USC UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

Traballo de Fin de Grao

Sherlock Holmes Unveiled: A Study of The Character Behind the Detective Symbol

Autor: Alex Ferrín Blanco

Titora: Laura María Lojo Rodríguez

CURSO 2023–2024

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TITOR/A:	Laura Mª Lojo Rodríguez
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Resumo [na lingua en que se vai redacta-lo TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

For years, the character of Sherlock Holmes has been the ultimate representative of the detective archetype, an unquestionable symbol of the Victorian period and of cold logic and reasoning, or as he calls it, of the science of deduction. Nevertheless, delving deeper into Arthur Conan Doyle's writings uncovers that beyond the legend, beyond the attire of Holmes' coat and hat, there lies an overflowing humanity, which, although mostly repressed in Conan Doyle's depictions, is just as integral to Holmes' characterization as his wit and mental acuity.

Through an exploration of the original work of Arthur Conan Doyle, and other adaptations such as BBC *Sherlock* and *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes,* this dissertation aims to unveil and analyse the character of Sherlock Holmes within the context of his era, as well as of his innermost homoerotic desires, their repression, and the self-destructive coping strategies he employs to distance himself from all the above. Overall, the main objective of this work will be to challenge the conventional perception of this character as a dehumanized emblem of detective fiction, in order to show him as a representation of self-repression and self-imposed detachment, with which both contemporary and modern readers could identify.

The methodology used for the analysis will include the comprehensive review and close reading of key academic texts such as Joseph McLaughin's *Writing the Urban Jungle* (2000) , Graham Robb's *Strangers – Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century* (2003), Matt Cook's *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885–1914* (2003), among others.

Santiago de Compostela, 6 de Novembro de 2023.

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DECLARACIÓN DE ORIXINALIDADE

Don Alex Ferrín Blanco, con DNI 53799293Q, declara que o presente Traballo de Fin de Grao é integramente orixinal, non tendo sido empregada ningunha fonte sen ser referenciada, sendo consciente do delito de plaxio que constitúe o contrario.

En Santiago de Compostela, a 27 de xuño de 2024.

To my mother, who shares my passion for literature.

To my grandfather, the most special man I have ever known.

To my supervisor, Laura, for inspiring me and guiding me along this path.

SUMMARY

Fin-de-siècle English fiction is marked by a widespread sense that the essence of the national spirit and the nation itself was in decline, driven by the radical changes of the era. These changes included the rise of social class movements, strides toward equality and women's rights, the emergence of what were considered "deviant" sexualities, and the decline of the Empire.

Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories embody these anxieties, which are reflected in the character of the detective. Therefore, this dissertation argues that, contrary to popular belief, Sherlock Holmes is not a character ahead of his time but rather a by-product of it.

To support this, a selection of original Sherlock Holmes narratives will be analyzed, along with two screen adaptations, namely Billy Wilder's *The Private Life of Sherlock Holme*s and BBC *Sherlock*, bridging the gap between written and film mediums to highlight the multidimensional complexity of the famous detective.

KEY WORDS: *fin-de-siècle*, degeneration, subtext, adaptation

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0. INTRODUCTION

When I was a teenager, I became captivated by the character of Sherlock Holmes. His intellectual prowess, the way he so elegantly handled his cases, and the meticulous methodology he employed~~,~~ were the things that initially caught my attention as an inexperienced reader. Nonetheless, as I read more of these stories, I began to notice that behind the cold demeanour of pure intellect, there was a fallible character, who had a tendency to mask his own pain with the thrill of solving cases and the abuse of hard drugs. Around that time, I also discovered BBC Sherlock, a modern adaptation which delved deeper into those aspects of Holmes I had glimpsed in the original narratives, leaving me eager for a more comprehensive understanding of this fascinating character. It is for this reason that my dissertation has focused on unveiling the complex characterization behind the seemingly one-dimensional detective I believed I had encountered years ago.

This dissertation aims to question the notion that for decades has been key to the interpretation of the character of Sherlock Holmes, incorrectly perceived by the reading public as a “man beyond his time”, marked by a complete lack of emotions and as a cold, composed demeanour. The primary aim of this dissertation is thus to challenge this perception and present Holmes in a new light—not as a man ahead of his time, but as a by-product of his era. Additionally, this dissertation seeks to reveal the detective's hidden vulnerabilities, the true nature of his feelings for John Watson and their repression, and the real reason behind his frequent drug use. Furthermore, this dissertation aims to emphasize the value of screen adaptations of Sherlock Holmes as a source of character study and to validate this medium as a valuable artistic product, rather than merely a reproduction of the original works.

