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**SHERLOCK HOLMES:
FROM LITERARY CHARACTER TO POP CULTURE SYMBOL**

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ANNOTATION

Anna Hulcová

Sherlock Holmes: From literary character to pop culture symbol

The bachelor thesis *Sherlock Holmes: From literary character to pop culture symbol* deals with the collection of sixty detective stories by Arthur Conan Doyle, the canon. The aim of the thesis is to highlight the aspects that contributed to the popularity of Sherlock Holmes and the series as such. The character of Sherlock Holmes became one of the most adapted literary characters, which is reflected in many areas of popular culture. Special attention is paid to the recent adaptations presenting Sherlock as a pop icon of the modern age.

Supervisor: Mgr. Tomáš Jajtner, Ph.D.

ANOTACE

Anna Hulcová

Sherlock Holmes: z literární postavy symbolem popkultury

Bakalářská práce *Sherlock Holmes: z literární postavy symbolem popkultury* se zabývá souborem šedesáti detektivních příběhů Arthura Conana Doylea, označovaným jako kánon. Cílem této práce je poukázat na aspekty, jež přispěly k popularitě postavy Sherlocka Holmese a série jako takové. Osoba Sherlocka Holmese se stala jednou z nejčastěji adaptovaných literárních postav, což se odráží v mnoha oblastech populární kultury. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována nejnovějším adaptacím představujícím Sherlocka jako populární ikonu moderní doby.

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Tomáš Jajtner, Ph.D.

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1. Introduction

One hundred and twenty six years ago, one of the most important characters of Victorian literature, Sherlock Holmes, was created. Despite being the protagonist of detective stories which are classified into the genre of popular fiction, Sherlock belongs to the group of the most famous literary characters of all times.

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to present some of the reasons why Sherlock has become an iconic figure of popular culture and why his popularity has even risen in the recent years. To achieve this goal, the analysis of Sherlock Holmes series will be provided, focusing mainly on the style and the characters of the stories.

This thesis is divided into three parts. The first one deals with the primary source for the study of Sherlock Holmes – *the canon*. The first chapter will present the origin of the whole series, the genre of detective tales in general and Doyle's sources of inspiration for creating Sherlock Holmes.

The second section called *Popularity* will provide the analysis of the style and the key figures of the stories in order to emphasise the aspects contributing to the popularity. It will also present other areas of popular culture influenced by this phenomenon, including adaptations and Sherlockian societies. As Priestman mentions, “With Doyle's creation of the Sherlock Holmes series, detective fiction became for the first time an indubitably popular and repeatable genre format“ (IV), which is reflected in the immense influence on other professional and even amateur writers.

The last part of this thesis is concerned with the two recent Sherlock Holmes adaptations – Guy Ritchie's movies *Sherlock Holmes* and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* and the BBC series *Sherlock*, which changed the stereotypical view of the great detective. Such transformation has raised discussion on several topics including for example the relationship between Sherlock and Watson.

Being immensely popular, the Sherlock Holmes series was analysed not only by various literary critics, but also by Sherlock's fans. This resulted in a vast collection consisting of miscellaneous critical essays, however, their quality and credibility is questionable. Both sources of secondary literature were used for the purpose of writing this thesis in order to present a comprehensive outlook on the phenomenon called Sherlock Holmes.

2. The Canon

The canon is a term used for the original Sherlock Holmes series containing four novels and fifty-six short stories. However, numerous other stories featuring Sherlock were written, some of them even by Arthur Conan Doyle himself. It may be sometimes confusing what can be classified as an original story and therefore a part of the canon. This applies especially in the case of the translated non-English editions which may contain some other stories.

Ivan Wolfe provides a clear criteria for inserting a story into the canon: “the story must be written by Arthur Conan Doyle ... it should have been published during Doyle's lifetime ... it must be about Sherlock Holmes (or possibly Watson) ... it cannot radically contradict the rest of the canon ... it should be prose fiction“ (107-108). These rules detach many other stories from the canon. Some of them are called *apocryphal works* and comprise other tales, plays and even essays written by Doyle, or works on which he cooperated. The next group of Sherlock Holmes stories is called *pastiches*. These stories are written by other authors in the style of Arthur Conan Doyle and feature Holmes or Watson. In *the pastiches* the author's fantasy has no limits, so the genre of the stories moves from detective fiction to science fiction and some of them were even published in the form of comic books. The last but not least group is described by Lavigne: “Holmes and Watson are additionally the heroes of innumerable *slash fiction stories* – amateur fan-authored works that feature favorite characters in non-canonical and often graphic same-sex relationships“ (14). Such stories can be found mainly on the internet. Nevertheless, this thesis will be concerned only with the canon.

2.1 The Origin of the Canon

It all begun in 1887 when Arthur Conan Doyle, a Scottish physician and occasional writer published the novel *A Study in Scarlet* in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*. He presented a thrilling detective story featuring a young man of extraordinary capacities narrated by his friend Dr. John Watson. Before the publication, Doyle decided to change the names of the protagonists, originally they were called Sherrinford Holmes and Ormond Sacker. Also the title was altered from *A Tangled Skein* to *A Study in*

Scarlet. However, the first story was not the success Doyle hoped for, so he returned to the genre of historical novels.

It was Joseph M. Stoddart, the managing editor of the American publication *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, who spurred Doyle to write another novel, because he wanted to publish it in his magazine. *The Sign of the Four* (for the British edition the title was shortened to *The Sign of Four*) appeared in the February 1890 edition. In this story Doyle returned to the genre of the crime fiction with the leading duo Holmes – Watson and followed the structure and the style of the first novel.

Doyle achieved a major breakthrough after he changed the format and reduced the novels to short stories. He also started to cooperate with *The Strand Magazine* which became the main publisher of the Sherlock Holmes series. The first twelve detective tales were published serially in *The Strand* from July 1891 to June 1892. The whole collection entitled *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* was published in a book form in 1892. With this collection, Doyle gained in popularity and so did *The Strand*.

The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes contain another twelve stories that appeared in *The Strand Magazine* between the years 1892-1893. The complete series was published as a book in 1894 both in Britain and America, but the story *The Cardboard Box* was omitted from the British edition and from all subsequent book editions at Doyle's request, because he considered it inappropriate for its sexual and violent character. Despite the fact that Doyle was receiving a lot of money for his detective tales, he felt that Holmes distracts him from other writings. Therefore he wrote the last story of this collection called *The Final Problem* presenting Sherlock's arch-enemy Professor James Moriarty as an attempt to divest of the great detective and to step out of his shadow.

However, Sherlock's death raised a wave of protest which was quieted down only by the publication of *The Hound of The Baskervilles* in 1901. Although Doyle received many complaint letters from Sherlock's fans, the principal motive for Holmes's rebirth was not the public opinion, but the money, because *The Strand* did not want to lose the most famous protagonist of their stories. *The Hound of The Baskervilles* is a novel written as a posthumous story. It is set in Dartmoor and it is full of dark atmosphere mixing together superstition with science. This story is the most adapted one and therefore the best known from the whole canon.

In 1903 Doyle decided to bring Sherlock back to life in the third collection of thirteen stories entitled *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. The fourth Sherlock Holmes novel *The Valley of Fear* was published in the book form in 1915. Doyle returned to the same format as he used in the first novel *A Study in Scarlet*. He divided the story into two parts with the second part revealing a back story of the first one.

