

Sherlock's Relationships in the Twenty-First Century

BA Thesis
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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter 1: Adaptations	4
Chapter 2: Who is Sherlock?	6
Chapter 3: The Relationship Between Holmes and Watson	10
Chapter 4: Sherlock and the Others	15
4.1 Mycroft Holmes	16
4.2 Jim Moriarty	18
4.3 Gregory Lestrade / Scotland Yard	20
4.4 Mary Morstan	21
4.5 Irene Adler	23
4.6 Molly Hooper	23
4.7 A Conclusion to the Characters	25
Conclusion	26
Bibliography	27

Introduction

There are very few people who have never heard of Sherlock Holmes. That is not because everyone has read Arthur Conan Doyle's stories about this famous character. Ever since the stories were first published in 1887 they have been adapted into screen films and television series. During these 100 years the character has also transformed. Newer adaptations have also been inspired by previous adaptations, which changes the Holmes that was first created by Conan Doyle into a character that the everyone who adapts him contributes to. Film adaptations are a filmmaker's interpretations of stories and characters. In recent years several Sherlock Holmes adaptations have been created. Many alterations regarding the original stories by Doyle have been made to please the contemporary audience. Due to limited time and space, this thesis shall focus mainly on the BBC series *Sherlock* created by Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat, which first aired in 2010. Gatiss and Moffat have analysed the characters and stories thoroughly; they have then deconstructed them and reassembled them in twenty-first century England. The series has received highly complimentary reviews and it can be suggested that they have successfully modernised the original. Few have complained that Sherlock Holmes was no longer Sherlock Holmes. Numerous essays and articles have been written about this modernised adaptation, though few focus heavily on Holmes' relationships with the other characters. This thesis shall give insight into the way in which Moffat and Gatiss have transformed the Sherlock Holmes that Conan Doyle created, into a twenty-first century Sherlock Holmes; the focus shall lie on the protagonist's dealings with those surrounding him. To do so, a comparison between the nineteenth century Holmes, as can be found in Conan Doyle's stories, and a twenty-first century Holmes will be made. Where this thesis shall focus primarily on the differences in the approach towards relationships in the nineteenth and twenty-first

century, future research might focus more heavily on the difference between novel and film.

Holmes prefers the rational above the emotional. Science is very important in his life, yet he cannot do without certain people either. How does the twenty-first Sherlock Holmes compare to the nineteenth century Sherlock Holmes in light of his relationships with fellow human beings? Pierre argues that often Holmes “makes sense from a practical viewpoint, it is still very cold and uncaring, contrary to how we expect someone to react to it” (Pierre 2012). The transformation of the detective might change the practicality of Holmes' viewpoint into a viewpoint that someone could be expected to possess. Familial bonds, nemeses, friendships, co-workers and love relationships will be discussed. The question is whether the approach towards relationships has changed.

Adaptations

The written word has been adapted into moving pictures for as long as they both exist. Even in the twenty-first century, a great many films are in a way adapted from novels, short stories or comic books. An adaptation may try to respect the original story, but adapting also means change. Films stimulate different senses than texts. “Film is a more direct sensory experience than reading,” says Andrew Davies, screenwriter for four Jane Austen film adaptations. “Besides verbal language, there is also color, movement, and sound,” he continues. Because of this, whenever the novel describes a room full of paintings, the filmmaker might have to come up with a certain theme for the paintings that, in his vision, best suit the story, although the novel nowhere mentions anything descriptive about those paintings. A novel is not simply changed literally into a transcript. Filmmakers must refashion the spirit of a story with the vision and the tools that they have got (Davies 2011). Sometimes they need to make adjustments because they want to highlight different themes, or

emphasise different character traits. They may even believe that the original story was flawed. In the case of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series this is understandable. Conan Doyle was not very consistent in his stories. Furthermore, when he had had enough of the detective, he killed him off. Later he regretted this decision and made him come back from the dead. He cheated a bit. Filmmakers adapting the stories might want to give a better explanation for Holmes' return from the dead. In addition to this, the meaning of a novel is controlled by only one person: the author of the work. A film is the result of a collaborative effort of many people, who all change the outcome of the whole.

Many of the classic canonical works are praised for their timelessness, their themes that are still very relevant. In this regard, the step towards an adaptation set in the contemporary world is soon made. The problem that filmmakers face with this modernisation is that, while the themes may be very relevant, many other aspects of the stories are not. In the example of Sherlock Holmes, the forensic science that the detective used in Conan Doyle's stories was only just beginning. A great mind like Sherlock's used this tool to solve his cases. The stories were not about a forensic scientist; they were about a person using tools wisely and processing information effectively. The clever use of search engines on his smart phone, for instance, is one of the tools the modern Sherlock Holmes has to help him gather the information he needs. Everything is still done in combination with his deductive skills. Deduction does always play a major role in his success; this is still relevant and needs no changing. The core, which is deduction in this case, need not change; the tools used to acquire that core would have to be updated. Along with the update of certain devices, the filmmakers need to emphasise certain aspects of the stories that they believe is appealing to a modern audience. Huitt argues that “[c]haracter development traditionally has focused on those traits or values appropriate for the industrial age such as obedience to authority, work ethic,

working in group under supervision”, whereas character development in the information age focuses on “truthfulness, honesty, integrity, individual responsibility, humility, wisdom, justice, steadfastness, dependability” (Huitt 2004). Where an eighteenth century audience might have been more interested in the solving of the cases, a contemporary audience may be more interested in the emotional transformation that the characters undergo. The audience is be more interested in the character on an emotional level, rather than in the work that he or she delivers.