The methodology in this dissertation involves examining the character of Sherlock Holmes from two distinct perspectives: the original literary works and two film adaptations that emphasize aspects of Holmes' psyche subtly present in the texts. For this purpose, this study includes a thorough review and close reading of Arthur Conan Doyle's narratives, as well as the critical examination of various academic texts to shed light on the historical and literary context of Victorian England and Conan Doyle's works, considering the predominant ideological concepts of the time and the genre of male romance, to which the Holmes' narratives belong. Additionally, key academic sources on the film adaptations are analysed to underscore the value of the cinematic medium for character study and to explore how these adaptations portray the psyche and inner world of Sherlock Holmes as a character.

The first chapter of this dissertation is divided into four sections, highlighting the historical context of *fin-de-siècle* England and its influence on Doyle's narratives and the character of Sherlock Holmes. The chapter begins with a brief historical overview of the British Empire during this period, focusing on how its decline and the rise of social class movements threatened the bourgeois male dominance in England. This perspective, introduced by Max Nordau, led to the theory of degeneration, which permeated the literary framework of the time. To understand how this context influenced the Sherlock Holmes narratives, Stephen Arata's *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (1996) informs this section. Arata's book illustrates how these narratives emphasize the national English spirit, with crimes that initially seem like local issues, but which ultimately uncover a broader network of criminality extending beyond England's borders, thereby presenting evil as an external threat.

Additionally, Elaine Showalter's *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (1990) provides insights into the male romance genre that are central to this chapter, highlighting the genre's emergence as a countermovement against the growing prominence of

female-written and female-oriented novels. The Sherlock Holmes narratives are a characteristic example of this genre, focusing on the relationship between the male protagonists, Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. The depth of this relationship as seen within the sociohistorical context of the time is better understood through Graham Robb's *Strangers: Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century* (2003) and Matt Cook's *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* (2003). These works establish how Sherlock Holmes, both physically and socially, could be seen as a "deviant" man in an era when such behaviour was considered evidence of degeneration and could be punishable by law, as demonstrated by the Oscar Wilde trials. Furthermore, the analysis shows that the relationship between Holmes and Watson extends beyond mere camaraderie and friendship, and Holmes' inability to handle emotionally complex situations is identified as the root of his drug addiction.

The second chapter, divided into three sections, examines the portrayal of Holmes in two screen adaptations: the film *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1970) by Billy Wilder, and the TV series *Sherlock* (2010), co-created by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss. The chapter begins by challenging the notion that fidelity to the original source material determines the quality of an adaptation, arguing that deviations do not necessarily corrupt the essence of the original narrative. This argument is informed by Brian McFarlane's *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (1996), and it refutes the controversial claim that the Granada Television series *Sherlock Holmes* (1984) is the definitive portrayal of the detective.

Departing from these premises, the chapter analyses the two above-mentioned adaptations, focusing on how they depict elements from the original source that reveal the true character of Sherlock Holmes, including his concealed vulnerability, his drug addiction, and his relationship with John Watson.

Regarding Wilder's film, which intended to portray Holmes as openly homosexual but was censored by Conan Doyle's heirs, the analysis—here informed by Gerd Germünden's *A Foreign Affair: Billy Wilder's American Films* (2008) and Neil McCaw's *Adapting Detective Fiction: Crime, Englishness and the TV Detectives* (2011)—highlights how this homoerotic subtext is subtly introduced in the film, particularly in relation to Holmes' drug abuse. The study also examines Holmes' deep-rooted misogyny, a significant theme in Doyle's narratives, exploring the origins of these controversial views held by the detective, deeply connected with Holmes's identity as a character. In this sense, the chapter also explores how Holmes' portrayal in the media, through Watson's stories in *The Strand Magazine,* contrasts with the real human being behind the cold mask of intellect. Furthermore, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Wilder's vision for his film, the analysis also considers the parts of the film that were excluded from the final cut.

Finally, regarding the TV adaptation BBC *Sherlock* (2010), the focus is put on the special episode "The Abominable Bride" (2016). This episode's Victorian setting and the fact that it takes place within the detective's mind allow for an in-depth analysis of both the historical context of *fin-de-siècle* England and Sherlock Holmes's psyche, which serves as a useful tool for understanding the roots of the character's emotional complexity. The analysis primarily draws from the fact that the creators of this series were heavily influenced by Wilder's *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes,* alongside the established context of Victorian *fin-de-siècle*. In this light, the theme of misogyny is examined in relation to the episode's plot, and insights into Holmes' drug addiction, tied to his emotional repression—especially concerning his feelings for John Watson—are offered, bridging the gap between this series and Wilder's film.