His Last Bow is a fourth collection of short stories published in 1917 containing seven new stories and the originally omitted *The Cardboard Box*. As the name of the collection indicates, the ending story *His Last Bow* was intended to be the last one of the Sherlock Holmes series, but Doyle kept writing until 1927, when the last volume of the twelve tales was published under the name *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*.

2.2 Detective Stories

The genre of detective fiction is considered as popular fiction. Such stories have a unique structure. In *The Reader and the Detective Story* George N. Dove defines the four qualities of the tale of literary detection: “The detective story is transitory, without long-range goals or purposes; it is fundamentally an intellectual undertaking; it is recreational, intended primarily to relax; and it is a disciplined, delimited literary form“ (2). The literary critics also compare detective stories to crossword puzzle as an intellectual game between the author and the reader, because the reader is directly involved in the story. However, a good author does not to allow the reader to find a solution of the case before he or she wants to.

According to their reading strategies, Dove divides the readers of detective fiction into three groups. The first group adopts the passive role and let the author surprise them with his or her sensational conclusion. Readers of the second group follow the clues given, and try to solve the mystery before the detective. Finally, there are some readers who skip the story and read the solution first and then enjoy the course of the story (10).

The detective tales can also be defined by four rules, presented by Dove, which clearly distinguish this genre from others: “First, the main character is a detective; this person may be male or female, professional or amateur, public or private, single or multiple, but there is an identifiable detection role. Second, the main plot of the story is

the account of the investigation and resolution; there may be love themes, ghost themes, social themes, or others, but the detection retains precedence. Third, the mystery is no ordinary problem but a complex secret that appears impossible of solution. Finally, the mystery is solved; the solution may be unknown to the detective-protagonist, the official police, or anybody else in the story, but it must be known to the reader“ (10).

Despite the complex structure, the genre of detective fiction was considered to be a part of low literature for a long time. Martin Priestman claims that the turn came in the 1960s, when “the presumed barriers between 'high' and 'low' literature have been progressively dismantled“ (1). Nevertheless, Doyle and his audience regarded the stories as a part of the mass culture, which is reflected in the style of the stories.

It was Doyle who made the genre of detective fiction famous. However, the crucial innovative role in creating this genre belongs to Edgar Allan Poe, who served as a major source of inspiration to Doyle. Poe created a Parisian sleuth C. Auguste Dupin, who appeared in three short stories *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Mystery of Marie Rog t* and *The Purloined Letter*. Poe also invented some investigative techniques later copied by Doyle. Dupin, as well as Sherlock, places ads in the newspaper to lure the culprits to his apartment. He also visits crime scenes to look for the clues that were overlooked by the police. Inspired by Poe, Doyle used the detective's companion as a narrator.

Another of Doyle's predecessors was  mile Gaboriau, who wrote the first police novels with the protagonist called Inspector Lecoq. It was Gaboriau who divided his novels into two parts and used flashbacks to describe the previous events. Doyle copied this strategy in *A Study in Scarlet* and *A Valley of Fear*.

2.3 The Inspiration

As Kyle Freeman states in the *General Introduction to The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, Arthur Conan Doyle was inspired mainly by Thomas Macaulay, an English historian and poet. According to Freeman, “he [Macaulay] was immensely influential in the nineteenth century. Conan Doyle was entranced by his language and his sharp, colorful pronouncements. Macaulay made history a source of wonder and romance. He was also an unapologetic believer in the superiority of British life“ (15).

Doyle devoted his writing career not only to detective fiction, but he also wrote several historical novels, non-fictional works and even poetry. Of course, his major domain was short stories, nevertheless the range of his topics is much wider than adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

Arthur Conan Doyle received a very good education and thus was familiar with both ancient and modern classics. He also had a wide knowledge of classical music, which is reflected in Holmes's taste for music. Doyle's detective stories were inspired by his predecessors - Edgar Allan Poe, Émile Gaboriau, and Wilkie Collins. He was very well acquainted with their work as he refers to Poe and Gaboriau in the series, even though he presents Sherlock as being superior to the great detectives Dupin and Lecoq:

“You remind me of Edgar Allen Poe’s Dupin. I [Watson] had no idea that such individuals did exist outside of stories.”

Sherlock Holmes rose and lit his pipe. “No doubt you think that you are complimenting me in comparing me to Dupin,” he observed. “Now, in my opinion, Dupin was a very inferior fellow. That trick of his of breaking in on his friends’ thoughts with an apropos remark after a quarter of an hour’s silence is really very showy and superficial. He had some analytical genius, no doubt; but he was by no means such a phenomenon as Poe appeared to imagine.”

“Have you read Gaboriau’s works?” I asked. “Does Lecoq come up to your idea of a detective?”

Sherlock Holmes sniffed sardonically. “Lecoq was a miserable bungler,” he said, in an angry voice; “he had only one thing to recommend him, and that was his energy. That book made me positively ill. The question was how to identify an unknown prisoner. I could have done it in twenty four hours. Lecoq took six months or so. It might be made a text-book for detectives to teach them what to avoid.”

I felt rather indignant at having two characters whom I had admired treated in this cavalier style. I walked over to the window, and stood looking out into the busy street. “This fellow may be very clever,” I said to myself, “but he is certainly very conceited.” (Doyle 24; st. *A Study in Scarlet*)

With this utterance Doyle declared himself having exceeded his predecessors. As it is mentioned in his biography, “the great defect in the detective fiction is that he [Poe] obtains results without any obvious reason,” Conan Doyle told an early interviewer. “That is not fair, is not art” (Stashower 8). He improved the structure by including explanations of Sherlock's methods of deduction to every story.

The model for Sherlock's methods of investigation was Doyle's former medical professor from Edinburgh University Dr. Joseph Bell, who was the master of diagnosis using observation and deduction. Doyle described Bell's methods in his autobiography on a dialogue between Bell and one of his patients:

“In one of his best cases he [Bell] said to a civilian patient:

“Well, my man, you've served in the army.” - “Aye, sir.”

“Not long discharged?” - “No, sir.”

“A Highland regiment?” - “Aye, sir.”

“A non-com. officer?”

“Aye, sir.”

“Stationed at Barbados?” - “Aye, sir.”

“You see, gentlemen,” he would explain, “the man was a respectful man but did not remove his hat. They do not in the army, but he would have learned civilian way had he been long discharged. He has an air of authority and he is obviously Scottish. As to Barbados, his complaint is elephantiasis, which is West Indian and not British.” (*Memories and Adventures* 26)

Such stream of deduction based on mere observation is often used in the stories. The following dialogue between Sherlock and his client serves as an example of the apparent inspiration:

“Mr. James M. Dodd seemed somewhat at a loss how to begin the interview. I [Sherlock] did not attempt to help him, for his silence gave me more time for observation. I have found it wise to impress clients with a sense of power, and so I gave him some of my conclusions.

“From South Africa, sir, I perceive.”

“Yes, sir,” he answered, with some surprise.

“Imperial Yeomanry, I fancy.”

“Exactly.”

“Middlesex Corps, I fancy.”

“That is so. Mr. Holmes, you are a wizard.”

I smiled at his bewildered expression.