Who is Sherlock?

In 1887 the character of Sherlock Holmes was first introduced to the public in the story “A Study in Scarlet” by Arthur Conan Doyle. Readers are first introduced to Watson, who has just come back from the Second Afghan War. He runs in to an old acquaintance whom he tells that he is looking for lodgings in London. His old friend responds: “[t]hat's a strange thing,' remarked my companion, 'you are the second man today that has used that expression to me.’” Watson is ecstatic, but his companion, who goes by the name of Stamford, is a bit more hesitant. This is when Holmes is first described. Stamford tells Watson that Holmes is a bit queer, “a little too scientific for [his] tastes – it approaches to cold-bloodedness. [He] could image his giving a friend a little pinch of the latest vegetable alkaloid, not out of malevolence, you understand, but simply out of a spirit of inquiry in order to have an accurate idea of the effects” (Conan Doyle 9). His science is worth more to him than the safety of those who (involuntarily) are the guinea pigs. In Holmes' defence, though, Stamford then remarks that he probably would do it himself, too. To make it even worse, Holmes was once witnessed beating corpses to see how bruises may be produced after death. Watson and Stamford then proceed to actually meet the man they have been discussing. The very first thing Holmes asks Watson is, “How are you? You have been in the Afghanistan, I perceive” (Conan

Doyle 11). Holmes does not explain how he knows, however.

When, in 2010, Gatiss and Moffat introduced their version of the popular detective, their audience had already a thorough idea of who Sherlock Holmes is. BBC's casebook¹ of Holmes written by Adams introduces him in this way: “[t]he cleverest person in the room. Self-proclaimed 'high-functioning sociopath'. Addict – of mental stimulation above all else. He is the thinker; the logician; the detective; the magician, achieving the seemingly impossible through skill and misdirection. 'He has one whopping advantage over magicians, though,' says Steven Moffat. 'This is where Doyle is right and magicians are wrong: always tell them how the trick is done!’” (Adams 28). Moffat and Gatiss introduce Holmes in an episode entitled 'A Study in Pink'. The name of the story indicates they try to stay close to the original; all of their episodes are named after a Conan Doyle story, albeit with a slight twist in the name. They have, indeed, used a great deal of the original story for their adaptation, but they have made many alterations as well. Again, the audience is introduced to Watson first, who has, incidentally, got back from the Afghan war, too. His psychiatrist tells him to write a blog about everything that happens. It will help him adjust to civil life, she believes. The audience, in this case, is introduced to Holmes not through Watson at first, but while he is mocking the police with text messages during a press conference. Everyone who is present during the conference receives text messages that say “Wrong!” every time the police inspector makes a claim. After this comes Holmes' introduction to Watson. First, as in the written stories, there is the old acquaintance Stamford. Watson cannot afford to live on his own, and when Stamford hints at flat sharing, Watson remarks “who would want me for a flatmate?” Stamford replies, laughing “you are the second person to say that to me today”²(A Study in Pink). They then

¹ This book detailss the making of the series, it includes background information about the process of adapting the novels into the 21st century television series.

² Citations from the episodes are all taken from DeVere's transcripts. The episode names shall be included after each quotation.

proceed to meet Holmes, right after the viewer has seen Holmes whipping a corpse. The first thing he asks Watson, this time, is “Afghanistan or Iraq?” (A Study in Pink). Again Holmes reveals a great deal about Watson without explaining how he could possibly know these things, yet later in the episode he does. The audience is baffled and so is Watson. In the television series Holmes immediately deduces that Watson is there to become his flatmate, whereas in the original story Stamford had to mention the option. In this regard the stories remain seemingly similar, except that more explanations are given to Holmes' deduction. He does not get his information out of the blue. Sherlock explain that he got to the conclusion because Watson is “trained at Bart’s, so Army doctor – obvious. Your face is tanned but no tan above the wrists. You’ve been abroad, but not sunbathing. Your limp’s really bad when you walk but you don’t ask for a chair when you stand, like you’ve forgotten about it, so it’s at least partly psychosomatic. That says the original circumstances of the injury were traumatic. Wounded in action, then. Wounded in action, suntan – Afghanistan or Iraq” (A Study in Pink). These explanations make the deductions even more impressive, because Holmes can describe how he got to them. It makes the character more human.

