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CONSONANT BUT DISSONANT TO THE (S)CORE: THE NEO-VICTORIAN "AFTERINGS" OF SHERLOCK HOLMES'S VIOLIN

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Author: Mgr. Francesca Battaglia

Supervisor: Prof. PhDr. Marcel Arbeit, Dr.

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Francesca Battaglia

Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts

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ABSTRACT

By combining neo-Victorian criticism, adaptation studies, musicology and gender studies, this dissertation focuses on the re-presentations of Sherlock Holmes's violin across media and on the role of music in redefining Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's great detective as a model of masculinity. For the purposes of my dissertation, I take into consideration Guy Ritchie's Sherlock Holmes films (2009-11), the BBC television series *Sherlock* (2010) by Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat, and the novel *A Slight Trick of the Mind* (2015) by the American writer Mitch Cullin. All these works are analysed in an interdisciplinary perspective since the violin is examined as both a musical

instrument and a literary and cultural symbol. It will become evident that music plays indeed a major role in negotiating gender identities in the transition from the Victorian texts to the postmodern world.

ABSTRAKT

Tato disertační práce se s využitím neoviktoriánské kritiky, adaptačních studií, muzikologie a genderových studií zaměřuje na nové pohledy na housle Sherlocka Holmese napříč médii a na roli hudby, která předefinovává slavného detektiva, vytvořeného Sirem Arthurem Conanem Doylem, jako vzor mužnosti. Pro účely své disertační práce jsem si zvolila filmy Guye Ritchieho o Sherlocku Holmesovi (2009–2011), seriál televize BBC Marka Gatisse a Stevena Moffata *Sherlock* (2010) a román *Malé hnutí mysli* (2015) amerického spisovatele Mitche Cullina. Všechny tyto práce rozebírám z interdisciplinární perspektivy, která nahlíží na housle jako na hudební nástroj i jako na literární a kulturní symbol. Ukazuje se, že hudba skutečně hraje významnou roli v debatě o genderových identitách a jejich přechodu z viktoriánských textů do postmoderního světa.

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto dizertační práci vypracoval samostatně a uvedl v ní veškerou literaturu a ostatní zdroje, které jsem použil.

V Olomouci, dne 17/03/2019

Francesca Battaglia

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As I will indicate in the footnotes, several parts of this dissertation appeared or will appear in peer-reviewed journals in a slightly different form; consequently, a special thanks goes to editors Marcel Arbeit (Palacký University), Jan Suk (University of Hradec Králové) and Emily Alder (Edinburgh Napier University) for allowing me to reuse the already published material and those experts who welcomed me and provided support during my research stays abroad, with particular reference to Dr Marie-Luise Kohlke, who made my stay at Swansea University memorable in 2017, and Dr Helen Hanson and Dr Phil Wickham, who pointed me to the best resources at Exeter University in 2016. I also acknowledge the generous contribution of The European Association for the Study of English (ESSE), which awarded me a travel grant in 2017 for my research stay in Swansea.

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Introduction

The last few years have witnessed a renovated interest in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. In particular, after the release on screen of Guy Ritchie's films in 2009 and 2011,[1] modernized rewritings have followed one another, launching a new golden age for the great detective. This revival is not an isolated case. On the contrary, it aligns with a more general trend to re-enact, recycle, refashion, and even rewrite the Victorian past. This modern obsession came to the attention of Cora Kaplan in 2007, prompting reflection not so much on how we adapt Victorian novels to modern taste as on why we (almost fetishistically) resurrect them.[3] A year later, such studies were institutionalized with the foundation of the British peer-reviewed journal *Neo-Victorian Studies,* which addresses these questions. More specifically, Mark Llewellyn explains that neo-Victorian studies mainly focus on

> those works which are consciously set in the Victorian period . . . or which desire to re-write the historical narrative of that period by representing marginalised voices, new histories of sexuality, post-colonial viewpoints and other generally 'different' versions of the Victorian.[4]

Since these works frequently enact a revision of historical wrongs, the revival of Victoriana, as Alexia L. Bowler and Jessica Cox remark, "extends beyond a nostalgic

[1] *Sherlock Holmes*, directed by Guy Ritchie (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2009), DVD; *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, directed by Guy Ritchie (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Picture, 2011). The latter hereafter cited as *A Game of Shadows*.

[3] See Cora Kaplan, *Victoriana: Histories, Fictions, Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 15–36.

[4] Mark Llewellyn, "What Is Neo-Victorian Studies?" *Neo-Victorian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 165, http://www.neovictorianstudies.com/.

yearning for a previous age,"[5] providing a new lens through which to investigate postmodern anxieties and fears. It therefore comes as no surprise that gender roles, racial issues, and technology are among the most debated aspects of neo-Victorian scholarship. As opposed to these topics, the studies on neo-Victorianism and music are still less advanced and mainly interested in the steampunk genre or style. The latter, Barry Brummett explains, "resituates aesthetic elements from the Age of the Steam into our world. . . . [It] imagines what would happen if later technological innovations had emerged during the Age of Steam."[6]

Starting from this critical gap in neo-Victorian criticism, this dissertation analyzes neo-Victorian re-presentations of Sherlock Holmes's violin across media. Therefore, after examining the original texts, this work will take into consideration Guy Ritchie's films *Sherlock Holmes* and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, the BBC television series *Sherlock* (2010–2017) by Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat,[7] and the novel *A Slight Trick of the Mind* (2005) by Mitch Cullin. To avoid confusion, I use the term "neo-Victorian" for sources that show a general tendency to explore or revise underrepresented aspects of the Victorian past—such as unconventional sexualities or ethnic minorities—whereas the term "steampunk" refers to sources where anachronisms and the Victorian aesthetic of industrial technology are principal features. Indeed, steampunk works often overlap temporal dimensions through retrofitted advanced technology and other juxtapositions. In so doing, they show the typical characteristics of *pastiche*. As Ingeborg Hoesterey observes, "[l]iterally, 'pasticcio' derived from Common Romance *pasta*, denoted in early modern Italian a pâté of various

[5] Alexia L. Bowler and Jessica Cox, Introduction to "Adapting the Nineteenth Century: Revisiting, Revising and Rewriting the Past," *Neo-Victorian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2009–10): 3, http://www.neovictorianstudies.com/.

[6] Barry Brummett, "Editor's Introduction: The Rhetoric of Steampunk," in *Clockwork Rhetoric: The Language and Style of Steampunk*, ed. Barry Brummett (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), ix.

[7] *Sherlock*, written by Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat (London: BBC/Hartwoods Films, 2010–17), DVD.

ingredients—a hodgepodge of meat, vegetables, eggs, and a variety of other possible additions."[9] As such, the term has been incorporated in the field of arts where, as Julia Sanders further explains, *pastiche* is

> often regarded as a related literary form since, as with parody, it involves imitation often at the level of style. In its strictest usage, however, in the domain of fine art and music, a 'pastiche' refers more specifically to a medley of references to different styles, texts or authors.[10]

Akin to patchwork artwork, which joins "strips, squares, triangles, hexagons, or other shaped pieces of fabric (also called patches), by either hand or machine stitching, into square blocks or other units,"[11] *pastiche* is a genre whose originality paradoxically lies on acts of recycling. Guy Ritchie's films, in this regard, can be considered as an example of "neo-Victorian" *pastiche* that also presents steampunk elements.

The choice of the primary sources is related to the enormous visibility of Sherlock Holmes in culture, which offers an opportunity to examine music's relationship with neo-Victorianism in a coherent and specific way. Also known as "the great detective," Holmes made his first appearance with "A Study in Scarlet" in the magazine *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, achieving an immediate success. Conan Doyle, who was at that time a medical student, took inspiration from his mentor Joseph Bell to outline Holmes's outstanding logical and deductive skills.[12]

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[9] Ingeborg Hoesterey, *Pastiche: Culture Memory in Art, Film, Literatur*e (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 1.

[10] See Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2016), 146. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.

[11] See *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online, s.v. "Patchwork," accessed 27 November 2018, https://www.britannica.com/art/patchwork

[12] See *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online, s.v. "Arthur Conan Doyle," accessed April 27, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Arthur-Conan-Doyle.

Conan Doyle's work consists of fifty-six short stories and four novels, spanning from 1887 to 1927; these publications have been followed by countless rewritings in all semiotic systems, including cinema, television, theater, comics, and radio. Much more than a literary character, Sherlock Holmes has become a recognizable icon of British culture all over the world.

From the academic point of view, Holmes's literary career and afterlife have fueled scholarly debates that go far beyond literature and touch upon philosophy, gender studies, media, and even medicine. In fact, while mainly referring to neo-Victorian criticism, my research draws on various fields, including literature, gender studies, musicology, and adaptation studies. Therefore, it is within an interdisciplinary framework that I am going to examine selected twenty-first-century revocations of the Holmesian canon, choosing among those in which the role of the violin presents interesting points of contact with neo-Victorian and steampunk criticism.

My first goal is to discuss the violin's engagement with gender issues. Therefore, the first question to be addressed is: does music encode gender identities and roles? From a non-academic point of view, my personal experiences would be enough to answer "yes, it does." As a female pianist I sometimes encountered ostracism, especially in small, less urban communities. Some musicians claimed, for instance, that my "frail, feminine" body could not endure the masculine power required to perform some composers. Undeniably, some pieces for piano require a certain hand extension and strength. On the other hand, when I was a student the courses available at public conservatories and private schools did nothing to challenge gender stereotypes or help musicians with smaller hands. In Italy, for example, the syllabus for pianists studying under the old order has remained unchanged for more than eighty years since 1918, revolving exclusively around male musicians, the most commonly played ones being

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), Ludwig von Beethoven (1770–1827), Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849), Franz Schubert (1797–1828), Robert Schumann (1810–1856), Franz Liszt (1811–1886), and Johannes Brahms (1833–1897). These are also the names that non-experts with an average knowledge of music usually remember. Consequently, another misconception is that music composition is more typical of men, while the truth is that female composers like Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's sister Anna Maria (1751–1829), Felix Mendelssohn's sister Fanny (1805–1847), Robert Schumann's wife Clara or Cécile Chaminade (1857–1944) did not make it to collective consciousness among non-experts because of gender discriminations.[13]

The relationship between music and gender politics, after all, is marked by conflicts and contradictions. On the one hand, for example, feminine connotations emerge from the fact that, as Chris Philpott states, for a long time before poststructuralism music has been denied the status of language, traditionally linked to logic, because of the presumed lack of correlation between signifier and signified.[14] Indeed, the interpretation of *logos* as both speech and rationality has dominated over Western beliefs for a long time, prompting associations with masculine power and phallocentrism because of a "tendency since the Enlightenment to associate men with reason and women with nature."[15] Deconstructed by the philosopher Jacques Derrida, *logos* was central to Ferdinand De Saussure's semiotics, based on the distinction between signifier and signified, influencing significantly Jacques Lacan's

[13] Also see Diane Peacock Jezic, *Women Composers: The Lost Tradition Found*, 2nd ed. (New York: Feminist Press, 1988).
[14] See Chris Philpott, "Is Music a Language?" in *Issues in Music Teaching*, ed. Chris Philpott and Charles Plummeridge (London: Routledge, 2001), 32–40.
[15] Derek B. Scott, *From the Erotic to the Demonic: On Critical Musicology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 45. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.

psychoanalysis.[16] In Conan Doyle's works, and detective fiction in general, *logos* has a prominent role, since it allows the detective to master reality, establish narrative hierarchies, and bring order out of disorder through logical explanations that lead to the solution of the case. As Philpott explains, it was only with more recent works in semiotics that the relationship between signifier and signified was reformulated and the role of music reexamined.[17] Other scholars, on the other hand, observe that musicians and critics have integrated gender oppositions into music and deemed feminine only those elements with negative connotations of weakness, although these, in the words of Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson, "are not immutable but have shown themselves to be susceptible to radical transformation and re-appropriation."[18] Therefore, because of the ambivalent critical attention music has received over centuries, the representation of musicians in nineteenth-century literary works can lend itself to multiple interpretations.

In my dissertation I specifically focus on the role of the violin in masculine contexts, examining the impact of the violin's most recent transformations on Sherlock Holmes as a model of masculinity. Pertinently, commenting on the quotations from Conan Doyle in Robert Baden-Powell's book *Scouting for Boys* (1908),[19] Joseph Kestner suggests considering the Holmesian narratives as "modes of modelling manliness for the historical epochs in which these were published."[20] Thus,

[16] See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1967; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016); Ferdinand De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris (1916; London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Jacques Lacan, "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (1966; New York: W.W. Norton), 197–268.
[17] See Philpott, "Is Music a Language?" 32.
[18] Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson, Introduction to *Masculinity and Western Musical Practice*, eds. Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson (London: Routledge, 2009), 15.
[19] Robert Baden-Powell (1857–1941) was a British army officer and the author of the book *Scouting for Boys* (1908), considered as a source of inspiration for the Scout Movement.
[20] Joseph A. Kestner, *Sherlock's Men: Masculinity, Conan Doyle, and Cultural History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 2.

> Baden-Powell could plausibly endorse the Holmes tales as constructing a masculine script, given that they confirmed qualities which were radically engendered as masculine in Victorian culture: observation, rationalism, factuality, logic, comradeship, daring and pluck.[21]

Kestner suggests, however, that manliness and masculinity are "not monolithic and essentialist. Rather, they are queried in these texts, investigated (along with the criminal investigation and through it), as well as supposedly reinforced."[22]

Notoriously, Sherlock Holmes's sexuality and intimate relationship with his sidekick Dr. Watson are never scrutinized in the literary works, which has prompted writers and fans to propose re-imaginings *ad hoc*. The same curiosity motivates recent adaptations, some of which overtly put Holmes and Watson's relationship into question. Interpreting the bond on screen is an arduous endeavor. One of the most popular terms that can be used in this context is "bromance," defined by Michael DeAngelis as an "intense bond between presumably straight males who demonstrate an openness to intimacy that they neither regard, acknowledge, avow, nor express sexually."[23] As Kayley Thomas remarks, bromance is closely aligned with "homosociality"[24] as it was studied in literature by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in the 1980s, namely a heteronormative and homophobic social system where women are used to reinforce male bonding.[25] Sedgwick's analysis highlighted critical points; famous, for instance, is her observation that "[f]or a man to be a man's man is separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred,

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[21] Kestner, *Sherlock's Men*, 2.
[22] Kestner, *Sherlock's Men*, 16
[23] Michael DeAngelis, Introduction to *Reading the Bromance: Homosocial Relationships in Film and Television*, ed. Michael DeAngelis (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014), 1.
[24] Kayley Thomas, "'Bromance is so passé': Robert Downey, Jr.'s Queer Paratexts," in *Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century: Essays on New Adaptations*, ed. Lynnette Porter (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), 47. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.
[25] See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

always-already-crossed line from being 'interested in men.'"[26] Commenting on this passage, Thomas underlines that rather than focusing on the "inherent homosexuality in the literary characters that she analyzes,"[27] Sedgwick "calls for more complex considerations of the relationships between men."[28] According to Thomas, these relationships are further problematized by the recent categorization of Ritchie's films as bromance, which "conflates the heterosexual-homosocial with homoerotic subtext, complicating the assumption of male friendships as emotional *and* non-sexual."[29] Examining the interviews and statements released by Robert Downey, Jr., who plays Holmes in Ritchie's films, Thomas notices that "Downey's comments work to establish within the popularity and subsequent categorization of the bromance a queer space of potentiality, an essence to be filled and multiplied with meaning."[30] "Queerness" is therefore used as a set of possibilities that do not necessarily materialize or convey any fixed meaning. As it will become evident, this open notion of queerness can be applied to *Sherlock*'s case as well. Thus, in this dissertation I use the term "queer" in reference to those subtexts that say more than the original texts but show less than expected by the audience, relying on the unsaid as a strategy to complicate assumed notions on masculinity.

Another recurrent term I will use throughout my dissertation is "Gothic." By this term I refer to a kind of literary tradition that appeared in the eighteenth century and became popular during the nineteenth century, examples being Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818), Edgar Allan

[26] Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 89.
[27] Thomas, "'Bromance is so passé,'" 47.
[28] Thomas, "'Bromance is so passé,'" 47.
[29] Thomas, "'Bromance is so passé,'" 48. Italics in the original.
[30] Thomas, "'Bromance is so passé,'" 52.

Poe's horror short stories, and Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897).[31] These works tend to feature recurrent topics, such as haunted locations, Gothic architecture, supernatural or sensational events (e.g. murders, bigamy, and robbery.), madness or illness, vampirism, double figures, and unconventional or threatening forms of sexuality (e.g. predation, lust, homosexuality, and incest). These tropes repeatedly appear in Conan Doyle's stories, *de facto* competing with detective fiction itself and even motivating its existence. Indeed, many of the stories focus on seemingly supernatural events—the most obvious case being "The Hound of the Baskerville" (1901–1902)[32]—which prove to have scientific explanations. In this kind of fiction, Gothic elements, especially the sexual ones, can be seen as attempting at the stability of social order, provoking fears and anxiety. As evident from the following analyses, Gothic tropes are also evoked in modern adaptations and cannot be therefore ignored, especially because, as Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben observe,

> *neo-Victorianism is by nature quintessentially Gothic*: resurrecting the ghost(s) of the past, searching out its dark secrets and shameful mysteries, insisting obsessively on the lurid details of Victorian life, reliving the period's nightmares and traumas.[33]

In particular, when put in relation to music, Gothic tropes help uncover the gender codes associated with instruments and provide insight into the use of musical signifiers and signifieds in a transhistorical perspective.

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[31] *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online, s.v. "Gothic novel," accessed April 13, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/art/Gothic-novel

[32] The story revolves around the legend of a monstrous hound hunting the members of the Baskerville family. Sherlock Holmes will find out that these apparitions have no supernatural origin.

[33] Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben, "The (Mis)Shapes of Neo-Victorian Gothic: Continuations, Adaptations, Transformations," in *Neo-Victorian Gothic: Horror, Violence and Degeneration in the Re-Imagined Nineeteenth Century,* eds. Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), 4. Italics in the original.

The second point of my dissertation revolves around the possible correlations between music and neo-Victorian criticism in films with a neo-Victorian aesthetic. This includes considerations on theoretical, aesthetic, and ideological aspects concerning the role of composers in the process of adapting the original texts for modern audiences. In this regard, I will mainly rely on Julie Sander's definitions, according to which "[a]n adaptation most often signals a relationship with an informing source text either through its title or through more embedded references."[34] More specifically, Sanders remarks that the practice of adaptation is

> frequently involved in offering commentary on a source text. This is achieved most often by offering a revised point of view from the 'original,' adding hypothetical motivation or voicing what the text silences or marginalizes. Yet adaptation can also continue a simpler attempt to make texts 'relevant' or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the process of proximation and updating."[35]

Sanders's notions of adaptation will prove useful; at the same time, as I will further discuss, it is impossible to examine neo-Victorian adaptations without considering the postmodern genre of pastiche. From the point of view of film music semiotics, on the contrary, I will extensively rely on Jerrold Levinson's distinction between "appropriated score," music that draws on a pre-existent repertoire, and "composed score," music composed *ex novo*.[36] In so doing, I will focus on the way in which intertextuality helps shape gender issues.

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[34] Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 47.
[35] Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 34.
[36] Jerrold Levinson, "Film Music and Narrative Agency," in *Film Theory & Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 7th ed., eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 403.

Having clarified the use of terminology, I move on to the structure of the dissertation, which consists of five main chapters. The first chapter begins with some general considerations about the violin in the Sherlock Holmes canon and its symbolism in literature and culture, with particular reference to its phallic connotations. This section will be followed, in the second chapter, by the examination of the soundtrack songs composed by Hans Zimmer for the Sherlock Holmes films by Guy Ritchie. Through a combination of neo-Victorian criticism, adaptation theories, and musicological analyses, I will examine to what extent the transformation of Sherlock Holmes's iconic violin into a folk fiddle influenced the portrayal of the detective's figure in Guy Ritchie's films. I argue that in the process of adapting the canon for a modern audience, certain songs, especially those featuring the imitation of folk musical idioms, draw attention to aspects of genre that deeply engage with Conan Doyle's original texts. By suggesting the possibility of a fusion between the detective and the exotic other, and by means of ironic intertextual references, which also gesture towards the pastiche, the film score plays a leading role in complicating the representation of the detective as masculine hero, while simultaneously condensing conservative and progressive notions. In such contexts, the neo-Victorian detective and his violin prove "consonant but dissonant" in relation to a discourse that breaks boundaries. In this chapter I will also consider the contrast between the folk fiddle and classical reminiscences, represented by intertextual references to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Franz Schubert. I will therefore analyze, from a semiotic point of view, the way in which classical music is used to comment upon the relationship between Holmes and Moriarty.

The third chapter continues to explore Ritchie's films but shifts the focus to the Steampunk elements they contain and their relationship with music. Therefore, while

the first section I provide insight into the story and main characteristics of the Steampunk genre in literature and music, in the second section I examine the way in which the Steampunk variables of gender, race, and technology are presented in the films and interact with musical choices. In this regard, Steampunk elements are considered in terms of both ideology and aesthetic.

The next chapter is entirely devoted to the BBC television drama *Sherlock*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman as lead characters. By finding points of contact between psychoanalysis and gender studies, I investigate the role of the violin in the process of recovery from childhood traumas. The scholarship of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901–1981)[37] will provide a suitable framework to highlight the importance of the violin and of music in the semiotic disruption caused by trauma. In particular, I will resort to the concepts of Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real to investigate the relationship between trauma and queerness. It will be argued that, as a non-verbal means of communication, the violin materializes unresolved psychoanalytical conflicts related to threatening models of femininity and "transhistorical" traumas, drawing attention to the clash between the Victorian construction of gender roles and postmodern plural identities.

The final chapter draws attention to the role of music in the novel *A Slight Trick of the Mind* (2005) by Mitch Cullin. Despite preceding, chronologically, the other adaptations, Cullin's work is the last to be studied for its curious absence of the violin. More precisely, I underline the way in which the novel contradicts itself in its effort to reject Holmesian stereotypes. In fact, although the common beliefs inspired by John

[37] Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis mainly builds on Sigmund Freud's theories and structural linguistics. Some concepts have been significantly revised over the course of Lacan's career. Therefore, in addition to his own works, to avoid confusion, in my dissertation I also rely on contributions from scholars that introduce and clarify controversial or noteworthy aspects of his studies. See Jacques Lacan, "On a Question Prior to Any Treatment and the Principles of Its Power," in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (1966; New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 445–88; Jacques Lacan, "Psychoanalysis and Its Teaching," in *Écrits*, 364–83; Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in *Écrits*, 75–81.

Watson's authorship are disavowed in order to provide a more realistic portrait of the man behind the legend, the Victorian past keeps haunting Holmes through an old case concerning a glass harmonica. By featuring a Victorian setting and a rather unconventional instrument, associated with female homosocial subversion, the text in the text exhibits some of the common traits of neo-Victorian narratives. Since a parallel can be drawn between the instrument and Holmes's iconic violin, the sub-narrative ends up functioning as a neo-Victorian *mise en abyme*, where those Gothic elements, potentially related to Holmes's musicianship in the original texts, appear to be projected onto the glass harmonica and female characters, drawing attention to the gendered codes of music's discourse in neo-Victorian narratives. Therefore, while the violin may serve in the Holmes canon as a male signifier, albeit a controversial one, the glass harmonica carries feminine connotations that shed new light on the many possible re-presentations of Sherlock Holmes's favorite instrument. The portrayal of music thus paradigmatically reflects the contradictions of Cullin's novel, which nostalgically evokes those very Gothic clichés which it tries to suppress.

In conclusion, these modern adaptations ideally continue Conan Doyle's quest of masculinity with a self-reflective awareness of historical wrongs and postmodern crises. All of them call attention to the clash between the Victorian construction of identity and postmodern issues of gender, race, and class. Adaptation is therefore a liminal space where identities are re-negotiated or examined. The outcomes are not the same, though. Whereas Ritchie's films show the potential benefits of rewriting the past, *Sherlock*'s gender politics are mired with ambiguity, torn between unapologetically political incorrectness and clumsy attempts to reflect more critically on historical wrongs. More pessimistically, Cullin's work indulges in a nostalgic mourning for the loss of mystery and masculine power, blaming postmodern fluidity for solitude, existential crises and

alienation. The detective's identity is therefore simultaneously consonant but dissonant *vis-à-vis* changing contexts and values, namely the shift from the cherished and glorious Victorian past to the instability of postmodernism.

Chapter One
From the Victorian Enthusiast to Guy Ritchie's Films

1.1 From the Victorian Enthusiast…

The portrayal of Sherlock Holmes in modern rewritings is still heavily influenced by predominant stereotypes. The mind cannot but go, for instance, to the deerstalker, the violin, and the magnifying glass,[38] made iconic by illustrations and posthumous representations of the detective across media.[39] Such accessories, however, can be refashioned as well as deliberately eliminated in the process of adaptation. More precisely, as Lynnette Porter remarks,

> the public's misconceptions about Victorian Holmes can be "blamed" on author John Watson or the unnamed illustrator, who established readers' expectations of what a Victorian consulting detective should wear or how he should act. Such expectations are often difficult to meet, although deviating too far can cause the public to reject an unexpected version of Holmes.[40]

[38] Compare Emily Michelle Baumgart, "'What One Man Can Invent, Another Can Discover': Music and the Transformation of Sherlock Holmes from Literary Gentleman Detective to On-screen Romantic Genius" (master's thesis, Michigan State University, 2015), PDF, https://d.lib.msu.edu/etd/2641; Allan Johnson, "It's Vestimentary, My Dear Watson: Disguise, Criminality, and British Luxury Fashion in *Sherlock*," *Film, Fashion & Consumption* 3, no. 2 (2014): 115–27; Lynnette Porter, "Modernizing Victorian Sherlock Holmes for *Mr. Holmes* and the BBC's *Sherlock* Special," in *Who Is Sherlock? Essays on Identity in Modern Holmes Adaptations*, ed. Lynnette Porter (Jefferson, NC: McFarland 2016), 25–39. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.
Baumgart examines the role of the violin from the point of view adaptation, while Johnson provides insight into the Inverness Cape and its re-imagining in *Sherlock.* More generally, Porter analyses aspects of the detective's persona and stereotypical icons in selected adaptations.

