

The Master Criminal Who Is Not There

A study on the lasting popularity of Professor James Moriarty

BA Thesis English Language and
Culture, Utrecht University

Annik Delissen

5904706

Supervisor: Prof. dr. David Pascoe

Second reader: dr. Roselinde Supheert

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Introduction

In 1893, Arthur Conan Doyle introduced Professor James Moriarty, an antagonist to the overly popular fictional detective Sherlock Holmes in the short story “The Final Problem”. By the end of the narrative, both characters fall to their alleged death and the Professor is presumed dead. However, not even fifty years later, a poem by renowned poet T.S. Eliot is published in his collection of occasional verse, *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats* (1939) titled “Macavity the Mystery Cat”. The titular character shows striking similarities with the previously mentioned antagonist. Take, for example, the cat’s physical description:

Macavity’s a ginger cat, he’s very tall and thin;
 You would know him if you saw him, for his eyes are sunken in.
 His brow is deeply lined with thought, his head is highly domed;
 His coat is dusty from neglect, his whiskers are uncombed.
 He sways his head from side to side, with movements like a snake; (23)

When comparing this depiction to that of Moriarty in “The Final Problem”, there remains no question as to who inspired Eliot to write this cat: “He is extremely tall and thin, his forehead domes out in a white curve, and his two eyes are deeply sunken in his head [...] his face protrudes forward, and is forever slowly oscillating from side to side in a curious reptilian fashion” (833-834).

Another evident reference to Moriarty can be found in the final stanza of Eliot’s poem:

Macavity, Macavity, there’s no one like Macavity,
 There never was a Cat of such deceitfulness and suavity.

He always has an alibi, and one or two to spare:

At whatever time the deed took place – MACAVITY WASN'T THERE!

And they say that all the Cats whose wicked deeds are widely known

(I might mention Mungojerrie, I might mention Griddlebone)

Are nothing more than agents for the Cat who all the time

Just controls their operations: the Napoleon of Crime! (24)

First of all, the last words of the poem, “the Napoleon of Crime” can be considered as quite important. These exemplify the title that Holmes uses to describe the Professor in “The Final Problem”. It officially belongs to Adam Worth, who acquired it by running a criminal organisation. The same is true for Moriarty and Macavity, which would connect all three of them. Another characteristic and the most important one where this essay is concerned: the fact that the Mystery Cat “wasn’t there”. The same can be said about both other criminals. In all three cases the phrase can be taken literally in the sense that they are not physically present at the time their crimes are committed, as they are able to let their subordinates do the dirty work for them, which would ensure their safety from the police. However, in the case of the Professor, this essay will show that there is another factor to be considered: his identity as the Master Criminal is never proven. It might well not be there at all.

As noted, Eliot’s poem was published in 1939, less than fifty years after Moriarty’s initial appearance in “The Final Problem”, which means that the character was already attracting interest outside the Sherlock Holmes canon within quite a short period of time. When Conan Doyle introduced him, he seemed to be merely a plot device to murder the very popular fictional detective created by the writer. Nobody could have guessed that the antagonist would become one of the most famous fictional criminals of all time. Even now, his name is still well-known, not only from the original Holmes’ stories, but also from adaptations that have followed. Yet, when we consider that he is only featured in eight of

Holmes' cases, "The Final Problem", The Adventures of "The Empty House" (1903), "The Norwood Builder" (1903), "The Missing Three-Quarter" (1904) and "The Illustrious Client" (1924), "His Last Bow" (1917) and *The Valley of Fear* (1915), with the entire canon consisting of 56 short stories and four novels, it would seem like a rather meagre amount of representation for a character so greatly admired.

Therefore, the following question can be asked: How did Professor James Moriarty gain his popularity in the original Sherlock Holmes canon and how has this popularity endured until the 21st century?

The first part of the question will be answered by establishing exactly how the character is presented in the original stories. There are in fact two sides to him; the Professor of Mathematics and the Master Criminal. This information will lead to a discussion on the effect such a character could have had on the original readers of the Sherlock Holmes stories. The expected answer to this part of the question is that Moriarty spoke to the readers' fears, but also offered them the type of criminal they looked for in crime fiction during that period.

Finally, the second part of the main question stated above will be answered by presenting how the mystery and the gaps surrounding the character inspired new writers to add to the original canon. By creating new stories, they were able to introduce their own interpretations of who the Master Criminal could and could not have been. These writers have two options; either they adopt Arthur Conan Doyle's speculations about Moriarty's criminal side by giving an account of the life of the Napoleon of Crime, or their writing takes on the subject of psychosis and focusses on the Professor's relationship with Sherlock Holmes. Because there are many uncertainties surrounding Moriarty's personality, writers have several directions in which they can take their stories about either of the two subjects. As a result, the character has remained relevant for over a century.