Furthermore, there are still the quintessentially Holmsian elements that make Holmes who he is. The features that in nearly all adaptations are present: the friendship with Watson, Bakerstreet 221B, the art of deduction, being a consulting detective, and Holmes outwitting those around him. The original Holmes is still similar to the one which has been transposed into the twenty-first century. All of these have elements, however, been depicted differently. Ingrid Verhees argues in her MA thesis that “[t]he changes discernible in the adaptations are not, however, ones that add or remove elements from the stories: rather, the emphasis on these elements changes, because both sides of the coin were already present in Doyle” (58) . Those who adapt the stories of Holmes must decide where they put their emphasis. Fortunately for them, “Doyle provided readers and future

adapters with a large amount of information and consequently with a large array of possibilities, interpretations and options of which different ones speak to different times and generations” (Verhees 58). Heroes need to have weaknesses, too, in order for them to be enjoyable. Without flaws and setbacks there is little suspense; the hero must be credible as a human being. Gatiss and Moffat have for this reason given Watson a more prominent role: his character is more like an average person. The comparison between an average person and the hero shows examples of some shortcomings of the hero. Rather than merely being the sidekick and biographer that Watson was in the original story, he saves Holmes' life when Holmes has “risked his life to prove [he is] clever,” (A Study in Pink) as Watson puts it. They have become more equal than they were in the original, which is depicted by them both having value. In the original Holmes merely explains how he figured out who was the murderer. In the adaptation he and Watson are both needed to catch the murderer. The sidekick becomes more of a hero, whereas the actual hero becomes less of a hero in comparison with the original. In the original, there was already a friendship and some affection towards each other; the recent television series *Sherlock* has emphasised these parts of the stories. Holmes and Watson have become important to each other, because of their mutual necessity to have the other in their lives, their friendship is even greater than in the original stories. In “The Great Game”, for example, Watson stands up to Holmes when Holmes does not seem to care about people's lives. Watson angrily tells Holmes that “there are lives at stake here, Sherlock, actual human lives! Just so I know, do you care about them at all?” Holmes replies: “Would caring about them help save them?” Watson says that is would not. “Then I'll continue to make that mistake” (The Great Game). Watson, by becoming angry with Holmes, shows that he has a voice of his own. He is on the same level of the social ladder, whereas in Conan Doyle's stories he was merely the follower.

Some fans have entertained the possibility of Holmes being a gay man. The series does acknowledge this in a conversation Holmes has with Watson about the subject; they are sitting in a restaurant and the waiter remarks “I’ll get a candle, it’s more romantic”, to which John Watson exclaims (twice) “I’m not his date!” (A Study in Pink). They then have a conversation about Sherlock Holmes having a girlfriend or not. It is not his area, he remarks. Neither is having a boyfriend. They are both unattached. Holmes, perhaps mockingly, misinterprets the questions and tells John that he considers himself married to his work; that he is flattered but not interested. (A Study in Pink) This conversation implies that Holmes is asexual rather than homosexual. He is devoted to his work and rationale. Even though Sherlock has more affection for those around him than he wishes to admit, there is no conclusive evidence that these affections go any further than mere friendship.

The Relationship between Holmes and Watson

John Watson's role has fundamentally changed, now that he is Holmes' sidekick onscreen rather than in print. When Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote the stories, Watson's role was that of Sherlock Holmes' biographer; everything was seen through the eyes of John Watson. His primary function was to write about Sherlock Holmes' adventures. The detective remains more of a mystery to the reader, because he is written about from through the eyes of someone else. Never do the readers get a look inside Holmes' head other than through Watson's thoughts, descriptions or dialogue. Furthermore, since at times his flaws are described, too, he becomes a credible person. Holmes is observed through the eyes of the ordinary man: Watson. The audience can relate to Watson and, through him, observe the actions of a brilliant eccentric. In the screen adaptations John Watson still

writes about Sherlock Holmes, although the audience does not view Holmes through this blog. The audience, when watching the series, can see Holmes' actions first-handedly. He need not be described by doctor Watson; the expressions on Holmes' face, too, can be seen. The audience can create their own conclusions about what Holmes feels in certain situations. The blog is merely a way for Holmes to become famous in the series, rather than outside of it. Characters in the series mention having enjoyed reading Watson's blog. Additionally, prospective clients come to Holmes because they have heard from him through Watson's blog. The function of Watson's writing about Holmes has changed immensely. Watson is no longer the primary focaliser. The question that arises is whether the character of John Watson and his relationship with Sherlock Holmes has changed because the stories are modernised, or because Watson has a new purpose in the stories now that he is no longer the focaliser. To decide on this, Watson's intellect must be analysed in both the series and the written stories. Not only is Watson's intellect important, but so is their friendship. The two characters now address each other by their first names, which implies a change in their relationship. Furthermore, the effect Watson has on Holmes and vice versa must be taken into account; without each other they would both be a burden on society. Finally, the contributions Watson makes to solving crimes have changed now that he has a more active role.