[39] See Johnson, "It's Vestimentary My Dear Watson," 115–16.

[40] Porter, "Modernizing Victorian *Sherlock Holmes*," 37.

In other words, either present or absent, iconic objects emphasize the metafictional value of props in palimpsestic rewritings and capture the attention of readers, spectators, and fans, whose knowledge of the canon is sometimes teased and provoked.[41]

While the detective's deerstalker and Inverness Cape have been already examined by other scholars, little has been said about the violin, which can be analyzed as both a prop and musical instrument in compositions for television and screen. The violin, after all, was a prominent feature in Conan Doyle's works. The Stradivarius, as specified in "The Cardboard Box" (1893),[42] appears already in the first story "A Study in Scarlet" (1887), where Watson describes Holmes's "powers upon the violin" as "very remarkable, but as eccentric as all his other accomplishments."[43] In "The Red-Headed League" (1891), the reader finds out that Holmes is "not only a very capable performer but a composer of no ordinary merit."[44] The comment emphasizes Holmes's genius, creative skills, and unordinary abilities. In "The Sign of Four" (1890), the detective is reported to speak

> on a quick succession of subjects—on miracle plays, on medieval pottery, on Stradivarius violins, on the Buddhism of Ceylon, and on the war-ships of the future—handling each as though he had made a special study of it.[45]

As evident from this passage, Holmes's extravagant knowledge covers the most atypical topics, including esoterism. Similarly, in "The Five Orange Pips" (1891), Watson

[41] For further insight, see Baumgart, who addresses this topic from the point of view of fidelity in adaptations and pastiches.
[42] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 894.
[43] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 22.
[44] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 185.
[45] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 134.

recalls the first impressions he had of the detective, listing violin-playing among his unusual activities:

> Philosophy, astronomy, and politics were marked at zero, I remember. Botany variable, geology profound as regards the mud-stains from any region within fifty miles of town, chemistry eccentric, anatomy unsystematic, sensational literature and crime records unique, violin-player, boxer, swordsman, lawyer, and self-poisoner by cocaine and tobacco.[46]

Watson insists on Holmes's habits in "The Second Stain" (1904) as well. He says: "He ran out and ran in, smoked incessantly, played snatches on his violin, sank into reveries, devoured sandwiches at irregular hours, and hardly answered the casual questions which I put to him."[47]

The way itself the violin is played is unconventional since Holmes is frequently caught in the act of scraping upon the instrument or lazily plucking its strings,[48] his repertoire ranging from "melancholy wailings"[49] to "sweetness and delicacy and harmony."[50] Given that the violin stimulates amiable conversations, while at other times its music reflects Holmes's unruly abandonment to overthinking and depression, it can be confirmed, as Elizabeth A. Clendinning suggests, that Conan Doyle "establishes violin-playing as one of [the character's] central attributes."[51]

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[46] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 225.
[47] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 657–58.
[48] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 22.
[49] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 40.
[50] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 185.
[51] Elizabeth A. Clendinning, "Sherlock's Violin: Making the Victorian Modern Through Musical Fan Culture," *Journal of Fandom Studies* 4, no. 2 (2016): 144.

More sinister connotations come to the surface when Holmes is described as filled with admiration[52] for Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840), a famous Italian violinist whose talent was associated with stories of superstition and devilish practices. Mai Kawabata claims that "Paganini's ghostly presence on stage and his eradication of seemingly insurmountable technical difficulties suggested that he had exchanged his humanity for virtuoso powers."[53] The idea was not new since the violin's

> mysterious origins in the Middle East promoted its status as a 'magic box' whose deepest secrets could only be unlocked by the most gifted virtuosos. In medieval folklore the violin was associated with the Grim Reaper, who led the *Totentanz* playing a pair of human bones like a violin, a mythology that became popularised as part of the Romantic interest in the middle ages.[54]

Similar tales of unholy connections had previously circulated around another Italian virtuoso, Giuseppe Tartini (1692–1770). According to Sumitrajit Dhar and James W. Hall III, the man might have been "the first known owner of a violin made by Antonio Stradivari in 1715"[55] and is also said to have received inspiration from the Devil for an extremely demanding piece known as "The Devil's Trill."[56]

Although Paganini can be rightly considered as Tartini's successor, part and parcel of his performances was a distinctive erotic allure, as "[r]umors of Paganini's violent and criminal past helped create his reputation as a remorseless sadist who piled

[52] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 894.
[53] Mai Kawabata, *Paganini: The 'Demonic' Virtuoso* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 26.
[54] Kawabata, *Paganini,* 43–44.
[55] Sumitrajit Dhar and James W. Hall III, *Otoacoustic Emissions: Principles, Procedures, and Protocols* (San Diego: Plural, 2012), 2.
[56] This story is narrated in *Voyage d'un françois en Italie* (1769) by Joseph-Jérôme Lefrançois Lalande. See Fabio Giovannini, "Diabolus in Musica," in *Il Libro del Diavolo: Le Origini, la Cultura, le Immagini*, eds. Anna Maria Crispino, Fabio Giovannini, and Marco Zatterin (Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 1986), 106.

abuse onto women and violins for his own edification."[57] Indeed, his "persona as a Gothic libertine touched on various literary and historical figures (Lovelace, Sade, Casanova)."[58] As Kawabata further remarks, "[a]pproaching the turn of the twentieth century, the figure of the 'demonic' violinist became increasingly established as a compositional feature."[59] As musicians were travelers, it is not difficult to image how fast such tropes spread across Europe; for example, Robert Riggs reports that "[i]n a London review he [Paganini] received the moniker Zamiel, the name of the satanic character in [Carl Maria von] Weber's opera *Der Freischütz* (1821)."[60] Thus, following Clendinning, the violin serves in Conan Doyle's texts as "a cultural touchstone through which [he] constructed Holmes's eccentric genius and, potentially, a sensuality that otherwise may have been hidden in his original characterization."[61]

Holmes's proverbial misogyny,[62] however, reminds us that when the violin is used as a sexualized signifier, its associations can extend beyond heteronormativity. For instance, in 1919 the instrument's symbolism played a leading role in Richard Oswald's German silent film *Anders als die Andern* (Different from the Others),[63] which raised awareness of homosexuality by focusing on the tragic love story between a virtuoso violinist and his student. Makeup and costumes connote the musician, played by Conrad Veidt,[64] as both vigorous and languidly unordinary, confirming that the stereotype of the eccentric violinist was still deeply rooted in European culture. Another literary example

[57] Kawabata, *Paganini*, 60.
[58] Kawabata, *Paganini*, 61.
[59] Kawabata, *Paganini*, 132.
[60] Robert Riggs, *The Violin* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2016), 19.
[61] Clendinning, "Sherlock's Violin," 145.
[62] In "A Scandal in Bohemia," (1891) Holmes is said to reject both women and emotions in order not to be distracted. The adventuress Irene Adler seems to be the only woman who can outsmart him. As Kestner observes, Conan Doyle's investigation of masculinity in the Holmesian canon seems to stem from several events threatening men in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, including women's progressive emancipation (Kestner, 5–6).
[63] *Anders als die Andern*, directed by Richard Oswald (Richard-Oswald-Produktion, 1919).
[64] Conrad Veidt (1893–1943) was a German actor who became famous for his roles as villain.

is Charles Morel, the unfaithful, capricious violinist with whom the Baron de Charlus falls in love in *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* by Marcel Proust.[65]

The impact of Gothic tropes on Anglophone literature and culture persisted even after the two wars, such as in novel saga *The Vampire Chronicles* by the American writer Anne Rice. In *The Vampire Lestat* (1985), the protagonist establishes an intimate relationship with his best friend, a mentally unstable violinist who maddens and commits suicide after turning into a vampire. The same violin will be used by the protagonist to awaken and incestuously seduce the ancestral mother of all vampires.[66]

At last, in the film *The Red Violin* by the Quebecois François Girard (1998),[67] the protagonist is a reddish instrument made in 1681 by a famous Italian violin-maker whose wife Anna is pregnant. The woman asks her servant to predict the future of her unborn child with the tarots, but the maid can only predict Anna's own fate. Since she dies just before her husband can varnish the violin, the servant's predictions are fulfilled by the violin itself, which is passed down across generations and involved in many unlucky events. In the 1990s it is finally revealed that Anna's blood had been added to the violin's varnish by her husband.

Unsurprisingly, the extent of the violin's symbolism transcends both literature and film: exploring symbol formation, the British psychoanalyst Hann Segal reports cases of patients who perceived a correlation between violin-playing and masturbation

[65] *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (In Search of Lost Time) is a series of seven novels by the French author Marcel Proust. For further insight into the specific references to Morel and de Charlus see Marcel Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe II* (1924).
[66] The saga begins with the bestseller *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), adapted into an eponymous film by Neil Jordan in 1994. See Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* (1976; London: Sphere, 2010). The violin is mainly featured in *The Vampire Lestat* (1985) in relation to Lestat and Nicolas's intimacy and to the awakening of the ancestral mother Akasha. See Anne Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* (1985; London: Sphere, 2009).
[67] *The Red Violin*, directed by François Girard (1998; Universal City: Universal Studios, 2003), DVD.

phantasies,[68] probably influenced by the physical position of the violinist who leans towards his arm as if towards his own penis.

All these conflicting outcomes—heterosexual predation, masturbation, homosexuality or homosociality, and male patronization or objectification—suggest a correlation between the violin and phallic symbolism. David Malvinni observes, after all, that "[v]irtuosity is a male signifier,"[69] which is supported by the term's etymological affiliation with the word "virtue," from the Latin *vir* ("man").[70] In the Victorian age, Scott underlines, such beliefs resulted in oppressive policies against women:

> [f]emale creativity was . . . denied or inhibited by education and socioeconomic pressures born of ideological assumptions. In consequence, many women found themselves marginalized as composers, restricted to 'acceptable' genres such as the drawing-room ballad.[71]

The fact that "[w]omen began to take to string instruments (which, like wind instruments, were long thought unfeminine) later in the [nineteenth] century,"[72] further supports a phallic reading of the violin in the Holmes canon, to which Gothic sinister influences can be added.

Although at this point Holmes's characterization may appear as inherently contradictory, as Kestner explains, "Doyle guarantees that the representation of Holmes will constitute a contestation of masculinity, as well as an advocacy, by endowing him

[68] Hanna Segal, *The Work of Hanna Segal: A Kleinian Approach to Clinical Practice* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1981), 49.
[69] David Malvinni, *The Gypsy Caravan: From Real Roma to Imaginary Gypsies in Western Music* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 105.
[70] *Merriam Webster Dictionary* online, s.v. "virtue," accessed April 13, 2018, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/virtue.
[71] Scott, *From the Erotic to the Demonic*, 45.
[72] Scott, *From the Erotic to the Demonic,* 49.

with elements that mark him as both paradigm and outsider."[73] Such a conclusion is validated by Watson himself, who thus comments:

> [Holmes'] singular character the dual nature alternately asserted itself, and his extreme exactness and astuteness represented, as I have often thought, the reaction against the poetic and contemplative mood which occasionally predominated in him.[74]

As an emblem of this duality, Holmes's violin kept appearing in posthumous adaptations and rewritings of Conan Doyle's canon, fictionally played by Basil Rathbone and Jeremy Brett between the 1930s and 1990s, as well as by Robert Stephens in the movie *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1970) by Billy Wilder.[75] In the latter, Holmes is in love with Watson, and a Stradivarius violin is offered to him by a Russian dancer in exchange for his semen. The film already played with less stereotypical representations but when Guy Ritchie's mystery action film *Sherlock Holmes* was released in 2009, followed by the sequel *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* in 2011, it was clear once for all that a new chapter had been written for the great detective and his favorite instrument.

[73] Kestner, *Sherlock's Men*, 37.
[74] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 185.
[75] *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, directed by Billy Wilder (1970; Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 2004), DVD.

1.2 …to Guy Ritchie's Films[76]

The release on screen of Guy Ritchie's films launched a new golden age for Conan Doyle's narratives and modern cinematic adaptations of the original canon have flourished since then. The father of criminology still wears Victorian clothes in Ritchie's films. However, as Rhonda Harris Taylor points out, "[t]hese modern iterations avoid the familiar, now trivialized, trappings of the magnifying glass and deerstalker representation of Holmes."[77] The films, starring Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law as lead characters, combine both progressive and conservative elements, challenging conventions but, at the same time, "trying to be as authentic as [they] can to the original Sherlock Holmes."[78] The result is a marked focus on the physical strength of the characters, and, above all, the exploration of alternative history, which includes queer, racial, and technological revisions. The updating process did not spare Holmes's violin, even though a careful analysis reveals that the instrument appears only occasionally in the films' scenes as a prop, while his role is significantly foregrounded in certain soundtrack songs, composed by Hans Zimmer, wherein it is originally played as a folk fiddle.

Remembered, among other movies, for *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003)[79] by Gore Verbinski and *The Dark Knight* (2008)[80] by Christopher Nolan, Zimmer is described by scholar Vasco Hexel as "a self-taught rebel [and] an experimenter who likes to tinker

[76] Parts of this and the following chapter were originally published, in a slightly different form, as Francesca Battaglia, "Consonant but Dissonant to the S(Core): The Neo-Victorian 'Afterings' of Sherlock Holmes's Violin and Issues of Genre in the Sherlock Holmes Films by Guy Ritchie," *Moravian Journal of Literature and Film* 7, no. 1–2 (2016), 59–80.
[77] Rhonda Harris Taylor, "A Singular Case of Identity: Holmesian Shapeshifting," in *Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century: Essays on New Adaptations*, ed. Lynnette Porter (Jefferson, NC: Mc Farland, 2012), 100. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.
[78] Mark Brown and Ben Child, "Ritchie and Downey Jr. Launch New, 'Authentic' Sherlock Holmes," *Guardian*, October 2, 2008, http://www.theguardian.com/film/2008/oct/02/robertdowneyjr.
[79] *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*, directed by Gore Verbinski (Burbank: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2003). DVD.
[80] *The Dark Knight*, directed by Christopher Nolan (Burbank: Warner Home Video, 2008), DVD.

with synthesizers but does not read notation."[81] In an interview for *Los Angeles Times,* Zimmer explains that the score of the films features instruments, such as the banjo, the accordion, and the Hungarian cimbalom that certainly add exotic flavor to the settings.[82] The violin and the cimbalom, in particular, are described by Bálint Sárosi as typically belonging to Gypsy music and culture.[83]

In an interview for *Collider*, the composer confirms that the score of *A Game of Shadows* resulted from collaboration with Gypsy musicians in eastern Slovakia. He claims:

> The Roma culture was something that I gave to Sherlock, in the first movie. There have been many Sherlock Holmes interpretations, but the one thing he does is play the violin. He's always been playing classical music, as far as I know. I thought that, in the Victorian Age, they were looking for the exotic and the East was this exotic place, so I wanted to widen the gaze. I thought he would be interested, not in playing classical music, but in playing a great virtuoso Gypsy violin.[84]

Such references are justified by the appearance of Gypsy communities in five stories of Conan Doyle's canon, namely "The Red-Headed League" (1891), "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892), "The Adventure of Silver Blaze" (1892), "The Hound of the Baskervilles" (1902), and "The Adventure of the Priory School" (1904). In these

[81] Vasco Hexel, *Hans Zimmer and James Newton Howard's "The Dark Knight": A Film Score Guide* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), xx.
[82] Todd Martens, "Hans Zimmer on His 'Sherlock Holmes' Score: 'Real Life Takes Place in Pubs,'" *Los Angeles Times*, December 24, 2009, http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/music_blog/2009/12/hans-zimmer-on-his-sherlock-holmes-score-real-life-takes-place-in-pubs.html.
[83] Bálint Sárosi, *Gypsy Music* (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1970), 216.
[84] Christina Radish, "Composer Hans Zimmer Talks *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* and *The Dark Knight Rises*," *Collider*, December 13, 2011, http://collider.com/hans-zimmer-sherlock-holmes-2-dark-knight-rises-interview/.

texts, Gypsies are often described as inhabiting gloomy moors.[85] In "The Red-Headed League," they are mentioned in reference to the pierced ears of the villainous John Clay.[86] Joseph Kestner states that "[c]ertainly Clay . . . whose red hair . . ., suggests Algernon Swinburne, is meant to evoke decadent aestheticism if not a stereotype of the homosexual in the culture."[87] His pierced ears reinforce this prejudice, endorsing the association between Gypsy culture and transgression, even from the sexual point of view. The presence of Gypsies near the crime scene is always suspicious. In all the stories, however, it becomes evident that they are not involved in the crimes, and the Gypsy culture, menacing and mysterious, is never seriously explored.

From the point of view of musicology, Anna G. Piotrowska observes that already in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, "the image of Gypsies as magic conjurers would be joined by associations with fortune-telling, acrobatics, and street music. . . . [I]n Gypsy performances, the combination of musical, magical, and acrobatic elements caused associations with devilish practices."[88] Once a permanent connection between Gypsies and musicians was established, in the nineteenth century "Gypsy themes started to be referenced in professional, *non*-Gypsy musical works."[89] At that time in Europe, "[s]o-called 'Gypsy music'—music associated with the Romani people—was perceived

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[85] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 260, 546.

[86] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 183. John Clay, also known as Vincent Spaulding, is the main villain in Conan Doyle's story "The Red-Headed League." He plans to dig a tunnel under the office of Holmes's client, Mr. Wilson, to steal from the neighboring bank. In order to keep Mr. Wilson away from his office, Clay and his accomplice create a fake club called "The Red-Headed League," offering a well-paid job to red-headed applicants. Mr. Wilson, who had been struggling with his own business, applies for the job, and, as part of Clays's plan, the color of his hair is declared perfect for the Leagues' purposes.

[87] Kestner, *Sherlock's Men*, 86. Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909) was an English poet whose name is often associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a group of English painters, poets, and critics particularly active in the mid-nineteenth century. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, perhaps the most renowned member of the group, is famous for portraying red-headed subjects in his paintings, including a portrait of Swinburne in 1862.

[88] Anna G. Piotrowska, *Gypsy Music in European Culture: From the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2013), 5–6.

[89] Piotrowska, *Gypsy Music in European Culture*, 8. Italics in the original.

. . . in two different ways: as able to be assimilated and as not able to be assimilated."[90] More precisely,

> [a]t the same time as the position of Gypsy music was being negotiated as an element of national discourse in the nineteenth century, discrimination against Roma was widespread. Gypsy music, as belonging to an ostracized rather than welcomed Other, was described in academic writings and presented in musical productions for the stage.[91]

As non-assimilated element, "the Gypsy music of Eastern Europe was considered to be representative of exoticism."[92] For example,

> [t]he schematics of employing Romani themes in musical works favoured the perpetuation of stereotypes accompanied by certain 'musical signifiers'. Composers wishing to stress the Gypsy elements in their works usually made use of specific instrumentation (such as a clarinet solo), scales (such as the so-called 'Gypsy scale') and alluded to particular dancing practices. . . . Composers were familiar with these conventions from reports in the press, iconographic depictions, literature or other musical works, rather than from a study of Gypsy music itself.[93]

[90] Anna G. Piotrowska, "'Gypsy Music' as Music of the Other in European Culture," *Patterns of Prejudice* 47, no. 4–5 (2013): 395.
[91] Piotrowska, "'Gypsy Music' as Music of the Other in European Culture," 399
[92] Piotrowska, "'Gypsy Music' as Music of the Other in European Culture," 399.
[93] Piotrowska, "'Gypsy Music' as Music of the Other in European Culture," 400.

All these notions are cleverly reworked in Ritchie's films, but the trope of the fortune teller is foregrounded as opposed to Gypsy culture's marginality in the original texts, and further associated, in certain scenes, not only with the virtuosity of Gypsy musicians, but also with Irish folk tunes. Indeed, even though Gypsies represent the main ethnic group Ritchie takes inspiration from, Irishness is evoked through minor references during fighting scenes, where the violin is played in the Irish folk style.[94]

While Ritchie and Zimmer are conservative with regard to the iconicity of Holmes as violinist, the instrument imitates folk idioms, breaking boundaries as opposed to the previous cinematic adaptations of the Holmesiana. It can be observed, however, that Zimmer's agenda is not entirely dismissive of the aesthetic of film music in detective stories as a genre. On the contrary, Timothy E. Scheurer observes that

> the music that composers write to capture the character of the detective is often a surrealistic blend of streetwise, jazzy sophistication with world-weary bluesy ambivalence about the city mixed with an occasional old-fashioned heroic gesture plus some stark dissonances thrown in for good measure to remind us of the almost monolithic corruption and violence lying in wait for the detective.[95]

If on the one hand Zimmer's choice challenges the previous adaptations of Holmes the folk fiddle, with its allusions to the nomadic life of Gypsy communities and to the popular collective moments of Irish traditions, on the other hand it, too, recalls certain stereotypes of the genre's aesthetic by retrofitting the "streetwise, jazzy sophistication" of modern and contemporary detective films onto a Victorian atmosphere.

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[94] See Kestner, *Sherlock's Men,* 156.
[95] Timothy E. Scheurer, *Music and Mythmaking in Film: Genre and the Role of the Composer* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008), 88.

The violin's transformation is not the only remarkable element in Zimmer's score, as the soundtrack songs contain a considerable number of intertextual references, expressed through the combination of overt citations and classical reminiscences. When asked which character he felt most excited about scoring for, Zimmer replied:

> I loved Moriarty. I got happily stuck on Moriarty, for the longest time. He's a Schubert fan. I grew up in one of those typical middle class German families where classical music was everywhere, and the first song I could sing as a kid was 'The Trout' by Schubert, so it seemed like a good, rebellious act to go destroy that and put a lot of Schubert influences into the score. The score is this lop-sided thing where you have the very Germanic Schubert and Mozart type of sound for Moriarty, and then you have the lightness and fun and adventure of the Roma music. Just being able to have these two worlds collide constantly was a lot of fun.[96]

While the first film's score challenges conventions through the introduction of untraditional instruments and folk styles, two soundtrack songs from the second film are explicitly inspired by renowned compositions of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Franz Schubert.

While as an example of *pastiche* in film music it continues a tradition that makes, in Julia Sanders's words, the "impulse towards intertextuality . . . a central tenet of postmodernism,"[97] which stimulates "the ongoing experiences of pleasure for the reader

[96] Christina Radish, "Composer Hans Zimmer."
[97] Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 33.

or spectator in tracing the intertextual relationships,"[98] Zimmer's score undertakes a historical revision concerning the function of ethnic minorities in Western culture. As Deborah Epstein Nord remarks, in the nineteenth century "the gypsy hovered on the outskirts of the English world, unassimilable, a domestic and visible but socially peripheral character." [99] By emphasizing gypsy music and exotic instruments in Ritchie's films, Zimmer gives voice to those silenced minorities that gravitated around the British Empire in the Victorian Era.

In this respect, Zimmer's agenda as composer can be best understood if Ritchie's role as adaptor is analyzed within a theoretical framework where the studies on adaptation and neo-Victorianism intersect. Sanders observes:

> [t]he Victorian era, with its impressive surface achievements, but equally its active underworlds and subcultures, offers a very specific example of the cultural contradictions that adaptational work can seek to highlight, and this may in part explain the ongoing fascination with 'Neo-Victorianism,' as it has sometimes been called. [100]

[98] Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 46.

[99] Deborah Epstein Nord, "'Marks of race': Gypsy Figures and Eccentric Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing," *Victorian Studies* 41, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 189. I also point the reader to a conference paper presented by Juan José Martín González at the 13th Conference of the European Society for the Study of English (University of Galway, Ireland, August 22–26, 2016). The paper focuses on the adaptation of Victorian Gypsies on screen, which would lead me to suggest a consultation of this scholar's research for further insight into this topic. The extended version of his paper, however, is currently unavailable. For this reason, in the lack of a developed material on this subject, I take the liberty of contextualizing for the reader the references to Gypsy communities and other ethnic minorities within the framework of neo-Victorian studies. See Juan José Martín González, "Adapting Victorian Gypsies for the Screen: Ethnicity, Otherness and (In)visibility in Neo-Victorian Popular Film," *Repositorio Institucional de la Universidad de Málaga*, June 9, 2016, https://riuma.uma.es/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10630/11955/ESSE%20Conference%202016.%20Neo-Victorian%20Adaptations.%20Adapting%20Gypsies%20for%20the%20Screen..pdf?sequence=1.

[100] Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 171.

Therefore, Ritchie's films, featuring a Victorian setting but also exploring anachronisms, exoticism, and potential queer subtexts can be rightly considered as a neo-Victorian product in that they express their interest in giving voice to underrepresented communities. As a consequence, the neo-Victorian perspective, which, as Alexia L. Bowler and Jessica Cox note, has a tendency to challenge "Victorian constructions of empire, gender and sexuality,"[101] provides a suitable framework to explain what Ruth O'Donnell defines as "[t]he detective's association with the 'Other,'" which "is further evidenced by [Holmes's] much greater ease than Watson['s] in accepting the help of a band of gypsies in *A Game of Shadows.*"[102]

The fact that this association is underlined through soundtrack songs leads to consider carefully Linda Hutcheon's claim that "[t]he name of the music director/composer does not usually come to mind as a primary adapter."[103] On the contrary, as Glenn Jellenik explains, in view of the fact that intertextuality complicates significantly the "commonly held notion that a film adaptation's primary concern and source is the novel on which it is based,"[104] as it forcibly draws attention to that intricate web of intertexts that make "the blurring lens of poststructuralism . . . too wide to escape,"[105] the "non-literary, non-novelistic" agency of the soundtrack in certain adaptations can be, in the final analysis, considered "*as* adaptation"[106] itself. More specifically, Jellenik claims that

[101]Bowler and Cox, "Introduction to Adapting the Nineteenth Century," 3.
[102] Ruth O'Donnell, "'Lie Down with Me Watson': Transgression and Fragile Masculinity in the Detective Films of Robert Downey Jr.," in *Robert Downey Jr. from Brat to Icon: Essays on the Film Career*, ed. Erin E. MacDonald (Jefferson: McFarland, 2014), 173. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.
[103] Hutcheon and O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation,* 81.
[104] Glenn Jellenik, "Quiet, Music at Work: The Soundtrack and Adaptation," in *Adaptation Studies: New Approaches*, eds. Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Ray Cutchins (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), 221–22.
[105] Jellenik, "Quiet, Music at Work," 222.
[106] Jellenik, "Quiet, Music at Work," 223. Italics in the original.