The expected outcome of this essay is that the Professor's popularity can be attributed to the fact that he is the Master Criminal who is not there.

Chapter 1 – The Identity of a Master Criminal

Before any interpretations can be made, it is important to ascertain what type of character Arthur Conan Doyle created in the original Sherlock Holmes canon. The question that will be answered in this chapter is: What is known about Professor James Moriarty?

The first point of interest is his appearance, which was already mentioned briefly in the introduction. In “The Final Problem”, Holmes depicts him as follows:

He is extremely tall and thin, his forehead domes out in a white curve, and his two eyes are deeply sunken in his head. He is clean-shaven, pale, and ascetic-looking, retaining something of the professor in his features. His shoulders are rounded from much study, and his face protrudes forward, and is forever slowly oscillating from side to side in a curious reptilian fashion. (833-834)

Words such as “sunken in”, “pale”, “ascetic-looking” and “reptilian” give the reader a sense that this is not a pleasant character. Of course this is exactly what Holmes would want the reader to think because he suspects Moriarty of having a very dark personality.

It is striking that the Detective, before giving his description, says these words: “his appearance was quite familiar to me” (833). This utterance is not entirely surprising, when his own appearance is taken into account: “in height he was rather over six feet, and so excessively lean that he seemed to be considerably taller” (Doyle, “A Study in Scarlet” 19). Their similarities do not stop there as they are both compared to dangerous animals, Moriarty being more reptilian like, whereas Holmes is attributed features of a bird of prey (Powers 111): “his eyes were sharp and piercing [...] and his thin, hawklike nose gave his whole expression an air of alertness and decision” (Doyle, “A Study in Scarlet” 19). This resemblance in appearance can be the reason for Holmes feeling a sense of acquaintance

when he sees Moriarty for the first time. However, it could also be argued that the two men share a history, which the Detective does not quite remember. The fact that he uses the word “familiar” and proceeds to give a physical description so very close to his own would give way to the suggestion of there being a family connection between them. Yet, throughout the canon, there is no further mention of the characters having seen each other before their first meeting in “The Final Problem”. The reader can therefore never be sure of any deeper connection between them.

On the subject of family, there are certain information is offered about the Professor’s. For one thing, two brothers are mentioned. One of them is referred to in “The Final Problem”. His name is also James Moriarty and he works as a Colonel. The second is alluded to in *The Valley of Fear*. The information the reader gains about him is that he is younger and that he works as “a station master in the west of England” (316). As his name is not mentioned and *The Valley of Fear* is set before the events of “The Final Problem”, it is possible that this is the same brother as the Colonel. Holmes’ statement in the novel that the Professor only has one brother would support the suggestion that they are in fact the same man, but as there is no hard evidence to prove this, there are no certainties.

As for his parents, it is suggested that Moriarty has “hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind” (Doyle, “The Final Problem” 832), which would suggest that his parents were also involved in crime. During the 19th century, it was widely believed that criminality was innate (Spierenburg 379-384). Not only scientists such as Darwin and Lombroso advocated this theory, even ordinary people “found the idea that criminals were ‘born that way’ self-evident” (384). According to Gray Cavender and Nancy Jurik, Holmes was even intended as a modern version of Lombroso (“Crime, Criminology and the Crime Genre” 325). This would explain why he believes the Professor’s criminal side to be innate, but it does not serve as actual proof. As there is no further mention of his parents and they are never included

in any later stories, this theory of the Moriarty family being a criminal one remains speculative.

One certainty the reader has about the character is his career as a Professor of Mathematics. For some time, he worked at one of the smaller universities in England, after which he travelled “to London where he set up as an army coach” (Doyle, “The Final Problem” 832). Holmes has ascertained that he makes seven hundred a year, which can be found in “several trustworthy books of reference” (Doyle, *The Valley of Fear* 316). This evidence proves that his identity as a Professor of Mathematics indeed exists.

His second profession is one far darker, and is only perceived by the Detective. According to Holmes, Moriarty had to leave the university he worked at due to “dark rumours gathering round him” (Doyle, “The Final Problem” 832). What these exactly entailed, is not disclosed to the reader. It is stated that their existence is “known to the world” (832), most probably because they were circulating in the university town he worked at and spread from there, which means that at least the existence of rumours is a certainty. If they were true remains a mystery.