1. A MAN OF HIS TIME: THE ANXIETIES OF VICTORIAN *FIN-DE-SIÈCLE* THROUGH THE CHARACTER OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

1. 1 SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXT

The latter part of the nineteenth century in Britain was far from being tranquil. It witnessed rapid transformations, encompassing both external matters, such as the state of the Empire, which will be analysed below, and internal ones, like that of societal structure. Regarding the latter, this structure presented a very pronounced inequality among classes, given, for example, the substantial economic gap between the middle class and the working class, the latter experiencing extremely impoverished conditions, which led to the surge in movements advocating for workers' rights.

During the final decades of the century, the British Empire solidified its position as the foremost imperial superpower, in a context of global imperialism. By 1880, the Empire dominated the colonies of the Indian Sub-Continent, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, the West Indies, and a vast part of Africa, as well as Ireland. (ní Fhlathúin, 2008). Nonetheless, even with the seemingly expanding and prosperous Empire, during the Victorian *fin de siècle* there prevailed a widespread sense of unease and concerns regarding not only the external circumstances of the nation, but also the perceived moral deterioration within society. As highlighted by Stephen Arata in “The Occidental Tourist: Dracula" and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization” (1990): “the decay of British global influence, the loss of overseas markets for British goods, the economic and political rise of Germany and the United States, the increasing unrest in British colonies and possessions, the growing domestic uneasiness over the morality of imperialism - all combined to erode Victorian confidence in the inevitability of British progress and hegemony” (1990, 622).

Moreover, the increasing fear of the so-called "reverse colonisation", juxtaposed with Britain's status as the most prominent colonial power, played a significant role in shaping the Victorian *fin de siècle* mindset. This fear originated from the concern that the colonised might retaliate and invade the coloniser, causing similar apprehension and inflicting the same harm that the oppressor had provoked in the colonies. The anxieties regarding reverse colonisation are evidenced by various narratives of the time which vividly portrayed the fear of being impacted by the alleged primitive and savage nature of the indigenous peoples. (Arata 1996, 108).

Furthermore, in the realms of economics and socio-politics and due to Britain's status as the largest economy and imperial power, continuous conflicts emerged with other imperial forces, instilling a sense of insecurity in Victorian society regarding the state of the Empire. For example, by 1884, concerns heightened over the growing power of the French navy and the vulnerability of the British one. Subsequently, Germany became a source of anxiety, posing a threat with its economic strength and imperial ambitions (Black 2000, 152). On the other hand, the issue of social inequality was obvious: by 1880, only the 13% of the British population belonged to the comfortable middle and upper classes while the remaining 87% lived in poverty, leading to the fight for worker's rights via trade unions and working-class movements. In fact, the period between 1873 and 1896 is known in the circle of political science as the "Great Depression", due to the notable economic stagnation in the country, contrasting with the more prosperous preceding decades. (McGowan 1981, 52).

The socioeconomic context described above, as well as the intellectual trends of the time linked to that context, are reflected in the literature of the second half of the nineteenth century. One of the most important intellectual trends of the time, which influenced numerous authors and artistic works, is what is commonly referred to as the "degeneration theory", first introduced by the Hungarian critic and writer Max Nordau in his book

Degeneration (1892), related to the anxieties concerning "the collapse of culture, the weakening of national might, the possibly fatal decay — physical, moral, spiritual, creative — of the Anglo-Saxon "race" as a whole" (Arata 1996, 1). Hence, during this period, the above-mentioned decline of the British Empire and the perceived erosion of morals and propriety among the middle and upper classes contributed to an overarching sense of deterioration. This not only influenced theoretical writings on the subject, but it also shaped the attributes and characteristics of fictional characters from that era.

While this mindset is unquestionably rooted in social class distinctions, primarily focusing on, as Arata clarifies, middle-class portrayals of the poor as a group of criminals whose moral decline proliferated unchecked, it also extended to individuals in the upper spheres of society whose conduct displayed signs of that so-called deterioration. This becomes apparent in cases involving deviant sexual orientations, most notably exemplified by the Oscar Wilde trials (1895), whose significance will be further explored in connection with the primary discussion of this dissertation.

According to William Greenslade, degenerationism was "an enabling strategy by which the conventional and respectable classes could justify and articulate their hostility to the deviant, the diseased and the subversive" (1994, 2). This definition actually coincides with what Arata describes as the predominant "bourgeois common sense" in late nineteenth-century Britain. It establishes a connection between the social and the biological, pathologizing attitudes that deviated from the norm set by the morality of the British middle class, an explanation which, in turn, was employed to account for the perceived decline of the nation during that period (Arata 1996, 16-17).