> in certain texts, the soundtrack functions as an adaptive *mise en abime*, an adaptation embedded within an adaptation. Indeed, if we look and listen closely to certain films, we can trace the collective musical choices forming a parallel text –one that performs independently, in that it has the capacity not simply to highlight or underscore the meanings constructed by the visual and verbal narrative, but to generate an intertextual discourse in ways that image and dialogue cannot.[107]

A close analysis reveals that the score in Ritchie's films engages with the observations discussed so far in a number of ways. It can be argued, for example, that by condensing both conservative and progressive notions, while at the same time strongly relying upon intertextuality, Zimmer's soundtrack songs offer a good example of how a neo-Victorian pastiche score is composed, thus bringing to light the role of the score in the adaptive revision of the original texts, with particular reference to detective fiction as a genre.

Further expanding on this point, it can be observed that, by focusing on the resolution of cases, linked one to the other, Ritchie's films conform to the convention of mystery genre, which, in Michael Cohen's words, "[b]y its very nature. . . depends on secrets about crime – usually who committed it – being first hidden and then revealed."[108] Thus, in the first film, a series of murders leads Holmes to stop the evil Lord Blackwood, to unmask the true nature of his fake sorceries and to prevent a massive assassination at the English Parliament. Holmes will find out that another villain is pursuing even more dangerous goals, but this plot will be developed in the sequel, which revolves around the competition between Holmes and Professor Moriarty.

[107] Jellenik, "Quiet, Music at Work," 223. Italics in the original.
[108] Micheal Cohen, *Murder Most Fair: The Appeal of Mystery Fiction* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000), 27. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.

Moriarty is interested in earning money from the imminent World War I and tries to stir up political tensions in order to benefit from war injuries and arms trades.

Albeit non-canonical, both plots adhere to the convention of solving a mystery and finding the culprit. A peculiar aspect of mystery genre, however, is the relationship between the detective and representatives of the otherness. According to Cohen, "[m]ystery fiction makes others of both villains and detectives,"[109] which means that usually "the detective opposes evil,"[110] in spite of the fact that "[b]oth the detective and what he opposes are constructed as foreign to ordinary experience."[111] Cohen further observes that

> [m]ystery more often requires its author to convince us that the nastiness the detective seeks is located in a particular character who is evil and who is identifiably not us. The villain must be unlike us in order to serve the function of scapegoat.[112]

Shaping and defining otherness is an essential component of the Holmesian canon, a process that implies an investigation of both ethnicity, or national identity, and gender roles. Kestner's opinion is that "[t]he persistent querying of the Empire in the Sherlock Holmes canon, from *The Sign of Four* (1890) onwards, indicates Doyle's awareness of the ambiguous consequences of imperialism for the country."[113] Claiming that in "The Valley of Fear," "Holmes constitutes a key form of British manliness which is strongly contrasted with the masculine norm of America,"[114] Kestner confirms that ethnicity and

[109] Cohen, *Murder Most Fair*, 105.
[110] Cohen *Murder Most Fair*, 106.
[111] Cohen *Murder Most Fair*, 106.
[112] Cohen *Murder Most Fair*, 106.
[113] Kestner, *Sherlock's Men*, 7.
[114] Kestner, *Sherlock's Men*, 10.

national identity are in the canon a touchstone for the detective who stands for a model of masculinity and who defines himself in relation to the other.

Although an analysis of the folk fiddle alone would already bring to light the relationship between racial and gender issues, it is through the comparison with the classical references to Mozart and Schubert in *A Game of Shadows* that we can see the whole picture. The fact that both composers are overtly associated with Moriarty's villainy and predatory instincts, while the detective is represented by the Gypsy style, suggests the existence of a clash of different worlds that might as well epitomize the opposition of two different and extreme versions of masculinities. More specifically, the combination of semiotics and musicology highlights that, by taking masculinities to extremes, Ritchie's films seem to point out the necessity for Sherlock Holmes to assume a transitory feminized identity in order to overcome unresolved conflicts.

Under such circumstances, by means of musicological analyses that take into consideration both literary source texts and neo-Victorian instances in screen adaptations, it will be demonstrated in the next paragraphs that the folk fiddle and the other exotic or unusual string instruments of Ritchie's films, progressively marking the detective's association with otherness, and consequently complicating the representation of the detective, can be rightly described as neo-Victorian "afterings" of the canonic Holmesian violin, where "aftering" refers to what Antonija Primorac defines as

> a term including both adaptations and appropriations of Victorian heritage that show a self-conscious, intertextual, and often ironic relationship with the adapted texts and the past in general. As such, 'aftering' will be read as a key element of the neo-Victorian phenomenon: a product of the desire to have more, and still more, of the cherished Victorian heritage today, but a

version of heritage shaped and produced along the lines of contemporary needs and expectations.[115]

[115] Antonija Primorac, "The Naked Truth: The Postfeminist Afterlives of Irene Adler," *Neo-Victorian Studies* 6, no. 2 (2013): 90, http://www.neovictorianstudies.com/.

Chapter Two
Consonant but Dissonant to the (S)Core

2.1 The Folk Fiddle in Guy Ritchie's Films

2.1.1 "Rocky Road to Dublin"

The first Sherlock Holmes film by Guy Ritchie opens with the successful arrest of the villainous Lord Blackwood, so that the viewer is introduced *in medias res* into Holmes's investigations. Right from the beginning, however, it is clear that Holmes has another problem to solve, a personal one, as he struggles to come to terms with the imminent marriage of Dr. Watson, which will put an end to their partnership. Holmes's jealousy in Ritchie's films is evident from his various attempts to sabotage Watson's marriage, which results in a disastrous dinner where the doctor has his fiancée humiliated by the detective. Just after this episode, Holmes is seen fighting in a crowded arena where shouting men are betting on his defeat against a much more muscular opponent. The soundtrack song in the background of this scene is a traditional Irish song named "Rocky Road to Dublin,"[116] performed by The Dubliners.[117] In spite of not featuring a folk fiddle but rather a banjo, the song is of particular importance as it brings to light the use of string folk instruments, as an alternative to Holmes's violin, to mark implicit forms of comments on Holmes's role as masculine hero in male contexts.

According to Pádraic Whyte, the song, whose author is unknown and which relocates Irishness in London in the films, "was written in the nineteenth century and documents the experiences of a labourer who travels from Tuam in Co. Galway, in the west, to Dublin, in the east and finds his way onto an emigrant ship bound for

[116] For the lyrics of the song, see "Rocky Road to Dublin," *Brobdingnagian Bards: A Bard's Celtic Lyrics Directory*, accessed April 13, 2018, http://www.thebards.net/music/lyrics/Rocky_Road_To_Dublin.shtml.
[117] Song and the performers are mentioned in the closing credits of the film.

Liverpool."[118] During his travel, the protagonist is derided for his accent and encounters a number of difficulties that make the text overtly ironic, until he proudly picks a fight against his detractors to defend his Irishness. From the point of view of music semiotics, the soundtrack song can be defined as what Jerrold Levinson calls "appropriated score," namely a piece of music taken from an existent repertoire.[119] Levinson states that "with appropriated scores the issue of specific imported associations, deriving from the original context of composition . . . is likely to arise."[120] Following Hutcheon's claim that "sound, in general, can enhance, reinforce, or even contradict the visual and verbal aspects,"[121] the song seems to present itself as an ironic comment on Holmes's struggle to affirm his own masculinity. Indeed, his opponent looks at first too strong to be defeated and the detective is on the verge of giving up. When the man spits on his back, however, similarly to what happens in the song's narrative, Holmes reacts and wins the match leaving the crowd bewildered. As Ruth O'Donnell remarks, Holmes nevertheless "triumphs in the boxing ring, not through pure brawn . . . but through brains, mentally playing out his fight tactics for himself and the spectator before he commits himself to action."[122] The detective's masculinity thus appears to be "other" in comparison with the males in the crowd.

It can also be observed that the song contradicts certain uses of music as a means of aggregation. Following the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga, Ríonach Uí Ógáin highlights the fact that

[118] Pádraic Whyte, *Irish Childhoods: Children's Fiction and Irish History* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 110.
[119] Levinson, "Film Music and Narrative Agency," 403.
[120] Levinson, "Film Music and Narrative Agency," 403.
[121] Hutcheon and O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 23.
[122] O'Donnell, "'Lie Down with Me Watson,'" 175.

> there is a semantic understanding between East and West in the meaning and use of the word 'play'. Musical instruments are 'played' in the Arabic, Germanic and Slavonic languages. . . . Modern Irish uses *seinm* for the playing of music and the word also means singing, warbling or chattering, all of which are pleasant, enjoyable events.[123]

Contrary to these notions, "Rocky Road to Dublin" is not used during collective moments of entertainment but rather to mark the process through which homosocial relationships, defined according to the law of the strongest, are consolidated in hyper-masculine crowded settings, where Holmes's clumsy style provides a comical contrast.

The soundtrack song thus plays an important role in bringing to light Holmes's struggle to affirm his own masculinity in male contexts and prepares the viewer for the most crucial event in Holmes's investigation. As Scheurer remarks,

> [i]t is altogether possible that one will not hear a lot of violent music in the detective film, although there may be numerous violent sequences. The reasons for this are attributable to a couple of factors. First, violence is really the province of the criminal; the detective will only be forced to use it as a means of last resort. . . . In most detective films . . . the identity of the master criminal is usually concealed until the end. Consequently, aside from an occasional short burst, the most sustained violent sequences will largely be confined to the film's climax."[124]

[123] Ríonach Uí Ógáin, "Traditional Music and Irish Cultural History," in *Music and Irish Cultural History*, vol. 3 of Irish Musical Studies, eds. Gerald Gillen and Harry White (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995), 89. Italics in the original.
[124] Scheurer, *Music and Mythmaking in Film*, 93.

Therefore, while the soundtrack song ironically comments on Holmes's physical persona, it also preludes to the last scene of *A Game of Shadows*, where Holmes confronts his nemesis Moriarty, in O'Connell's words "the ultimate terrifying patriarch,"[125] against whom no other weapon, except a murder-suicide, is effective.

In conclusion, "Rocky Road to Dublin" plays an important role in marking Sherlock Holmes's struggle to affirm his own peculiar masculinity in a man's world dominated by a violent expression of maleness. The soundtrack song is meant to comment ironically and intertextually on Holmes's role in such contexts, which will be gradually emphasized throughout the films, until the final match against Moriarty. Above all, the song contributes to comparing Holmes to marginal forms of folk music, suggesting the gradual association of Holmes with the ethnic otherness, until the moment when the boundaries of the British Empire are questioned and relocated in *A Game of Shadows*. Indeed, the lyrics of "Rocky Road to Dublin" also draw attention to another important element, namely the trope of the travel, which will take place in *A Game of Shadows* and will prompt an exploration of gender and ethnic taboos for Holmes and Watson.

2.1.2 "Not in Blood but in Bond"

After Lord Blackwood is sentenced to death, Irene Adler makes officially her entrance into the plot and proposes a case to Holmes. The nature of the relationship between the two of them is not clear, but it is evident that the detective feels to some extent menaced by the woman. Suspecting other motivations behind Irene's visit, Holmes frantically follows her in disguise through London's crowded streets. The soundtrack song heard at

[125] O'Donnell, "'Lie Down with Me Watson,'" 175.

this point of the film is entitled "I Never Woke Up in Handcuffs Before,"[126] and hints at another scene of the film, where Holmes is tricked by Irene and finds himself naked and tied to a bed. While the title already suggests Holmes's position in the war of sexes, the song ironically reworks the film score's main theme and features the first official introduction of the Gypsy fiddle, accompanied by the tuba, percussions and the accordion. The figure of the Gypsy is not physically visible but the association between Holmes and otherness already materializes through the mixture of props and camera movements, which follow Holmes as he sneaks, perfectly at ease, into the tents of a street circus in the pursuit of Irene. As Paul Bouissac remarks, "[t]he orderly display of exoticism in the circus – both as institution and performance – constrains and regulates the temptation to yield to the dissipative seduction of otherness and novelty."[127]

From this moment onwards, it can be observed that the score progressively foregrounds the figure of the Gypsy and contributes to highlighting the queerest aspects of Holmes and Watson's relationship. For example, in an attempt to sabotage Watson's marriage, Holmes hires a fortune teller that approaches Watson in an alley, claiming that she can predict his future. Watson is irritated but stops when she mentions the name of his fiancée. While reading his hand, she says: "I see two men. Brothers. Not in blood but in bond." The last sentence is also the title of a soundtrack song[128] that is heard later in the film, when Watson's body disappears into the flames of an explosion in front of Holmes's eyes. From the point of view of semiotics, Levinson would classify this song as "composed score,"[129] namely a piece of music composed *ex novo* for the film. In my opinion, the piece, imitating the Gypsy style, is of particular importance in the film as

[126] Hans Zimmer, "I Never Woke Up in Handcuffs Before," *Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* (Burbank: Water Tower Music, 2009), CD.
[127]Paul Bouissac, *Semiotics at the Circus*, (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2010), 71.
[128] Hans Zimmer, "Not in Blood but in Bond," *Sherlock Holmes: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* (Burbank: WaterTower Music, 2009), CD.
[129] Levinson, "Film Music and Narrative Agency," 403

its composition reveals details about Zimmer's exploitation of music's specific language in reference to the neo-Victorian elements of the films.

The song is characterized by an extremely lyrical melody for solo violin revolving around a Hungarian minor scale, or Gypsy minor scale. Included among the so-called "exotic scales"[130] by Western composers, its main characteristic is that it features two intervals of augmented second, which are responsible for what it is commonly considered, in Western classical music, as exotic flavor.[131] Piotrowska remarks that the augmented second is "commonly associated with musical exoticism in European culture."[132] In twelve-tone equal temperament, this interval is said to be enharmonically equivalent to a minor third, containing both a whole step and a half step between one sound and the other. As their definitions in music dictionaries emphasize, "[s]ince an augmented second is classified as a dissonance, and a minor third as a consonance, the same sound in different notation is not only analyzed differently, but functions differently."[133] Indeed, the consonance or dissonance of an interval is given not only by the interval itself but also by its position in a scale or chord. Despite being equivalent to a consonant interval, in the general context of the Gypsy minor scale, namely in relation to the other intervals of that peculiar scale, the augmented second is perceived as dissonant, uncommon, unexpected, something the listener is not accustomed to.

The scale is also very ambiguous, since it features numerous half steps. While epitomizing the intensity of the film's scene, the horizontal melodic movement may be

[130] For an overview on exotic scales see Misha V. Stefanuk, *Jazz Piano Scales and Modes* (Fenton: Mel Bay Publications, 2003), 12–13.
[131] The augmented second is an interval, namely "the distance in pitch between two tones. . . . The normal size of unison, fourth, fifth, or octave, is called *perfect*. An interval a half-step larger is called *augmented*, a half-step smaller, *diminished*." Theodore Karp, *Dictionary of Music* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1983), 190–91. Italics in the original.
[132] Piotrowska, "'Gypsy Music' as Music of the Other in European Culture," 400.
[133] Karp, *Dictionary of Music*, 191–92.

seen as a spatial exploration of peripheral otherness. At the same time, the soundtrack song evokes the rhapsodic composition *Tzigane* (1922–1924) by Maurice Ravel, where "[t]he violin part is vividly Hungarian in feeling but its virtuosity also makes a gesture in the direction of Paganini."[134] The reference reminds us that Western and Gypsy cultures are, in fact, not as strictly in opposition as it may seem. On the contrary; as Peter Manuel points out, in the nineteenth century "the existence of transnational ethnic groups also promoted musical homogeneity. . . . [B]y far the most significant ethnic group in the transmission of musical practices was the gypsy community."[135] The soundtrack song is *de facto* a condensation of both Gypsy culture's authentic expressions and its Western appropriation, mainly represented by musical stereotypes. Where the two cultures meet, the neo-Victorian rhetoric creates a dynamic and "erratic" center, a spatial and cultural dimension that allows an exploration of those liminal spaces where the borders and norms of the British Empire, defined by its center and periphery, are subverted, and historical experiences, as well as cultures, hybridized.

All these elements contribute to making the neo-Victorian detective similar to the augmented second: consonant *per se* but dissonant in relation to the context. The song is also meant to describe the relationship between Holmes and Watson, so that its condensation of both Gypsy and Western culture imitates the queer nature of their bond. In this respect, Holmes's association with Gypsies may also bring to light his position in the couple. Piotrowska explains that the Roma,

> considered as a part of Oriental culture, were—*inter alia*—linked with vigorous eroticism; 'Gypsy love', as a derivative of both romantic and Oriental love, preserved the romantic ideal while adding a hint of exotic

[134] Joe Staines, ed., *The Rough Guide to Classical Music,* 3rd ed. (London: Rough Guides, 2001), 445.
[135] Peter Manuel, "Modal Harmony in Andalusian, Eastern European, and Turkish Syncretic Musics," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 21 (1989): 76–77.

> perversity. Thus the artificially created idea of 'Gypsy love' allowed composers to introduce on stage aspects of corporeality associated mainly with Romani women and their sexuality, demonstrated most clearly in their dancing.[136]

Throughout the films the doctor is torn between Holmes and his fiancée/bride, namely between homosociality and heteronormativity, and the films often indulge in portraying intimacy between the two men, in spite of their frequent childish arguments. The queer subplot diverts attention from the solution of the case, providing a sub-narrative that challenges heteronormativity and questions or complicates the process by which, as Philippa Gates explains, "[t]he detective narrative follows the detective's investigation of a crime and, itself, offers an investigation of the hero's masculinity as it is tested and proved through his solving of the case."[137]

2.1.3 An Untitled Irish Motif

At this point, it appears clear that both queer male bonding and Gypsy culture are equally stigmatized as "peripheric others" in reference to the Victorian system of values of the source texts. As a consequence, the exploration of queerness in the films goes hand in hand with the emergence of Gypsy culture, to which a more active role in the plot is granted. In *A Game of Shadows*, this process is taken to extremes and a full collaboration between the lead characters and Gypsies becomes necessary to solve the case. The partnership starts when Holmes finds out about a connection between the brother of Madame Simza, the leader of a Gypsy community, and Professor Moriarty. In

[136] Piotrowska, "'Gypsy Music' as the Music of the Other in European Culture," 400.
[137] Philippa Gates, "Detectives," in *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia*, Volume 1, eds. Michael S. Kimmel and Amy Aronson (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2004), 216.

order to contact the woman, Holmes organizes a fake stag party for his friend Watson in the same place where she performs as a fortune teller. When the tarot session ends, Holmes and Madame Simza are attacked by a Russian Cossack. The soundtrack song in the background of the fighting scene is not included in the original collection of songs officially released by Water Tower Music (Warner Bros.' in-house music label). It features fast percussive rhythms, repetitive melodic motifs that revolve around a limited number of notes, a solo folk fiddle and the accompaniment of a banjo, recalling the instruments and style of Irish traditional music.

As was the case with the first film, a folk piece of Irish inspiration, this time without lyrics, is used within a violent and hyper-masculine context, taking to extreme that process of revision which further weakens Holmes's physical representation and enacts a gender role reversal. More precisely, Holmes is impressed by the fighting skills of Madame Simza, who looks independent and strong. Debora Epstein Nord argues that "[i]n a cluster of works written by women in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. . . gypsy figures mark not only cultural difference but a deep sense of unconventional, indeed aberrant, femininity."[138] As opposed to Watson's wife Mary Morstan, Madame Simza is perfectly at ease in non-domestic environments; she is the leader of a community, she can defend herself, and even though she is emotionally attached to her brother, she is not financially dominated by him. Madame Simza will therefore become an increasingly important character in the story.

The stag party is followed by Watson's wedding, after which the doctor and his new wife are attacked by Moriarty's pawns and saved by Holmes. The detective and Watson eventually survive Moriarty's attack and travel to Paris without Mary, in the pursuit of Madame Simza. The contamination of an adventure plot leads some critics,

[138] Nord, "'Marks of race,'" 190.

such as Stephanie Sommerfeld, to assume that "Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* thus belongs in the group of action and adventure movie series of the 1980s and early 1990s like *Die Hard* or *Indiana Jones*."[139] Such an influence draws attention to the aspects of both genre and gender. Kestner observes:

> The fact that many of the Holmes tales were published with the prefix 'The Adventure of . . .' preceding the main subject title and the fact that the first collected volume of short stories was entitled *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, reflect this bias towards the male readers of the *Strand*. In constructing his narratives about Holmes, Doyle was to be adroit in addressing his male readers about masculinity.[140]

By considering Doyle's appropriation of the term "adventure" as a strategy to propose a valid model of identification for male readers, Kestner implies that the stories were meant to have an educative function. According to this scholar, the "texts both arouse psychic menaces and resolve them."[141] Indeed, "Doyle sustains the idea of the hero by engaging readers in perennial acts of his reconstruction."[142]

The construction of masculinity proves a crucial and controversial component of detective fiction and the contamination of an adventure/action plot in Ritchie's films is of strategic importance to explore the adaptors' engagement with the canon. The fact that, as Gates remarks, the films hint at the cop action films of the 1980s, where the cop hero "expressed himself through wisecracking quips and physical violence, with his

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[139] Stephanie Sommerfeld, "Guy Ritchie's Sherlock Bond, the Deerstalker and Remediation," in *Film Remakes, Adaptations and Fan Productions: Remake/Remodel*, eds. Kathleen Loock and Constantine Verevis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 50.
[140] Kestner, *Sherlock's Men*, 75.
[141] Kestner, *Sherlock's Men*, 24.
[142] Kestner, *Sherlock's Men*, 24.

body as the site upon which masculine crisis could be expressed and resolved,"[143] is in contrast with those various scenes that show Holmes as physically weakened. The qualities that had made of the Victorian Holmes a model of maleness, namely rationalism and logical skills, when compared to those masculine models of Western cinematic tradition that inspire Ritchie's films, raise questions about Sherlock Holmes's role as a male paradigm in contemporary society, in line with the claim of Bowler and Cox:

> While adaptation(s) can be thought of as inhabited by literary and cultural 'ghosts', this echoing of voices and ideas performs an intertextual weaving with the present moment and exhibits a simultaneous recognition of and departure from that past, allowing us the space in which to grapple with the renewed crises we face in negotiating our (post)modern identities.[144]

Ritchie's Holmes seems to advocate for a masculinity that legitimately rejects patriarchic aggressiveness (represented by Moriarty) but many of the scenes that portray him as physically fragile are connoted by irony with the help of soundtrack songs that underline Holmes's struggle to affirm his own peculiar masculinity, while other soundtrack songs emphasize the claim for intimacy between men outside the rigid conventions of heteronormativity. Notwithstanding the label "mystery action movie," presumably addressing a male audience, the films reflect the adaptors' ambivalence when it comes to shaping Holmes as a model of maleness, marking the shift from a

[143] Philippa Gates, "Cop Films," in *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia*, Volume 1, eds. Michael S. Kimmel and Amy Aronson (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2004), 184.
[144] Bowler and Cox, "Introduction to Adapting the Nineteenth Century," 3.

problem-solving detective to a detective that is problematic himself: the genre is queered at its very core.

2.1.4 "Romanian Wind" and "Two Mules for Sister Sara"

Holmes and Watson's journey to Paris also presents itself as an exploration of what might happen outside the frame of Western heteronormativity and homosocial constructions. When Holmes and Watson reach Madame Simza's Gypsy community in Paris, they have to get used to new habits, represented by the "hedgehog goulash" they are offered for dinner. After the first cultural shock, Watson accepts the invitation to dance and a bond of friendship and trust is established. The soundtrack song on the background of the dancing scene, entitled "Romanian Wind,"[145] is characterized by the repetition of few melodic patterns, a rich virtuoso ornamentation in a vivid Gypsy style, and a frenzy and rhythmic acceleration of the instruments involved. Such features, implicitly recalling orgiastic dances, bring to light a suppressed mythical past that underlies the origins of the word "mystery" itself, a past where subversion was part and parcel of initiation rites. As Jan N. Bremmer remarks,

> [m]ystery originally appeared in Greek in the plural, *Mystêria*, as the name of the festival that we currently call the Eleusinian Mysteries. . . . Unfortunately, the etymology of *mystêrion* is not wholly clear. . . . More recently, Hittite scholars have explained the Greek term from the Hittite word *munnae*, meaning 'to conceal, to hide, to shut out of sight', rather than 'keep secret, silent about'[146]

[145] Hans Zimmer, "Romanian Wind," *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* (Burbank: WaterTower Music, 2011), CD.
[146] Jan N. Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), vii. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.

The Eleusian ritual was composed of several parts, including a "transitory stage of betwixt and between."[147] Anthropologist Victor Turner observes, in this regard:

> During the intervening "liminal" period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the "passenger") are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. . . .
>
> As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon.[148]

According to Bremmer, sex played an important role and the ritual eventually culminated with the showing of an ear of wheat, followed by the announcement of the birth of a child,[149] a clear reference to the cult of fertility. Bremmer also confirms that "[t]he fire returns in many allusions to the Mysteries,"[150] which "must have been characterised by orgiastic dances and heavy drinking."[151]

The phenomenon of Orphism provides interesting cues as well: Bremmer believes that Orpheus's Thracian origin played an important role, as

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[147] See Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World*, 7.
[148] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 94–95.
[149] See Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World*, 12–14.
[150] Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World*, 14.
[151] Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World*, 48.