“When a gentleman of virile appearance enters my room with such tan upon his face as an English sun could never give, and with his handkerchief in his sleeve instead of his pocket, it is not difficult to place him. You wear a short beard, which shows that you were not a regular. You have the cut of a riding-man. As to Middlesex, your card has already shown me that you are a stockbroker from Throgmorton Street. What other regiment would you join?” (Doyle 1000; st. *The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier*)

It is clear that Dr. Bell played a crucial role in the creation of Sherlock Holmes. According to Freeman, the inspiration for Sherlock's peculiar personality was Doyle's fellow medical student George Budd, who is described as: “Brilliant but mercurial, Budd could talk expansively on subject after subject, then lapse into moody silence. The life of the party at one moment, he could turn violent the next” (Freeman 15-16).

While Sherlock is a combination of two of Doyle's acquaintances, Dr. John Watson is clearly his self-portrayal. He projected his profession and his own longing for adventure into the character of a former army doctor. Watson is not only the narrator of the stories, but it is him who presents Sherlock to the reader and therefore creates his image. He is also the first fan and a great admirer of Sherlock's. Being a biographer of the great detective, Watson escapes his ordinary medical practice in order to participate with Sherlock on many astounding adventures just like Doyle did while he was writing the stories.

“I [Sherlock] am going out now. It is only a reconnaissance. I will do nothing serious without my trusted comrade and biographer at my elbow. Do you stay

here, and the odds are that you will see me again in an hour or two. If time hangs heavy get foolscap and a pen, and begin your narrative of how we saved the State.“ (Doyle 925; st. *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington plans*)

Not only the characters, but also the plots were analysed in order to find out their origins. Rafe McGregor examined the sources of inspiration for the novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and came to the conclusion that there are three: “the legends of black dogs and Wisht hounds widespread in the British Isles; “Followed“ (1900), a short story by Dr. Robert Eustace and Mrs. L.T. Meade; and “The Brazilian Cat“ (1898), one of Doyle's own horror titles“ (70). However, Doyle states in the dedication that he based the story on “a west country legend“ which was told to him by his friend Bertram Fletcher Robinson.

For the second part of novel *The Valley of Fear* called *The Scowrers* Doyle retold the story of Allan Pinkerton's book *The Molly Maguires and the Detectives* (published in 1877). Pinkerton's book is about a terrorist group named *the Molly Maguires* and Doyle even copied the name Pinkerton for one of the characters.

3. Popularity

Sherlock Holmes was the first pop icon of the modern age. Together with Watson they constitute a widely recognisable duo and their names are familiar even to those who have never read a single story by Arthur Conan Doyle. The series did not influence only literature but also other areas of popular culture, which will be discussed in the second part of this chapter.

The first part provides the analysis of the whole series in terms of the structure and the characters in order to point out some of the elements that contributed to the popularity of Sherlock Holmes. *Popularity* is the key term for this thesis and for the whole series as well. The stories are not appreciated for their literary qualities, but for the creation of strong characters who have maintained their uniqueness and popularity up to the present day and thus influenced the culture as such.

3.1 The Style

The whole collection of sixty tales was written within forty years, which is correspondingly reflected in the style. Although Doyle followed a certain pattern in the stories, he did not avoid some inconsistencies in his writing. Because of the fact that he began to be tired of his greatest character, the quality of the stories is unstable.

3.1.1 Novels

Doyle's first detective story *A Study in Scarlet* was designed as a novel and Doyle followed the format and the style also in his second tale called *The Sign of Four*, however, afterwards he changed it and devised a series of short stories. He returned to the format of a novel again in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Valley of Fear*, but these novels were originally published serially in *The Strand Magazine* which is reflected in the structure. The first half of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is composed as a series of reports given by Watson in order to keep Holmes in touch with the latest events and the second part of *The Valley of Fear* is designed as a flashback. Individual chapters enabled Doyle to build up the atmosphere gradually in order to maintain the tension throughout the whole story.

In contrast to the short stories, the novels incorporate detailed descriptions and a wide range of emotions such as romance, thirst for retribution or fear. These four tales are distinguished from the others by the gradually built atmosphere, number of murders and by the most convoluted plots comprising of many supporting characters. Part of these four novels also takes place outside of London. Flashbacks reporting the past events of *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Valley of Fear* are enacted in America. In *The Sign of Four* the narration of the escaped convict Small transfers the reader to India and the whole adventure of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is located in Devon.

The most important element of the novels are the flashbacks. Doyle uses them to explain the motivation for the crime or to describe the characters' past. In addition, all the flashbacks are based on real historical events. The flashback in *A Study in Scarlet* deals with Mormonism in the nineteenth-century America. As Steven Doyle and David A. Crowder claim: "Utah was in a distant, isolated wilderness, and back east in the U.S.,

as well as in England, lurid tales of polygamy, plural marriage, forced marriage and “avenging angels” circulated in the popular press. Doyle's take on Mormonism reflected the popular understanding of the day“ (150). In *The Sign of Four* Doyle mentions the Indian Rebellion of 1857. *The Valley of Fear* contains a flashback depicting an Irish society called *the Molly Maguires* which was active in coal mining towns in Pennsylvania. However, Doyle did not incorporate the flashback into his most famous novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Instead of it, its historical background is illustrated by a legend.

The novels are distinguished from the stories mainly because of the combination of different genres, such as romance, mysteries and horror stories. All the novels deal with murder, however, as Rafe McGregor states, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is not a detective story at all. Supporting his claims with works of Jacques Derrida and Noël Carroll, McGregor convinces the reader that *The Hound* is actually a horror story. He explains: “Horror is distinguished by involving monsters that disturb the natural order, and the essence of horror is that it produces a compound reaction of fear and disgust“ (71). This explanation perfectly characterises the novel. Doyle created a story in which every aspect arouses anxiety – the moors with solitary houses, the legend about a gigantic hound glowing in the dark, the escaped convict and family curse. As McGregor concludes: “ ... that anxiety is the essential clue in the solution of the real mystery of *The Hound*, the secret of its remarkable success“ (76).

3.1.2 Short Stories

After the publication of the two novels, Doyle decided to change the format from novel to short stories. There are many differences between the novels and the short stories. They are based mainly on dialogues, such as when Sherlock interrogates his clients, talks over the cases with Watson and explains the process how he came to the conclusion. The short stories contain almost no flashbacks and most importantly the plot is condensed. Also the number of characters is reduced in comparison with the novels.

With the modification of the format, Doyle revolutionised the way magazines published fiction. Instead of presenting one story, he created an icon with a self-contained life as a link for a series of independent stories, so the readers could join in

any time. This fact also contributed to the immense popularity of the series.

The most important factor which influenced Doyle's style was that he wrote most of the stories for money, which is also reflected in the quality. The quality oscillates in the last two collections, because Doyle started to experiment not only with the style – he changed the narrator, two of the stories are told by Sherlock himself, two of them are composed almost as a drama, but Doyle made some alterations to the character of Sherlock as well, who in the last stories seems to be more emotional than before.

Nevertheless, all the stories contain certain elements and patterns which connect the whole series. The introductory phase is almost the same in every case. It is usually a client or a policeman who presents the case to Sherlock, but sometimes he finds it in the newspaper. The introductory phase usually takes place in the rooms of 221B Baker Street. Before the very introduction of the case, it is time for Sherlock to show his capabilities of deduction, usually by guessing the identity of the client. After this display of his skills, the client is assured being in good hands and presents the case to Sherlock. At this moment Sherlock invites Watson to participate on the upcoming adventure.