This viewpoint, therefore, helps in understanding the reception of specific literary works from that period, such as *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Its author, Oscar Wilde,

brought the Marquess of Queensberry to court in 1895 over an offensive calling card left by the latter. Surprisingly, after the trial, it was Wilde himself who was arrested and found guilty of "acts of gross indecency" according to the prevailing law, which prohibited homosexual relations. Remarkably, during the court proceedings, the accusations against him did not primarily centre on his actual homosexual practices; instead, the focus was put on his attitudes and character, drawn from those of his fictional creation, Dorian Gray (Arata 1996, 58). Consequently, Wilde's writings were used against him in the trial, serving as evidence of the author's moral degeneration. The perspectives of contemporary writers, such as Max Nordau, add to this interpretation. Nordau's assumptions are summarized by Arata as "first, that deviance is a form of character rather than a mode of behaviour; second, that individual character expresses (and thus reveals) itself most coherently through the medium of literary writing; and third, that literary works exert a profound influence over the shape and "health" of a culture". (1996, 55).

In light of this context, it becomes clear that literary works during that era were viewed as more than mere fiction. This understanding sheds light on why other authors, including Arthur Conan Doyle—who was also a friend of Oscar Wilde—chose to portray subversive attitudes and behaviours in a more subtle manner in their main characters, like that of Sherlock Holmes. In fact, within the realm of detective literature, this character stands as the perfect example of the genre's archetype, possessing a remarkable combination of intellect, cold logic, and an affiliation with the Victorian middle-class lifestyle, so highly appreciated by his contemporary audience. While commonly known as a man ahead of his time, this dissertation seeks to unveil a less familiar dimension of the famous detective. Sherlock Holmes not only reflects the prevailing mentality of his time but also encapsulates the struggles and contradictions of the *fin de siècle* man, which modern day readers often overlook.

1.2 THE SHERLOCK HOLMES NARRATIVES: UNCONVENTIONAL DETECTIVE FICTION.

It has been previously argued that the character of Sherlock Holmes embodies the classic attributes expected of a prototypical detective protagonist, showcasing sharp intellect, as well as a methodical approach. Nonetheless, upon closer examination of the stories themselves, it becomes evident that these narratives significantly deviate from the conventional detective tale.

When asked about the fundamental structural elements of a detective story, one might typically outline the following: the first element to be found is the introduction of a particular enigma, generally of a criminal nature, accompanied by thorough details and information gathering. Subsequently, the detective initiates a period of investigation, collecting clues and unravelling the mystery in order to arrive to a plausible resolution of the case. Finally, with the unveiling of the enigma, the perpetrator(s) behind the crime are brought to justice, providing a satisfying conclusion to the narrative, and thus restoring social order, eliminating the present threats for the status quo.

Surprisingly, however, this structure is not the predominant one in the Sherlock Holmes stories, despite their status as some of the most renowned detective tales in history. According to Stephen Arata's analysis, Holmes often struggles to pinpoint a specific individual as the actual factor of disruption of social order. This is because what initially appears to be a localized or national matter, frequently unfolds to reveal complexities extending beyond English borders. Interestingly, out of the first twelve Holmes stories, only "The Red-Headed League" (1891) concludes with the apprehension of the criminal (Arata 1996, 145).

A case in point is the first Sherlock Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). There we can find, as Arata argues, the first example of this expansion beyond national borders of an issue which was initially thought to be a domestic, national case. In this story, Holmes departs from Baker Street in response to a telegram seeking his assistance in a murder investigation led by Inspectors Gregson and Lestrade, of Scotland Yard. Upon arriving at the crime scene, Holmes notices the word "Rache", which had been written in blood on a wall. Lestrade speculates that the victim, Enoch Drebber, was attempting to write "Rachel" but could not finish it. However, Holmes astutely points out that the victim's final message was actually the German word *Rache*, meaning "revenge", suggesting that the murder might have been politically motivated (Arata 1996, 142).