Once in London, it seems he set up his criminal empire. What this entails is that “he is the organiser of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city” (833). He plans all the crimes, but has his agents carry them out for him, keeping himself out of harm’s way. During one of two conversations Holmes and Moriarty share in the canon, the Professor does allude to the Detective being close to the truth: “you stand in the way not merely of an individual, but of a mighty organisation, the full extent of which you, with all your cleverness, have been unable to realise” (834). Unfortunately, nobody else was present at this conversation to confirm these words were actually spoken.

In a note Holmes leaves for Watson before his final confrontation with the Professor, he writes that: “he has been giving me a sketch of the methods by which he avoided the

English police” (844). Again, the reader only has Holmes’ word as evidence that Moriarty is indeed a Master Criminal. To be sure, the Detective never offers any hard evidence for the crimes the Professor supposedly committed. He merely refers to meetings he had with the man because only during those does he obtain some information on what is at play in London. Unfortunately, nobody can confirm these actually took place.

Another subject to be discussed is Moriarty’s personality. During the previously mentioned conversation between MacDonald, Holmes and Watson in *The Valley of Fear*, the Inspector mentions the following about the alleged criminal: “he seems to be a very respectable, learned and talented sort of man” (315). These characteristics can be supported by evidence existing inside the canon. At the age of twenty-one, Moriarty wrote a treatise on Newton’s Binomial Theorem, which would prove his mathematical intelligence. Furthermore, he is the author of the fictional work *The Dynamics of an Asteroid*, which “ascends to such rarefied heights of pure mathematics that it is said that there was no man in the scientific press capable of criticising it” (308). Because these works are either published or can be found in university records, they can be regarded as proof for his learned intelligence and talent. The fact that he is regarded as respectable can be explained by his position as a Professor at a university, but also by his later work as an army coach, as working for the military, and therewith for Queen and country, does result in a person being regarded as respectable.

As for his darker personality, Holmes compares him to “a spider [that sits] in the centre of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them” (Doyle, “The Final Problem” 833). Furthermore, the Detective calls him “one of the first brains of Europe”, who has “all the powers of darkness at his back” (Doyle, *The Valley of Fear* 310). That he would have a dangerous group of people surrounding him, would appear from the murderous attempts that were made on Holmes after his first conversation with Moriarty, none of which were carried out by the man himself and could probably not

even be connected to him. Thus, this would make him a man who should be feared. When we compare this person to the one described in the previous paragraph, it is hard to believe that they are the same person. Add to that the fact that Holmes has very little to actually prove the existence of the second identity and this would give reason enough to doubt if there even is such a man.

The inspiration for this dark side of Moriarty's character can be found in two real-life criminals, whom Arthur Conan Doyle even alludes to when discussing the character. As mentioned in the introduction, by awarding him the title of the Napoleon of Crime, he refers to Adam Worth, who led a large criminal organisation from his flat in Piccadilly (Wolkomir). But, this is not the only reference made to the man. In *The Valley of Fear*, Holmes and MacDonald discuss a portrait that hangs in the Professor's study. It is a fictional work by French portrait and landscape painter Jean Baptiste Greuze titled *La jeune fille à l'agneau* and serves as a nod to Worth, who stole a portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire by the famous British painter of portraits and landscapes, Thomas Gainsborough, from William Agnew's art gallery in 1876:

the title of the imaginary painting itself, *Jeune Fille à l'agneau* means "Young girl with lamb," but the reader is actually being offered one of Conan Doyle's most delicious puns. Would MacDonald, for all his "good Aberdeen upbringing," have known the meaning of the word "agneau"? Probably not. He might, in fact, translate the title "The Young Woman from Agneau," and the young woman from Agnew's was none other than the celebrated Duchess of Devonshire, stolen from Agnew's art gallery in 1876. (Macintyre 225)

By referring to Worth in two separate stories and because both he and Moriarty ran a large criminal organisation in London, Conan Doyle establishes the connection between the character and the real-life man.

A second criminal who served as inspiration is Jonathan Wild. He is even mentioned by name in the novel *The Valley of Fear* in relation to the Professor: “Jonathan Wild [is] a master criminal [who] lived last century – 1750 or thereabouts ... [He] was the hidden force of the London criminals, to whom he sold his brains and his organisation on a fifteen per cent commission” (317). However, this description is not without discrepancies. Wild lived between 1682 and 1725. He was a “master English criminal of early 18th-century London, leader of thieves and highwaymen, extortionist, and fence for stolen goods” (Encyclopaedia Britannica). In 1742, Henry Fielding wrote a satire about him titled *The Life and Death of Jonathan Wild, the Great*, which would explain the wrong date in Holmes’ narrative. To be able to carry out his criminal escapades, Wild used the cover of being a *Thief Taker General*. Moriarty allegedly uses his career as Professor for the same purpose.