The following investigation is one of the elements which varies the most. Sherlock manages to solve some of the cases without leaving the rooms of Baker Street, others involve travelling to various destinations and require a thorough on-site investigation. From this moment on, the reader relies on Watson's descriptions, because Sherlock never reveals his conclusions unless he is completely certain. Doyle provides the reader with clues so he or she can attempt to find a solution, however, it is always Holmes who explains the chain of events and presents the conclusion at the end. The solution seems really simple after Sherlock's summary of the case, but without his skills and expertise the reader would not be able to solve it.

This pattern allows Doyle to elaborate the plot and to provide the stories with multiple characters without losing the comprehensibility. On the other hand, the pattern is more or less the same throughout the whole series and the plots become more and more predictable. Another reproach could be raised against the unchallenged fashion of storytelling. The client arrives right on time and Watson is always free and willing to leave his private practice and assist Sherlock. Moreover, there is always a train taking the protagonists back to London and Sherlock's disguise is never discovered by anyone,

not even by Watson. Nevertheless, such simplicity is compensated by the rich variety of plots.

According to Steven Doyle and David A. Crowder the stories can be classified into five categories – *The “locked-room“ mystery*, when the murder is committed under impossible conditions, *Crime prevention*, *Espionage*, *Missing persons* and unclassifiable *Weird tales* (16). However, many of the adventures are a mix of two or more categories. As Watson mentions, he only describes the stories, which were solved or somehow concluded, but admits, that even Sherlock Holmes is not able to solve every single case. The variety of cases is immense, Sherlock deals not only with minor crimes and problems, but also with issues of greatest importance often with international consequences.

Although writing detective stories, Doyle (via Sherlock) does not judge the culprits and their motives for the crimes they committed. He deliberately leaves the moral questions to the readers. Even though there is a clear distinction between good and evil, sometimes the boundaries are blurred.

The readers find the short stories attractive and amusing, which is supported by the usage of humour and romance. Doyle also often uses exotic or unusual destinations and characters in order to enrich the story. His motivation for writing the stories was money and for this purpose he invented strong characters and followed the same simple pattern which made the short stories thrilling and entertaining. However, he was also very inconsistent in his writing.

3.1.3 The Blunders

Doyle was a very careless writer, who often contradicts himself in the series. To his major mistakes belongs Watson's wound from Afghanistan. In *A Study in Scarlet* Watson mentions that he “was struck on the shoulder by a Jezail bullet“ (Doyle 15; st. *A Study in Scarlet*), and in the second adventure *The Sign of Four* he mentions his wounded leg. The other big disagreement regarding Watson is his Christian name, which is mentioned only a few times in the whole series, because Sherlock addresses his companion mainly “My dear Watson.“ Doyle used the name John in the first story, the original form Ormond Sacker was altered before the publication. Doyle's indecision

about the name became evident when he needed Watson's wife to address her husband with his Christian name. He forgot the original form and changed it to James (Doyle 230; st. *The Man with the Twisted Lip*). However, in the preface of the collection *His Last Bow*, thirty years after the publication of *A Study in Scarlet*, Doyle returned to the original form John.

Another big contradiction caught the attention of S. C. Roberts, who while attempting to sum up Watson's biography, unfolded many inconsistencies in the time line of the stories. A thorough analysis revealed that Doyle used the dates recklessly. As Roberts indicates, the tale *The Five Orange Pips* dates back to the year 1887 and presents Watson as a married man, in spite of the fact that Watson met his wife in 1888. Roberts accuses Watson as Sherlock's biographer of making this mistake and also provides an explanation of this problem. He claims that the date of the first encounter between Watson and Mary Morstan derives from Miss Morstan's narration and is therefore inaccurate, because Watson was fascinated by her beauty and was not capable of recording the date correctly. As Roberts wonders: "Was this a state of mind calculated to produce chronological accuracy" (62)?

However, this is not the only mistake in the time line occurring in the series. One of the most evident appears in the novel *The Valley of Fear*. Although being written after the story *The Final Problem*, the novel is set in the period before it. *The Final Problem* is the tale where Sherlock presents Professor Moriarty, his arch-enemy, to Watson for the first time. Nevertheless, in *The Valley of Fear* Watson already recognises Moriarty as a famous criminal.

3.2 The Characters

Sherlock Holmes series is grounded on the duo of a solitary private detective and his companion, however, various other characters including the clients, criminals and policemen appear in the stories. In the tales Doyle involved a rich variety of London inhabitants of the late nineteenth century and thus created a colourful world of his masterpiece. Nevertheless, there are three important supporting characters playing the key roles in the stories, which will be discussed in this chapter as well as the significant features of the two protagonists.

3.2.1 Sherlock Holmes

The whole series is grounded on the character of Sherlock Holmes, the first consulting detective, a profession he himself invented. He became an iconic figure of British literature and the features which distinguish him from the other detectives will be described in the following piece of text.

In the first novel *A Study in Scarlet* Doyle delineated Sherlock's appearance, mental capacities and some of his unusual habits. The greatest attention was paid to Holmes's knowledge, which seems quite extraordinary on one hand, especially in case of topics concerning crimes, but on the other really limited, for example he is “ignorant of the Copernican Theory and of the composition of the Solar System“ (Doyle 21; st. *A Study in Scarlet*). This illustrates an episode from the first story in which Sherlock explains his attitude towards knowledge:

“I consider that a man’s brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose. A fool takes in all the lumber of every sort that he comes across, so that the knowledge which might be useful to him gets crowded out, or at best is jumbled up with a lot of other things so that he has a difficulty in laying his hands upon it. Now the skilful workman is very careful indeed as to what he takes into his brain-attic. He will have nothing but the tools which may help him in doing his work, but of these he has a large assortment, and all in the most perfect order. It is a mistake to think that that little room has elastic walls and can distend to any extent. Depend upon it there comes a time when for every addition of knowledge you forget something that you knew before. It is of the highest importance, therefore, not to have useless facts elbowing out the useful ones.“ (Doyle 21; st. *A Study in Scarlet*)

Sherlock's out-of-box thinking is what makes him stand out above all the other detectives. His methods of investigation were thoroughly examined in many publications, so for the purpose of this thesis will be sufficient to point out some of the main elements. Sherlock pays attention to details and focuses on the most common objects which seem uninteresting to everyone except him. To provide an example, an

excerpt from the story *Silver Blaze* was used:

“Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?” [client]

“To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.” [Sherlock]

“The dog did nothing in the night-time.”

“That was the curious incident,” remarked Sherlock Holmes. (Doyle 347)

Usually Sherlock has more than one version of the solution and eliminates them one by one, until he finds the right one. As he explains to Watson: “How often have I said to you that when you eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth” (Doyle 111; st. *The Sign of Four*). Despite the fact, that he has no proof for his hypothesis, he solves the case by compelling the culprit to confess.

Besides his mental capacities, Sherlock has other talents. He is a great admirer of music and even plays the violin, which helps him to gather his thoughts and also to clear his mind. At the university he participated in activities such as fencing and boxing and he is still able to keep good physical condition. He also excels in the art of disguise and even Watson is not able to recognise him when he masks himself. Sherlock is a master of utilizing all of his powers and combining them in order to solve his cases.

Despite Watson's effort to depict Sherlock as a hero, he has some darker sides in his personality. He is a heavy smoker and occasional drug user and his mood is very unstable with a tendency to melancholy. He is obsessed with mysteries and crimes and is unstoppable until he solves the case. Without mental work he becomes easily bored and melancholic, which he compensates by taking drugs. His mood goes always into the extremes – he is either extremely excited, full of energy and enthusiasm, or totally bored and depressed. The only moment when he is even-tempered is while he is thinking.