> [i]n ancient Greece, Thrace was the country of the Other. The wine god Dionysos was reputed to come from Thrace, as did the god of war, Ares. . . . So 'otherness' is an important aspect of Orpheus' mythological persona. . . .
>
> Music, song and poetry all went together for the Greeks and they belonged to a sphere of life that was separate from the hustle and bustle of everyday existence. Poets and singers were thus people outside the normal social order.[152]

The contamination of an adventurous plot and the collaboration with a Gypsy community thus seem to suggest the possibility of a rite of initiation for the protagonists who explore masculinity and break the boundaries (and even taboos) of Victorian heteronormativity. The pursuit of Madame Simza may recall the saying "*Cherchez la femme*"[153] but the stereotype of a threatening seductive femininity is subverted by a neo-Victorian revision of gender roles. For example, in her essay "Between Friends," Jennifer Doyle observes that "[t]raditional philosophy dismisses the second sex as incapable of friendship for their subordination to love," which would create an opposition between desire and friendship.[154] Ritchie's films challenge this notion as it can be observed that Madame Simza has no erotic involvement in the story and the partnership between her and the two men proves successful even without the mediation of sex. In other words, by queering the boundaries of homosociality, the male protagonists make it possible for men and women to be friends in spite of a number of philosophical texts where "women are the others against whom friends take shape."[155]

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[152] Bremmer, *Initiation*, 56–57.
[153] The expression comes from *The Mohicans of Paris* (1854) by Alexandre Dumas (père). See Alexandre Dumas, *Théâtre Complet* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1874), 103.
[154] Jennifer Doyle, "Between Friends," in *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Studies*, eds. George Haggerty and Molly McGarry (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 325.
[155] Doyle, "Between Friends," 325.

Subversion of genre, gender, and ethnic roles also appears in the following scene of the film, where Madame Simza provides horses for all the members of the group. Holmes is reluctant to ride and claims: "They're dangerous [the horses] at both ends and crafty in the middle. Why would I want anything with a mind of its own bobbing about between my legs?" Watson then asks whether it would be possible to find a more suitable means of transport for Holmes and in the next hilarious shots the detective is seen riding a pony. The soundtrack song that dominates the scenario, entitled "Two Mules for Sister Sara,"[156] is Zimmer's tribute to Ennio Morricone, who scored the eponymous Western directed by Don Siegel in 1970.[157] The Wild West is recalled through solitary travelers riding into the wilderness, but it is simultaneously subverted by Holmes's hilarious unwillingness to exhibit masculine behavior. Experiences, as well as genres, are intertextually condensed together so that the soundtrack song is consonant *per se*, namely in reference to the Western genre, but dissonant and anachronistic in the context of the Sherlock Holmes stories. It also creates another "erratic center" that relocates the American frontier in the heart of Europe.

It is worth noting that certain collective social images of the Wild West also appear in the so-called "Western steampunk." As an anachronistic reworking of the Victorian aesthetic of industrialization and steam technology, steampunk was born as a literary genre whose antecedents can be found in the nineteenth-century works of science fiction pioneers, such as Herbert George Wells (1866–1946) and Jules Verne (1828–1905).[158] Its popularity has recently grown beyond literature and film, inspiring communities of fashion lovers, artisans, and interior designers. When steampunk is

[156] Hans Zimmer, "Two Mules for Sister Sara," *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* (Burbank: WaterTower Music, 2011). CD. Details about the performance are displayed in the closing credits of the film.
[157] Don Siegel, dir., *Two Mules for Sister Sara*, Universal Pictures, 1970, DVD.
[158] For further insight see David Beard, "Introduction: A Rhetoric of Steam," in *Clockwork Rhetoric: The Language and Style of Steampunk*, ed. Barry Brummett (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), xiv–xxxii.

combined with the Western genre, as Cynthia J. Miller suggests, "we see the working out of the tension between popular fascination and fear in relation to technology and the Machine Age—a commentary on the loss of wildness, independence, and freedom of the frontier West."[159] In the case of Ritchie's films, however, the anachronistic intertextual reminiscences of the Western genre are strongly marked by irony. Indeed, intertextuality seems to allude not only to its most classical representations, but also to its more modern declensions.

2.2 A Game of Seduction and Predation: Classical References in Guy Ritchie's Films[160]

2.2.1 Sherlock Holmes and Mozart's Don Giovanni

As already mentioned, in *A Game of Shadows* Zimmer enjoys the contrast between folk instruments and classical Western repertoires. After engaging in the boxing match, Holmes is seen riding in a carriage with Dr. Watson. He tries to start a conversation by saying: "Did you know the opera house is featuring *Don Giovanni*? I could easily procure a couple of tickets if you had any cultural inclinations this evening." The doctor is definitely not inclined to forgive Holmes for having insulted his fiancée the previous night. When he breaks his silence, the two of them end up arguing childishly and the allusion to *Don Giovanni* is relegated to the background. Nevertheless, the title of this opera by Mozart, premiered in 1787, is mentioned again in *A Game of Shadows* when the lead characters, finally in Paris to sabotage Professor Moriarty's evil plans, find themselves involved in a performance of *Don Giovanni* at the Opera of Paris.

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[159] See Cynthia J. Miller, Introduction to *Encyclopedia of Weird Westerns: Supernatural and Science Fiction Elements in Novels, Pulps, Comics, Films, Television and Games*, ed. Paul Green (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2016), 10.

[160] Parts 2.2.1, 2.2.2, and 2.2.3 were originally published, in a slightly different form, as Francesca Battaglia, "Classical Music in the Sherlock Holmes Films by Guy Ritchie: A Game of Seduction and Predation," *Hradec Králové Journal of Anglophone Studie*s 3, no. 1 (2016): 26–35.

Holmes's intention is to prevent a terrorist attack by looking for a bomb that might be hidden under the stage of the theatre, but he eventually realizes that the bomb has been placed elsewhere and that he has been deceived by Moriarty, who is enjoying the opera at a safe distance. The story, based on the libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte, follows the reckless adventures of Don Giovanni, a noble libertine who seduces countless women. The man kills the Commendatore, father of one of his victims, and refuses to repent in front of his statue. The title of the scene performed on the stage when Holmes intervenes is "A Cenar Teco". The statue of the murdered Commendatore comes to life and invites Don Giovanni to dinner: the nobleman bravely accepts but is dragged off to hell as he refuses to repent for his sins.

The absence of dialogues in the film's scene draws attention to the musical soundtrack song "To the Opera!" composed by Zimmer, combining both the excerpts from Mozart's original score (appropriated score), and the composer's free development of musical themes (composed score). The two scores alternate in the scene according to the movements of the characters both inside the theatre, where *Don Giovanni* is performed, and outside the theatre, where the story continues to develop. In this respect, Nicholas Reyland comments that "[s]coring and mixing retool the original opera music, rendering it fitter for contemporary cinematic purposes in both subtle and more obvious ways."[161]

From Elizabeth Kirkendoll's point of view,

> the soundtrack moves fluidly between diegetic and nondiegetic, even combining both. These transitions are representative of the *mise en abyme*.

[161] Nicholas Reyland, "Corporate Classicism and the Metaphysical Style," *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image* 9, no. 2 (2015): 116, PDF, https://doi.org/10.3828/msmi.2015.8.

> The characters of *Don Giovanni* and *A Game of Shadows* characters are fluctuating as well.[162]

The use of the *mise en abyme*[163] as a form of self-reflective narration[164] reveals that various narrative levels overlap. While Kirkendoll supports the thesis that Ritchie's films can be read as a modern re-telling of the *Don Giovanni* tale, the *mise en abyme* also seems to have another important function as it becomes a space where the composer self-reflectively comments upon Holmes's masculinity in male games of power. This implicitly recalls some of the strategies used by Conan Doyle himself in his works. For example, Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning state:

> Metanarrative comments are concerned with the act and/or process of narration, and not with its fictional nature. . . . Metanarrative passages need not destroy aesthetic illusion, but may also contribute to substantiating the illusion of authenticity that a narrative seeks to create. It is precisely the concept of narratorial illusionism, suggesting the presence of a speaker or narrator, that illustrates that metanarrative expressions can serve to create a different type of illusion by accentuating the act of narration.[166]

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[162] Elizabeth, Kirkendoll, "Mozart at the Movies: Cinematic Reimaginings of Opera," (master's thesis, Texas Christian University, 2015), 37. PDF, https://repository.tcu.edu/bitstream/handle/116099117/8330/Kirkendoll_tcu_0229M_10582.pdf?sequence=1. Diegetic music can be heard by both viewers and characters because it is implicit within the story, while non-diegetic music can be heard only by the viewer since it is played over the action.

[163] As Patrice Pavis explains, the *mise en abyme* "is a device that in which an enclave is embedded in the work (which may be pictorial, literary or theatrical), reproducing certain of its structural similarities or properties (specular reduplication)." Patrice Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis,* trans. Christine Schatz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 215.

[164] See Ansgar Nünning, "On Metanarrative: Towards a Definition, a Typology and an Outline of the Functions of Metanarrative Commentary," in *The Dynamics of Narrative Forms: Studies in Anglo-American Narratology*, ed. John Pier (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 19.

[166] Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning, "Metanarration and Metafiction," in *Handbook of Narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn, John Pier, Wolf Schmid, Jörg Schönert (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 205.

In “A Study in Scarlet” (1887), the reader is initially invited to believe that Dr. Watson will be the main narrator of the story. Metanarrative comments, referred directly to the reader, reinforce this idea, such as in the second chapter, where Watson claims: “The reader may set me down as a hopeless busybody.”[167] The second part of the story, however, is introduced by an unknown narrator, presumably Doyle himself, who focuses on the events that preceded the murder in London. Although Watson’s role is eventually re-established, a significant section of the second part’s sixth chapter is occupied once again by another narrative, that of a villain who explains the facts from his point of view.

The existence of a hierarchy of narrative levels in Doyle’s texts may invite the reader to wonder about the role and reliability of the narrators. Joseph Kestner claims that the

> bifurcation into two parts, and then an additional bifurcation in the second part of *Scarlet* is disruptive. It also weakens the presentation of both Watson and Holmes as masculine models and paradigms by granting narrative authority to an anonymous narrator.[168]

Likewise, through the *mise en abyme*, the composer remarks his own choices and his role as mediator, drawing a symbolic parallel between *Don Giovanni*’s tale and the film’s story.

Kirkendoll suggests that in the scene “Holmes . . . is identifiable as both Holmes and the moral representation of Giovanni. Similarly, Moriarty is simultaneously

[167] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 20.
[168] Kestner, *Sherlock’s Men*, 68.

himself, the Commendatore, and the amoral Giovanni."[169] Levinson's interpretation seems plausible as well, he nevertheless observes:

> First, with appropriated scores the issue of specific imported associations, deriving from the original context of composition or performance or distribution, rather than just general associations carried by musical styles or conventions, is likely to arise. Second, with appropriated as opposed to composed scores, there will, ironically, generally be more attention drawn to the music, both because it is often recognized as appropriated, and located by the viewer in cultural space, and because the impression it gives of chosenness, on the part of the implied filmmaker, is greater.[170]

Levinson further extends the scope of his inquiry by studying the reiterated references to Lehar's "Merry Widow" waltz in Alfred Hitchcock's film *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), where "the recurrent waltzing image should be constructed as a form of narrator's commentary."[171] According to him, "what is made fictional by these musical cues is *not* that Uncle Charlie is the murderer but that the *narrator* is adverting to that fact, almost sardonically, both before and after it is narratively established."[172] Levinson therefore considers the possibility of using music as a form of commentary. Accordingly, it can be assumed that, by drawing a parallel between the films' plot and the *Don Giovanni* tale, namely through the *mise en abyme*, adaptors anticipate something that will be narratively established later (the defeat of Moriarty) but at the same time they place

[169] Kirkendoll, "Mozart at the Movies," 37.
[170] Levinson, "Film Music and Narrative Agency," 403.
[171] Levinson, "Film Music and Narrative Agency," 414.
[172] Levinson, "Film Music and Narrative Agency," 414. Italics in the original.

emphasis upon the choice of a particular appropriated score as a form of implicit commentary.

Because of its peculiar location in culture, Mozart's appropriated score calls attention to certain connotations. Exploring the extent of denotation and connotation in the semiotics of film, Christian Metz claims that

> a visual or an auditory theme—or an arrangement of visual and auditory themes—once it has been placed in its correct syntagmatic position within the discourse that constitutes the whole film, takes on a value greater than its own and is increased by the additional meaning it receives."[173]

Metz argues, however, that this addition "is never entirely arbitrary"[174] as it refers to the discourse of film. Therefore, following Metz's distinction between denotation and connotation, according to which "the connotative meaning *extends over* the denotative meaning, but without *contradicting* or *ignoring* it,"[175] the fact that Don Giovanni is known as a seducer cannot be ignored. "The erotic here is *seduction,*"[176] says Søren Kierkegaard in the second chapter of his work *Either/Or* (1843) entitled "The Immediate Stages of the Erotic or the Musical Erotic," adding that desire in *Don Giovanni* is "absolutely sound, victorious, triumphant, irresistible, and demonic."[177] From the point of view of denotation, the scene's focus is on the defeat of Don Giovanni, which also alludes to Professor Moriarty's villainy. Nevertheless, as Metz adds, "objects (and characters must also be included) . . . carry with them, before even

[173] Christian Metz, "From *Film Language*: Some Points in the Semiotics of Cinema," in *Film Theory & Criticism: Introductory Readings*, edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 72.
[174] Metz, "From Film Language," 72.
[175] Metz, "From Film Language," 73. Italics in the original.
[176] Søren Kierkeegard, *Either/Or*, trans. Alastair Hannay (1843; London: Penguin, 1992), 87. Adobe Digital Editions ePub. Italics in the original
[177] Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 81.

cinematographic language can intervene, a great deal more than their simple literary identity."[178] It can be observed that *Don Giovanni* is located in a cultural space where he is punished for being a sexual predator. By drawing attention to the appropriated score, adaptors are reminding the viewer that Don Giovanni is a predator, associating Don Giovanni with Moriarty, and anticipating that Holmes will be his pray.

2.2.2 Sherlock Holmes and Franz Schubert's "Die Forelle":

As the title already suggest, Ritchie's sequel *A Game of Shadows* prominently focuses on Holmes and Moriarty's match, symbolized by the chess game. Nevertheless, there seems to be more than gaming when viewers realize that, throughout the films, Holmes is chased by violent men and behaves akin to a vulnerable object of desire, fighting, as O'Donnell points out, "against opponents of atypical strength and stamina against whom there seems to be no possibility of winning."[179]

The fact that the relationship between Holmes and Moriarty builds on mutual chasing until their antagonism becomes physical, indicates male predation. This becomes visible in another scene from *A Game of Shadows*, the setting of which is dominated again by an appropriated score. Holmes ventures into Moriarty's arms factory but is captured by a group of men. When he finally confronts his nemesis, Moriarty takes advantage of his vulnerability and pierces his shoulder with what O'Donnell calls a "phallic-looking meat-hook."[180] While Holmes cries in agony, Moriarty turns on both a gramophone and a megaphone so that the musical background resounds through outside the building, where Watson is fighting against Sebastian

[178] Metz, "From Film Language," 73.
[179] O'Donnell, "'Lie Down with Me Watson,'" 175.
[180] O'Donnell, "'Lie Down with Me Watson,'" 175.

Moran. The music chosen by Moriarty is "Die Forelle" ("The Trout"), a *Lied*[181] composed by Franz Schubert in 1817 for piano and solo voice, which tells the story of a trout, cruelly killed by a ruthless fisherman. Looking intently at himself in a mirror, Moriarty begins to sing the *Lied* in German, regardless of Holmes who is now hanging from the ceiling, partially off-screen. At this point, Moriarty grabs Holmes, as if to mockingly dance with him, and as he cries, the megaphone amplifies his screams, so that supposedly Watson indirectly joins the torture as well.

A similar strategy was used in the tragicomic Italian film *La vita è bella* (Life Is Beautiful, 1997) by Roberto Benigni,[182] set during World War II. It revolves around the love story of Guido and Dora, both interned in a Nazi concentration camp along with their child. As in the camp women and men are separated, Guido uses a gramophone to communicate with his wife, making a familiar song resound through the camp, where it finally reaches Dora. Something similar happens in Ritchie's films, where the setting anachronistically recalls elements of Nazism, such as the men's black uniforms, the German language, and the dispositions of buildings in a hyper-masculine setting.

If Moriarty turns on the gramophone so that Watson can hear his friend being tortured, by using music and sounds he remarks his involvement in a process of triangulation characterized by a sadomasochistic game of predation: he tortures a man to psychologically dominate another man. Lawrence Kramer claims, after all, that "Die Forelle" may hide the author's latent "wish to be woman,"[183] and "[t]he underlying aim of this wish is to escape the aggressiveness, Oedipal rivalry, and emotional detachment

[181] In the musical jargon, a Lied is "[a] type of German song, especially of the romantic period, typically for solo voice with piano accompaniment." *English Oxford Living Dictionary*, s.v. "Lied," accessed March 01 2019, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/lied.
[182] *La Vita è Bella,* directed by Roberto Benigni (Roma: Cecchi Gori Group, 1997).
[183] Lawrence Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.

central to masculine identity as it is normatively constructed for middle-class men."[184] He adds that "once the narrative of 'Die Forelle' is recognized as a sexual parable, the fantasies that subtend it are hard to miss."[185] Assuming that "[t]he narrator is entranced by the trout's free, self-delighting movement in her on element,"[186] Kramer notices that

> [w]hen the fisherman maliciously muddies the waters, he not only catches the fish - that is, seduces the girl, who makes his rod twitch ("so zuckte seine Ruthe") - but also breaks up the narrator's fantasy. That the narrator sees this with blood boiling ("mit regem Blute") is understandable, but the exact source of his rage is not self-evident. Is the problem that he has lost his beloved to a more aggressive rival? Or is he raging over the loss of the rivalry itself, which has tacitly been mediating desire between the two men across the body of the woman? Or is the loss homosexual rather than homosocial, the absence of the trout making it impossible for the narrator to identify himself with the object of the fisherman's masculine desire? Or, finally, is the fisherman's triumph the outcome of a contest between rival versions of masculinity, a victory for phallic aggressiveness over its feminizing sublimation in the glad, arrowlike leaping of the trout?
>
> Schubert leaves all of these possibilities open, but concentrates on the last two.[187]

Accordingly, when Moriarty finally bends over a bleeding and suffering Holmes and asks "Which one of us is the fisherman and which the trout?" their physical closeness, along with Moriarty's expression of satisfaction, *de facto* materialize a male rape.

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[184] Kramer, *Franz Schubert*, 5.
[185] Kramer, *Franz Schubert*, 81.
[186] Kramer, *Franz Schubert*, 83.
[187] Kramer, *Franz Schubert*, 83.

Such scenarios have their antecedents. Analyzing excerpts from the novel *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–1865) by Charles Dickens, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick found out scenes "whose language is that of male rape."[188] She considered the representation of the "sphincter domination,"[189] in the form of recurrent round shapes, as part of this language, recalling the Freudian theories on anality expressed in *Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality* (1905).

Sedgwick's observations are compatible with other examples from literary works where the linguistic representation of the sphincter domination pairs with music. For instance, in the novels by Anne Rice, circular shapes frequently occur in relation to vampirism and non-genital erotically connoted male activities. The following passage, taken from the *The Vampire Lestat* (1985), exposes the ambiguous friendship between the protagonist Lestat and his violinist friend Nicolas:

> I went after him as he danced in circle. The notes seemed to be flying up and out of the violin as if they were made of gold. I could almost see them flashing. I danced round and round him now and he sawed away into deeper and more frenzied music. I spread the wings of the furlined cape all round and threw back my head to look at the moon. The music rose all around me like smoke, and the witches' place was no more.[190]

The repetition of certain words ("circle", "round", "around") and symbols ("the moon"), associated with circularity, is evident in this excerpt, where "frenzied music" recalls the typical features of orgiastic dances. A close analysis reveals that much of the erotic

[188] Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 169.
[189] Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 169.
[190] Rice, *The Vampire Lestat*, 54.

charge in Rice's novels is conveyed by music, rhythmic reiterations or physical abandonment, so as to suggest, through repetition and circularity, a condition of fixity. [191]

Another example of how homoeroticism, music, and circular shapes can function together is the choreography by Maurice Béjart on Maurice Ravel's *Bolero* (1928). The male version, starring the Argentine dancer Jorge Donn (1947–1992), appears in the film *Les Unes et les Autres* by Claude Lelouch (1981)[192] and focuses on the seducing gestures of a dancer on top of a round table, surrounded by a group of men dancing in circle.[193] Similar associations can be observed in Moriarty's factory, where guns, cannons, and torpedoes stand for phallic symbols in a scenario dominated by a tower, the most elevated point of the scene and also the hiding place of Moriarty's best killer, Sebastian Moran.

Moran's use of the rounded viewfinder to spy Watson's movements introduces into the scene, apart from a certain voyeuristic attitude—the viewer himself spies Watson through Moran's viewfinder—the first symbolic representation of the sphincter domination. The most significant and abstract one, however, is the reference to Moriarty's acute narcissism, embodied by the mirror. The object evokes the myth of Narcissus,[194] who admired himself in the water, and underlines the narcissistic nature of the bond that leads Holmes and Moriarty to confront each other, until their final embrace.

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[191] See, for instance, the reference to the sun (and to its shape) in *The Vampire Lestat* (49–50) and to "a golden circle of sound" in a passage from *Interview with the Vampire* (209), marked by erotic connotations.

[192] The story revolves around the members of four families from different countries, all of which love music. The *Bolero* scene, featuring Jorge Donn in the original version of the choreography, is the final and focal point of the film since all the characters find themselves re-united to attend the event.

[193] *Les Unes et les Autres,* directed by Claude Lelouch (France: LFilms 13, TF1, 1981).

[194] I refer to the version of the myth narrated by Ovide. See Michael Simpson, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 52–56.

As also Kirkendoll notices,[195] *Don Giovanni* is evoked again in the last scene of the film, when Holmes holds Moriarty tightly in his arms and both disappear into the Reichenbach Falls. It is worth noticing that, in the version produced by Franco Zeffirelli and performed in 1990 at the Metropolitan Opera House of New York,[196] Don Giovanni (Samuel Ramey) offers his hand to the statue of the Commendatore (Kurt Moll), which holds it until the end of the scene, so that the two of them plunge into darkness locked to each other.

As it has been observed so far, classical music supports the forms of commentary concerning Moriarty's character and villainy. It also insistently draws attention to the consequences of an exploration of too extreme versions of homosociality.

2.3 Who Is the Master of Men?

The transformations and re-presentations of Sherlock Holmes's violin in Guy Ritchie's films lead to rediscover exotic instruments and folk music, enacting a revision of historical experiences related to Western music. In particular, the songs that feature the violin as folk fiddle can be considered as part of a complex process of remediation where issues of genre, as related to gender and ethnicity, are subverted within the framework of a neo-Victorian rhetoric. It becomes evident that, by promoting a fusion between the detective and the exotic other, the score plays a leading role in dealing with peculiar characteristics of Conan Doyle's detective fiction, while revising, questioning or complicating, at the same time, controversial aspects of the original texts. The Gypsy-infused soundtrack songs are thus responsible for the definition of an "erratic

[195] Kirkendoll, "Mozart at the Movies," 53–54.
[196] The video of the performance is only available with a Met Opera on-demand subscription or rental at the following link: http://metopera.org/Season/On-Demand/opera/?upc=811357012215.

center," a spatial and cultural dimension where the notions of "center" and "periphery," in relation to Victorian Imperialism, are subverted and cultural experiences hybridized.

Above all, the score contributes to rising questions about the figure of the detective as a masculine model. Sedgwick explains, for example, that homosocial societies build on the exchange of women whose role as a property hides, in fact, the male homosocial desire. Sedgwick observes in this regard:

> To misunderstand the kind of property women are or the kind of transaction in which alone their value is realizable means, for a man, to endanger his own position as a subject in the relationship of exchange: to be permanently feminized or objectified in relation to other men. On the other hand, success in making this transaction requires a willingness and ability to temporarily risk, or assume, a feminized status. Only the man who can proceed through that stage, *while* remaining in cognitive control of the symbolic system that presides over sexual exchange, will be successful in achieving a relation of mastering to other men.[197]

Indeed, Holmes's masculinity in Ritchie's films is typical of the man who, as Sedgwick puts it, "fearing to entrust his relations with patriarchy to a powerless counter, a woman, can himself only be used as woman, and valued as a woman, by the men with whom he comes into narcissistic relation."[198] Therefore, Moriarty's question "Which one of us is the fisherman and which the trout?" could be read as "Which one of us is the master of

[197] Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 50–51. Italics in the original.
[198] Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 169–70.

men?" As previously demonstrated, Moriarty's act of supremacy takes the form of an assault that looks like a rape. Notwithstanding, in that very scene, albeit wounded, Holmes takes advantage of Moriarty physical closeness to steal the notebook where he keeps record of his financial movements, a detail that will be revealed at the end of the film. The transitory feminized status of passivity allows Holmes to deceive and defeat Moriarty, causing him financial loss, and to embrace a temporary death that will bring him to a new life. The problem of Sedgwick's contextualizing is that her observations on male bonding are based on the male traffic of women,[199] while Ritchie's films underline the marginal role of women. Moriarty uses Watson as a conduit through which he can dominate Holmes, so that Holmes's transitory feminine status must be considered as substituting the female role.

A careful analysis reveals that the use of music as an appropriated score, along with verbal references and visual themes, defines a subtext that blurs the line between the interest of men and the interest in men. In such contexts the neo-Victorian detective and his violin prove "consonant but dissonant" in relation to a discourse that breaks boundaries.

[199] Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 21.