Both Worth and Wild were seemingly invisible to the authorities. They organised crimes, but kept mostly to the background when they were carried out, ensuring the blame could not fall on them. However, proof was found of their involvement, whereas in Moriarty’s case, there is no evidence present in Conan Doyle’s writing.

Like his inspirations, the Professor allegedly ran a large criminal organisation in the streets of London. The reader does not know much about the people working inside it because, according to Holmes, Moriarty has created “a chain with this Napoleon-gone-wrong at one end, and a hundred broken fighting men, pickpockets, blackmailers, and card sharps at the other, with every sort of crime in between” (Doyle, *The Valley of Fear* 317). This appears to be such a well created chain that there are no weak links, save one: Porlock. It is explained that this is not the man’s real name, but a *nome du plume*. He is the only person

within the criminal organisation that Holmes has been able to persuade to pass on information to him. However, the Detective has never seen the man himself, which means that there is no way to be sure that Porlock is who he says he is. It is never disclosed in the canon who actually hides behind the codename. In *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes: The Novels* (2005), several studies conducted into the mystery behind the identity of Porlock are summed up. As there is so little known about the character, possibilities range from his brother Mycroft Holmes to Professor Moriarty himself to even Mrs. Hudson (Klinger). Again, this person could not serve as undeniable proof for the existence of the criminal organisation, as he, or even she, could be making everything up as they go along without Holmes being any the wiser.

The second person described as being part of the criminal chain is Colonel Sebastian Moran. He is Moriarty's right-hand man and is allegedly paid six thousand a year, which Holmes learned "quite by chance" (Doyle, *The Valley of Fear* 317). He once served in Her Majesty's Indian Army. Why exactly he turned from the military to the criminal trade is unknown. Apart from the murder of Ronald Adair and the attempted murder of the Detective himself in "The Adventure of The Empty House", there are no crimes written to his name in the original stories.

So, even though a large criminal organisation exists in London, the reader only receives information about two people in it and it appears that even Holmes only has knowledge of those two. He has deduced the larger scale of the matter and he can connect certain crimes to the organisation, but he apparently has not been able to single out any other individuals, which is quite curious in an organisation of this size and does not speak for its credibility.

This chapter was introduced by the following question: What is known about Professor James Moriarty? The answer is that quite some information can be found and

proven about one side of the character, but that the other remains very much in doubt. It is known that he is a Professor of Mathematics, who first worked at a small university but later moved to London where he set up as an army coach. Furthermore, it is proven that he wrote a treatise and a book on mathematical subjects. As for his dark side, the only known information is that which Holmes tells the reader. But most of the information he provides about Moriarty is not proven at all or only by him retelling intelligence he received from the Professor during a private conversation. As a result, Arthur Conan Doyle created a Master Criminal who is not there.

Chapter 2 – Initial Popularity

The previous chapter established the type of criminal Professor Moriarty portrays: he is intelligent, cunning and, most importantly, invisible. This chapter will divert from the fictional world and focus on the audience of the Sherlock Holmes stories. To be elevated into a life of his own, Moriarty first had to be appreciated by the audience of Conan Doyle's original canon. Therefore, the central question of this chapter is: Why did the Professor have such an impact on nineteenth-century readers?

The Holmes stories were published during a time in which there was an “explosion of interest in the criminological enterprise” (Garland 109). This resulted in, among other things, the publication of hundreds of texts about the subject and the formation of dozens of national and international congresses (109). Even ordinary people started to form their own opinions about the origins of criminality. For example, they believed criminality was hereditary, as mentioned in the previous chapter. During this period, there was much anxiety among the readers of the stories, whom Stephen Knight describes as “a respectable, London-based, middle-class audience” (67). He states in his book *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (1980) that they “had faith in modern systems of scientific and rational enquiry to order an uncertain and troubling world, but [...] needed a suitably equipped hero to mediate psychic protection” (67). They found safety in Sherlock Holmes, whose remarkable intelligence and powers of deduction kept the fictional streets of London clean. David Garland states in his essay “The Criminal and His Science” (1985) that “the new criminology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century promised an exact and scientific method for the study of crime, a technical means of resolving a serious social problem” (110). This resembles the way in which Holmes approaches his cases. By creating a character who is able to regard crime in a way similar to the contemporary criminologists' approach, Conan Doyle brought the people a new hero.