Besides these deviations, Sherlock seems to the reader still the same, because his personality does not undergo a considerable development. The reader knows what to expect from him, which contributes to the idea of Sherlock as a hero who is always on the good side.

Another crucial feature of Holmes's character is his relationship with women. In

fact, there is none. Holmes does not know anything about women, he is interested in them only when they are somehow involved in his case. Considering women, Watson describes him as: “an automaton—a calculating machine! ... There is something positively inhuman in you at times“ (Doyle 96; st. *The Sign of Four*). It is Watson who represents the role of the expert on women, as Sherlock sometimes calls him. The only intimate relationship Sherlock keeps is with Watson, which will be discussed later in the chapter *Bromance*.

Sherlock's name raises in people's mind a stereotypical image of an elderly man in a checked cape with a deerstalker hat, holding a pipe in one hand and with a magnifying glass in the other. However, this appearance was influenced by Sidney Paget's illustrations from *The Strand*. In the series Holmes is depicted as a young man who likes to wear frock coat and a top hat. It was Paget who equipped the great detective with the deerstalker hat and changed Doyle's idea of a non-attractive man into an appealing handsome hero, which also contributed to the popularity, especially among female readers.

3.2.2 Dr. John Watson

Dr. John Watson is a man of strict character, a former army doctor, who is looking for a roommate after his return from the Afghan war. Very soon after his first encounter with Sherlock, Watson became his loyal and dearest friend.

Watson's key role in the whole series is that he is the narrator of the stories. However, he is not only Sherlock's biographer, but he is his investigative partner as well. Sherlock uses him as his apprentice and even as a tool to find a solution. As Holmes comments it in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*: “It may be that you are not yourself luminous, but you are a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable power of stimulating it” (Doyle 669). It is clear that Doyle suppressed Watson's intellect in order to accent Sherlock's genius.

Watson also represents a connection between Sherlock's perspective and the reality, and he also provides the cases with a thrilling atmosphere. The reason for this is explained by Tom Dowd: “The stories are about the characters and the chase. We see through Watson's eyes in part because if we could see through Holmes's eyes, the matter

at hand would be somewhat less dramatic. Holmes himself is often thrilled primarily by his ability to problem solve, and the fact that the problem gets solved is a serendipitous result“ (100 – 101). In other words, if the story was told by Holmes, once he finds the solution he does not bother to explain it to the reader. It is Watson who has to play the role of a less intelligent man in order to compel Sherlock to provide the necessary explanation in order to satisfy the reader.

However, Sherlock often accuses Watson of “pandering to popular taste instead of confining himself rigidly to facts and figures“ (Doyle 1000; st. *The Adventure of the Blinded Soldier*) and for that reason two stories from the whole collection are written by Holmes himself (*The Adventure of the Blinded Soldier*, *The Adventure of the Lion's Mane*). According to Sherlock, Watson's recordings should serve as a source of education and he wants Watson to see his methods as an art. Although Sherlock considers himself a detective, he dedicated his life to solving mysteries, not catching criminals: “If I claim full justice for my art, it is because it is an impersonal thing—a thing beyond myself. Crime is common. Logic is rare. Therefore it is upon the logic rather than upon the crime that you should dwell. You have degraded what should have been a course of lectures into a series of tales“ (Doyle 317; st. *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*).

3.2.3 Mycroft Holmes

One of the key characters of the whole series is Sherlock's elder brother Mycroft. Although he appears solely in the stories of *The Greek Interpreter* and in *The Bruce-Partington Plans*, he represents Sherlock's only living relative.

Mycroft Holmes is a subordinate in governmental services and it is him who stands for the British government in the series. As Sherlock puts it: “You are right in thinking that he [Mycroft] is under the British government. You would also be right in a sense if you said that occasionally he *is* the British government“ (Doyle 914; st. *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*).

He is also a founder of a private gentleman's club called *Diogenes Club*, a silent sanctuary for solitary men. Sherlock and Mycroft do not act like brothers, the only time they spend together is while solving the two cases mentioned above. The interesting fact

about Mycroft is that Sherlock admits that he is a man of even greater capacities for observation and deduction than Sherlock himself, however, “he has no ambition and no energy. He will not even go out of his way to verify his own solutions, and would rather be considered wrong than take the trouble to prove himself right“ (Doyle 436; st. *The Greek Interpreter*). Mycroft is therefore Sherlock's counterpart, not only in their physical characteristics (Sherlock is according to Watson tall and lean whereas Mycroft is corpulent), but also smarter than Sherlock, yet his idleness distinguishes him from his brother, who is willing to do everything to solve a case.

This determination associates Sherlock with another key figure of the series, his arch-enemy.

3.2.4 Arch-enemy

“He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city. He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has a brain of the first order. He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web, but the web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them. He does little himself. He only plans.“ (Doyle 471; st. *The Final Problem*)

This is the description of Sherlock's arch-enemy, Professor James Moriarty, who appears in the last story of the collection *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. His sudden appearance was caused by Doyle's urge to dispose of Sherlock and step out of his shadow. Nevertheless, Doyle presented Moriarty as a criminal mastermind, whose activities had been followed by Sherlock for a long time, even though this fact is not mentioned in the series until the story *The Final Problem*.

Moriarty became an iconic figure, a personification of crime and despite the fact that he was created only for the purpose to kill Sherlock, his presence has a major impact on the detective. After their final clash at the falls of Reichenbach both of them were considered dead. However, after Sherlock's return in *The Adventure of the Empty House*, the web of Moriarty's gang is still in its full-strenght even though their leader is dead. Steven Doyle and David A. Crowder pointed out that “Moriarty’s absence doesn’t

diminish his status — it actually enhances it. The professor is a sort of Sherlockian boogeyman, haunting the stories through to the end of the canon ... Moriarty is like some kind of ghost, and few but Sherlock Holmes himself have ever laid eyes on him“ (128). It is solely Sherlock who encounters Moriarty, but the scenes described by Holmes himself are characterized by an atmosphere full of tension. The dialogues between Sherlock and Moriarty are very brief, brisk and completely different from other dialogues in the series, evoking some kind of an intimate relationship, which is given by their ability to understand each other's mind without words.

“ 'All that I have to say has already crossed your mind,' said he [Moriarty].

“ 'Then possibly my answer has crossed yours,' I replied [Sherlock].

“ 'You stand fast?'

“ 'Absolutely.'“ (Doyle 472; st. *The Final Problem*)

It could be said that Sherlock and Moriarty are alike. Both of them come from a similar background, they were given a very good education and have extraordinary mental capacities, but it is only Sherlock's sense for morality that keeps him from entering the same career as Moriarty. This idea of the great detective becoming a criminal is sketched by the creators of the BBC series *Sherlock* and will be discussed later in the last part of this thesis.

3.2.5 The Woman

Despite the fact that many female characters appear in the Sherlock Holmes series and some of them even in the roles of clients, all of them but one play completely passive role. The world Doyle created is dominated by male characters, however, there is one woman who evens up the men. Irene Adler is a fierce, unpredictable, smart and inventive female counterpart of Sherlock Holmes.

Although she appears only in one story – *The Scandal in Bohemia*, her key role is that she is the only person who ever outsmarted Sherlock. She is always one step ahead of his plans and it is her who wins at the end. She is presented as an archetype of an independent woman, exceptional in her appearance and actions. “To Sherlock

Holmes she is always *the woman*“ (Doyle 161; st. *A scandal in Bohemia*). Similar to Moriarty, the ultimate villain, she represents the only woman in Sherlock's life, which raised speculations that Sherlock and Irene were lovers.