Conan Doyle portrayed Watson as less intelligent than Holmes. It was his role to ask questions and not understand certain things so that Holmes could explain them to him and therefore also to the audience. This did not mean that Watson was a complete idiot; he was still an army doctor. He did not idolise Holmes and he also wrote about his flaws and shortcomings. The fact that Watson can see the flaws in his object of admiration, Holmes, indicates that he can think for himself, too. Conan Doyle had to make Watson not too intelligent, because then much of the attention would go to him rather than to Holmes. Watson could not have been dim-witted either,

because then the audience would not believe his tales.

In the BBC television series, Watson no longer merely reports about Holmes' adventures and solved crimes; he is now an active part in it. This is probably due to the fact that the point of view has changed. The audience now watches Holmes first-handedly through the camera, rather than through Watson's descriptions. It would not be interesting to watch a man follow Holmes all day long, doing nothing more than taking notes and asking questions. Watson has been given a much more active role, and because the audience now looks at him as an actual character in the stories, he shines more brightly himself. The audience still needs him to ask Holmes to explain certain things, but due to his active role he appears more intelligent than in the original stories.

In addition to this, Holmes and Watson call each other by their first names (Sherlock and John) in the series, rather than by their last names, which they do in the Conan Doyle stories. Calling each other by their first name is something that is done more in the twenty-first century than in the nineteenth. However, those that are not on friendly terms are still called by their last names. The landlady is called Mrs. Hudson, the police inspector Lestrade and the villains Moriarty and Magnussen. This detail emphasises that, more than just a biographer writing about his subject, John and Sherlock are, indeed, friends. That is not to say that they were not friends in the Conan Doyle stories, but they certainly have become more equal on the social ladder. Watson is respected by both the police department as well as Sherlock's brother Mycroft Holmes. He is frequently asked for his opinion.

Both Watson and Holmes need each other, both in their own ways. This has not changed in the adaptation. Holmes still needs Watson to stay in touch with humanity, to not fall into criminal degeneracy. Watson says in 'The Sign of Four' that “[he] could not but think what a terrible criminal [Holmes] would have made had he turned his energy and sagacity against the law instead of

exerting them in its defence” (Conan Doyle 167). Holmes confers in “The Final Problem” when he talks of Moriarty: “[m]y horror at his crimes was lost in my admiration of his skill” (Conan Doyle 730). In the series, some police officers also believe that Holmes might be a great criminal if he wanted to, and McLaughlin argues that “[t]his notion stems from decades of criminal science research, including research conducted by Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau.³ In many ways, Sherlock fulfills the attributes regarding the idea of a criminal. Some of these attributes include Sherlock’s view of others as inferior and his often lack of conscience. The show, unlike the stories, emphasizes these degenerative tendencies with the use of characters like Irene Adler and Jim Moriarty. However, unlike Adler and Moriarty, Sherlock never acts on them” (McLaughlin, 19). This is most likely due to his friendship with John Watson, whereas Adler and Moriarty have no friends. On the other hand, Watson needs Holmes to not live like an idle man and thereby fall into social degeneracy. This also remains unchanged in the BBC series *Sherlock*. In the beginning of the series, Watson, before he has ever met Holmes, sees a psychiatrist in an attempt to get over his war trauma. She advises him to write about everything that happens to him and in that way get back into society. Watson remarks that nothing ever happens to him; he is a social degenerate with nothing going on for him. He therefore has nothing to write about. That is until he meets Holmes; he now has something to write about and he does so in the form of a blog. Holmes provides Watson with a purpose in his personal life, too. He missed the action of the war, which Mycroft notices because of Watson's intermittent tremor in his left hand: “[y]our therapist thinks it’s post-traumatic stress disorder. She thinks you’re haunted by memories of your military service [...] She’s got it the wrong way round. You’re under stress right now and your hand is perfectly steady. [...] You’re not

³ Nordau described a degenerate as “necessarily egotistical and impulsive [...]. His excitability appears to him a mark of superiority; he believes himself to be possessed by a peculiar insight lacking in other mortals, and he is fain to despise the vulgar herd for the dulness and narrowness of their minds. The unhappy creature does not suspect that he is conceited about a disease and boasting of a derangement of the mind” (1913: Nordau, 19).

haunted by the war, Doctor Watson, you miss it". Watson no longer sees his psychiatrist until he learns that Holmes has died. It is only after the death of his best friend that he no longer has a purpose for his blog, nor a purpose in his personal life, either. He needed the adventures to function. The mutual necessity is much more emphasized in the series than in the novels, although it was there already. In this regard their relationship has not changed fundamentally; the aspect has just been given more attention by Moffat and Gatiss.