It is intriguing to observe that in this book, the arrest of the murderer, Jefferson Hope, occurs relatively early in the narrative, leaving more than half of the novel remaining to unfold. This setup suggests that the central focus of the story is not on the crime itself or the apprehension of the culprit, contrary to the typical structure found in detective stories that was summarized above. Following the capture of Jefferson Hope, the remainder of the narrative in *A Study in Scarlet* delves into the motivation behind the murder, leading readers far beyond English borders to Salt Lake City, Utah, the headquarters of the Mormon community. As Arata highlights, Hope's revenge is rooted in the crimes perpetrated by the Mormon community against Lucy Ferrier, his fiancée, and her father, John. Furthermore, the depiction of this religious group draws parallels to the clandestine political societies of the Continent, such as the Inquisition, or the German Vehmgericht (1996, 142). Hope is, therefore, presented as an avenger, a victim of injustice and of the corruption of a foreign community, rather than being cast solely as the culprit whose arrest and trial would typically bring closure to a detective story (1996, 143). Moreover, he evades facing trial for his crimes, as his demise is ultimately brought about by an aneurysm.

Similarly, the second Sherlock Holmes novel, *The Sign of Four* (1890), features a comparable thematic development. There, we find a remarkable example of how the narrative shifts its focus from what initially appears to be a private matter regarding a daughter and her father, to a broader systemic issue, namely the Empire (Arata 1996, 141). The mystery unfolds when Mary Morstan, the client, seeks Holmes' assistance regarding her father, Captain Morstan, an army officer who disappeared a decade earlier while on leave in London. Mrs. Morstan turns to Holmes after receiving a series of perplexing clues related to her father's disappearance, such as sets of pearls, and a note which instructed her to go to a specific meeting point. Furthermore, Mrs. Morstan had found, in her father desk, a map, containing a red cross, besides which could be read: "The sign of the four, —Jonathan Small, Mahomet Singh, Abdullah Khan, Dost Akbar" (Doyle 2004, 122). While Holmes adeptly deciphers the clues, the plot gradually reveals its complexity, intertwined with connections to the Empire, as previously noted (Arata 1996, 142).

It unfolds that Captain Morstan died from a heart attack during a heated argument with his friend from India, Major Sholto, concerning a treasure comprising a vast collection of jewels. This treasure, claimed to be jointly owned by Morstan and Sholto, should rightfully pass to their descendants, Mary Morstan, and Thaddeus and Bartholomew Sholto, now that both men are deceased. Subsequently, Holmes discovers the body of Bartholomew Sholto, who had earlier hinted at knowing the treasure's whereabouts, leading Holmes to suspect one of the "sign of the four" men, Jonathan Small, as the perpetrator.

Indeed, Small confesses to Holmes his responsibility regarding the murder of Bartholomew Sholto, and, as he recounts his tale, readers come to understand his motives. During his time stationed in India, Small found himself embroiled in the Indian Rebellion of 1857, a mutiny of the Indian population against the East India Company, with the aim of overthrowing British rule in the country (Black 2008, 15). There, he was tasked with

guarding the fortress of Agra and overseeing two men, namely Abdullah Khan and Mahomet Singh. These men, however, convinced Small to kill a merchant in order to steal his treasure, a collection of jewels. After acquiring the treasure, they made an oath to never betray each other regarding the crime or the treasure, setting off a complex chain of mysteries that ultimately led to the death of Bartholomew Sholto.

Nonetheless, as was the case with Jefferson Hope, the culprit is victimized, and the scope of the crime extends beyond individual actions to encompass larger systemic issues. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Hope is portrayed as a man consumed by vengeance due to the injustices inflicted upon him by a larger, foreign system. Similarly, in *The Sign of the Four* Small is depicted as a man who falls prey to the corruption of the native Indians, whom he derogatorily refers to as "black fiends" (Doyle 1857, 43), whose influence led him to criminality (Arata 1996, 141). This is, as has been explained, a subversion of the classical closure within the detective genre, as the narrative shifts from addressing private matters to public ones, and there is a lack of some sense of restoration of social order upon arrest of the culprit.

Certainly, Doyle's portrayal of native peoples of the British colonies as savage and uncivilized in the Sherlock Holmes stories is a recurring theme. It is intriguing, however, that despite his open personal support of the Empire, Doyle's depiction of it in his works often carries what seem to be elements of critique (Arata 1996, 140). Consequently, the victimization of characters like Jonathan Small suggests a deeper, more ambiguous message within the narrative: the degeneration of the Empire's system. This concept aligns with the idea of reverse colonisation that was previously analysed, given that "Doyle's colonials have been corrupted by their experiences" (Arata 1996, 140), both by the colonial environment, and through their interactions with native populations. This theme is exemplified, not only in characters like Small, but also in Holmes' companion, Dr. Watson.