3.3 Adaptations

The fact that contributes to the popularity of Sherlock Holmes is that he is one of the most adapted literary characters. He has been inspiring playwrights to adapt the stories to the stage, radio, television and film. The tales with exciting plots comprising various colourful characters and vivid dialogues represent an easy subject for adapting. In addition, Sherlock himself is easily recognisable thanks to his personality, which is described accurately in the series. Thanks to his extraordinary skills of observation and deduction the authors are able to invent unlimited number of plots. As Steven Mofat reminds: “[Sherlock Holmes is] the most unchanging, yet most adaptable hero of all time ... Utterly recognisable, and utterly different at the same time“ (7). The public's demand for more stories encouraged the market to bring Sherlock back to life.

The first stage adaptations emerged soon after the publication of the *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* in 1893. However, the most famous stage production was *Sherlock Holmes: A Drama in Four Acts*, which has been performed on Broadway since 1899. William Gillette, the author as well as the actor in the leading role, combined the stories *A Scandal in Bohemia* and *The Final Problem*. He also adjusted some of Sherlock's characteristics, for example, he made Holmes fall in love. It was Gillette who introduced some of the iconic accessories of the great detective, the deerstalker cap and the calabash pipe. In the United States, Gillette's name became a synonym of Sherlock Holmes, especially because the illustrator of the American editions used him as a model for his pictures of the stories.

The adaptations very soon differed from the canon. As Neil McCaw states: “the history of Holmesian appropriations is one of 'palimpsestuousness,' a 'relationship of copresence between an almost limitless number of Holmesian texts in a 'ceaseless circulation' of images, characters, settings, and plotlines“ (19). The palimpsestuousness was even encouraged by Doyle, who also created or co-created various stage adaptations and non-canonical texts featuring Holmes or Watson.

The history of film adaptations of Sherlock Holmes is almost as long as the history of film as such. The first thirty-second-long movie adaptation *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* was released in 1900, few years after the invention of the movie camera. The technical development of the film can be studied on Sherlock Holmes adaptations, which started as silent movies and followed the inventions of sound and colour until the modern era, when the film makers take advantages of the latest technologies.

The title role of Sherlock is connected with many great actors. In 1940's it was Basil Rathbone whose name became a synonym of the great detective for this era. Together with Nigel Bruce playing Watson they starred in fourteen films. After two decades of decline, 1970's brought Sherlock back on the silver screen. The most famous movie of this era is *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* released in 1970. Golden times of Sherlock Holmes continued until 1988 with the appearance of Christopher Plummer, Peter Cook and Michael Cane in the title role.

From the huge number of TV adaptations stands out the Granada Television series *Sherlock Holmes* with Jeremy Brett excelling in the title role. The creators attempted to maintain the authenticity, so they followed the canon very closely. David A. Crowder and Steven Doyle state that: “Granada's series is not only the best Sherlock Holmes TV series produced to date but also one of the most successful historical TV series ever produced“ (280). However, according to many critics, Granada's series was surpassed by the BBC series *Sherlock*.

3.4 Sherlockian Societies

The influence of Sherlock Holmes phenomenon was reflected not only in the popular culture but also in the large fandom base. The origin of the term *Sherlockian* is described by Steven Doyle and David A. Crowder: “as early as 1902, the term *Sherlockian* was used in print to describe those Holmes fans afflicted with a devotion to the world's greatest detective“ (283).

The need to encounter other Sherlockians in order to share his passion with them presented the driving force for the American journalist Christopher Morley, who established the first Sherlockian society *Baker Street Irregulars* in 1934. Its name derives from a group of urchins Sherlock used to gather the clues. The members are not

allowed to mention Doyle's name, because in the society it is believed, that Sherlock is a living person. Moreover, the *Baker Street Irregulars* has been a strictly male society until 1991. Because of this restriction, a small group of female college students founded a female Sherlockian society called the *Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes*.

To the activities of these two societies belong regular meetings, publication of journals consisting of essays on various topics concerning the world of Sherlock Holmes. The membership into these societies is available by invitation only. Many famous people were members of *Baker Street Irregulars* included Isaac Asimov, Neil Gaiman, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry Truman.

The first Sherlockian society in Great Britain, *The Sherlock Holmes Society of London*, was formed in 1951, however, the Sherlock fans are called *Holmesians*. It originated during the preparations for an exhibition devoted to Sherlock Holmes installed during *The Festival of Britain*. The exhibition was planned by a group of Holmesians who later established the *Sherlock Holmes Society of London*. This society welcomes every Holmesian interested, therefore no invitation is needed.

Alongside the most prestigious *Baker Street Irregulars* many so-called scion societies were formed, however, the number of such societies increased rapidly thanks to the internet. Peter E. Blau presents that there are 897 Sherlockian societies, from which 419 are active to the date of February 2, 2013 (Blau, "Information of the Listings"). Many of those societies also prepare the reconstructions of some iconic scenes from the series: to the most frequent one belongs the final fight between Sherlock and Moriarty at the Reichenbach Fall.

The distinction between fan clubs and Sherlockian societies is in the literary scholarship. The Sherlockians publish pastiches, parodies, fictional biographies, monographs, anthologies, scrapbooks and even cookbooks. However, the fandom of Doyle's work could be found not only in English speaking countries, but all over the world, which reflects the immense influence of a literary character on the mass culture.

3.5 Who was fictional and who was real?

In the case of Sherlock Holmes a curious phenomenon ensued. Soon after the publication of the first short stories, the readers started to consider Holmes to be a real

living person. As Michael Salver points out, “Holmes was the first character in modern literature to be widely treated as if he was real and his creator fictitious“ (600). The effect of this phenomenon became evident when scholarly biographies of both Watson and Holmes aroused a vivid discussion on particular details from their lives. Such fascination with Holmes Salver compares to “fetishization“ (601).

Surprisingly, it was not Doyle who strove to persuade the readers about the existence of a real Sherlock, as it was in case of Washington Irving, who intentionally misled his readers by placing a series of missing person adverts in newspapers in order to seek information on Diedrich Knickerbocker, whom Irving pronounced the true author of the stories. As Doyle stated: “the impression that Holmes was a real person may have been intensified by his frequent appearance on the stage“ (*Sidelights on Sherlock Holmes* 9), which he encouraged by writing several plays himself, the first of them, *The Speckled Band*, was completed in 1912.

Nevertheless, the stage adaptations were not the only reason for this general impression. The element supporting the idea of Sherlock being real can be found in the character of Dr. John Watson. Some of the Sherlockian societies, for example *Baker Street Irregulars*, consider Watson to be the author of the stories and intentionally avoid mentioning Doyle's name. However, the major argument against this opinion is that it is Doyle who keeps a tight rein on the stories, which is proved especially in the last collection *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*. Doyle published a preface, in which he thanks the readers. Moreover, not all stories of the whole series are narrated by Watson, two of them are to some degree composed as a drama for they lack the narrator.