However, the Detective only battled crime concerning “respectable people gone wrong, turned aside from their proper roles” (Knight 90). In other words, people like the reader, also belonging to the middle-class, who strayed from the righteous path. These were not the people they feared, the “‘dangerous classes’ who genuinely did threaten bourgeois London” (90). This way, Holmes served as a distraction from what was happening on the real streets of London. Furthermore, in most stories, there is an “exclusion of real physical threats from the plots” (103). Until the introduction of Professor Moriarty, who not only is the embodiment of organised crime but also poses an actual threat to the Detective. Organised crime was very much present in nineteenth-century England, especially in and around London (90). By introducing this antagonist, Conan Doyle confronted the reader with something and someone they actually feared in their everyday lives. He is intelligent, cunning and invisible, and can even be considered as the reason crime happens.

Apart from this criminological view, there is a psychological explanation for the effect the character had on the initial readers of the stories. In the article “Criminal Minds: Psychiatry, Psychopathology, and the Government of Criminality” (2016) Stephen Garton states the following: “the belief that there were criminals of considerable guile and intelligence was a powerful one in Victorian popular culture” (404). According to him, this type of criminal “showed no defect of intelligence or mental reasoning yet had little or no moral conscience” (404). The Master Criminal created by Arthur Conan Doyle would fit this description perfectly. Without remorse, he tells Holmes that he will bring destruction on him (Doyle, “The Final Problem” 835). Additionally, the fact that he is able to organise half of the crime in London without showing any sign of having a conscience, as far as Conan Doyle informs the reader, also serves as proof for this case. The fact that he does not seem to regret his actions, would have deemed him morally insane by the standards of nineteenth-century scientists such as James Cowles Pritchard and Henry Maudsley (Garton 404). The subject of

insanity was never discussed by Conan Doyle in connection with the Professor, but if the Master Criminal could be categorised as such, it would stand him apart even more from other antagonists Holmes faces, who usually have a clear motive for their crimes and act on emotion. Moriarty appears to commit crime for crime's sake, as the number of cases he is allegedly involved in is quite generous. Furthermore, his transgressions do not seem to have a common factor among them, at least none that is mentioned in the original canon. The nineteenth-century reader would not be able to understand such thinking, as they read the stories with what Stephen Knight calls their "bourgeois morality" in mind. They believed there were certain rules one needed to be follow and once these were broken the person who was responsible had "turned aside from their proper [role]" (90). Moriarty, however, does not seem to acknowledge the rules the middle-class reader lives by. Instead, he lives outside the law. This is a very foreign concept for the reader because they cannot imagine ever renouncing their established moral views. And, as is common for people, that which they do not understand, they fear.

Apart from the fact that he caused a feeling of unease among readers, Professor Moriarty was also a very popular type of criminal in crime fiction. Before the nineteenth century, crime was regarded as something that belonged to the lower classes, to people who did not have the means to build a life for themselves and had to resort to transgression to obtain what they needed. Yet, this vision changed in the new millennium, as Michel Foucault writes in his book *Discipline and Punish* (1975):

there is a whole aesthetic rewriting of crime, which is also the appropriation of criminality in acceptable forms. In appearance, it is the discovery of the beauty and greatness of crime; in fact, it is the affirmation that greatness too has a right to

crime and that it even becomes the exclusive privilege of those who are really great. (68-69)

By aestheticizing crime, it is moved to a higher standard. The people who commit crimes, are not normal people, they form an entirely different class that needs to be feared because the people in it are invisible to the naked eye. This conforms to the actual fears that late nineteenth century people had.

By taking the visions stated by Foucault and applying them to Professor Moriarty, it will become apparent that the character closely resembles them. He exhibits a great deal of power by leading a large criminal organisation that terrorises the streets of London. He does not even have to actively participate in his crimes, he can sit in his web and let his agents do the work for him. This would move him to a different class from the readers of the stories, as they could not imagine themselves in a position such as that. Even Holmes cannot help but admire Moriarty's work, as he states that he has formed a very high opinion of the Professor's abilities (Doyle, "The Final Problem" 844).

Another statement Foucault makes about the rewriting of crime, is that "in this new genre, there were no more popular heroes or great executions; the criminal was wicked, of course, but he was also intelligent; and although he was punished, he did not have to suffer" (Foucault 69). This description about a new type of antagonist, can also be applied to Moriarty, as it was established in this chapter that he would be deemed morally insane by psychologists, making him that wicked character who does not seem to have a conscience. Moreover, he is a mathematical genius, who can use his intelligence to plan the crimes his organisation commits. As for his suffering, the Professor met his demise by falling off a ledge at the Falls of Reichenbach, probably resulting in a quick and painless death. This would

sooth the minds of the Victorian readers because they could be certain that this Master Criminal would not return to haunt them.