At the beginning of *A Study in Scarlet*, we find a John Watson recently returned from serving as an army doctor in Afghanistan. He is not only physically wounded from being shot, but also psychologically traumatized by his experiences, on the brink of descending into a marginalized life. Watson returns to his homeland, but he finds himself unemployed and lacking prospects, struggling with the challenges of readjusting to civilian life in a society where he feels an outsider (Arata 1996, 140).

In this scenario, he encounters our protagonist, Sherlock Holmes, who, as Arata argues, effectively rescues him from falling into this fringe and lonely lifestyle (1996 140). It is this deep connection between the two, among other elements, that truly captured the attention and garnered the affection of readers at the time. With this premise in mind, the next section will delve into how, despite the Sherlock Holmes stories diverging from the traditional structure of the detective genre, their fame and acclaim remain unparalleled. Although they may lack the conventional satisfaction of neatly identifying a single culprit and providing a clear closure, the pleasures these stories offered their contemporary readers stemmed from another source: the male romance genre (Arata 1996, 145).

1.3 THE MALE ROMANCE GENRE AND SHERLOCK HOLMES

Fin-de-siècle "male romance" can be defined, as Arata notes, as a "rejection of both realism and professionalism [...] in the name of a reimagined male bourgeois identity" (1996, 47). Nonetheless, before examining its nuances and characteristics in the Sherlock Holmes stories, it is crucial to understand the genesis of this genre, which can be traced back, as Eleine Showalter claims, to the death of George Eliot (1990, 59).

Mary Ann Evans was born in South Farm, Arbury, in 1819, to parents Robert and Christiana Evans (formerly Pearson) (Haight 1968, 3). However, it is not under this name that she is widely recognized by the reading public, but rather by her penname George Eliot.

Undoubtedly, this author was among the most influential writers of the Victorian era, whose literary legacy, as suggested by Showalter, left an imprint on all the reading and writing sphere of the time. She faced, nonetheless, harsh criticism from female writers such as Henry James' sister, Alice, who claimed that "Whether it is that her dank, moaning features haunt and pursue one thro' the book, or not, but she makes upon me the impression, morally and physically, of mildew or some morbid growth — a fungus of a pendulous shape, or as of something damp to the touch" (Showalter 1990, 62). However, male notable figures were even more severe in their assessments. William Butler Yeats, for instance, went as far as to significantly undermine Eliot's abilities, claiming that the famous novelist "understands only the conscious nature of man" (Showalter 1990, 76).

To understand this hostility, it is crucial to examine the historical and economic circumstances of the period within the literary domain. At the time of Eliot's passing, the dominant position of men in the literary market faced significant challenge due to the increasing presence of women. In the 1870s and 1880s, over forty percent of writers at major publishing houses like Bentley's were women. Furthermore, in the United States, three-quarters of the novels published during this era were authored by women (Showalter 1990, 76-77). However, these factors were not solely responsible for the animosity; the psychological aspect also played a significant role. With male superiority being challenged, there was a need to reaffirm it, adding to the tension and hostility (Showalter 1990, 77).

Consequently, as Showalter contends, in male-authored works of Victorian *fin-de-siècle*, not only were females devalued, but also, the power of creation of life was wrested from female hands, leading to a subversion of the natural order. Hence, male powers of creation were depicted in male written books, in the form of, for instance, aesthetic duplication, as seen in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), or even through the figure of the *D*oppelgänger, as in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) (Showalter 1990, 78).

The combination of these factors and circumstances resulted in the resurgence of "romance" under the control of men: they sought to recapture the domain of the English novel for the male sphere, developing narratives aimed specifically at a male-centric audience. Hence, replacing the traditional themes of heterosexual courtship, romance, and marriage prevalent in female-authored works, male critics and novelists pursued and celebrated the masculine homosocial romance centred around adventure and quest (Showalter 1990, 79). This narrative genre was intimately connected with the idea of youthful masculinity, or boyhood, a link which is emphasized by the fact that during the Victorian era, the term "boy" was often used as a euphemism for the male lover.

Moreover, as its supporters contended, the genre explored essential aspects of human nature that realists had overlooked, such as intense, albeit unconscious, homoerotic emotions. Indeed, Arthur Conan Doyle himself testified to this everlasting boyish spirit in his epigraph of *The Lost World* (1912), expressing his faith in the notion with these words: "I have wrought my simple plan - If I give one hour of joy- To the boy who's half a man -And the man who's half a boy" (Showalter 1990, 80).