The impression of Sherlock being a real person was renewed by the creators of the BBC sensation. In the TV series both Watson and Sherlock have their own blog. Watson uses his blog for posting the stories, whereas Sherlock's *Science of Deduction* serves as a propagation of his methods. Both blogs were actually created and can be found on the internet (www.thescienceofdeduction.co.uk, www.johnwatsonblog.co.uk/). This commercial trick was inspired by George Newnes, the publisher of *The Strand Magazine*, who reprinted Doyle's stories in another magazine called *Tit-Bits* after they appeared in *The Strand*. As Saler describes: “[in *Tit-Bits* Newnes] published editorial material implying Holmes was real, as well as frequent references to, contests about,

and parodies of the stories“ (610). Both *The Strand* and *Tit-Bits* were enormously popular among readers, which contributed not only Sherlock's popularity, but also to the impression of Sherlock being a real person.

3.6 Why is Sherlock Holmes so popular?

There are many reasons why Sherlock Holmes became popular so quickly and managed to keep his position of the greatest detective of all times into the modern era. The first one lies in the age of his origin. As Saler puts it: “Holmes was one of the first characters to become ubiquitous through being taken up by all the new mass media“ (610). Since the beginning of the Sherlock Holmes cult, he gradually appeared in all mass media. It started with the paper form (books and magazines), and through the stage adaptations he made a breakthrough into the cinema. Sherlock found his place even in the modern era of the internet, for that reason the web is full of information about this phenomenon.

The second reason can be found in the cooperation with *The Strand Magazine*. When Doyle started to write the stories, the mass culture was connected mainly with magazines. The first novels were not very successful, however, once Doyle started to cooperate with *The Strand*, the stories gained extreme popularity. His strategy to publish short stories with one character as a link revolutionised serial publications. Every month the readers joined their idol on some astonishing adventure, without the necessity of reading the previous ones. Moreover, it was George Newnes, the publisher of *The Strand* and *Tit-Bits* who helped Sherlock to gain the massive popularity. As Micheal Saler points out: “While *The Strand* ... was aimed at a middle-class audience, the penny-weekly *Tit-Bits* extended Doyle's readership into the working classes“ (610).

Another reason can be found in the clear typology of the characters. Doyle did not only base the whole series on a single strong character, but also supplemented him with clearly defined supporting characters, created as archetypes. Dr. John Watson, presented as Sherlock's biographer, is an archetype of a loyal and truthful friend, the only friend of Sherlock's. However, in order to emphasise Sherlock's positive nature, Doyle invented an arch-enemy as his counterpart - Professor Moriarty, who is depicted as a personification of evil. Doyle created Sherlock as an icon living its own life in

pastiches, parodies, slash stories and adaptations.

Arthur Conan Doyle made the genre of detective story very famous and thus influenced many professional and amateur writers to follow his legacy. Not only the style of the stories has been imitated, but also the leading duo consisting of the private detective and his companion became an often repeated motif in the detective fiction. The examples can be found not only in detective stories, such as Agatha Christie's Poirot with Captain Hastings, but also in other genres, for example in *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco.

Finally, the attractiveness of the stories arises from the style. Most of the plots revolve around common objects and everyday life issues, allowing the readers to identify with the characters easily. Moreover, the readers can test their deduction skills, because Doyle presents clues throughout the whole story and reveals the solution at the very end.

Contemporary readers favoured the stories thanks to the idea of modernity it represented. As Saler points out:

“The character of Sherlock Holmes ... represented and celebrated the central tenets of modernity adumbrated at the time – not just rationalism and secularism, but also urbanism and consumerism. The stories made these tenets magical without introducing magic: Holmes demonstrated how the modern world could be re-enchanted through means entirely consistent with modernity.” (603)

On the other hand, the latter fans regard the series as a nostalgic reflection of the “good old England.” T. S. Eliot pointed out that: “Sherlock Holmes reminds us always of the pleasant externals of nineteenth-century London. I believe he may continue to do so even for those who cannot remember the nineteenth century“ (17). Sherlock Holmes series is timeless as will be shown in the following chapter.

4. Sherlock in the Modern Era

The previous chapter described the reasons why the series was so popular at and immediately after the time of its origin. However, Sherlock's popularity survived a

century, and after entering the second millennium his popularity has even risen. The question why is easy to answer. The fan base of Sherlock Holmes series enlarged thanks to the two recent television and movie adaptations of the stories which transformed the old literary hero into a modern man.

The first one, Guy Ritchie's film adaptation *Sherlock Holmes* released 2009 with Robert Downey Jr. in the title role of Sherlock and Jude Law as Watson, followed two years later by a sequel *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, became quickly a sensation which established a new way of depicting the great detective. Although being set in the Victorian era and taking the canon only as a source of inspiration, the movie presents Sherlock in a new light as a controversial hero who boxes for money, takes drugs and often falls into deep depression.

The second adaptation, the BBC series *Sherlock*, is set in the modern London. The creators Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss used the canon as the main source of inspiration and filled the stories with many details, however, they transferred the plots into the twenty-first century. The creators also pointed out that there is a thin line between the good side and the dark side of Sherlock's personality, because he is capable of everything such as deception and even burglary.

It must be said that these two adaptations are much more faithful to the canon than most of the previous ones. The reasons for that can be found in careful examination of the literary source and in the depiction of the characters. These two adaptations do not present Sherlock as a hero, but as a sociopath who is obsessed with solving crimes, which corresponds better to the canon than the previous adaptations.

However, the main difference between the modern adaptations and the previous ones lies in the fact that they comprise a sexual subtext, which is apparent in both Ritchie's movies and in the BBC series. This subtext will be explained in the following chapters.

4.1 Bromance

The two recent adaptations of Sherlock Holmes brought up a term often connected with popular culture - bromance. It is a portmanteau of "bro" and "romance" which is used to describe a close non-sexual relationship between men. Kaley Thomas

summarised several elements common to the bromance: “back-and-forth banter, a love-hate dynamic, codependency, masculine physicality and action, male camaraderie and loyalty, and potential homoeroticism“ (38). The notion of bromance has been present in the series since its beginnings, for in the late Victorian era it was quite common for a man to have an intimate male friend and to spend a lot of time with him. However, the relationship between Sherlock and Watson is exceptional, since Sherlock is not interested in any love affairs. Although Watson has a wife, he spends more time with Sherlock than with her.

Rex Stout, a member of the most prestigious Sherlockian society *Baker Street Irregulars* discussed the possibility of Watson being a woman in his contribution to *The Baker Street Reader* (Stout 159). He argues that the stories must have been written by a woman and grounds his idea on various excerpts from the whole series. One of them comes from *The Adventure of the Creeping Man*: “The relations between us in those latter days were peculiar. He [Sherlock] was a man of habits, narrow and concentrated habits, and I had become one of them. As an institution I was like the violin, the shag tobacco, the old black pipe, the index books, and others perhaps less excusable“ (Doyle 1071). Stout supported his suspicion with another argument. He chose a few names of the cases and arranged them according to some rules and thus created an acronym IRENE WATSON, which convinced him, that *the* woman, the only woman Sherlock may ever care for, was actually Watson in disguise.

However, such bold interpretation of Doyle's masterpiece was not left without a response. The most recent TV adaptation of the canon – American series *Elementary*, presents Watson as a woman, although the original idea of Watson being Irene Adler was not embraced by the creators.

In Guy Ritchie's adaptation, the issue of bromance has been considered since its origin. As Thomas points out: “Ritchie's films occupy a highly masculine-oriented milieu, where male interests and male-male interactions take center stage ... Ritchie proposes that amidst the action will not only be a focus upon a buddy dynamic but on Holmes and Watson as a *couple*“ (37). Sherlock and Watson are depicted in this movie as companions who know each other very intimately and spend a lot of time together. Sherlock is even jealous of Watson when he plans to get married. Nevertheless, Robert

Downey Jr. and Jude Law are still considered to be “bros“, not a homosexual couple.