Although it is Holmes who is called the consulting detective, Watson has plays a rather big part in the detective-business, as well. In the BBC's *Sherlock* it is his blog, which is a massive Internet success, that brings new customers towards Holmes. Holmes gets his name because people on the Internet have read Watson's stories. Furthermore, he has become more of a crime-solver himself. In the original Conan Doyle stories, nearly all of the investigations are done by Holmes. It is only in "The Hound of Baskervilles" that Watson gets to investigate for himself and even then it is Holmes who does all the impressive work. Conan Doyle does not give Watson the opportunity to show his worth as a detective. In the series Watson is more capable of crime-solving. On behalf of Mycroft Holmes, Watson investigates the death of an MI6 employee. The audience can watch him come to a conclusion on his own. Just after he has done so, Sherlock Holmes appears to tell him that he had followed him all along. Watson did come to the conclusion all by himself. Earlier in the same episode, however, Holmes has asked him to analyse a pair of shoes. When Watson has done so, Holmes compliments him on his skills, but remarks that he has missed almost everything of importance. He then proceeds to point out the details that Watson has missed. In the twenty-first century Holmes is still the better crime-solver, but Watson has learned a few tricks, too.

In conclusion, Watson seems to be more intelligent in the adaptation *Sherlock* than he does in the original Conan Doyle stories. This is mostly because the point of view has changed; he has

become a character in his own right, rather than Holmes' narrator. He is less idle in the investigations and is now able to do his own detective work, too, albeit not with the same impressive deductive skills that Holmes uses. He very important to Holmes, for without him Holmes would lose his touch with humanity and possibly fall into criminal degeneracy. Both in the original and in the adaptation does Holmes' "addiction to his work [seem] to trump any other passion" (Harrington 2012). On the other hand, Watson needs Holmes to have a purpose in life; this is evidenced with his blog and his psychiatrist. Gatiss and Moffat have emphasized these aspects of the stories more, which indicates that the audience has changed over time and is in need of more empathisation with the characters, rather than idolisation. This might also be why they now address each other by their first names. They are closer to each other. These days, the formality of addressing each other by their last names would suggest them being less equal on the social ladder than they actually are in the adaptation.

Sherlock and the Others

Sherlock Holmes has, besides his best friend and sidekick John Watson, numerous other relationships in both the stories by Conan Doyle, as well as the adapted BBC television series *Sherlock*. There are a number of recurring characters that appear in nearly all adaptations, but more importantly, play an important role in Holmes' life in the BBC adaptation. These characters, although they are less frequently shown than Watson is, still affect Holmes' behaviour greatly. Holmes has certain relationships with those surrounding him that are noteworthy to analyse. He has familial relationships, mostly with his brother Mycroft Holmes, but to some extent also his parents. He, furthermore, has a nemesis who is intellectually equal to him: Jim Moriarty. In addition to this, Sherlock is, although he is not officially employed there, a co-worker to those in Scotland Yard.

Finally, there are the women in his life. Despite his apathetic view towards love relationships, there are those who do see him as their love-interest. More importantly, a woman is his biggest competitor in a struggle for Watson's affection. All of these relationships have been updated to better suit the twenty-first century Holmes.

4. 1 Mycroft Holmes

The time in which the stories of Sherlock Holmes were written by Conan Doyle saw many changes. The industrial revolution was at its peak in the British empire. According to McLaughlin, during these changing times “men felt they had to exert absolute power over their homes in order to sustain a stable nation. The home became a reflection of the state and as the state changed, so too did the domestic sphere. As the empire expanded and technology advanced, the home became less important, marriage became less vital to a man’s identity, and a new emphasis on the importance of homosocial bonds arose” (McLaughlin 2013, 10). This is very evident in the original stories. Holmes has a homosocial bond with Watson, rather than a family at home. His relatives by blood play a very small part in the stories. His brother, Mycroft, plays a small role; he appears in four stories. This may be because they are seven years apart; during their childhood Mycroft was probably away often to a boarding school. Therefore, he might possibly be just like a relative Sherlock saw every so often, such as a cousin. They are on friendly terms, yet they appear to be very detached. Sherlock has John believe he is an only child for seven years. Sherlock and his brother discuss work-related topics, rather than personal ones. Just like Sherlock, Mycroft also has a very gifted mind. Although Mycroft himself is very modest about his occupation in the British government, according to Sherlock he sometimes is the government, which is shown by the line in *The Bruce-Partington Plans*, saying about Mycroft that “The conclusions of every department are

passed to him, and he is the central exchange, the clearinghouse, which makes out the balance. All other men are specialists, but his specialism is omniscience” (Conan Doyle 405). In adaptations Mycroft is often portrayed as head of the secret service. Furthermore, in “The Greek Interpreter” Mycroft is described as one of the founders of the Diogenes club, a club which contains “contains the most unsociable and unclubable men in town”, persons who “some from shyness, some from misanthropy, have no wish for the company of their fellows” (Conan Doyle 683). Sherlock is also described to frequent this club occasionally. This indicates that the both of them, at least in the original stories, had decided to stay apart from other people.