Chapter Three

Music, Historical Anachronisms, and the Steampunk Ideology in Ritchie's Films

3.1 Introduction to Steampunk

As mentioned in the introduction, the scope of neo-Victorianism extends to the so-called steampunk genre, to which the journal *Neo-Victorian Studies* devoted a special issue in 2010. The introduction, co-written by Rachel A. Bowser and Brian Croxall, already highlights the problem of defining and contextualizing the genre within neo-Victorian scholarship.[200] They claim that steampunk seems

> to illustrate, and perhaps even perform, a kind of cultural memory work, wherein our projections and fantasies about the Victorian era meet the tropes and techniques of science fiction, to produce a genre that revels in anachronism while exposing history's overlapping layers.[201]

Bowser and Croxall note that essential, in this respect, is steampunk's "invocation of Victorianism"[202] in relation to the Industrial Revolution, which "accelerated the shift from agrarian time to factory time and rewrote the relationships between time and productivity."[203] The genre thus mainly privileges vintage nineteenth-century scenarios, mechanization, retrofitted technology, and historical anachronisms or overlaps.

[200] Rachel A. Bowser and Brian Croxall, "Introduction: Industrial Evolution," *Neo-Victorian Studies* 3, no. 1 (2010): 1, http://www.neovictorianstudies.com/.
[201] Bowser and Croxall, "Introduction," 1.
[202] Bowser and Croxall, "Introduction," 1.
[203] Bowser and Croxall, "Introduction," 3.

The style can be found in literature, cinema, videogames, Japanese comics (*manga*) and their animated adaptations (*anime*), graphic novels, fashion, and even music. Its aesthetic includes, for instance, brass goggles, clockwork mechanisms, refashioned corsets or top hats, airships, flying balloons, and elements from *art nouveau*. At the same time, the attention to details, materials, and handmade products triggers not only aesthetic responses. Stefania Forlini observes that

> steampunk artists produce fanciful Victorian-like gadgets (inspired by both actual and fictional Victorian mechanical inventions) or refurbish contemporary technological objects to make them look and feel 'Victorian' in order to challenge contemporary technological design and help us reconsider the value of things. In both its literary and material manifestations, steampunk is about learning to read all that is folded into any particular created thing – that is, learning to connect the source materials to particular cultural, technical, and environmental practices, skills, histories, and economies of meaning and value.[204]

The style is much more hybrid and incorporates references to the Edwardian period and the American Wild West. Accordingly, Elizabeth Ho observes that "the term 'neo-Victorian' has limited, if not controlled, the scope of steampunk's reach"[205] although "a study of steampunk adds to neo-Victorianism's history of the present."[206]

Despite currently pervading culture at a global level, Bowser and Croxall report steampunk to "have been barely a blip on the collective consciousness until 2007 – at

[204] Stefania Forlini, "Technology and Morality: The Stuff of Steampunk," *Neo-Victorian Studies* 3, no. 1 (2010): 72–73, http://www.neovictorianstudies.com/.
[205] Elizabeth Ho, *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire* (London: Continuum, 2012), 146.
[206] Ho, *Neo-Victorianism*, 146.

least insofar as the collective consciousness can be measured by worldwide Internet traffic and can be reported by Google Trends."[207] David Beard remarks that "genuinely Victorian-era texts,"[208] like Edward S. Ellis's *Steam Man of the Prairies*, serialized in the 1860s, and the works by Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, can be already considered as Steampunk's "grandparents,"[209] anticipating the novelistic tradition that "first began appearing in the late 1960s and early 1970s."[210] Therefore, Beard believes that the genre

> derives from at least three root systems: the nineteenth century's own fantastic representations of the changes that transformed its social and cultural fabric, some key science fiction works of the mid- and late twentieth century, and the DIY [do-it-yourself] aesthetic of the punk and postpunk eras.[211]

Analyzing, more specifically, the field of music, Brigid Cherry and Maria Mellins explain:

> The steampunk aesthetic and DIY approach of punk are both manifest in the steampunk musical projects that begin to emerge in the mid-2000s. . . . The websites and MySpace profiles of performers and bands such as Kozai Resonance, The Clockwork Dolls, Crimson Muddle, Unextraordinary Gentlemen, Vernian Process and Abney Park are predominantly of a neo-

[207] Bowser and Croxall, "Introduction," 10.
[208] David Beard, "Introduction: A Rhetoric of Steam," in *Clockwork Rhetoric: The Language and Style of Steampunk*, ed. Barry Brummett (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), xvii.
[209] Beard, "Introduction," xvii.
[210] Bowser and Croxall, "Introduction," 12.
[211] Beard, "Introduction," xvi.

> Victorian, steampunk or other anachronistic aesthetic. This aesthetic bricolage lends the varied music projects unity, creating a rich, visual tapestry on which disparate and eclectic musical forms – many related to punk and post-punk forms – are explored. The contradiction here is that despite a distinctive and easily identifiable look, steampunk does not have an identifiable musical style in its own right. Rather it is a fusion of many styles, including cabaret, classical, science fiction film soundtracks and alternative or underground genres.[212]

In *Presentations of the 2010 Upstate Steampunk Extravaganza and Meetup* (2011), musician Braxton Ballew provides a musicological point view, claiming that the use of anachronisms is popular in steampunk music composed by independent bands and musicians.[213] He specifies that the style's major features "are most obvious in the instrumentation choices,"[214] adding that also "different melodic and harmonic elements that suggest alternate history," as well as lyrics,[215] can be considered as typical of the genre. It is nevertheless clear that steampunk music is difficult to define but strongly characterized by performativity. On the contrary, the integration between music's specific language and texts with steampunk elements, such as narratives for cinema, television, or videogames, needs to be further explored by scholars.

It can be observed that the Holmesian canon is invoked in a number of steampunk works. A well-renowned example is Alan Moore's pastiche graphic novel *The League*

[212] Brigid Cherry and Maria Mellins, "Negotiating the Punk in Steampunk: Subculture, Fashion & Performative Identity," *Punk & Post-Punk* 1, no. 1 (2012): 14–15, https://doi.org/10.1386/punk.1.1.5_1.
[213] Braxton Ballew, "A Few Thoughts on the Steampunk Musical Elements," in *Presentations of the 2010 Upstate Steampunk Extravaganza and Meetup*, ed. Gypsey Elaine Teague (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 132.
[214] Ballew, "A Few Thoughts on the Steampunk Musical Elements," 132.
[215] Ballew, "A Few Thoughts on the Steampunk Musical Elements," 133.

of Extraordinary Gentlemen (1999–present),[216] which pays homage to several literary authors, including Bram Stoker, Jules Verne, and Arthur Conan Doyle.[217] Similarly, in the novel *Steampunk Holmes: Legacy of the Nautilus* (2012) by P.C. Martin,[218] Holmes is entirely relocated in a re-imagined steampunk world. Lighter steampunk revisions can be also found in a videogame developed by Frogwares, *Sherlock Holmes and the Devil's Daughter* (2016),[219] where historical anachronisms can be detected in the hipster look and costumes of Holmes and Watson. In addition, the detective is seen fathering an adopted young girl, whose obscure past will become central to the plot.

In Japanese *manga* and *anime*, palimpsestic appropriations of the Holmesian canon are paramount and attest not only Japan's interest in the Victorian past, but also its active participation in re-examining and re-modeling the relationships between Asia and the West. Steampunk references, for instance, are evident in the animation film *Shisha no teikoku* (The Empire of Corpses, 2015) directed by Ryōtarō Makihara.[220] The protagonist is named John Watson and the story presents a Victorian setting and retrofitted technology, mainly drawing on the trope of the zombie. After the ending credit sequence, Watson is seen embarking on a new career with his new partner Sherlock Holmes, suggesting a continuum between the Japanese fictitious "pre-text" and the Holmesian canon. Other less obvious examples are the manga series *Kuroshitsuji* (Black Butler, 2006) by Yana Toboso[221] and *Adekan* (Elegant Men, 2008) by Nao Tsujiki.[222] Neither of these works is a faithful adaptation of the original stories

[216] Alan Moore, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (ABC/WildStorm/DC Comics/Top Shelf Knockabout Comics, 1999–present).
[217] For further insight, see Laura Hilton, "Gothic Science Fiction in the Steampunk Graphic Novel: *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*," in *Gothic Science Fiction 1980–2010*, eds. Sara Wasson and Emily Alder (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 189.
[218] P.C. Martin, *Steampunk Holmes: Legacy of the Nautilus* (London: MX, 2012).
[219] Frogwares, *Sherlock Holmes and the Devil's Daughter* (Lesquin: Bigben Interactive, 2016), Microsoft Windows/Playstation 4/Xbox One.
[220] *Shisha no Teikoku*, directed by Ryōtarō Makihara (Musashino: Wit Studio, 2015).
[221] Yana Toboso, *Kuroshitsuji* (Tokyo: Square Enix, 2006).
[222] Nao Tsukiji, *Adekan* (Tokyo: Shinshokan, 2008).

but the palimpsestuous affiliation is rather explicit, considering that both present a couple of men solving mystery and horror cases in the Victorian London and Meiji era, respectively.[223]

Some scholars, such as Lisa Horton and Jaime Wright consider Guy Ritchie's films as steampunk texts as well. Horton focuses on the films' anachronisms, claiming:

> The clearest indication of Steampunk aesthetics in the art direction of the Sherlock Holmes films is the design and construction of the props, gadgets and gimmicks . . . . [For example, Holmes] demonstrates the use of his utility-belt-mounted mobile forensics laboratory in his examination of [a corpse] when the kit unrolls nearly to his knees and he selects various instruments from it in a way that suggests that he and Watson have relied on its use in their mutual professional cases for some time.[224]

Costumes play a key role as well, especially in Holmes's case, since his open-collar shirts, along with a certain tendency to expose the naked body, sexualize the figure of the detective, as opposed to the proverbial prudery of the Victorians. The result is a Bohemian look that emphasizes Holmes's upgrade to sex symbol, in line with the steampunk's interest in rendering the Victorian dress more fashionable through the combination of a sophisticated vintage taste and modern standards of comfort and utility. Finally, expanding on the occasional references to retrofitted technology, Wright suggests that

[223] The Meiji era indicates the reign of the Emperor Matsuhito in Japan, a period spanning from 1868 and 1919. It is in this period that Western countries started to trade with Japan.
[224] Lisa Horton, "Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*: Steampunk Superhero?" in *Clockwork Rhetoric: The Language and Style of Steampunk*, ed. Barry Brummett (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 189.

> Sherlock Holmes is the perfect representative of a steampunk discourse—a discourse that seeks to rewrite the past, using contemporary knowledge of the object as a corrective to centuries of technological advancement in which the development of war machinery always and already outstrips the healing technology it makes necessary.[225]

Indeed, as it will become evident later, Holmes uses technology to oppose Moriarty's capitalism. His innovative tools and loose style thus epitomize the rejection of massification, as well as social fluidity and hybridism.

Building on such observations, in this paragraph I propose that some elements, especially those related to technology and historical anachronisms, can be inherently read as steampunk. In doing so, I suggest starting from Brummett's assumption that steampunk

> reliably coheres around an aesthetic logic that generates rhetorical effects. Given the unavoidable politics of our era, this means asking questions having to do with the distribution of power in society, often along lines of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and so forth.[226]

As Beard further remarks, the genre "both challenge[s] and reif[ies] certain social relationships: (a) technological relations, (b) gender relations, and (c) race relations."[227]

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[225] Jaime Wright, "Steampunk and Sherlock Holmes: Performing Post-Marxism," in *Clockwork Rhetoric: The Language and Style of Steampunk*, ed. Barry Brummett (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 105.
[226] Brummett, "Editor's Introduction," x–xi.
[227] Beard, "Introduction," xxiv.

Accordingly, steampunk musical elements may specifically emerge from the tension between the Victorian aesthetic, ideological subversion, and historical anachronisms. In this respect, the steampunk and neo-Victorian interests may converge, or slightly diverge.

3.2 Music and the Steampunk's Variables in Ritchie's Films

The first time the iconic violin appears as a prop in Ritchie's first film. Holmes is caught in the act of plucking at the strings while observing the behaviour of a flock of flies trapped in a glass. When Watson enters the room, Holmes announces:

> What started merely as an experiment has brought me to the threshold of a monumental discovery. Now, if I play a chromatic scale there's no measurable response. . . But, now, and this is remarkable, if I change to atonal cluster, voilà... they fly in counter-clockwise, synchronized concentric circles, as though a regimented flock. Watson, this is exceptional. I, using musical theory, have created order out of chaos.

The detective exhibits certain knowledge of musical theory that collides with the film's 1890s setting. Technically speaking, as Bryan Simms reports, "[t]he term atonal began to appear sporadically in German technical writing on music in various contexts early in the twentieth century."[228] Willi Apel specifies:

> In the history of Western music, tonality dominates a period of about two centuries, from the end of the 17th to the end to the 19th century. . . . It is in

[228] Bryan R. Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg, 1908–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

> the works of [Richard] Wagner, [Claude] Debussy, and many of their contemporaries that a progressive breakdown of tonality begins to appear . . . . Tonality was used less and less by Wagner's successors, notably [Arnold] Schoenberg, and thereafter the evolution from tonality to atonality continued. . . . Nevertheless, the term *atonal* is generally (and preferably) confined to music that totally banishes tonality. Thus atonality, both as a concept and as a descriptive term, although at first challenged by Schoenberg himself, begins with the works he composed after 1909.[229]

As I previously mentioned, Holmes unconventional uses of the violin, namely his inclination to plucking lazily at the strings, are already remarked in the Holmesian canon but the scene additionally draws attention to an anachronistic detail. Emily Michelle Baumgart considers the scene as a tribute to Basil Rathbone's performance in Alfred L. Werker's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1939),[230] where the detective plays chromatic scales in the hope of finding a sequence that will send the flies away. Rathbone's Holmes continues his experiment at the end of the film, but Watson swats the flies with the newspaper.[231]

Ritchie's Holmes pays homage to Rathbone's interpretation by referring to the same experiment and adding something to it. Anticipating the theories of the future, Ritchie's Holmes manages to hypnotize the flies and announces that the discovery would allow him to create order out of disorder. The violin thus functions as both a magical object, with Gothic reminiscences, and a technological tool. The scene highlights not only the aesthetic value of the violin as an iconic prop, but also its

[229] Willi Apel, *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1972), 62.
[230] *The Complete Sherlock Holmes Collection* (Orland Park, IL: MPI Home Video, 2006). DVD.
[231] Baumgart, "'What One Man Can Invent, Another Can Discover,'" 34.

unordinary usage for scientific purposes. In this respect, the detective's creativity is in contrast with Professor Moriarty's exploitation of scientific progress for less noble purposes. For instance, at the end of the film, Holmes will save the members of the Parliament from a weapon of mass destruction that releases a lethal gas. The same compound, a pesticide called Zyklon B, was employed in Nazi gas chambers,[232] thus anachronistically anticipating the horrors of World War II. Furthermore, in *A Game of Shadows*, Moriarty raises the stakes and attempts to stir up political tensions in order to benefit from the trade of his own technologically advanced weapons in the imminent conflict. The occasional, yet incisive, references to retrofitted technology and cultural anxieties for a soon-to-be future in Ritchie's films justify steampunk readings, which can be given in relation to the score.

Following Ballew's claim that in steampunk music instrumentation is a key factor, and considering steampunk's major concern with handcrafted technology, it can be observed that in Todd Martens's previously mentioned interview for *Los Angeles Times* Zimmer mentions the introduction of a handcrafted "experibass," created by the Italian musician Diego Stocco assembling parts from different string instruments.[233] On a video from his official YouTube channel, Stocco gives a demonstration on the several sounds that can be obtained and digitally processed by beating the instrument with common objects, such as forks or drumsticks.[234] The artefact also lends itself to multiple uses, as Zimmer himself observes that "[a] lot of the percussion in the movie isn't percussion. . . . It's someone totally mistreating their upright bass."[235] The use of "string

[232] See Jon Huer, *Auschwitz, USA: A Comparative Study in Efficiency and Human Resources Management: How the Nazis' Final Solution Annihilated the Jews in Europe and How America's 'Free Enterprise' Has Consumed Our Intelligence and Humanity in America* (Lanham: Hamilton Books, 2010), 53.
[233] Martens, "Hans Zimmer."
[234] Diego Stocco, "Diego Stocco – Experibass," YouTube, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdYj7dMYwxM. Video.
[235] Martens, "Hans Zimmer."

percussion" is evident in the opening scene of the first film, which begins *in medias res* and introduces the reader to Holmes and Watson's investigation. The camera moves from the street pavement, into which the Warner Bros' logo is carved, to the carriage where Watson and Lestrade are loading their weapons. At this point, the spectator hears the melody of the film's main soundtrack song "Discombobulate." The melody is played by the Hungarian cimbalom, an exotic instrument that requires hammers to hit the strings, as in the piano. The result is a sound that recalls an out-of-tune harpsichord, aesthetically recreating a vintage atmosphere. It is thus clear that the detective is an emblem of the past. However, he is also associated with ethnic otherness.

The familiar sound of the piano, a common domestic instrument in the nineteenth century,[236] is obtained by means of an instrument that has a similar mechanics but carries ethnic associations. Besides defining the scene from an aesthetic point of view, the melody played by the Hungarian cymbalom also contributes to introducing Holmes's personality. As is the case with "Not in Blood but in Bond," the melody is strongly characterized by chromaticism, which, as already explained, conveys a certain instability or ambiguity. This may already point to the contrast between Holmes's masculine logical skills and Bohemian style.

As soon as the camera moves to the carriage, string percussive rhythms can be heard in the background, introducing the spectator to a chase. The scene is characterized by suspense not only because of the spectator's involvement in the chase, but mainly because Holmes's presentation is delayed. In fact, the spectator sees the running detective from behind before his face is clearly shown. The introduction ends when Holmes and Watson successfully stop Lord Blackwood, and the main protagonists, as well as the title of the film, are thoroughly revealed.

[236] See also Scott, *From the Erotic to the Demonic*, 47.

The next scene, set in Holmes's apartment, is preceded by a view of Baker Street that self-reflectively engages with the most iconic adaptations of Conan Doyle's texts, with particular reference to the so-called "Granada" Sherlock Holmes series. The series, which owes its name to the British company Granada Television, run between the 1980s and the early 1990s, starring Jeremy Brett as Holmes and David Burke, later replaced by Edward Hardwicke, as Dr Watson. Brett's interpretation of the great detective is even today remembered as one of the most faithful, iconic, and remarkable. According to Sommerfeld,

> [t]he fact that the Granada series is an important hypotext to Ritchie's film becomes evident if one compares the opening credits of the television series with the beginning of the new Holmes movie. Both show the 'Baker Street' sign, track a carriage, have extradiegetic music as well as ambient sound and they both exhibit a slight yellowish color dominance. In both cases, the camera, in a dolly shot, moves down and follows a carriage by tracking backward and slightly panning to the left at the same time. This shot overtly quotes the television series' opening credits and reveals that we are by no means dealing with a readaptation that completely ignores its cinematic precursors.[237]

More specifically, the Granada's intro starts by displaying the iconic sign, expands on the crowded street and its shops, and ends with a focus on Holmes, who masters the scene from his apartment. Similarly, Ritchie's opening sequence delays the introduction of Holmes but places the reference to Baker Street at the end, showing that the film's

[237] Sommerfeld, "Guy Ritchie's Sherlock Bond," 51–52.

tribute to previous representations is meant to subvert or push forwards the representation of the detective. In other words, when Holmes is introduced to the audience, the spectator immediately realizes that the Holmes they are going to meet is not the one they had been accustomed to by previous adaptations. Music helps the viewer recognize the difference through aesthetic choices that recall the iconic violin, but turn it into an ethnic and percussive instrument, in contrast with the much more traditional orchestration of the Granada series.

Percussive rhythms are thus associated with the running detective whose physicality and dynamism mark Ritchie's detachment from previous adaptations. Fittingly, the "savage rhythms" of the opening scene recall "[t]he discovery of percussive sonorities in melody instruments" and "the introduction of new playing techniques"[238] which in the early twentieth century characterized musicians like Bela Bartók, who made of percussion "an integral element of the texture."[239] Following the new interest in anthropology and ethnomusicology, which Bartók introduced and expanded, Igor Stravinsky similarly distinguished himself for introducing elements from primitive cultures in his composition. Notwithstanding, as Peter Hill comments, "[t]he scandal attending the *Rite* [*of the Spring*]'s première on 29 May 1913 became legendary"[240] since the audience was not ready for such innovations.

Within the historical context of the 1890s, especially in view of the iconicity of the Sherlock Holmes figure, the score evidences again an anachronistic reference that draws attention to the aesthetic of the pastiche, in line with the steampunk's tendency to overlap historical contexts and retrofit groundbreaking discoveries. From this point of view, both Zimmer and Stocco can be described as ideal steampunk musicians. Such a

[238] Michael Chanan, *From Handel to Hendrix: The Composer in the Public Sphere* (London: Verso, 1999), 234.
[239] Chanan, *From Handel to Hendrix*, 234.
[240] Peter Hill, *Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), vii.

feature, along with the tension between the Victorian aesthetic and technological advancement, marks a certain analogy with steampunk. The "experibass" itself recalls the "do-it-yourself" ethics of steampunks, who, in Cherry and Mellins's own words, "reject commodified mass production of fashion and lifestyle accessories, preferring to adopt historical styles that they produce themselves."[241]

Zimmer keeps exploring sounds also in the sequel *A Game of Shadows*, focused on the match between Holmes and his nemesis James Moriarty. The first tracks, namely "I See Everything", "That Is My Curse (Shadows – Part I)," "Tick Tock (Shadows – Part II)," and "Chess (Shadows – Part III)," present both old and new themes, introducing *ex novo* the persistent "tick-tock" trope of the chess clock and percussive rhythms that evoke factory sounds. As previously observed, Holmes and Watson end up looking for Moriarty in his own factory complex. The evil professor is clearly conducting groundbreaking experiments, since the laboratories the detective explores are filled with technological devices, bubbling chemical liquids, and advanced chemical weapons. The soundtrack song on the background, featuring the tick-tock sound, creates suspense but also associates the technological setting with the thinking process and therefore with the game of power between Holmes and Moriarty. The scene continues with percussive sounds in the music background, which evoke pistons and industrial mechanical tools, until Holmes is found by Colonel Moran. The detective is invited to replace his obsolete gun with more advanced weapons and is then presumably sedated with chloroform. To sum up, the mind of both Moriarty and Holmes is musically represented as a machine, but Holmes has a different approach to technology, one that is not in favor of unethical profit.

[241] Cherry and Mellins, "Negotiating the Punk in Steampunk," 18.

As previously mentioned, another major variable of steampunk concerns racial relationships. Here the steampunk and neo-Victorian interests collide. As Kristin Stimpson observes, "Empire is central to the Steampunk aesthetic and sometimes unapologetically so."[242] For instance,

> [b]ooks like *Rise of the Steampunk Empire*, *Gears of Empire: A Steampunk Survival Guide*, and *Stars of Empire: A Scientific Romance Set During the Victorian Conquest of Space* are few among many in the steampunk genre that evoke empire, but it isn't only the literary realm where empire is employed.[243]

Even when the empire is not the major theme, steampunk often promotes the figures of adventurous explorers, pioneers, and travelers. This seems to happen because, as Jay Strongman underlines, as opposed to postmodern globalization, steampunk exoticism evokes a "nostalgic hunger for a period in recent history when much of the world, for the West, was still an unexplored, exotic mystery waiting to be discovered and space travel was just a fanciful dream."[244] Therefore, according to Stimpson, "a closer look at the rhetoric of steampunk style reveals a complex and conflicted visual and material culture, which concomitantly resists, but ultimately reproduces, the ideology of empire."[245] More precisely,

[242] Kristin Stimpson, "Victorian, Machines, and Exotic Others: Steampunk and the Aesthetic of Empire," in *Clockwork Rhetoric: The Language and Style of Steampunk*, ed. Barry Brummett (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 22.
[243] Stimpson "Victorians, Machines, and Exotic Others," 25.
[244] Jay Strongman, *Steampunk: The Art of Victorian Futurism* (London: Korero Books, 2011), 7.
[245] Stimpson, "Victorians, Machines, and Exotic Others," 21.

> [t]he idea of discovery, exploration and exoticization works rhetorically to place the West at the center, while other places and peoples are Othered and turned into objects and lands to be discovered, as if their 'discovery' brings them into existence.[246]

Ritchie's films seem to offer a mediation between the neo-Victorian tendency to rewrite historical wrongs and the steampunk's crave for exploration.

In *A Game of Shadows*, Holmes and Watson travel to Paris in order to solve Moriarty's case and receive help from a group of Gypsies. This inspired Zimmer to collaborate with authentic musicians from a Gypsy community in Slovakia. The composer thus comments: "The racism was beyond anything I had ever experienced. In America, if you're racist, you know it's a bad thing. Over there, you don't necessarily acknowledge that that is a bad thing."[247] In fact, there are on-going debates concerning the co-existence of Gypsy communities in the Czech and Slovak territories. For example, Josef Kalvoda observes that

> [i]n Slovakia in the early 1980s, Gypsies, who make up 4 percent of the population, accounted for 24 percent of the charges for parasitism, 50 percent of robberies, 60 percent of petty thefts, 75 percent of charges for endangering the morals of youth, and 20 percent of all crimes committed.[248]

[246] Stimpson, "Victorians, Machines, and Exotic Others," 32–33.
[247] Radish, "Composer Hans Zimmer."
[248] Josef Kalvoda, "The Gypsies of Czechoslovakia," in *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe David*, eds. David Crowe and John Kolsti (1991; London: Routledge, 2015), 106.

This prompted the government to take action and the status of Gypsies has in some cases improved.[249] Yet, as Zimmer himself confirms, some Gypsy communities still live on the outskirts, torn between policies of inclusion, especially for children in schools, and prejudice or racial hate.