The BBC series uses the sexual overtone in a completely different way. Being set in contemporary London, the idea of a male couple living together is much more present, which prove frequent allusions on this subject. Watson's attempts to persuade the others that he is not a gay become a source of many humorous situations:

Watson: “I'm glad no one saw that.“

Holmes: “Mm?“

Watson: “You, ripping my clothes off in a darkened swimming pool. People might talk.“

Holmes: “People do little else.“ (*The Great Game*)

However, in contrast to Ritchie's movies, the sexual tension between Sherlock and Watson in the BBC series is perceived only by the society, not suggested by the protagonists. The authors of *Sherlock* Steven Moffat and Mark Gatton highlighted the evident change in the society's perception of two male intimate friends. What was perfectly normal in the late Victorian era is perceived by today's society as queer and is often accompanied by a sexual subtext.

4.2 Brainy's new sexy

Sherlock's reappearance as a pop culture icon of the modern era is connected with another phenomenon. Even though he was not created as an ideal of masculinity, thanks to the recent adaptations he certainly became one. Ritchie's Sherlock performed by Robert Downey Jr. is in perfect shape, because he often fights while solving the cases, and even boxes in the ring for money. On the contrary, BBC Sherlock is an image of a modern man, who rather prefers using technology and his wits to using his fists. As Graham and Garlan suggest: “The 21st century has embraced a new masculine ideal that equates intellectual acuity with sexual desirability, with more television programs and films than ever before celebrating the sexy geek as icon, hero, and heartthrob“ (33). Simply, as dominatrix Irene Adler puts it: “Brainy's new sexy“ (*A Scandal in Belgravia*).

The recent television series have shown that a strange genius can become an

idol, as it is in the case of Dr. House, Leonard and Sheldon from *The Big Bang Theory* or Charlie Epps from *Numb3rs*. These modern heroes replaced the old action heroes on steroids whose major domain was fighting and delivering one-liners. According to Graham and Garlan, the creators of the BBC series transformed Sherlock into “an icon of style, a model for the well-dressed British male, an object of emulation, admiration, and desire“ (32). Even though Sherlock is presented as asexual, his appearance and capabilities would guarantee him success with women, if he ever got interested.

Not only Sherlock, but also his arch-enemy is presented as a new masculine ideal. In the canon, Moriarty is depicted as an elderly university professor, however, the creators of *Sherlock* decided to transform him into an attractive young sociopath, who can easily be mistaken for a successful businessman. Sherlock and Moriarty are two sides of one coin in *Sherlock*. Both of them are geniuses and masters in their fields. Sherlock is a consulting detective, whereas Moriarty is a consulting criminal. They cannot exist without each other. In contrast to asexual Sherlock, Moriarty presents himself as a personification of success, which is perceived with a sexual subtext. In the (so-far) last episode *The Reichenbach Fall* Moriarty tells Sherlock that he own a computer code that will open any locked room in the world, which is clearly an object of desire: “Suddenly, I’m Mr. Sex“ (*The Reichenbach Fall*).

In the BBC series, comparing Sherlock to Moriarty is crucial for the perception of Sherlock's ambiguous personality. He solves the crimes not because he wants to help the society, but because he enjoys it and needs it. As sergeant Donovan states in the episode *A Study in Pink*: “You know why he [Sherlock] is here? He is not paid or anything. He likes it. He gets off on it...One day just showing off would not be enough. One day we will be standing around a body and Sherlock Holmes would be the one who put it there....He is a psychopath“ (*A Study in Pink*). However, the popularity of such a controversial hero demonstrates that “audiences adore the complicated, rebellious, Byronic type of hero much more than the straight arrow“ (Graham, Garlan 31).

It can be said that the modern era inclines more towards the original idea of Sherlock Holmes as a controversial hero. Despite Doyle's attempt to depict Sherlock as an asexual and unattractive man, the adaptations changed Holmes into an appealing hero. However, the recent adaptations proved that the contemporary audience demands

exactly this type of an ambiguous hero.

The final problem considering modern Sherlock left to discuss is how he managed to survive in the era of computer technologies. He uses only his brain and his methods of observation and deduction, which can be perceived as obsolete in the present. The popularity of television crime series such as *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* would imply that there is no space for mental reasoning. Every aspect of modern life is connected with technologies which are being created to make human life easier. However, the popularity of BBC series proves, that even though today's society is dependent on computers and technologies, the public can still find attractive a good old-fashioned detective solving the cases only by using his own brain. The reason for that may be found in the simplicity and credibility based on common objects, allowing people to identify themselves with the hero.

5. Conclusion

Arthur Conan Doyle created a literary character that became a widely recognised symbol of popular culture. Sherlock Holmes was originally created as a hero of detective adventures, however, soon after the publication of the first stories, he started to live his own life. Sherlock's immense popularity has been connected with the mass media since his origin. Doyle started to write the detective tales as novels, but the lack of success forced him to change the format to short stories. After the alteration of the format, Doyle established the cooperation with *The Strand Magazine*. George Newnes, the publisher of *The Strand* and *Tit-Bits*, wanted to increase sales, so he encouraged the idea of Sherlock being a real person by publishing various parodies on Doyle's stories and thus contributed to Sherlock's popularity.

Doyle's invention of one character as a link, which appears throughout the whole series, revolutionised the way fiction was published in magazines. Before Sherlock, the magazines had been releasing a continuing story in numerous issues. Doyle enabled the readers to enter the adventures without the necessity of reading the previous ones, which made the stories even more attractive. The other aspects contributing to the popularity are strong characters on which the series is based and the style which was inspired by Doyle's predecessors, Edgar Allan Poe and Émile Gaboriau. The whole collection

comprises various types of mystery and crime stories, yet they are linked by a similar pattern and also by the presence of the great detective. Every month, the readers were eager to participate on a new adventure together with Sherlock and his companion.

Even Doyle himself was surprised by the immense interest in the character he created, which earned him a considerable sum of money. Despite this fact, he wanted to change the subject of his writing, however, the readers' calls for more stories persuaded him to continue. In *The Preface of The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* Doyle wrote: “He [Sherlock Holmes] began his adventures in the very heart of the later Victorian era, carried it through the all-too-short reign of Edward, and has managed to hold his own little niche even in these feverish days. Thus it would be true to say that those who first read of him, as young men, have lived to see their own grown-up children following the same adventures in the same magazine. It is striking example of the patience and loyalty of the British public“ (983).

Various stage, movie and TV adaptations also contributed to the popularity of Sherlock, because he is one of the most adapted literary characters. Over the course of time, the adaptations created a stereotypical image of Sherlock. This image was influenced not only by the actors in the leading role, but also by the illustrators of the editions. However, the two recent sensations, Guy Ritchie's movies and the BBC series, presented a completely new Sherlock, who is paradoxically more truthful to the original idea.

Doyle made the genre of detective stories very popular and thus influenced many authors, both professional and amateur, which is reflected in the vast collection of pastiches, parodies and slash fiction stories. Not only the adaptations, but also these literary works has kept the character of Sherlock Holmes and his world a part of pop culture until these days. As Steven Moffat puts it: “The idea of Sherlock Holmes has become far larger, and now means far more, than the letter of the texts that inspired it.“ (9)

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