In the BBC's adaptation *Sherlock*, Mycroft plays a bigger role than one would expect considering his role in the original. Part of this may have to do with the fact that Mycroft's character is played by Gatiss, one of the show's creators. The more important aspect of it, is that the show's focus lies on relationships. More than the relationships between Sherlock and John; it focuses heavily on Sherlock and other people; those that he in the original avoids to have relationships with that are more than superficial. In their youth, apparently, both of the Holmes brothers thought Sherlock was an idiot, until they met other children. This implies that Mycroft is the smarter of the two. Although there is a rivalry between them, they do rely on each other more and more. Mycroft calls upon his brother to solve cases for him, and Sherlock needs his brother to get out of certain difficult situations such as jail; this is very much like the siblings in the original who call upon each other in work-related issues. In the twenty-first century, however, not only do they need each other for their careers, they also seem to care about each other greatly. Mycroft has Sherlock surveillanced to keep him out of trouble: he even offers to pay John to keep an eye on him. Furthermore, there is one occasion when Mrs. Hudson, the landlady, tells Mycroft, “it’s a disgrace, sending your little brother into danger like that. Family is all we have in the end, Mycroft Holmes.”

To which Mycroft replies, angrily “Oh shut up, Mrs Hudson” (A Scandal in Belgravia). This exchange is noteworthy, because it is one of the few times, if not the only time in the series that Mycroft loses his cool. Mycroft probably realises that those living with Sherlock on Bakerstreet are his surrogate family: Mrs. Hudson and John Watson. He feels left out of the family, although he cares deeply about his brother. Mycroft, who can bring down his enemies with merely a smile, has but one pressure point and that pressure point is his brother. The series' focus is very much on putting Sherlock in situations that are awkward to him and going from there to view his response. His distant brother is a perfect example of Sherlock having to cope with an emotional bond that he cannot rationalise – nor can Mycroft, for that matter. It makes them both irritable. Where in the Conan Doyle stories the Diogenes club served to prove that the Holmes brothers actively decided to stay away from others, in the BBC's adaptation this club emphasises Mycroft's loneliness. Sherlock has friends, more so than in the original stories; Mycroft does not seem to have any. Despite his more prominent role, he does not seem to have become more social to anyone other than his brother. Moffat and Gatiss have put Sherlock in relationships that the original did not: he must now cope with family. His quarrels with his brother make him a more ordinary and identifiable character.

4.2 Jim Moriarty

“Every fairy tale needs a good old-fashioned villain. You need me or you're nothing. Because we're just alike, you and I, except you're boring”, is what Jim Moriarty tells Sherlock in “The Reichenbach Fall” (The Reichenbach Fall). He is Sherlock's opposite in many regards. Where Sherlock is the consulting detective, Jim is the consulting criminal; just like Sherlock he gets very bored very easily. According to the two, everyone else is a boring, ordinary person. The two of them are mutually obsessed with each other. Despite the many lives that are at stake, they are playing

games with each other. The only thing that stops Sherlock from going too far, from neglecting that lives are at stake, is his friendship with John Watson. During their games they openly flirt with each other; the very first time they meet, when Sherlock and the audience do not know Jim, Jim pretends to be a gay man, flirting with Sherlock. In the original story Moriarty was included as a device to kill off Holmes. He was the criminal mastermind of London, protecting and consulting criminals demanding a share of their profits. Holmes and Moriarty fight each other, during which they both fall to their deaths. Watson never gets to meet Moriarty in the original. What he writes about is based on hearsay. In the present day series, Jim Moriarty has a more active role; from the beginning he is Sherlock's nemesis, advising criminals in the earlier episodes and committing crimes himself later in season two. Twice is he able to get to Sherlock through women that are obsessed with Sherlock: Molly Hooper and Irene Adler. The women's obsession he shares; it appears to be his life's purpose to outwit Sherlock. As Sherlock is the cleverest competitor he can imagine, he does not hesitate to commit suicide to win the battle from Sherlock. To save the lives of those he loves, Sherlock must commit suicide, too. There would be no escape; Sherlock would have to die and with Sherlock being dead, there would be no point for Jim, either. In the end, Sherlock faked his suicide, thus winning the final battle. At the end of season three, however, a picture of Moriarty appears with the text "did you miss me?" indicating that possibly Moriarty, too, faked his suicide. Another possibility is that someone used Moriarty's picture to get to Sherlock. Possibly even Mycroft, to get his brother back from his prison sentence. Until season four airs, nothing can be said with certainty about Moriarty's return. Moriarty's character has changed greatly from the original stories. Whereas he first was merely a device to kill off Sherlock, in the series he is connected to nearly all cases that Sherlock solves. He is the villain that the hero needs. Without the villain there would be no cases, nor would Sherlock's emotional transformation be as evident as it is now. Moriarty uses the people

most important in Sherlock's life to blackmail the hero into committing suicide. Without Moriarty the importance of those characters to Sherlock would not be as evident.