Certainly, as Arata argued, the appeal of the Holmes stories does not stem from arresting the criminal or restoring societal order by identifying a single culprit, as is typical in detective fiction. Instead, as previously explored, it was the male romance genre that delivered this gratification and held the interest of readers at the time. Beyond the recurrent theme of adventure and quest, which revolves around deep and intense homosocial connections, the male romance genre was primarily distinguished by its profound naivety regarding these relationships, perhaps in a subconscious manner (Arata 1996, 146).

In the Sherlock Holmes narratives this is a characteristic that can be observed, for example, in the opening of "A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891), where Dr. Watson, recently

married to Mary Morstan after the events of *The Sign of the Four*, passes by his old rooms in Baker Street, reminiscent of his bachelor days, claiming that the place will always be associated in his mind to his wooing. As Arata suggests, Watson could have been referring to his wife; however, not only does he fail to mention the object of his affection during that wooing, but his train of thought abruptly ends when he feels a strong desire to see Holmes (1996, 146).

Moreover, other male romance writers of the time, like Henry Rider Haggard, argued that a crucial element of the romance novel was the existence of a "safe and secret place" (Arata 1996, 147). For Haggard, whose novels centred on adventure plots, those places referred to the exotic settings featured in his stories, but also to the male romance itself, serving as a covert and protected space where male readers could indulge in their unconventional desires. In the case of the Sherlock Holmes tales, this sanctuary is embodied by the chambers of 221B Baker Street. In this secluded haven, protected from the darker aspects of society, Watson and Holmes find solace, seated across from each other beside the fire as they converse, a setting which evokes a sense of domesticity that deviates from the typical action-oriented male romance stereotype. As Arata observes, a substantial portion of each Holmes tale unfolds with a client recounting their story in the living room of Baker Street, while Holmes listens intently, mirroring Doyle's ideal reader, nestled by the fire absorbed in the narratives (1996, 147).

In these tales, the bond between men, inherent to the genre, is taken to a deeper level, as the unmistakable homoeroticism in Watson and Holmes' relationship is more pronounced than in similar dynamics found in, for instance, Haggard's homosocial connections. In fact, as noted by Arata, the protagonists seem to adopt the demeanour of an "old married couple" (1996, 146).

Moreover, the deep homoerotic undertones in these stories extend beyond the dynamics displayed by Holmes and Watson in their relationship. They also emerge through the use of euphemisms, behaviours, and subtle references rich with significant homoerotic implications, particularly when considering the context of the time. These elements, along with a more thorough examination of Conan Doyle and his central character, will be further explored in the following section.

1.4 HOMOEROTIC SUBTEXTS IN CONAN DOYLE'S SHERLOCK HOLMES NARRATIVES

In the relationship between John Watson and Sherlock Holmes, unmistakable homoerotic undertones are present. Moreover, the character of the great detective himself could be viewed as a somewhat typical example of a deviant Victorian man. As discussed earlier in this dissertation, during the Victorian *fin-de-siècle* period, the theory of degeneration held considerable sway as an intellectual framework. One aspect of this theory posited that society was undergoing a process of decline, which was evident in, among other things, the emergence of deviant sexualities. Therefore, adherents to this theory, initiated by Max Nordau (Degeneration, 1892), regarded certain mannerisms and behaviours as indicative of degeneration, a sentiment echoed during Oscar Wilde's trial regarding both himself, and his character, Dorian Gray.

The character of Sherlock Holmes could also be seen as embodying the traits of a decadent man of his era, as suggested by Graham Robb in *Strangers – Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century* (2003). Holmes not only possessed elegance and refinement but was also depicted as a bohemian figure, highly concerned with his personal appearance, exhibiting a "catlike love of personal cleanliness", a trait often associated with perceived deviant behaviours, as Robb contends. Additionally, his fondness for introspective German

music, which he appreciated with great sensitivity, held significance in this context. Described as listening to it with “langid, dreamy eyes”, it is worth noting that during that period, the term “langid” carried homosexual connotations (Robb 2003, 261-262).

In terms of physical appearance, another notable characteristic was his consistent preference for being clean-shaven, especially during a period when facial hair was particularly fashionable for men. As Matt Cook discusses in *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* (2003), while this was not necessarily considered a clear sign of sexual deviation at the time, it was a common trait among individuals accused of “gross indecency between men”, such as Oscar Wilde (Cook2003, 35).

Moreover, the portrayal of Holmes by Watson as “bohemian” could be seen as a significant indication of the aforementioned traits. During that era, labelling someone as a bachelor and bohemian, a description that fits Holmes quite well, often aroused suspicion of deviant sexuality, particularly following Wilde’s trials. In fact, the term “bohemian” was prominently used in those trials to describe the writer (Cook 2003, 31).