Drawing a parallel between the Victorian representation of Gypsies and their current position in Europe, Zimmer's words seem to reflect the concerns of neo-Victorianism, in that, as Ho claims, it "can help us address the drastically altered status of whiteness in the postcolonial world but more importantly, it allows us to see the residue of imperialism."[250] On the other hand, Horton stresses that

> [t]he depiction of this community, despite their usefulness and quaintness to the principle characters of the story, still reinforces stereotypes of thieving, vagrancy, drunkenness, and other negative assumptions with which Victorian society labeled them.[251]

Prejudice is rooted in a context where Gypsies struggle to integrate and adapt. Zimmer's thus finds a compromise, using the stereotype of the Gypsy musician to promote local talents outside the fictional world of the films. This is strongly emphasized in a video released for *ScoringSessions.com*,[252] where the composer tells about his journey and provides insight into his experience in Slovakia. In so doing, he draws attention to the universal power of music, as well as to an oral tradition of folk melodies and stylistic ornamentations that has been passed down across generations and may risk being

[249] See Kalvoda, "The Gypsies of Czechoslovakia," 106.
[250] Ho, *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire*, 12.
[251] Horton, "Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*," 192.
[252] "Hans Zimmer: Recording the Score – *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*," *ScoringSessions.com*, December 14, 2011, http://scoringsessions.com/video/11/.

forgotten, recalling the steampunk nostalgic fascination with the act of reviving, refashioning, and sharing the past.

Modern technology and visibility across media thus support cultural participation, which is essential to the steampunk culture. This is witnessed by the popularity of steampunk conventions, which make clear that the category "also exists as a field of art and a site of creativity."[253] Therefore, Zimmer's experimentations with exoticism and objects, within the context of Victorian aesthetics, recalls Forlini when she claims that "both material and literary engagements with the Victorian era help us to imagine more ethical relationships with all others – including things."[254]

At last, as already discussed in the previous sections of this dissertation, the third element that stands out in the score of *A Game of Shadows* is the inclusion of quotes from a classical repertoire. The fact that such references contribute to connoting the relationship between Holmes and Moriarty as sadomasochistic indicates that bromance is in contrast with patriarchy, embodied by Moriarty, an unscrupulous capitalist who benefits from wars, conflicts, and ground-breaking technological weapons. In this respect, Zimmer's promotion of local talents, experimentation, handcrafted objects, and participatory creative moments seems to align with what John M. McKenzie defines as the steampunk desire to preserve "a moment in technological history in which the destructive potential of science was still largely unrealized."[255] In fact, this potential in Ritchie's films is exposed but also counterbalanced by Holmes's own use of technology and social flexibility. Thus, in conclusion, music supports the definition of Holmes as awkwardly anachronistic, flexibly bohemian, and unconventionally modern—in other words, an ideal steampunk hero.

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[253] Beard, "Introduction," xxi.
[254] Forlini, "Technology and Morality," 74.
[255] John M. McKenzie, "Clockwork Counterfactuals: Allohistory and the Steampunk Rhetoric of Inquiry," in *Clockwork Rhetoric: The Language and Style of Steampunk*, ed. Barry Brummett (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 141.

Chapter 4

The Violin in *Sherlock*: A Case of Identity

4.1 *Sherlock* and Modern Psychology: The Medicalization of Victorian Logocentrism.

Co-created by Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat, the BBC television series *Sherlock* followed the release of Ritchie's films in 2010. This modernized adaptation, with Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman as lead characters, is set in the twenty-first century and ran until 2017, featuring four seasons, thirteen episodes[256] and two Christmas specials.[257] As Alan Johnson underlines, already after the first season the series achieved success beyond imagination, turning "its star Benedict Cumberbatch into the most unlikely of global sex symbols."[258] The drama benefitted from social media promotion, which prompted the creation of the fan portal Sherlockology,[259] where details about characters, episodes, props, and costumes can be found. It also inspired transmedia storytelling and intersemiotic adaptations, including two blogs, fictitiously run by John Watson and Sherlock Holmes respectively, and a homonymous manga adaptation by the artist Jay, published by Kadokawa Shoten.[260]

Since the series is set in contemporary London, the relationships between the characters are revised and updated. Sherlock Holmes is no longer Doyle's "champion of the law,"[261] but a man of dubious morality, a show-off who behaves recklessly and manipulates others for his own purposes. As opposed to Cumberbatch's almost

[256] First season (2010): "A Study in Pink," "The Blind Banker," "The Great Game." Second season (2012): "A Scandal in Belgravia," "The Hounds of Baskerville," "The Reichenbach Fall." Third season (2014): "The Empty Hearse," "The Sign of Three," "His Last Vow." Fourth season (2017): "The Six Thatchers," "The Lying Detective," "The Final Problem."
[257] "Many Happy Returns" (2013); "The Abominable Bride" (2016).
[258] Johnson, "It's Vestimentary, My Dear Watson," 118.
[259] Sherlockology: The Ultimate Guide for any BBC *Sherlock* Fan, accessed March 24, 2018, http://www.sherlockology.com/.
[260] Jay, *Sherlock: A Study in Pink* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2017).
[261] Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 480.

predatory detective, Freeman's John Watson is sensitive and empathic, although he struggles to recover from post-traumatic stress after spending some time in war areas. April Toadvine remarks that in the original texts, Watson's "very averageness makes him the representative of societal norm, unlike Sherlock Holmes."[262] Similarly, in the BBC television drama, the unemployed and traumatized doctor "represents economic and emotional instability familiar to many in the audience."[263] It becomes clear, however, that John's fascination with Sherlock's world hides a crave for danger and risk; John's moral integrity is therefore questioned as the story develops.

By investigating the characters' vulnerabilities, Sherlock's adaptors show awareness of modern psychology, uncovering a continuum between nineteenth- and twentieth-first-century queries. Indeed, Marie-Luise Kholke and Christian Gutleben point out:

> Long before World War I, the Holocaust, Hiroshima, and the Vietnam war, nineteenth-century artists and scientists had speculated about altered states of consciousness, split selves, and disturbed psyches produced by situations of existential crisis and extremity. . . . From the study of hysteria to 'railway spine' to neurasthenia and the US Civil War disorder of 'soldier heart' . . ., the pathological private self . . . became as much a focus of interest as the rational public self, the standard bearer of enlightened political, economic, and intellectual progress that supposedly undergirded nineteenth-century social reform and nation and empire building.[264]

[262] April Toadvine, "The Watson Effect: Civilizing the Sociopath," in *Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century: Essays on New Adaptations*, ed. Lynnette Porter (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), 59.
[263] Toadvine, "The Watson Effect," 62. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.
[264] Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben, "Introduction: Bearing After-Witness to the Nineteenth Century," in *Neo-Victorian Tropes of Trauma: The Politics of Bearing After-Witness to Nineteenth-Century Suffering*, eds. Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 1–2.

Influenced by his own medical career, Conan Doyle, too, portrayed madness and physical deformity in his stories. Joseph Kestner notices, in this regard, that the Holmesian canon "reflects a cultural concern that males are either not rational or declining from normative rational behavior; in either instance raising anxieties about race degeneration."[265] Holmes himself is described as a "self-poisoner by cocaine and tobacco"[266]; however, Kestner explains, "Doyle guarantees that the representation of Holmes will constitute a contestation of masculinity, as well as an advocacy, by endowing him with elements that mark him as both paradigm and outsider."[267] Thus, taking inspiration from the literary eccentric character, who naturally lends himself to psychological investigation, the TV series endeavors to provide a medical explanation for Holmes's singularity, as well as insight into what Conan Doyle never touches upon, namely Holmes's inner world and past.

As also Ragnhild Sollid notes, Sherlock's anti-heroic representation is not entirely innovative, as it confirms the success on screen of the cynical type, an example being Dr. Gregory House, the protagonist of the American television series *Dr House, M.D.*[268] Such characters have their Victorian antecedents, including Jane Austen's Mr. Darcy and Charles Dickens's Mr. Scrooge,[269] whose wicked personalities provide an opportunity for the reader to receive gratification from seeing the cold, often

[265] Kestner, *Sherlock's Men*, 206.
[266] Conan Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 225.
[267] Kestner, *Sherlock's Men*, 37.
[268] Ragnhild Sollid, "'A High-Functioning Sociopath?': Sherlock Holmes (Psycho)Analyzed" (master's thesis, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2016), 47, https://www.academia.edu/26143187/A_high-functioning_sociopath_Sherlock_Holmes_psycho_analysed.
[269] Mr. Darcy is a character created by the British writer Jane Austen for her famous novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). The wealthy, cold man initially disregards the female protagonist because of her inferior social status but, in the end, admits to loving her dearly. By contrast, Ebenezer Scrooge is the main anti-heroic protagonist of Charles Dickens's novella "A Christmas Carol" (1843). The man, who is selfish and mean, is visited by the spirits of the past, present, and future Christmas, who invite him to repent for his unkindness.

misogynous man finally surrounding to passions. It goes without saying that these characters embody extreme stereotyped versions of Victorian masculinity, which generally praised control over emotions.

Pertinently, *Sherlock*'s link to the Victorian heritage is marked by male homosocial power, embodied by Sherlock's brother Mycroft (Mark Gatiss) and the consulting criminal Jim Moriarty (Andrew Scott). Albeit cold and distant, the former reinforces the bond between Holmes and Watson, while the latter develops an insane obsession for Sherlock, playing the homosexual in "The Great Game" and engaging in flirtatious conversations with the sleuth, whom he nicknames "The Virgin." Since its first broadcast, after all, the series has fuelled debates over the male protagonists' closeness even though, in the final analysis, any question about Holmes and Watson's intimacy has remained unanswered. The persistent emphasis on the protagonists' homosocial bond affects negatively the female characters of the series. For instance, according to Antonja Primorac, the transformation of the adventuress Irene Adler (Lara Pulver) into a lesbian sex worker in "A Scandal in Belgravia" is indicative of the

> the blatant and much overlooked loss of Victorian female characters' agency that takes place in the process of 'updating' Victorian texts in contemporary screen adaptations through the—now almost routine—'sexing up' of the proverbially prudish Victorians.[270]

Irene's marginality is confirmed by her quick disappearance from the series after staking her own feelings for Sherlock in a dangerous game of power, which she loses. She is eventually saved by Sherlock in one of the most controversial scenes of the

[270] Primorac, "The Naked Truth," 90.

series, where she is seen crying on her knees, wearing a hijab, and waiting to be executed by terrorist kidnappers. Equally problematic is John's wife Mary Morstan (Amanda Abbingdon). Introduced for the first time in the third season, she appears devoted to John and good-hearted. However, after marrying John in "The Sign of Three," in "His Last Vow" she is blackmailed by the villainous Charles Augustus Magnussen and forced to reveal details about her previous career as a secret agent. She eventually accepts Sherlock's help, thus perpetuating the cliché of the damsel in distress.

The third noteworthy female character is Emelia Ricoletti, featured in "The Abominable Bride" (2016), a special episode in Victorian costumes. The story proves to be a drug-induced hallucination, or, in Felicia McDuffie's words, a "psychodrama"[271] enacted by Sherlock himself. More precisely, the episode vividly revokes Victorian Gothic atmospheres and settings, focusing on the case of a suicidal bride that seemingly comes back from the grave to persecute male oppressors. The episode received negative reviews on newspapers for its self-reflective awakenings *à la* Christopher Nolan's *Inception*[272] and the representation of suffragettes as violent conspirators.[273] According to critics, already by the end of the third season *Sherlock* had "morphed into a grotesque

[271] Felecia McDuffie, "'I Made Me': Narrative Construction of Identity in *Sherlock*'s 'The Abominable Bride,'" in *Who Is Sherlock? Essays on Identity in Modern Holmes Adaptations*, ed. Lynnette Porter (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2016), 43. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.
[272] *Inception*, directed by Christopher Nolan (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros Pictures, 2010). It is a science fiction movie with Leonardo di Caprio as lead character; it focuses on the main protagonist's possibility to penetrate the subconscious through a multi-layered structure of dreams that constitutes a complicated game of *mises en abyme*.
[273] See Jaber Mohamed, "Baffled by the Sherlock Special? Bizarre Episode Left Fans Scratching Their Heads. . . but Detective's Admission of 'a Rare Failure' Could Provide a Clue to the Mystery," *Mail Online*, January 3, 2016, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3382429/Bizarre-Sherlock-episode-left-fans-scratching-heads.html; Jack Shepherd, "Sherlock 'Mansplaining Feminism to Feminists Dressed in KKK Hoods' in The Abominable Bride Has Annoyed Viewers," *Independent*, January 3, 2016, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/sherlock-mansplaining-feminism-to-feminists-dressed-in-kkk-hoods-in-the-abominable-bride-has-annoyed-a6794416.html.

parody of the witty, faithful TV adaptation it once was,"[274] and season four, with its *pastiche* patchwork of action scenes, exoticism, and gothic locations, further confirmed critical concerns.

Besides the marginal role attributed to women, another mark of homosociality is logocentrism, which is strongly medicalized in *Sherlock*. Throughout the series the detective claims to be a "hyper-functioning sociopath," but some critics and psychologists contest this definition, especially because "the professional psychiatric community does not provide a clear-cut conception of the sociopath; it does not even recognize sociopathy or psychopathy."[275] Notably, the fifth edition of the *Diagnostical and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* uses "antisocial personality disorder" (ASPD), that is, "a pervasive pattern of disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others that begins in childhood or early adolescence and continues into adulthood."[276] The fact remains, as also Andreas Jacke and Ragnhild Sollid observe, that fictional characters, for obvious reasons, cannot be correctly diagnosed[277] and Sherlock's complex personality resists univocal definitions by professionals.

Despite the *DSM-V*'s dismissal of "psychopathy," the term is still widely used in psychiatric literature, even though not without controversies.[278] In this regard, some scholars make a distinction between the primary psychopath and the secondary psychopath, or sociopath. American neuroscientist James Fallon explains that the

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[274] Roisin O'Connor, "Sherlock Season 4 Has Morphed into a Grotesque Parody of the Witty, Faithful TV Adaptation it Once Was," *Independent*, January 4, 2017, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/sherlock-season-4-episode-one-benedictcumberbatch-martin-freeman-tv-series-mary-watson-amanda-a7509261.html.

[275] Kathryn McClain and Grace Cripps, "The BBC Sherlock: A 'Sociopathic' Master of the Social Game," *Who is Sherlock? Essays on Identity in Modern Holmes Adaptations,* ed. Lynnette Porter (Jefferson, NC: McFarland), 103. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.

[276] American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* 5th ed., (Washington: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013), 659. Henceforth as *DSM-V*.

[277] See Andreas Jacke, *Mind Games: Über Literarische, Psychoanalytische und Gendertheoretische Sendeinhalte bei A.C.Doyle und der BBC-Serie Sherlock* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2017), 36; Sollid, "'A High-Functioning Sociopath?'": i. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.

[278] See Martin Kantor, *The Psychopathy of Everyday Life: How Antisocial Personality Disorder Affects All of Us* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 6.

former "doesn't typically respond to punishment, fear, stress, or disapproval, and often lacks empathy." On the contrary, the latter "can feel stress or guilt . . . and is generally capable of empathy."[279]

Psychopathy is checked using Robert Hare's Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R).[280] Relying on these criteria, Fallon claims for *Business Insider* that "[b]y all appearances, [Sherlock] is a primary psychopath."[281] However, Fallon acknowledges that Cumberbatch's Holmes "is perhaps a tiny bit more humane than Doyle's original character," and adds that "these changes were probably necessary to make him more likeable to the audience.[282] By contrast, Sollid believes that Sherlock's psychopathy or sociopathy cannot "be attributed to the character, but must be seen as a symptom of a culture which increasingly values psychopathic traits."[283] In this perspective, the portrayal of the psychopath on screen ends up perpetuating popular misconceptions concerning psychopathy among non-professionals. Such erroneous beliefs may indeed reflect idealized expectations of romance, the desire to see the stone-hearted male character finally domesticated.

Kathryn McClain and Grace Cripps notice that the detective "exhibits emotions throughout the show—emotions that a psychopath or sociopath could not—and this contradiction calls into question his claim."[284] Pursuing similar skeptical lines of investigation, Jennifer Dondero and Sabrina J. Pippin propose a diagnosis of post-

[279] Tanya Lewis, "We Asked a Neuroscientist if Sherlock Is Actually a Sociopath and His Answer Surprised Us," *Business Insider*, January 8, 2016, http://www.businessinsider.com/is-sherlock-holmes-really-a-sociopath-2016-1

[280] The twenty items to be scored are: glib and superficial charm, grandiose self, need for stimulation, pathological lying, cunning and manipulativeness, lack of remorse or guilt, shallow effect, callousness and lack of empathy, parasitic lifestyle, poor behavioural control, sexual promiscuity, early behaviour problems, lack of realistic long-term goals, impulsivity, irresponsibility, failure to accept responsibility for own actions, many short-term marital relations, juvenile delinquency, revocation of conditional release, criminal versatility. Sollid analyzes in detail Sherlock's behaviours by applying the PLC-R.

[281] Lewis, "We Asked a Neuroscientist if Sherlock Is Actually a Sociopath and His Answer Surprised Us."

[282] Lewis, "We Asked a Neuroscientist if Sherlock Is Actually a Sociopath and His Answer Surprised Us."

[283] Sollid, "'A High-Functioning Sociopath?,'" 4.

[284] MacClain and Cripps, "The BBC Sherlock," 104.

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)[285] following developmental trauma, "characterized by stressful events, usually beginning in childhood or adolescence when significant cognitive, emotional, and social learning takes place."[286] Fittingly, Roland Schouten and James Silver observe that the symptoms of PTSD "could be mistaken for those of psychopathy suggesting the presence of almost psychopathy in the absence of the full criteria."[287]

For the purpose of my argument, I draw attention to the traits "lack of empathy" and "grandiose self," which can be found in ASPD, psychopathy, and narcissistic personality disorder.[288] Whereas Elsa F. Ronningstam reports that narcissists "are dependent upon the evidence of their success, and they can become hypersensitive to the lack of such evidence."[289] These observations seem to fit Sherlock's personality. For example, in "A Study in Pink," the detective recklessly risks his life to validate his theories, driven by the selfish desire to prove his own intelligence. Sherlock's relationship with John, especially at the beginning of the series, builds upon co-dependence. In "The Reichenbach Fall," Sherlock's colleague Molly Hooper (Louise Brealey) addresses this point: "You look sad. When you think he [John] can't see you. Are you okay?" The detective's speechless reaction validates Molly's deduction about Sherlock's need for admiration, implying that his actions are inspired not so much by morality as by a childish endeavor to boost his ego. Sherlock also repeatedly devaluates his colleagues throughout the series and ostensibly enjoys playing mind games with enemies, like Jim Moriarty, who can meet the expectations of his own sense of

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[285] See Jennifer Dondero and Sabrina J. Pippin, "It's Traumatic Stress, My Dear Watson: A Clinical Conceptualization of Sherlock," in *Who is Sherlock? Essays on Identity in Modern Holmes Adaptations,* ed. Lynnette Porter (Jefferson, NC: McFarland),77–88. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.
[286] Dondero and Pippin, "It's Traumatic Stress, My Dear Watson," 81.
[287] Ronald Schouten and James Silver, *Almost a Psychopath; Do I (or Does Someone I Know) Have a Problem with Manipulation and Lack of Empathy?* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 2012), 77.
[288] American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-V*, 670.
[289] Elsa F. Ronningstam, *Identifying and Understanding the Narcissistic Personality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9.

entitlement. When it comes to personal relationships, however, Sherlock often makes wrong deductions, which suggests an inflated identity. Furthermore, his lack of a real emotional interaction with other characters points to a certain fear of intimacy. It is also worth mentioning that the sleuth has a love-hate relationship with his older brother Mycroft (Mark Gatiss). The latter's position in the British government is used to both protect and patronize his sibling, which heightens the detective's inferiority complexes. This becomes evident in "His Last Vow," wherein Sherlock experiences a regression to childhood after being shot in the chest and hallucinates Mycroft insulting him.

Enlightening is season four's revelation that Sherlock was traumatized by a secret sister he removed from his mind. Being incredibly intelligent but also dangerously instable, Eurus Holmes was incarcerated at an early age after abusing Sherlock, killing his childhood friend Victor, and setting the family's house on fire. Her figure, akin to Sherlock's one, is influenced by Victorian stereotypes. For example, Gavia Baker-Whitelaw notices:

> In a fascinating example of *Sherlock* being more Victorian than its Victorian origins, [Eurus] ticks every box for the kind of madwoman who gets locked up in an asylum in a 19th century melodrama: pale skin, unkempt hair, unpleasant sexual appetites (she's implied to have raped and mutilated a prison guard), unspecified mental illness, and hints of supernatural powers. And, of course, all her crimes were motivated by a desire for male attention.[290]

[290] Gavia Baker-Whitelaw, "'The Final Problem' is season's 4 Most Entertaining 'Sherlock' Episode—and Its Most Sexist," *Daily Dot*, Jan 16, 2017, https://www.dailydot.com/parsec/sherlock-final-problem-review-eurus-finale/.

As an adult, Eurus proves highly manipulative and capable of killing and raping without remorse, which is compatible with severe ASPD or psychopathy. Since she is also said to have psychoses, her ASPD may be comorbid with paranoid personality disorder. The DMS-V states:

> Although antisocial behavior may be present in some individuals with paranoid personality disorder, it is not usually motivated by a desire for personal gain or to exploit others as in antisocial personality disorder, but rather is more often attributable to a desire for revenge. [291]

As revealed at the end of "The Final Problem," Eurus is indeed motivated by revenge and her abuses shed some light on Sherlock's early process of identity formation; according to the *Encyclopedia of Psychological Trauma*,

> childhood trauma and PTSD are two of the most robust and frequently examined risk factors for later antisocial behaviors, and have been found to be associated with increased risk for these behaviors among both male and female samples. . . . [I]ndividual (e.g., intrapersonal) risk factors have also been implicated in the development of antisocial behavior, including genetics, biological factors . . . and personality traits (e.g., impulsivity, affective instability, and insecure attachment). Further, recent research suggests that emotion dysregulation and distress intolerance may underlie

[291] American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-V*, 652.

> antisocial behavior, with these behaviors . . . functioning to escape, avoid, or otherwise regulate unwanted feelings and emotional distress.[292]

On the other hand, Neville Symington, taking narcissism into consideration, believes that it "is nearly always the product of a trauma. The whole narcissistic way of functioning—the grandiosity and the disowning of parts of the self—is a defensive procedure."[293]

At this point, it becomes clear that Sherlock's personality is ambivalent and can be analyzed from several perspectives. Dondero and Pippin claim that trauma played a significant role in the detective's early devolvement, and he may opportunistically use sociopathy to his own advantage. On the other hand, Eurus's severe pathologies and Mycroft's cold attitude draw attention to a potential genetic predisposition to psychopathic tendencies or other emotional dysfunctions in the Holmes family. Another possibility is that the trauma triggered a narcissistic defensive response, which would share some symptoms with psychopathy.

Regardless of the outcome, that is, whether Sherlock is a psychopath or behaves like one, the claim of sociopathy or psychopathy is extremely important in relation to a seemingly marginal element that proves crucial at the end of the series: the detective's relationship with his violin.

4.2 Sherlock's Violin

Sherlock's adaptors do not entirely give up stereotypical representations of Holmes. For instance, I have already mentioned Sherlock's great coat, which recalls Holmes's

[292] Matthew Jakupcak and Kim L. Gratz, "Antisocial Behavior," in *The Encyclopedia of Psychological Trauma*, eds. Gilbert Reyes, Jon D. Elhai, and Julian D. Ford (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 34–35.
[293] Neville Symington, *Narcissism: A New Theory* (London: Karnac Books, 1993), 73.

Inverness Cape. The deerstalker is mentioned as well, since Sherlock unwillingly accepts it as a gift in "The Reichenbach Fall" and occasionally wears it in ironic contexts, confirming a certain degree of engagement with Holmesian clichés. The series thus unsurprisingly features the iconic violin, which is used to mark Sherlock's emotional growth or impasse.

Speaking of relationships, Baumgart suggests that Sherlock and Mycroft's "sibling rivalry [is] taken to extremes and shaped by a significant role for the violin."[294] She observes, for instance, that in "The Great Game," Mycroft asks Sherlock to take on a case on his behalf, but "Sherlock drives him out of the flat with a pattern of rapid, discordant string crossings: technically impressive but musically abrasive."[295] Further expanding on Baumgart, I suggest focusing on another scene from "A Scandal in Belgravia": Mycroft requests Sherlock's help for a case but refuses to announce the name of the client. When Mycroft is ready to leave the apartment, Sherlock says: "Give her my love" and plays "God Save the Queen,"[296] making the name of the client clear to everybody in the room.

Whereas in these scenes the violin ironically highlights Sherlock and Mycroft's conflicts, in other contexts its usage prompts more serious considerations. In particular, it can be observed that the Queen is mentioned throughout the series but never seen, like a spectral signifier that wanders in search of meaning. For instance, in "A Scandal Belgravia," John joins Sherlock at Buckingham Palace and asks whether they are going to see the Queen, to which Sherlock replies, when Mycroft shows up: "Oh, apparently yes!" The queerness of the joke lies in the double temporality it subtends, expressed by the reference to Buckingham Palace, which became the official residence of the royal

[294] Baumgart, "What One Man Can Invent, Another Can Discover," 45.
[295] Baumgart, "What One Man Can Invent, Another Can Discover," 45.
[296] The national anthem of the United Kingdom.

family under Queen Victoria,[297] and by Mycroft acting as a male surrogate for the female sovereign. The signifier thus becomes the object of logocentric equivocations, such as in "The Sign of Three," when John says to Sherlock "You are not a puzzle solver; you never have been. You're a drama queen!" Similarly, in "A Scandal in Belgravia," after dancing his way into the London Tower, Moriarty sits on a throne wearing the Crown Jewels, whilst in "The Final Problem" he poses as a singer to the strains of "I Want to Break Free" by Queen.[298] It can be observed that these exclamations appear in performative contexts: already in the first episode, after all, Mycroft describes his brother—and by reflection himself—as a person who "does love to be dramatic." This is further confirmed in "His Last Vow," where Sherlock apologises to Mary for his methods by replying: "Sorry. I never could resist a touch of drama."