4.3 Gregory Lestrade / Scotland Yard

In the original stories 21 different police inspectors have made their appearance, most notably Lestrade and Gregson, whom Holmes calls “the pick of a bad lot” in *A Study in Scarlet*. The television series features only inspector Lestrade; this is probably for reasons of continuity. A character must grow on the audience, especially now that relationships are playing a much greater role than in the original. Each episode featuring a new police inspector would leave little room for character development, both within the police force as well as Sherlock's attitude towards the police force. A bond with the police force was in the nineteenth century as important for Holmes as it is in the twenty-first. His very job is consulting detective; when the police are stuck with their investigation they turn to the resourceful Holmes as a last resort. It seems that the police need Holmes more than he does them. Granted, he earns his living doing investigations, but the police need not be his only employer. On the other hand, the police have no one else to turn to; no one does the job better than Sherlock Holmes. However, this bond with the police does highlight his methods more than with any other employer. He is more resourceful than all of Scotland Yard, which is more impressive than Sherlock being more resourceful than anyone else in need of his help.

A great transformation happens between Sherlock Holmes and Gregory Lestrade. They get used to one another; they actually start to become friends. Both in the original as well as in the BBC adaptation, they start off on the wrong footing. This is probably because Holmes appears to be Lestrade's superior where police work is concerned, yet they cannot do without each other. They

have to stick together and over time this hatred towards each other turns into an annoyance, which turns into habit, which turns into a friendship. Because the original features less of Lestrade, this transformation is less obvious, yet when Holmes returns from the dead Lestrade tells him that “it is good to see you back in London, sir”. Each episode of the series features Lestrade as the head inspector; in the very first episode he is openly mocked by Sherlock, yet to much annoyance of his co-workers Sally and Anderson he needs Sherlock's help. In the first episode of season two another inspector needs Sherlock's help and Lestrade tells this inspector that “[t]his is just friendly advice, but give Sherlock five minutes on your crime scene and listen to everything that he has to say. And as far as possible, try not to punch him” (A Scandal in Belgravia). He openly admires Sherlock, yet he is aware that Sherlock can be a pain to those who are not familiar with him. This is the key to their transformation; they get to know each other and therefore they get to endure each other. Lestrade is the most obvious example of showing how Sherlock becomes friendly with someone else through the course of time.

4.4 Mary Morstan

John Watson has always been a ladies' man. Both in the original as well as in the series is he known for his way with women. There are hints that he has been married multiple times, though nothing is definite. He has, for a fact, had many different girlfriends, and furthermore, he has at least been married once: to Mary Marston. In Conan Doyle's stories this happens at the end of the story “The Sign of the Four”. To be precise, he is engaged to be married at the end of the story and at the beginning of the next story he is actually a married man. In the series an entire episode is dedicated to his wedding. Whereas Conan Doyle was less interested in the lives of others than Holmes, Moffat and Gatiss are very much interested in relationships and what it does to the characters; their plots

are much more character-driven than Conan Doyle's. The impact of the wedding in the series is much greater. Mary dies during the stage that Sherlock is also presumed dead in the written stories. The television series has John and Mary meet during this stage, so the timing has been changed by the directors. They have most likely done this to make her more integral to the story; she has become a part of the stories, rather than one of John's women. When Sherlock is presumed dead, Mary and John meet; she in a way replaces Sherlock in John's heart. He has found a new purpose in his life and that purpose is his wife. It is, therefore, interesting to see what happens when Sherlock returns from the dead. He finds himself replaced. In fact, John wants nothing to do with him out of anger. He did after all leave his best friend in the dark about his being alive for several years. Sherlock really must fight to get back to being friends. When they are back on good terms, things have changed, though. It is no longer just the two boys going on a mission; it is the three of them, including Mary. The name of the episode "The Sign of Three" may refer to this, although it more likely refers to the baby that is on the way. Sherlock would not exactly fit in the picture of John and a family. So far, however, Sherlock seems to cope with this possible exclusion rather well. Granted, it was not the best best man's speech ever, but he does seem to care for Mary, whereas he has been rather indifferent to the other women in John's life. When Mary turns out to be not who they expected her to be, even when he is shot by her, Sherlock still trusts she has the best intentions. Somehow they both accept each other as an extension of the person they love: John Watson. In "His Last Vow" Mary saves Sherlock's life by shooting him in a non-lethal spot, it is explained by the two of them. Furthermore, later that season Sherlock commits murder to save Mary's life. Both actions are presumably done for John Watson, rather than for each other. Mary in the television series has been given a considerably bigger role than the Mary in the written stories. Sherlock has changed his view towards John's relationships. He cares about John so much that he also cares

about Mary as an extension of John. Possibly Sherlock has realised that his disappearance was extremely selfish, even though it was to protect the three people that he really cared about. He could have come back much sooner. He must atone for this, something that the original Sherlock Holmes would never do.