The question introducing this second chapter was: Why did the Professor have such an impact on nineteenth-century readers? It was established that he possesses several features the Victorian reader feared: he is the brain behind half of the organised crime in fictional London and his motives cannot be understood, since he does not seem to have any. Apart from that, he was a popular type of character because he could be regarded as an aestheticized criminal: he displays intellect and power, and adds a certain greatness to crime. If these two images are combined, it can be stated that Moriarty was popular because of his identity as the Master Criminal.

Chapter 3 – Life After Death

The previous two chapters established the character of Moriarty in the original Sherlock Holmes canon and examined the impact he had on the readers during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. In the introduction of this essay, the 1939 poem “Macavity the Mystery Cat” by T.S. Eliot was discussed, displaying that the Professor had gained his own popularity outside the canon in less than fifty years after his introduction. This chapter will look beyond that initial interest and move somewhat closer to the present by answering the question: Why is Moriarty still an interesting subject for writers of fiction?

Through “Macavity the Mystery Cat” and the research into Conan Doyle’s character, it was established that it appears that the Master Criminal is not there. The existence of the Professor of Mathematics was proven by means of records providing his legal professions. However, his identity as the Napoleon of Crime, seems to be mostly speculative. This leaves room for new writers to attempt to fill the gaps left by Conan Doyle with their own imagination. By doing this, they move to the realm speculative fiction, which is defined as “a broad literary genre encompassing any fiction with supernatural, fantastical, or futuristic elements” (Collins Online English Dictionary). Mostly, this type of fiction is regarded as a genre close to science fiction. However, in this case the other world is actually our own with the slight twist that it is Sherlock Holmes’ version of it. Here also the fantastical element arises, as it is assumed that it was indeed Dr John Watson who wrote the stories instead of Arthur Conan Doyle. Within this type of fiction, new writers can shed light on questions left unanswered in the original canon. They usually do this in one of two ways, either by writing about the life of the Master Criminal or by adopting the subject of psychosis. But what makes these subjects so interesting to write about?

In the original canon, Holmes speaks in broad terms about what it is that Moriarty does as the Napoleon of Crime. This leaves a wide gap for new writers to jump into. What

does the life of a Master Criminal look like? This is the question writers seek to answer when writing about his occupation. One of those writers is Michael Kurland, who published the first novel in his serial about the Professor in 1978, titled *The Infernal Device*. Unlike the stories in the original canon, this novel is written from a third person point of view, which results in the reader being able to follow any character in the story. For example there are chapters focussing on Moriarty, others concentrating on his newly recruited employee Benjamin Barnett and even some informing the reader on the actions of the antagonist of the novel. Already, this is a completely different narratological approach in comparison to Arthur Conan Doyle's first person point of view.

When focussing on the depiction of the Master Criminal, it becomes clear that this also contradicts the original view. He is a very Holmes-like character, as he works as a consultant for anyone who can pay his fee. Like the Detective, he makes deductions to reveal information about the people he meets. They even share the use of the martial art baritsu, which is mentioned in "The Adventure of the Empty House" as the way Holmes was able to win his final confrontation with the Professor at the Falls of Reichenbach. To complete the comparison, Kurland even made a hero-type character out of the man who was really only perceived as the antagonist in Conan Doyle's writing. Because of this, the familiarity between the two also stands out, as they are alike in more ways than only their physicality. However, all of these features contradict the character that is built in the canon. The criminal the reader is familiar with is devious, deceptive and invisible, but these traits cannot be attributed to the man in Kurland's novel. He does not appear to be hiding from the authorities, his face is even known to them as a friendly one, and he carries out his own plans when necessary instead of only instructing his agents to do so. But because the evidence for him to be the way he is perceived by Holmes is greatly lacking, this depiction of the character could be the truthful one.

Another contradiction with the original stories is that the two rivals have been acquainted for some time, because Moriarty used to work as a tutor for the Holmes brothers. It is even stated that at one point they were “as close to being friends as a tutor and his student ever get” (157). However, as they were both cast out by society, they each chose a different side of the law to live their lives on and to accomplish their goals (158). This background story would account for their similarities, as it could be suggested that the Detective picked up some of his features from Moriarty.

During the course of the novel, the characters are very aware of each other. It would seem that the two regularly share conversations when Holmes believes that the Professor is planning something. Their association is taken even further when they have to work together on a case. This turn of events is slightly harder to take as the truth because it is not supported in any way in the original canon.

As a novel of speculative fiction, *The Infernal Device* seems to speculate a bit too much to make it fit into the established world of Sherlock Holmes. This is mostly due to the fact that two rivals find themselves collaborating to solve a case. As far as the depiction of Moriarty goes, this could fall within the borders created in the canon, as the Detective’s image of the criminal could be tainted by his obsession with him. This new way of portraying him offers the reader a more human and relatable character.