As Emily A. Haddad and William Schweinle clarify, in the nineteenth century "[t]he reign of Great Britain's Queen Victoria provide[d] an early paradigm for feminine national leadership."[299] More precisely, "by deferring her femininity and operating in a somewhat masculine, but at times, politically, feminine way, Victoria's relations with the state and the public originate in her explicitly female role within the family unit."[300] Notwithstanding, the fact that Mycroft and Moriarty—both played by homosexual actors—impersonate the queen in queered performative contexts blurs the line between the terms "drama queen" and "drag queen." Under such circumstances, Mycroft's replacement of the Queen is ambivalent since it conflates regressive reaffirmations of

[297] See *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online, s.v. "Buckingham Palace," accessed 2 December 2018, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Buckingham-Palace.
[298] British rock band whose lead vocalist was Freddy Mercury. Mercury was homosexual and died of AIDS in 1991.
[299] Emily A. Haddad and William Schweinle, "The Feminine Political Persona: Queen Victoria, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Michelle Bachelet," in *Feminism and Women's Rights Worldwide: Heritage, Roles and Issues*, volume 1, ed. Michelle A. Paludi (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 97.
[300] Haddad and Schweinle, "The Feminine Political Persona," 100.

homosocial power and progressive reactions to Victorian heteronormativity. If Mycroft is a model of identification, then Sherlock himself identifies with the queen, but the result is "the drama queen," which implies "the drag queen." As Judith Butler observes,

> when a man is performing drag as a woman, the 'imitation' that drag is said to be is taken as an 'imitation' of femininity, but the 'femininity' that he imitates is not understood as being itself an imitation. Yet if one considers that gender is acquired, that it is assumed in relation to ideals which are never quite inhabited by anyone, then femininity is an ideal which everyone always and only 'imitates.'[301]

Although Sherlock is not technically dragging, his clumsy imitation of surrogate queens may be read as a failed internalisation of the feminine and the maternal figure, which adds to the gender roles confusion. In fact, as opposed to the values promoted by Queen Victoria, as Linda J. Jencson emphasizes, "Moffat and Gatiss build a fictitious chosen family centered on 221B Baker Street while simultaneously deconstructing "the Family" in Western society."[302] The relationship between Sherlock and Mycroft is ambiguous and slightly homoerotic, since more than once Mycroft, a confirmed bachelor, shows his deep attachment to his brother and rushes to rescue him out of concern.

In *Sherlock*, the performative extremization of essentialist gender roles paradoxically accounts for its queerness, as becomes evident in "A Scandal in Belgravia," whose marked focus on disguising underlines Sherlock's attempt to perform

[301] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), 145.
[302] Linda J. Jencso, "Chosen Families, TV and Tradition: Queering Relations in the BBC's *Sherlock*," in *Who is Sherlock? Essays on Identity in Modern Holmes Adaptations*, ed. Lynnette Porter (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2016), 147. Adobe Digital Editions ePub.

Victorian masculinity. For example, when the detective shows up at Irene's house dressed as a priest, she comments:

> IRENE: Do you know the big problem with a disguise, Mr. Holmes? However hard you try, it's always a self-portrait.
> SHERLOCK: You think I'm a vicar with a bleeding face?
> ADLER: I think you're damaged, delusional and believe in a higher power. In your case, it's yourself.

Irene immediately recognizes Sherlock's egotistic façade, which nonetheless cracks when the woman fakes her own death and Sherlock is heard composing sad music. According to Baumgart,

> The work's mourning tone and its longing implications are immediately evident to John, Mrs. Hudson, and the audience. This expression of affection, a chink in Holmes's self-proclaimed sociopathic armor, can only be communicated musically; verbalizing the desire is too difficult for someone so reserved.[303]

Rather than conveying desire or real sorrow, however, the violin seems to help the detective cope with a narcissistic wound inflicted by the momentary loss of a game of power. The sorrow for losing the role play suggests that what Sherlock developed is not a real identity but rather an inflated self that feeds on external expectations and repudiates emotional intimacy. This narcissistic fixation, which simultaneously rejects

[303] Baumgart, "What One Man Can Invent, Another Can Discover," 47.

intimate relationships with others but builds on their approval, accounts for Sherlock's sexual immaturity. Indeed, when Irene comes back, she complaints with John about Sherlock's cold attitude and asks:

> IRENE: Are you jealous?
>
> JOHN: We're not a couple.
>
> IRENE: Yes you are. There . . . (She sends a message to Sherlock with her cell phone) "I'm not dead. Let's have dinner."
>
> JOHN: Who . . . who the hell knows about Sherlock Holmes, but – for the record – if anyone out there still cares, I'm not actually gay.
>
> IRENE: Well, I am. Look at us both.

The conversation calls attention to the queer triangle in which Sherlock, who eavesdrops on them from behind a wall, is involved: unable to take a clear gendered position between the two sexes, he eventually engages in avoidant behavior and silently leaves the building. Due to the episode's prominent level of performativity, it is difficult to determine whether Sherlock's previous musical compositions were inspired by real empathy or the sorrow for the momentary loss of an exciting game of power. Indeed, when at the end of the episode Sherlock realizes that Irene has feelings for him, he humiliates her, regaining his position of superiority and foreclosing any possibility of romance. In all cases, the violin is used to highlight the cracking of Sherlock's inflated ego.

The television series portrays triangular situations in other episodes as well. Notably, in "The Reichenbach Fall," while waiting for Moriarty in Baker Street,

Sherlock plays Johann Sebastian Bach's *Sonata in G Minor*, which Baumgart describes as

> a somewhat less personal choice that allows Holmes to hide his terror behind contrapuntal competence, revealing far less about his emotional state than his own compositions. . . . In this case, composer Michael Price evokes what he identifies as the common perception of Bach's music as logical.[304]

Baumgart's last statement is supported by musicological evidence. Bach's music is characterized by polyphony, namely the overlap of various independent melodic lines, also called voices. Handling more than one voice at once requires remarkable logical skills, as well as a perfect technical mastery of the instrument. More precisely, Ivan Galamian states: "Chords in polyphonic music present a special problem, because they have to be played in a way that not only does not interrupt the continuity of the individual voices but also actually helps to clarify their individual sequences."[305] At the same time, Bach is also associated with Gothicism by some scholars. For instance, George A. Kochevitsky notices that

> [a]s in the Gothic cathedral the general constructive plan grows from the severe simple parts, but develops not into petrified forms but into lines rich in nuances—so in Bach's structure we see the union of the broad, stern plan with vivid, expressive details.[306]

[304] Baumgart, "What One Man Can Invent, Another Can Discover," 46–47.
[305] Ivan Galamian, *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2013), 90.
[306] George A. Kochevitsky, *Performing Bach's Keyboard Music* (New York: Pro/Am Music Resources, 1996), 146.

The music performance thus seems to hide a reference to the literary Gothic trope of the *doppelgänger,* an evil alter ego, such as a peer, a twin or the result of a split personality, which embodies what the subject might become or what it suppressed within itself, including perverse sexual appetites.[307]

Fittingly, when Moriarty arrives at Baker Street, Sherlock politely invites him to make himself comfortable in Watson's couch, but the consulting criminal deliberately sits down on Sherlock's chair, introducing the theme of the identity switch. The conversation that follows deserves attention:

> JIM: You know when he was on his death bed, Bach, he heard his son at the piano playing one of his pieces. The boy stopped before he got to the end...
>
> SHERLOCK: . . . and the dying man jumped out of his bed, ran straight to the piano and finished it.
>
> JIM: Couldn't cope with an unfinished melody.
>
> SHERLOCK: Neither can you. That's why you've come.

[307] See Tony Fonseca, "The Doppelgänger," in *Icons of Horror and the Supernatural: An Encyclopedia of Our Worst Nightmares*, ed. S. T. Joshi (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 187–214. In the Gothic novels and novellas of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the *doppelgänger* is used to evoke an *alter ego* that shares elements with the protagonist or another main character, but onto which evil or deviating features are projected. In this kind of literature, the double is associated with secrecy and mystery so that its existence, or the truth behind him/her, is delayed and creates narrative suspense. Erotic connotations, as well as incest, are also frequent,as forms of unconventional and uncontrolled sexualities that defy order, social stability, and heteronormativity. The double can represent a second or hidden identity of the same subject, such as in the novella "Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" (1886) by Robert Louis Stevenson, or another person that comes to replace the subject or oppose it. It can be therefore an antagonist with the same abilities as the protagonist but with an evil attitude, such as in the case of Holmes and Moriarty, or even a twin or sibling, such as in "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), first published in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* 5 (1839). The unnamed narrator of the story is invited at the house of his friend Roderick Usher. The man suffers from a mysterious illness, which makes him exceedingly nervous. At the mysterious location, the House of Usher, the narrator finds out the Roderick has a twin sister, named Madeline, who suffered from the same illness and eventually died. Although the narrator witnesses her entombment, Madeline is seen coming back from the grave to persecute and kill her brother. Both heirs perish along with their house, which cracks and collapses to the ground. Jacke notices similarities between this story and *Sherlock*, drawing attention to the cliché of the feminine that comes back to avenge oppression. Jacke, *Mind Games*, 140.

Sherlock symbolically associates Moriarty with Johann Sebastian Bach, the composer, imagining himself in the place of the "son" who performs his works. The consulting criminal subsequently claims to be in possession of a computer code that can virtually open any door:

> JIM: Big client list: rogue governments, intelligence communities, terrorist cells. They all want me. Suddenly, I'm Mr. Sex.
> SHERLOCK: If you could break any bank, what do you care about the highest bidder?
> JIM: I don't. I just like to watch them all competing. "Daddy loves me the best!" Aren't ordinary people adorable? Well, you know: you've got John. I should get myself a live-in one.

As it can be observed, the conversation between the two of them becomes increasingly sexualized, ambiguous, and almost incestuous, exposing the series' Gothic sublayer: Moriarty keeps referring to himself as to "Mr. Sex" and "Daddy" before confessing to Sherlock "I owe you a fall, Sherlock. I owe you."[308] As is the case with Ritchie's films, the villain is portrayed as a patriarchal predator with sadistic and incestuous instincts, whereas Sherlock is in a position of inferiority, confined to the role of a subjugated "son" or sexual pray. The figure of the son in *Sherlock* can therefore be considered as a double in that it shares the same familiar traits as the father but can decide whether to follow his steps, or not.

[308] In this scene, Moriarty is seen carving an apple with a knife. When he leaves the apartment, Sherlock realizes that he carved the letters "I" and "You" separated by a hole that looks like an "O." The graphic sign alludes to the phonetic pronunciation of "owe" but also gestures towards the conventional graphic representation of a heart that is used to say: "I love you."

In "The Sign of Three" it becomes clear that triangular situations hide in fact psychoanalytical conflicts. At the end of the episode, after playing a waltz he himself composed for John's and Mary's wedding, Sherlock clumsily confesses that there is a deduction he kept for himself and suggests that Mary do a pregnancy test. The couple panics but Sherlock assures that they practiced enough as parents and specifies: "Well, you're hardly gonna need me around now that you've got a real baby on the way." Once again, Sherlock imagines himself as a "baby," but his position is queered in the next conversation:

> JOHN: Well, we can't all three dance. There are limits!
>
> SHERLOCK: Yes, there are.
>
> MARY: Come on, husband. Let's go.
>
> JOHN: This isn't a waltz, is it?
>
> SHERLOCK: Don't worry, Mary, I have been tutoring him.
>
> JOHN: He did, you know. Baker Street, behind closed curtains. Mrs. Hudson came in one time. Don't know how those rumors started!

This representation of childhood as a site of traumas, violent impulses, and rivalry does not fit the Victorian ideals of infantile "purity" and "innocence;"[309] rather, Sherlock is the Freudian polymorphous perverse child whose sexuality is complex and conflicted.[310] Hence, the drama pays homage to the original texts only to deconstruct them. More

[309] See Anne Bolin and Patricia Whelehan, *Perspectives on Human Sexuality* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 187.

[310] In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Sigmund Freud engaged in an analysis of human sexual behaviors and introduced the idea that children, too, express sexual urges. See Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," *in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, *Volume VII (1901–1905): A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexualities and Other Works*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanlysis, 1953), 173–222.

specifically, what the "sign of three" refers to is not so much John's family as its uncanny double, represented by the Holmes clan. In such a familiar context, the meaning attached to a signifier can easily shade into its very opposite or engender ambiguous and paradoxical outcomes. As a result, all members can switch roles and simultaneously play more than one part, such as Mycroft, who takes the place of the Queen and becomes an androgynous combination of mother and father, father and brother, sibling and enemy.

Sherlock's confusion, in this regard, is underlined in the episode in Victorian costumes "The Abominable Bride." Herein Sherlock, with the help of drugs, imagines himself in the nineteenth century in order to solve the old case of a bride who apparently comes back from the grave to assassinate her husband. At the morgue, Watson has an argument with the pathologist Hooper, who is forced to disguise as a male to embark on a career as a doctor:

> WATSON: Er, the gunshot wound was obviously the cause of death, but there are clear indicators of consumption. Might be worth a post mortem. We need all the information we can get.
>
> HOOPER: Oh, isn't he observant now that Daddy's gone?
>
> WATSON: I am observant in some ways, just as Holmes is quite blind in others.
>
> HOOPER: Really?
>
> WATSON: Yes. Really. Amazing what one has to do to get ahead in a man's world.

The fact that Sherlock is nicknamed "daddy" implies that in this Victorian fantasy he has "moved forward" and abandoned his position of "child." This is only an illusion, however: McDuffie explains:

> *Daddy* is the Freudian father and represents the superego, the internalization of the demand by the parental figure that the child conform to the rules of culture and received standards. *Daddy* punishes transgressions, especially those motivated by the id, with guilt and neuroses. In this case, as subsequent scenes make clear, the *Daddy* that Sherlock has internalized is not his own father, but Mycroft, specifically Sherlock's perception of Mycroft's demands and the standards of rationality that he has made part of his self-concept.[311]

Since fatherhood is not the result of internalisation but of Sherlock's emulation of historically mediated and mediatic representations of the Victorian past, the psychodrama results in a narrative disruption. Sherlock finds out that the leader of the murderous feminist sect he is chasing is his own double Moriarty, dressed as a bride: the queer imitation of femininity shows that the meaning of "woman" is momentarily deferred in a game of mirrors. Consequently, the metafictional false awakenings Sherlock experiences afterwards, align with "the tendency of postmodern reworking [which] challenges ideas about textual hierarchy, legitimacy, and authority."[312]

Sherlock's psychic conflicts are finally solved in the fourth season. Already before its official release, the violin had been featured in one of the teasers—a

[311] McDuffie, "'I Made Me,'" 47. Italics in the original.
[312] Bowler and Cox, "Introduction to Adapting the Nineteenth Century," 3.

photograph, more precisely—on *Sherlock*'s official Facebook page.[313] The instrument is at the center of the square picture and one of its strings is broken; the series' title and release date are laconically placed to the left and right of the instrument, respectively. The predominant colors, those of the gray background and the violin's brown body, are cold and dull, like the nuances in the institution where Eurus Holmes is kept prisoner. Under such circumstances, the broken violin represents the link between brother and sister; when the two finally meet, he can hear her playing in her cell. As Jacke observes, the glass, which proves illusory, may stand as a metaphor for the line between good and evil.[314] A closer analysis reveals it also stands for objectification: deprived of her privacy, Eurus is constantly monitored and controlled by Mycroft, who similarly exploited Sherlock on behalf of the English government.

When Sherlock interrogates Eurus, she ignores his requests and asks him to play the violin, only to stop him as he proceeds to perform Bach: "No, not Bach; you clearly don't understand it. Play you." By playing Bach, Sherlock musically represents himself as a detective, but this performative screen, onto which egotistic images are projected, flattens his critical skills. At this point, Sherlock unconsciously picks up Irene's motif, choosing the piece he composed when his logocentric ego showed signs of fracturing. Crucially, Sherlock reacts with visible discomfort when told to have been taught music by Eurus in early childhood: much to his sister disappointment, he forgot her completely. Consequently, the violin highlights another queer triangle: after receiving the instrument from Mycroft, Eurus now gives it to Sherlock, whose memories have been manipulated by the eldest sibling. The naked truth is eventually uncovered: Mycroft selfishly claimed both the mother and the father role for himself, erasing Eurus

[313] *Sherlock*'s Facebook page, "Sherlock will return in The Six Thatchers on January 1, 2017. #Sherlock," October 26, 2016, https://www.facebook.com/Sherlock.BBCW/photos/a.438342982932969.1073741825.163565280410742/933830403384222/?type=3&theater.
[314] See Jacke, *Mind Games*, 207.

from Sherlock's memories the same way history excluded women from music composition and other intellectual activities. Paradoxically, the detective is no longer the Victorian active master of reality but a passive subject whose role is predetermined by the long-term effects of trauma; as Mycroft himself explains to his brother, "Every choice you ever made; every path you've ever taken—the man you are today is your memory of Eurus." Sherlock's reliability, so to speak, is questioned since the detective's approach to reality proves mediated not by rationality, as he thinks, but by relativistic subjectivity and the unstable variables of the time of consciousness.

4.3 Psychoanalytical Interpretation: Transhistorical Traumas.

As a matter of fact, the TV series *Sherlock* is concerned with the consequences of trauma at various levels, which prompts reflection on the way in which history and psychoanalytical conflicts are dealt with in the series. Gutleben points out: "The generation coming after the last Victorians fiercely rejected their direct ancestor's values and art forms in a manner which Freud would have called Oedipal."[315] Indeed,

> [b]ecause of the new data provided by psychoanalysis, mathematics, physics, linguistics and anthropology, the writers of the first decades of the twentieth century felt themselves propelled towards an experimental art which might reflect the changes in their cultural environment.[316]

Under such circumstances, "[t]he quest for the new was inseparable from a discarding of the old."[317] On the contrary, states Gutleben, "[p]ostmodernism tends to be defined in

[315] Christian Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism: The Victorian Tradition and the Contemporary British Novel* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 156.
[316] Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, 156.
[317] Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, 156.

terms of continuations and breaks with its modernist predecessor"[318] since it "amplifies the modernist objection to the coherence of character and insists instead on their textual nature."[319] Thus, when the postmodern *pastiche* engages with history through the juxtaposition of temporal dimensions where past and present paradoxically coexist, self-reflectivity emerges as the real object of inquiry. As a consequence, postmodern *pastiches*—and *Sherlock*, especially the fourth series, can be considered as such—represent "the failure of the new, the imprisonment in the past."[320] Gutleben and Kohlke further remark:

> [w]hereas the disturbed nineteenth-century psyche was constituted the exception . . ., the traumatized subject now assumes the position of the contemporary norm. It functions as a veritable paradigm of modern subjectivity in the context of our so-called 'trauma culture', as all individuals become (at least *in potentia*) 'lost' and traumatised others-to-themselves.[321]

To explain the origins of such anxieties, "critics and theoreticians commonly evoke the unprecedented scale of the mass destruction of World War II and the Shoah, together with later deadly conflicts, genocides, and acts of terrorism, such as 9/11."[322] Thus, Neo-Victorian fiction in their opinion

> could be said to mimic the double temporality of traumatic consciousness, whereby the subject occupies, at one and the same time, both the

[318] Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, 158.
[319] Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, 159.
[320] Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, 9.
[321] Gutleben and Kohlke, "Neo-Victorian Tropes," 3. Italics in the original.
[322] Gutleben and Kohlke, "Neo-Victorian Tropes," 4.

> interminable present moment of the catastrophe which, consciously re-lived, refuses to be relegated to the past, and the post-traumatic present that seems to come after but is paradoxically coterminous.[323]

Under such circumstances, the return of the traumatized postmodern subject to an idealized pre-Oedipal stage as a defensive mechanism would come as no surprise. Fittingly, Sherlock's inclination towards infantile behavior suggests the predominance of the "Imaginary," one of the three psychoanalytical orders that, according to the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, constitute human subjectivity. Besides being interconnected with the other two registers, the Symbolic and the Real, about which I will write later, the Imaginary is strictly related to the Lacanian theory of the so-called "mirror stage," wherein the child is believed to form an ideal ego through its own mirror image and all the images and expectations provided by its caregivers.[324] Hence, summarizing Lacan's theories, Derek Hook describes the Imaginary as a "pre-Oedipal world of narcissistic identifications and mirror reflections. It is a world . . . in which the child patterns its emerging ego on Imaginary counterparts that appear to offer the promise of unity, cohesion and integrity.[325] However, Lacan observes that the child does not remain in the Imaginary forever since, at a certain point, it is initiated to another order into which "we are, as it were, born a second time, in leaving behind the state

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[323] Gutleben and Kohlke, "Neo-Victorian Tropes," 2.
[324] Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," 75–81.
[325] Derek Hook, "Lacan, the Meaning of the Phallus and the 'Sexed' Subject," *LSE Research Online*, 2006, 61, PDF. Derek's article was originally published in the book *The Gender of Psychology*, edited by Tamara Shefer, Floretta Boonzaier, and Peace Kiguwa, published by University of Cape Town Press in 2006. As stated in the preface, at page xii, Derek's contributions to this book focus on psychoanalysis. The chapter devoted to Jacques Lacan "illustrates how Lacan's reformulations avoid an inevitable recourse to the essentialism of biological or anatomical explanations. Hook concludes that, despite the feminist debate about whether psychoanalysis reinforces or explains patriarchy, it does offer us critical tools and conceptual resources that are useful to understanding sexual identification processes." I quote from this article since it provides a concise view and clarification concerning Lacan's approach to gender issues that proves particularly suitable to this discussion.

which is rightly known as the *infans* state, for it is without speech—namely, the symbolic order constituted by language. . . ."[326] The Symbolic is the domain of otherness *par excellence*; herein the child is asked to understand the rules of language, culture, and law in order to differentiate itself. Therefore, as Hook exemplifies, "[t]he 'coming into being' within language is a structural analogue of sorts for the 'coming into being' as a sexually differentiated social subject within the Oedipus complex."[327] The problem deriving from the fact that a signifier can evoke multiple signifiers and vice versa is solved by context, which presides over the creation of chains of meaning by establishing logical relationships between signifiers.

Applying these notions to the BBC series, we can notice that Sherlock builds his own subjectivity on the images and expectations provided by Mycroft, a parental surrogate, and the audience, which is accustomed to stereotyped representations of the detective on screen. As a consequence, in Sherlock's mind the Imaginary seems to predominate over the Symbolic, presumably as a result of early childhood traumatic events and gender prejudices. The Lacanian theoretical framework, in this regard, proves once again useful since Lacan's third register, the Real, is linked to trauma. The online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2013) points out:

> The register of the Real is tricky to encapsulate and evades being pinned down through succinct definitions. Lacan's numerous and shifting pronouncements apropos the Real are themselves partly responsible for this absence of straightforwardness. But, rather than being just a barrier to grasping the Real, this absence is itself revelatory of this register. To be more precise, as that which is foreign to Imaginary-Symbolic reality—this

[326] Jacques Lacan, "Psychoanalysis and Its Teaching," in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (1966. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 371. Italics in the original.
[327] Hook, "Lacan," 66.

> reality is the realm containing conscious apprehension, communicable significance, and the like—the Real is intrinsically elusive, resisting by nature capture in the comprehensibly meaningful formulations of concatenations of Imaginary-Symbolic signs.[328]

Speaking about the relationship between the Real and trauma, Sean Homer clarifies that in Freudian psychoanalysis trauma "implies that there is a certain blockage or fixation in the process of signification. Trauma arrests the movement of symbolization and fixes the subject in an earlier phase of development."[329] Homer also explains: "What Lacan adds to the Freudian conception of trauma is the notion that trauma is *real* insofar it is unsymbolizable and is a permanent dislocation at the very heart of the subject."[330] There is a distinction, however, because in psychoanalysis "a trauma is not necessarily something that happens to a person 'in reality.'"[331] Instead, it is usually psychical, a problem that "arises from the confrontation between an external stimulus and the subject's inability to understand and master these excitations."[332] In *Sherlock*, trauma has both a tangible and psychic cause. The former is represented by Eurus's abuses, whereas the latter is to be found in the subject's self-reflective awareness of the transition from the Victorian past to postmodernism. Gutleben writes:

> Because of the free interplay of signs which excludes stable identities or fixed meanings, postmodern characters have multiple, fragmentary and dispersed selves where discourse has replaced the convention of

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[328] Johnston, Adrian, "Jacques Lacan," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed December 2, 2018, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/lacan. Italics in the original.
[329] Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Routledge, 2005), 84.
[330] Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, 84. Italics in the original.
[331] Homer, *Jacques Lacan,* 83.
[332] Homer, *Jacques Lacan,* 83.

> psychological depth. Of the old stable ego of Victorian fiction there is not much left in these self-reflective aesthetics choices.[333]

Therefore, while sheltering in an idealized pre-Oedipal stage—a remediated reconstruction of the Victorian dimension—Sherlock tries to meet the expectations of Mycroft and the audience by resorting to a series of signifiers or iconic elements, such as the detective's coat, the deerstalker, and logocentrism. Nevertheless, the detective struggles with these symbols because of the relocation of the signifieds in the postmodern world.

At this point, either false or true, the claim of sociopath becomes important from the semiotic point of view since in *Sherlock* what Jochem Willemsen and Paul Verhaeghe define as the "psychopath's inability to endure the division between signifiers" in relation to the development of an identity[334] seems relevant to the detective's case. These scholars claim:

> The psychopath does not have the ability to develop an identity through the concatenation of signifiers. . . . Furthermore, unable to bear his own lack, the psychopath will not tolerate the lack of the Other, either. At this point anxiety can arise. . . . The psychopath is structurally inclined to narcissism. Unable to define himself as a particular subject, different from all others, he presents himself as exceptional, better than all others. . . . However, this

[333] Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, 159.
[334] Jochem Willemsem and Paul Verhaeghe, "When Psychoanalysis Meets Law and Evil: Perversion and Pyschopathy in the Forensic Clinic," in *Law and Evil: Philosophy, Politics, Psychoanalysis*, eds. Ari Hirvonen and Janne Porttikivi (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 251.