4.5 Irene Adler

Irene Adler only appears once in the original, and also only once in the series. Because she is one of the very few female characters that play a role in the original stories, much speculations about Sherlock's feelings towards her have been made by fans. She is the only female character to ever outsmart Sherlock. In the series, however, this does not happen. Although she occasionally outsmarts him, and has rather impressive tricks of her own, it is Sherlock who has the final say. Even though both Mycroft and Irene already believe that she, Irene, has won. In the epilogue of the episode Sherlock even saves her life. It is speculated by characters in the episode that he has romantic feelings for her, yet he refutes them every time. Additionally, in the original there has been some ambiguity as to whether he is in love, lust, or something else with her. He appreciates her intellect far more than her body. In the series, also, it is not her body that he cares for, nor the advances that she makes. He enjoys to play the game with her. At the end of the day Sherlock chooses his head over his heart. Despite her relative small role in the bigger storyline, she does show the possibility of Sherlock's romantic involvement with someone, which prior to her appearance had not been shown.

4.6 Molly Hooper

Molly Hooper never appeared in Conan Doyle's stories. She is a new character altogether. At first the creators did not intend to have her reappear after the pilot episode; she would just have to

introduce Sherlock in the opening scene in the morgue. Her role turned out splendidly and the creators decided to add a character to their cast. Women played hardly a role in the Conan Doyle stories, but in the series Sherlock is much more engaged in relationships with females, even though he does not get into a love-relationship. Molly brings out a more human side of Sherlock. She has an obvious crush on Sherlock, which begins in the very first episode when she asks him out on a date: “I was wondering if you’d like to have coffee,” to which he replies, “black, two sugars, please. I’ll be upstairs” (A Study in Pink). Later that season, since Sherlock is not responding at all, she is trying to make him jealous by introducing Sherlock to her new boyfriend. She seems oblivious to the fact that her boyfriend is gay; he openly flirts with Sherlock. Later, this new boyfriend turns out to be Jim Moriarty. Molly was used by the villain to get closer to Sherlock. Many viewers feel sorry for Molly, who is longing to be loved. This becomes especially awkward in the opening episode of the second season, when she is all dressed up at a Christmas party at Sherlock's. Sherlock deduces that she must have a new boyfriend, because she is so dressed up and mocks her, until he sees her present that is addressed to Sherlock Holmes. He immediately regrets what he has said and asks for forgiveness. Even John seems surprised to hear these words come out of the mouth of Sherlock. In fact, this is the very first time Sherlock has ever genuinely apologised for his behaviour in the series. In this regard she is crucial to Sherlock's transformation into a more emotional man. He no longer neglects the feelings of those surrounding him; he realises that he must behave. She gets over it and their relationship seems to have become stronger. In fact, she has always mattered to him. Sherlock tells her “you do count. You've always counted, and I've always trusted you” (The Reichenbach Fall). He furthermore tells Molly that he needs her. The audience at this point does not know what he needs her for. The next season, however, it becomes apparent that she helped him to fake his suicide. Moriarty has overlooked his relationship with Molly, which saves him from dying.

4.7 A Conclusion to the Characters

The BBC adaptation of Sherlock Holmes has updated many relationships that the protagonist has with other recurring characters. The creators of the show have not only given the side characters more prominent roles, they have even included a wholly new character. All of this is done to give Sherlock Holmes a more human touch. It causes new situations, that the original Holmes did not encounter. The villains aptly evolve with Sherlock and make use of this renewed Sherlock Holmes. They use Sherlock's relationships to get to him; Moriarty uses Molly and Mycroft to get to Sherlock. Magnusses, on the other hand, uses Mary and John to get to Sherlock, because he needs to use Sherlock to get to Mycroft. On the other hand, in the end these relationships do prove to be helpful. Moriarty, for example, has overlooked the relationship between Sherlock and Molly; he believes the only ones that Sherlock cares for are John Watson, inspector Lestrade and Mrs. Hudson. This is what gives Sherlock the opportunity to fake his own death with the help of Molly. Allegedly, of course, because no definite answer as to how he has faked his death has been given. Furthermore, the relationships that Sherlock has with the other characters, has made him a rounder character that transforms throughout the series. It makes it easier to identify with him for the audience, rather than only admire him.

Conclusion

Moffat and Gatiss' adaptation of Sherlock Holmes in a modern setting emphasises contemporary character development. Not only do Sherlock Holmes and John Watson evolve throughout the series, many of the recurring characters undergo a transformation. The directors have decided to give certain characters more screen time than the original stories would suggest. They have even introduced new recurring characters. The effect of the more prominent role that certain characters are given, is that they are easier to relate to. It makes the stories more human, just like Sherlock's new weaknesses do; he risks his life to prove he is clever. Instead of idolising Sherlock, the audience now empathises with him, and not only with him but with the others, too. The basics of the stories, Sherlock solving crimes with his gifted mind and deductive skills, still exists in all of the episodes; he has, however, been giving new – more modern – tools to do so. Where the characters around Sherlock Holmes were a device used by Conan Doyle to show off Sherlock's great mind, in the television series they are a tool to show Sherlock's transformation as a person. Sherlock has changed his approach towards relationships. The other characters show the audience how Sherlock changes from a bored and self-centered genius into a bored and slightly less self-centered friend.

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