Anthony Horowitz chose to present the Professor quite differently in his 2014 novel *Moriarty*. It is set after the events of “The Final Problem” and is seemingly narrated by Frederick Chase, “a senior investigator with the Pinkerton Detective Agency in New York” (8), who travels to Europe to apprehend the American Master Criminal Clarence Devereux, who is taking over Moriarty’s criminal organisation now that the latter has passed away. Chase joins forces with Inspector Athelney Jones from Scotland Yard, whom the reader may remember from the Holmes novel *The Sign of the Four* (1890) and short story “The

Adventure of the Red-Headed League” (1891). Both these narratives do not “[give] an account of [him] that is particularly kind” (Horowitz 47), as he made some crucial mistakes during the course of the cases. He has pledged that he will not allow himself to make such errors again (49). In the course of the novel, a relationship like the one between Holmes and Watson is built between the two characters, in which Jones is the Detective and Chase is his partner, who also writes down the events. By narrating the story in this way, Horowitz creates a familiar environment for the reader. However, during the final chapters, it turns out that the reader has been tricked by none other than Moriarty himself, who has been playing the part of Frederick Chase all this time. By adding this twist, the novel turns away from the normal formula used by Conan Doyle in which the narrator can be trusted.

The way the character is depicted remains very close to the way he was outlined in the original stories. He is cunning and deceitful, and he can be ruthless when he has to be. Because the novel is written from his point of view, even though the reader does not know this for the largest part of the story, it builds a stronger character than the one offered in the Holmes stories. He states to the reader: “I have not lied” (211) and explains clearly that what he has written is true, but that he used language in a deceptive way, which speaks for his personality. Furthermore, whenever possible, he has his loyal agents commit his crimes for him, keeping his own hands clean. Both of these characteristics could be attributed to Arthur Conan Doyle’s Moriarty.

Apart from the way he narrated the story and depicted the Master Criminal, Horowitz also manages to remain really close to the original stories in the fact that his suggestion of the Professor having survived his fall at the end of “the Final Problem” could have happened within the boundaries of the canon. For one thing, it was stated at the end of that particular case that “any attempt at recovering the bodies was absolutely hopeless” (Doyle, “The Final

Problem” 846). For another, he leaves for America by the end of Horowitz’s novel, which would serve as an explanation for his absence from any further Holmes stories in the canon.

The two examples given here show that there is no one way to portray the character in his profession as Master Criminal. Because nothing is proven about this side of him in the original stories, writers can form their own opinion about the way he lives his life and carries out his business. As Kurland’s case would prove, it is not even necessary to stay entirely within the boundaries created in the original stories. This makes for an interesting and versatile subject.

Another way of adding to the canon is by focussing on the deeper relationship between Holmes and Moriarty. Mostly, this type of rewriting can be found in pastiche, which is “a piece of writing, music, film etc. that is deliberately made in the style of someone or something else” (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* 1275). In the case of Sherlock Holmes pastiche, the writings would usually be narratives about the Detective and his friend Dr Watson written from the point of view of the latter because those would remain closest to Arthur Conan Doyle’s original work. Sanna Nyqvist distinguishes two types of such stories: “corrective and complementary pastiches” (“Authorship and authenticity in Sherlock Holmes pastiches”). The second type is quite similar to the speculative writings that were previously discussed, as their goal was to offer insight into who the Professor was outside the canon. The first type is important for the stories that strive to create a deeper connection between Holmes and Moriarty, as this would be something that was not explicitly mentioned in the original stories and could be “corrected” in new narratives.

In 1974, the novel *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* by Nicholas Meyer was published. This novel can be considered a “corrective pastiche”, in which Meyer seeks to correct the mistakes made in “The Final Problem” and “The Adventure of the Empty House”. Instead of portraying Holmes as the heroic detective the reader has become familiar with, he shows his

vulnerable side. The title of the novel refers to the seven-per-cent solution of cocaine Holmes uses in *The Sign of the Four*. From the start of Meyer's work, it becomes clear that Holmes is addicted to the drug in such a way that it radically affects his mind. It would seem that all the information the Detective discloses to Watson about Moriarty the Master Criminal in "The Final Problem" is false and only exists in Holmes' drug induced imagination. Whenever the effects have worn off, he does not even remember the man. This depiction of the Detective in a vulnerable state of mind had not been attempted before, as he had always been portrayed as the hero originally created by Conan Doyle (Nyqvist). This new way of considering him, "propelled Holmes into the modern world, making him the model for today's variously troubled Sherlocks, as well as an early example of the recovery-story hero" (Hale).