> narcissism is only a makeshift for his inability to apply the dialectical operation of signifiers that is required for identity formation.[335]

By playing the detective, Sherlock puts himself in a position of superiority, but the development of psychopathic and narcissistic traits prevents him from building an identity through a coherent concatenation of signifiers. According to the creators of the series, the semiotic disruption originates in a disconnection from emotions and femininity, as witnessed by the representation of the queen. Whereas in the nineteenth century Queen Victoria embodied an iconic paradigm of femininity, in *Sherlock* she has faded away along with the strong values of Victorianism, based on familiar unity, cohesion, and distinct gender roles. The Queen remains a powerful signifier, but, in the lack of context, meanings confusedly overlap. Therefore, if femininity is not appropriately internalized but relegated to the Lacanian Real, the unattainable, "the limit of symbolisation,"[337] reality becomes an expression of the "uncanny," which Sigmund Freud defined as "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar."[338] Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle expand on this notion:

> Such a disturbance might be hinted at by way of the word 'familiar' itself. 'Familiar' goes back to the Latin *familia*, a family: we all have some sense of how odd families can seem (whether or not one is 'part of the family'). The idea of 'keeping things in the family' or of something that 'runs in the

[335] Willemsem and Verhaeghe, "When Psychoanalysis Meets *Law and Evil,*" 251.
[337] Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, 83.
[338] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917–1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works,* ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1955), 219.

> family', for instance, is at once familiar and potentially secretive or strange.[339]

These observations seem relevant to the analysis of *Sherlock*'s scenes since the series entirely revolves around family matters. Indeed, as Bennett and Royle further notice, the logic of the uncanny lies in the fact that the meaning of the word can easily shade into its opposite.[340] Repetition is another common manifestation of the uncanny, especially "the experience of *déjà vu* (the sense that something has happened before), and the idea of the double (or *doppelgänger*),"[341] which symbolizes the death drive. To sum up, in *Sherlock* the lack of a proper context gives way to a series of narcissistic tautologies that lead the detective to identify with interchangeable doubles in an endless game of mirrors. As Jacke points out, for instance, Eurus is an exaggerated Moriarty,[342] but Irene and Mary, who defy Sherlock, can be considered as potential doubles as well. In other words, Sherlock is unable to perceive himself as different from his own doubles and clings to performativity in order to make this difference illusorily visible through oral acts of supremacy.

It is Eurus herself who introduces the concept of "emotional context" in "The Final Problem," referring to Sherlock's repressed memories. By forgetting about Eurus and her motivations, Sherlock bears witness to the postmodern failure to internalize history, as well as the male subject's inability to internalize the feminine. When Sherlock finally accepts Eurus as a peer, he reconciles with his own emotions, discovering the power of emotional intelligence. Studied in the 1990s by Peter Salovey and John D. Meyer, the ability to recognize and deal with emotions questions any

[339] Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, 3rd ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2004), 34. Italics in the original.
[340] Bennett and Royle, *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, 40.
[341] Bennett and Royle, *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, 35. Italics in the original
[342] Jacke, *Mind Games*, 208.

traditional idea of logical thinking.[343] From this perspective, as Daniela Bruzzone observes, emotions are intelligent because rational behavior pertains to a person who can recognize, listen, interpret emotions, and use them wisely.[344] In *Sherlock*, the ability to listen, empathize, recognize emotions, and use them properly, and not for manipulative purposes, can help the detective negotiate his postmodern identity.

Eurus will come back to her prison at the end of the series. Nonetheless, at the end of the last episode, Sherlock and Eurus play the violin together in Eurus's cell. Mycroft and her parents attend the concert so that the woman, no longer alone, finally gives up the death drive represented by compulsive-obsessive repetition and makes a duet with different melodies that are gradually integrated into the orchestra. Meanwhile, some flashbacks show Sherlock bringing together scattered pieces of furniture in his apartment, previously destroyed by a bomb: the detective literally rebuilds his own identity through the act of connecting fragments, or concatenating signifiers. Thus Sherlock demonstrates that, as Philpott explains, music "is not simply a 'language of the emotions' but a language for human cognition; a way of knowing, thinking and feeling, and as such has epistemological parity with 'other disciplines.'"[345] Fittingly, the violin is used in *Sherlock* to highlight the role of historical and emotional context and as a tool to overcome the semiotic disruption in the process of re-locating signifieds in the postmodern world, drawing attention to the role of emotional intelligence in the process of signification.

In conclusion, the return of a skilled sister in *Sherlock* draws attention to the way in which gender-inflected assumptions prevented women from contributing to scientific progress, in the name of ideals of rationality that were strictly related to intellectual

[343] See Peter Salovey and John D. Meyer, "Emotional Intelligence," *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality* 9, no. 3 (1990): 185–211.
[344] See Daniela Bruzzone, "La Competenza Emotiva: Una Indispensabile Risorsa Professionale," in *Pedagogia Generale*, eds. Silvia Kanizsa and Anna Maria Mariani (Torino: Pearson, 2017), 154.
[345] Philpott, "Is Music a Language?" 43.

practices, from which women have been excluded. By playing with logocentric equivocations, the deconstructive process in *Sherlock* both revokes and questions gender oppositions to highlight the necessity to negotiate, rather than perform, gender identities. In such a context, the violin plays a crucial role since, as a non-verbal means of communication, it shows the limits of Victorian phallocentric logocentrism as well as the detective's inability to build a solid identity based on the internalisation of otherness. In the final analysis, however, the instrument does not function as a mere symbol for repressed emotions or femininity, which would account for a return to essentialist gender models, since empathy acts as a cognitive ability that actively intervenes in the process of signification and, consequently, identity formation, redefining any stereotyped gendered concept of rationality. Therefore, albeit controversially, *Sherlock* encourages a reflection on the relocations of signifiers in the shift from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, highlighting the clash between Victorian fixed constructions of gender roles and postmodern plural identities. In so doing, they take the violin and music as an example for the integration between logics and emotions, allowing a re-consideration of the role of the instrument itself as a male signifier.

Chapter 5

Music and Neo-Victorian Gothic Tropes in *A Slight Trick of the Mind* by Mitch Cullin

5.1 Music and Gender Codes.[346]

In this section I examine another palimpsestic rewriting of the Holmesian canon where the violin is interestingly not mentioned. In his novel *A Slight Trick of the Mind* (2005) the contemporary American writer Mitch Cullin, author of seven novels and several short stories, proposes an original sequel to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmesian canon, presenting an elderly protagonist, who is, as Lynnette Porter comments, "still clinging to his heyday in the Victorian era but trying to correct continuing misconceptions about his popular identity forged during his prime."[347] The setting can be described as post-Victorian, since the story takes place in the 1940s and focuses on the retired detective's new life as apiculturist with his housekeeper and her son Roger.

The most remarkable aspect is Watson's absence from the narrative, which will prove crucial at the end of the novel. The doctor is therefore replaced by an omniscient narrator that provides details about Holmes daily routine; this contributes to making the narrative more objective and detached. The detective keeps disavowing common assumptions concerning his literary persona. For example, when asked about the deerstalker or the pipe, Holmes replies: "I am afraid I never wore a deerstalker, or smoked the big pipe—mere embellishments by an illustrator, intended to give me distinction, I suppose, and sell magazines."[348] Holmes also clarifies that his relationship

[346] Parts of this and the following chapter will be published, in a slightly different form, as Francesca Battaglia, "Music and Neo-Victorian Gothic Tropes: The Glass Armonica in *A Slight Trick of the Mind* by Mitch Cullin," *Gothic Studies* 21, no. 1 (2019). In print.
[347] Porter, "Modernizing Victorian Sherlock Holmes," 27.
[348] Mitch Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005), 58.

with Watson, which still continues to fuel a debate in both adaptations and scholarly analyses, was "purely platonic."[349]

Such details emerge gradually from a fragmented narrative that is occasionally interrupted by flashbacked descriptions of Holmes's stay in Japan with his penfriend, Mr. Umezaki. The text thus proposes the exploration of a country that is sporadically mentioned in the Holmesian canon in relation to travelling, exotic items of furniture or objects, and martial arts.[350] Nevertheless, the journey cannot be properly described as adventurous, especially in view of the detective's advanced age and senile problems.

Eventually, a third sub-narrative is presented to the reader when the monotony of Holmes's retired life among the bees is broken by Roger, who finds a book entitled *The Glass Armonicist*. The manuscript was written by Holmes himself to keep a record of an old case that still haunts him. As opposed to the third-person main narrative, the book adopts Holmes's perspective and provides insight into the detective's subjective world. As the title suggests, *The Glass Armonicist*'s sub-narrative highlights the role of music, drawing attention to the novel's silence over Holmes's iconic violin.

Holmes's client is Mr. Keller, who blames his wife's miscarriages on her illness, not without a certain patronizing attitude. Mr. Keller adds:

> Among my recently deceased father's possessions was an antique glass armonica. It had been a gift from his great-uncle, who, my father claimed, had purchased the instrument from Etienne-Gaspard Robertson, the famous Belgian inventor.[351]

[349] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 78.
[350] See "The Gloria Scott" (1893), "The Greek Interpreter" (1893), "The Empty House" (1903), "The Three Garridebs" (1924).
[351] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind,* 27.

Mr. Keller's description emphasizes the story behind the antique object, which is passed down from male to male, in contrast with female sterility. It goes without saying that the instrument is placed in the house's attic room, where it becomes a catalyst for awkward events. Indeed, as Mr. Keller remarks,

> what little interest Ann had summoned for the instrument waned almost completely from the start. She didn't like being alone in the attic, and she found it difficult creating music on the armonica. She was also bothered by the curious tones produced by the glasses as her fingers slid across their brims.[352]

The lady, "dressed entirely in black, as if in mourning"[353] is thus sent to take lessons from a certain Madame Schirmer, "[a] very solid, manly woman, although not really corpulent,"[354] and gets increasingly involved, much to her husband's delight. However, when she starts neglecting her duties in the house, he states that "[t]he preoccupation had, in effect, become an unhealthy obsession."[355] Her fixation culminates in a spectral scene in the attic, "lit by candles, which were placed in a circle around the harmonica, casting her in a flickering glow."[356] As the woman is heard whispering the names of her unborn children, Mr. Keller blames Madame Schirmer, who is now defined as "a

[352] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 28.
[353] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 30.
[354] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind* 29.
[355] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 33–34
[356] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 36.

woman with dangerous beliefs,"[357] for "teaching Ann something other than music lessons,"[358] most probably a spell to summon the dead.

When Madame Schirmer finally admits that the glass armonica may hide supernatural powers, historical details are provided about sinister anecdotes circulating in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. They match the consideration people had of the instrument at that time. Indeed, as James Kennaway reports,

> Benjamin Franklin invented the harmonica in the early 1760s, drawing on a tradition of musical glasses that went back much further. Between 1760 and 1830 musical glasses had their golden age, with Mozart writing an Adagio for Glass Harmonica (K 356) and an Adagio and Rondo for Harmonica and Flute, Oboe, Viola and Cello (K 617).[359]

The instrument is featured in other nineteenth- and twentieth-century compositions, such as Camille Saint-Saëns's 'Acquarium' movement in *The Carnival of the Animals* and Richard Strauss's *Frau ohne Schatten*. It is also widely known, as Philipp Gossett claims, that the Italian composer Gaetano Donizetti wrote a part for glass armonica—later replaced with the flute—for the so-called 'mad scene' in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, wherein the protagonist, suffering for love, engages in violence before dying.[360] Indeed, what renders the glass armonica so peculiar is its association with the fair sex and madness. Kennaway specifies that "[t]he instrument's novelty, feminine character and

[357] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 34.
[358] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 37.
[359] James Kennaway, *Bad Vibrations: The History of the Idea of Music as a Cause of Disease* (London: Routledge, 2016), 44.
[360] Philip Gossett, *Divas and Scholars: Performing Italian Opera* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 434.

unusual sound made it a key battleground in discourses about women's nerves" since a series of events supported the belief that "the harmonica's over-stimulating effect could lead to serious illness and even death among women, with their weak nerves."[361] This tradition has also been recalled in more recent times. For example, in the short story "Mrs. Franklin Ascends" (1996) the Southern author Fred Chappell imagines the American polymath Benjamin Franklin coming back to his wife Deborah in America after spending some time in Europe.[362] As the title suggests, the story focuses on Mrs. Franklin, whose domestic life is negatively affected by the long journeys of her husband and certain materialism. The story draws attention to married life, until the moment when Mr. Franklin is said to have invented and brought with him a glass "armonica,'' which is stored in the attic of his house. Interestingly, Mr. Franklin associates the instrument with his wife, since he states: "For a long time I had in mind to call it a *deboronica*, in tribute to the dulcet timbre of my goodwife's voice."[363] Madness, too, is mentioned, since one of Franklin's guests is said to remember

> hearing opinions from medical men to the effect that continued performance upon glass instruments set up such a vibration within the performer's body that it interfered with the vital fluids. He had even heard it declared that long exposure to such performance might eventually lead to madness.[364]

However, in line with the spirit of Enlightenment, Franklin dismisses such superstitious worries. Soon afterwards, both husband and wife die placidly in their sleep to the strains

[361] Kennaway, *Bad Vibrations,* 44.
[362] Fred Chappell, "Mrs Franklin Ascends," in *Moment of Lights* (Altadena: Boson Books, 1996). Adobe Digital Editions ePub.
[363] Chappell, "Mrs. Franklin Ascends," 29.
[364] Chappell, "Mrs. Franklin Ascends," 29.

of a celestial music. Mrs. Franklin strives to be reunited with her husband but her "ascension" ends in the attic, where Mr. Franklin is trying the armonica. He declares: "It was on my mind to see if my armonica was broken during the voyage, and I knew I could never rest without finding if it was in working order."[365] The story thus ends: "Oh, this was too much! Must Dr. Franklin always be arranging everything? Even the musical entertainment of their afterlife? Deborah bit her lip. She was *exasperated*."[366] The last few sentences mark the irony implicit in the author's comments: Mr. Franklin is so materialistically obsessed with controlling every aspect of his life that the only higher place he can ascend to is the attic of his house. The story also highlights Mrs. Franklin's struggle with social expectations of women so that the glass armonica, confined in the attic and obsessively controlled by Mr. Franklin, may also reflect female oppression in patriarchal societies.

Although the glass harmonica is featured in some famous compositions,[367] it does not easily come to the mind when thinking about Western traditional orchestras, especially because during the nineteenth century

> the 'four principal parts' model of the classical orchestra was replaced by a new organization into sections of strings, woodwinds, and brass, each section containing a full range of instruments from treble to bass. . . . Triangle, side drum, and bass drum were added to orchestras as needed, usually played by supernumeraries.[368]

[365] Chappell, "Mrs. Franklin Ascends," 32.
[366] Chappell, "Mrs. Franklin Ascends," 32.
[367] See the Adagio Rondo K 617 by Mozart (1791).
[368] John Spitzer and Neal Zaslaw, *The Birth of the Orchestra: History of an Institution, 1650–1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 339.

Thus, the glass harmonica can be said to occupy a marginal position as opposed to other instruments. After all, in line with Victorian essentialist gender ideologies, as Kennaway puts it, "[t]he harmonica's association with femininity and a novelty meant that it was increasingly regarded as a nerve stimulant, and not as a part of serious musical culture."[369] Such beliefs also affected men; Scott underlines that "the presence of feminine qualities in their compositions could lead to invidious comparison with the less elevated output of women."[370]

Faithful to the spirit of the time, Cullin uses the glass armonica in reference to the feminine sphere. In all cases, Mr. Keller makes it clear that the instrument brought despair to his marriage: "I told [my wife] that each of us had certain obligations to the other: Mine was to provide a secure, sound environment for her; hers was to maintain the duties and upkeep of the household for me."[371] The harmonica is therefore removed in an attempt to "restore order"[372] and the decision is followed by the woman's promise to become a "better wife."[373] However, when Mrs. Keller begins to disappear from home, her husband has reason to suspect that she might attend secret music lessons. Holmes agrees to help his client, but cannot but wonder, deep inside, about "the attraction which was summoned by the common, unremarkable photograph of a married woman."[374] He will take the same picture as payment for the case, although Mrs. Keller is not found at Madame Schirmer's house.

[369] Kennaway, *Bad Vibrations,* 48.
[370] Scott, *From the Erotic to the Demonic*, 45.
[371] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 41.
[372] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 42.
[373] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 42.
[374] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 52.

5.2 Sensationalism and Gothic Tropes

Despite the effort to reject Holmesian stereotypes through a detailed account of Holmes's senile life, the book's subplot brings to the surface suppressed traces of sensationalism and Gothic tropes. Indeed, the glass harmonica implicitly evokes the memory of Holmes's violin by suggesting sensuality and the empowerment of same-sex bonding. However, when used in a female context, the instrument recalls the Victorian belief of original Conan Doyle's texts that "[w]omen are naturally secretive"[375] and that female homosociality, especially if queered, eventually results in contesting patriarchy.

Hence, the awkward events provoked by the glass harmonica confirm Bennett and Royle's observation that "detective fiction seems to be continually threatened with its generic other – the gothic, tales of psychic phenomena, spiritualism."[376] Since, as George E. Haggerty notices, "[a] wide range of writers, dispersed historically and culturally, use 'gothic' to evoke a queer world that attempts to transgress the binaries of sexual decorum,"[377] the use of the instrument ends up drawing attention to gender issues. For instance, it becomes clear that Mr. Keller's fear of the glass harmonica goes beyond its presumed powers to summon the dead. Already from the beginning, Madame Schirmer is described as a manly predator who might "easily overtake most men"[378] and aim for Mrs. Keller's inheritance. Accordingly, aside from supernatural matters, the real mystery revolves around what happens between the two women when they are alone and unseen, since the narrative's elusive language leaves room for speculations about female homosocial or homosexual subversion. As Haggerty remarks, after all, "[t]rangressive social-sexual relations are the most basic common denominator of gothic writing," where "terror is almost always sexual terror, and fear, and flight, and

[375] From "A Scandal in Belgravia." Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 171.
[376] Bennett and Royle, *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory,* 176.
[377] George E. Haggerty, *Queer Gothic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 2.
[378] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 47.

incarceration, and escape are almost always colored by the exoticism of transgressive sexual aggression."[379]

As the glass harmonica is used to reinforce female bonding and defy patriarchy, it must be removed to "restore order" in the family, especially when its supernatural power to summon unborn children, that is, to serve alternative reproductive purposes, is thoroughly revealed. Remarkably, it can be noticed that Gothic elements are gradually spreading beyond the boundaries of *The Glass Armonicist*, since although the novel disavows certain assumptions, the author cannot resist the temptation to parallelly evoke them. For instance, debated aspects of the Holmesian canon, such as sterility and potential queer readings of homosociality, are conjured up not only in *The Glass Armonicist*, but also in the post-Victorian narrative, when Holmes realizes that Mr. Umezaki's proclaimed brother Hensuiro is, in fact, his lover[380] and when a shocked woman is found holding the corpse of her baby in Holmes's property.[381] Such controversial aspects of the canon are projected onto parallel situations created *ad hoc*, which recalls the already mentioned definition of uncanniness as a form of familiar repetition: Cullin's novel is an iteration that contains iterations.

All things considered, the lack in the text of certain iconic elements, such as the violin, seems to be entwined with John Watson's absence from the narrative: annoyed by the way in which the doctor had fictionally embellished his last failure, Holmes began to write his own version of the story, which eventually reveals the detective's bitter disappointment after finding out that there was no mystery behind Mrs. Keller's behavior. The woman, who was found reading alone, committed suicide after conversing with Holmes, who therefore withdrew from society.

[379] Haggerty, *Queer Gothic*, 2.
[380] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 77.
[381] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 64–65.

The novel thus presents a typical neo-Victorian element, namely what Gutleben and Kohlke call the "encapsulation of the referential trauma in an object or work within the novel itself, functioning as a sort of *mise en abyme*."[382] *The Glass Armonicist*, functioning as a narration within narration, deals with Holmes's traumatic inability to "restore order" in Mr. Keller's household. Accordingly, the novel does not limit itself, as Tom Ue explains, to show "Holmes's gradual (if reluctant) acceptance of the value of fiction"[383] but also makes a distinction between genres. In other words, what Holmes acknowledges is not only the power of an enriched narrative, but also the loss of mystery and sensationalism in the face of countless re-presentations of Gothic and crime fiction, which accustomed readers to certain tropes.

The author also seems to be aware, as Gutleben observes, that "[t]he modernist text. . . gives up the coherence of character and the influence of a specific social context to concentrate on the irrational working of the mind, on the dark subjective drives of the inner life."[384] Mrs. Keller says once: "I fear every individual has an inner life, with its own complications, which sometimes cannot be articulated, regardless of how one might try."[385] Therefore, since Mystery is functional to the pleasure of bringing order out of disorder, Holmes mourns those times when his help could "alleviate [his clients'] troubles and restore order to their lives,"[386] as opposed to the disrupted narratives of postmodernism.

At a second level, Haggerty emphasizes that "Gothic resolutions repeatedly insist on order restored and (often) on reassertion of heteronormative prerogative;"[387] as a result, *The Glass Armonicist* may reflect a nostalgic crave for traditional gender roles,

[382] Gutleben and Kohlke, "Introduction," 25.
[383] Tom Ue, "Introduction: Holmes at the Matinee," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 45, no. 2 (2017): 65.
[384] Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, 159.
[385] Cullin*, A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 31.
[386] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 240.
[387] Haggerty, *Queer Gothic*, 10.

as opposed to postmodern plural identities. When Holmes realizes that there is no mystery behind Mrs. Keller's disappearance from home, the glass harmonica loses its charm and he writes: "How regrettable that that alluring instrument, whose strains were so possessing, so richly emblematic, would fail to arouse me as before."[388] In an attempt to examine Mrs. Keller's motivations, Holmes enlists the possibility of neuropsychosis, mental disease, and post-traumatic stress, unable to reach a plausible solution. While the unattainable truth reflects the postmodern condition of "multiple, fragmentary and dispersed selves,"[389] as Gutleben reminds us, the idea that perhaps the woman's fulfilment outside the domestic domain might have healed her depression never crosses his mind.

Mrs. Keller's suicide *de facto* diminishes the impact of female agency in the novel; that is why the narrative's promising exploration of female homosociality, in line with the tendencies of neo-Victorian fiction, eventually results in reinforcing the nostalgic longing for a distant past where the boundaries of narration, space, and gender roles were more clearly defined. The real extent of Neo-Victorianism is questioned by means of a rather self-reflective awareness of the issues of postmodernism. Holmes is therefore portrayed as out of place: his body is decaying like his mind; he is isolated and ultimately alone. His faith in logic and deduction are anachronistic in an increasingly entropic world.

In conclusions, A *Slight Trick of the Mind* attempts to offer an innovative portrait of the great detective, successfully dealing with original topics, such as the detective's senility and emotional exploration. Nevertheless, the author cannot resist the temptation to summon stereotypes. The tension between the neo-Victorian tendency to rewrite the past and the postmodern narrative crisis is thus embodied by the gap

[388] Cullin, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, 253.
[389] Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, 159.

between the novel's main narrative and the subplot of *The Glass Armonicist*, which revokes the traditional Gothic tropes of mystery, uncanniness, sensationalism, and queerness. In order to materialize them, the subplot appeals to the discourse of music, providing an original re-presentation of Sherlock Holmes's violin, whose semiotic value is transferred to the glass harmonica.

Conclusions and Cues for Further Research

As is evident from my analyses, the desire to resurrect the "most original" Sherlock Holmes after so many manipulations of detective fiction as a genre is not without problems. On the contrary, this process highlights cultural fears, mainly related to a presumed loss of authenticity and unresolved conflicts with the past that ultimately bring gender, race, and class issues to the surface. In such contexts, the transformations of Sherlock Holmes's violin draw attention to the instrument's function as a male signifier in the age of political correctness, globalization, and plurality.

The violin can be studied as both a musical instrument and a prop. In the first case, what emerges is the relationship between music and the Neo-Victorian stances in terms of aesthetic and ideology, the relationship that highlights the engagement of music with the original texts in the adaptive process. In Guy Ritchie's films, the composer's choices align with the neo-Victorian tendency to rewrite the past and re-imagine gender, class, and social relations. Music is therefore used not only to convey the character's feelings but also to comment on the representation of the detective as a masculine hero in the shift from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century.

When the violin is used as a prop, its symbolic value within music discourse, which ultimately points to the gender codes of instruments, is underlined. In this case, the violin can be used to further confirm or question the validity of certain historical prejudices about music and musical instruments. In all the cases examined, the violin supports the exploration of gender identities in order to expose and address the vulnerability of the detective *vis-à-vis* women's emancipation, cultural plurality, and capitalism.

Regardless of whether we can see the violin as a prop or as an instrument, there is still much to explore. The role of music and instruments in neo-Victorian or

steampunk films, television series, and videogames deserves further attention. More importantly, even though I focused on Western cultural products, the success of Sherlock Holmes and neo-Victorianism extends far beyond Europe and America. I sporadically mentioned, for example, the interest of Japanese comics writers in re-living the nineteenth century and detective fiction. In this case, there is a large amount of materials that can be examined, and the approaches at stake would have a transhistorical, transmedia, and transcultural quality. Indeed, due to the success of the Holmesian canon and nineteenth-century literary works in Japan and Asia in general, the lines of investigation would be multiple, including the role of music in neo-Victorian, pastiche, or steampunk animated series adapted from Japanese *manga*, the specific role of the violin in adaptations and appropriations of the Holmesian canon in comics and adaptations from comics, and the role of the violin in recent adaptations of Conan Doyle's texts for cinema and television.

In conclusion, an interdisciplinary focus on the role of music and its gender, racial, and class codes in adaptations and appropriations for film and television would be useful to thoroughly comprehend postmodern anxieties, issues, and plural identities in a transcultural, intersemiotic, and transhistorical perspective.

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