The depiction of Moriarty in this novel is also quite different from the cunning, dangerous professor the reader was offered in "The Final Problem". Meyer writes that he has the "disconcerting habit of turning his hat round and round in his hands as he [speaks]", there is a "whine in his inflection", he gives and "ferret-like" glances and avoids eye contact in awkward situations (27-28, 31, 53). Furthermore, Mycroft Holmes seems to hold information over him, with which he can persuade the Professor into doing anything he wishes him to do. All of these characteristics do not correspond to a powerful man who runs a large criminal organisation. And because there is so little evidence supporting Moriarty's position as Master Criminal in the original canon, it may well be that he does not exist.

The novel not only contradicts Holmes' accusations against him, it also offers a reason as to why they exist in the first place. By the end of the story, it is revealed that there is a dark reason behind his "cocaine addiction, aversion to women, and obsession with 'wickedness' and 'injustice'", as they "are shown to derive from the childhood trauma of witnessing his mother's infidelity being punished by the father" (Nyqvist). As it turns out, Moriarty was Holmes' mother's lover, which would make the Professor part of the reason the Detective

became the man the reader knows him as. However, Holmes has suppressed this memory, which is why this information can only be revealed by using hypnosis. This entire ordeal would explain why, when the two men meet for the first time in “The Final Problem” Holmes mentions that “his appearance was quite familiar to [him]” (833). Not only had this man been his tutor, he had also been his mother’s lover and the reason she had been killed. Due to these bad memories, Holmes’ drug induced brain created a story around the Professor based partly on the truth, but adjusted in such a way to suit his current profession. Because in the original stories, the Master Criminal is not actually proven to exist, using the subject of psychosis and attributing this side of Moriarty’s character almost entirely to Holmes’ imagination is a very intriguing idea for writers outside the canon. It would allow them to place a psychological view on the situation created by Conan Doyle, with which new, compelling novels like *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* can be created.

Of course there are many more novels that feature the Napoleon of Crime in one way or another. However, focussing on the above mentioned ones will offer an indication of some of the ways in which writers have portrayed him over the past fifty years. The reason behind the still present rewriting of Professor James Moriarty lies in the simple fact that he is not entirely present in the original canon. There are so many gaps surrounding his diabolical person that one could indeed wonder if he ever really existed at all. This has urged writers of speculative fiction to either offer evidence for his identity as a Master Criminal by writing about that part of his life, or try and show that this side of the Professor may not exist at all and is only present in the Detective’s mind. In both cases, this has led to the character living on for over a century.

Conclusion

At the start of this essay, the following question was asked: How did Professor James Moriarty gain his popularity in the original Sherlock Holmes canon and how has this popularity endured until the 21st century? The answer is quite simple: because he is the Master Criminal, who is not there.

Arthur Conan Doyle created a character who was built almost solely on speculation. His identity as the Napoleon of Crime is unknown to the public, yet he is allegedly involved in many of the crimes taking place in the fictional city of London. What is known about him is that he lives an ordinary life as a respectable Professor of Mathematics and has no illegal acts written to his name. It would appear that only Holmes is capable of seeing through this façade, but as the Detective has no evidence to support the existence of the man's darker identity, it cannot be proven that this side of him is real.

A character shrouded in so much mystery and darkness would stand out to the original readers of the canon in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as he spoke to their fears, but also intrigued them. To them, he would have been the impersonation of organised crime, as he ran the biggest criminal organisation within the borders of London. Furthermore, he posed a real threat to their hero, Sherlock Holmes. Finally, they were unable to understand his motives because he does not seem to have any. And yet, he also represented a type of criminal that had grown to be popular during the nineteenth century, because he possesses a great sense of power and intelligence, and shows that there could be a greatness in crime, as he seems to be involved in half the crime in London and yet manages to remain a free man. He even makes his position in the crime business feel like a form of privilege because there is only one Napoleon of Crime throughout the stories. So, apart from speaking to their fears, the Master Criminal also interested the readers and thus gained his initial popularity.

As for the question of how Moriarty was able to maintain his popularity, this can be attributed to the fact that he did not seem to exist. Because Arthur Conan Doyle never proved the existence of the Professor's darker identity, writers of speculative fiction are offered a way to shed light on the situation. They either write about his life as a Master Criminal, supporting Conan Doyle's speculations with their own evidence, or they play with the idea that the Master Criminal does not exist and is only a figment of Holmes' imagination. Because there is still so much mystery surrounding him, even twenty-first century writers are inspired to include him in their stories.

All in all, Professor James Moriarty, the Napoleon of Crime, is a character who is not there, but will never die.

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