On a different note, it is quite interesting to mention the fact that Holmes and Watson, as described in the latter’s accounts, enjoyed certain activities in each other’s company, during their leisure time between cases. In “The Adventure of the Illustrious Client”, originally published in 1924, Watson mentions that “both Holmes and I had a weakness for the Turkish bath” (Doyle, 1927, 13), particularly the one in Northumberland Avenue. He then describes an isolated corner with two couches side by side where he would relax, in the company of Holmes. Taking into account that during the *fin-de-siècle* period in Europe Turkish baths were commonly frequented for homosexual encounters, this observation becomes particularly relevant (Cook 2003, 88).

Considering this information, one might assume that Arthur Conan Doyle was indeed quite open-minded, and much like his character is often perceived to be, a man ahead of his time. However, his views on what were deemed deviant sexualities appeared to be less progressive. Regarding Oscar Wilde, who was, at some point, a friend of his, he expressed the following sentiment concerning the 1895 trials: “I thought at the time, and still think [in 1924], that the monstrous development which ruined him was pathological, and that a hospital rather than a police court was the place for its consideration” (Robb 2003, 261).

Nonetheless, as has been previously stated, Doyle had a tendency to contradict himself. The first meeting between Conan Doyle and Oscar Wilde took place in August 1889, during a social dinner at the Langham Hotel, organised by the publisher J. M. Stoddart. This meeting ultimately led to the subsequent publication of both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Sign of the Four,* and it is safe to say that Wilde made a lasting impression on Doyle. Thirty years later, Doyle fondly referred to the meeting as a “golden evening”, remarking that Wilde’s conversation left an indelible impression on him, particularly his “curious precision of statement” and “delicate flavour of humour”. Doyle expressed profound admiration for Wilde, stating that he “towered above them all” (Robb 2003, 261).

Another illustration of Doyle’s nuanced and sometimes contradictory perspectives regarding the “pathologies” he had criticised in Wilde can be found within his own literary works. For instance, in “The Adventure of the Three Students”, originally published in 1904, there is a clear allusion to the societal situation surrounding this issue at the time. As Watson narrates, “it was in the year '95 that a combination of events, into which I need not enter, caused Mr. Sherlock Holmes and myself to spend some weeks in one of our great University towns” (Doyle, 1905, 237). It would have been apparent to readers of the time that this “combination of events”, which Watson chooses not to elaborate on, refers to the Wilde trials that occurred in the same year. Therefore, the reason for Holmes and Watson’s temporary

departure from London in this context can be inferred as the suspicion surrounding two bachelors living together for many years in a city centre flat, which was often associated with "gross indecency between men". Indeed, as Cook argues, there were numerous men fitting that description who were brought to court accused of homosexual acts (2003, 31).

The exact reasons behind the disparities between what Doyle might have privately believed and what he depicted in his stories can only be speculated. These inconsistencies are not only evident concerning the topic of deviant sexualities but also regarding his views on the Empire, as previously discussed. However, these disparities can be attributed, at least partially, to the context of his time, characterized by significant societal changes and the prevailing belief that these changes led to decay and degeneration. In such a context, it is inevitable that discrepancies and nuances would emerge, often within an individual, between personal desires and societal norms.

Certainly, this inclination towards self-contradiction was not unique to the author but extended to the central character of his stories, Sherlock Holmes. As discussed previously, Holmes was typically depicted as purely analytical, cold, and logical. In fact, he employed these terms to describe his own nature and consistently prioritized logic over emotion (Arata 1996, 148). However, Watson held a contrasting perspective, stating that despite Holmes' assertions, "the romance was there" in the cases he narrated (Arata 1996, 148). Following what is presented in the narratives themselves, it appears that it was Watson who was correct in this assertion, suggesting that Holmes' cold demeanour was merely a facade he adopted.

A clear example of the above-mentioned can be found in stories such as that of "The Three Garridebs", originally published in 1924, where John Watson is injured in his thigh after receiving a gunshot. At this incident, Holmes reaction is intense enough to surprise even Watson himself, who narrates the following, in a very heartfelt manner: "My friend's wiry

arms were round me, and he was leading me to a chair. ‘You’re not hurt, Watson? For God’s sake, say that you are not hurt!’ It was worth a wound - it was worth many wounds - to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking” (Doyle, 1927, 167). This response serves as a compelling demonstration that John Watson and Sherlock Holmes were not simply two companions sharing a residence in London and occasionally embarking on detective escapades. Rather, they were two individuals who harboured profound affection for each other, and willingly chose to spend a significant portion of their lives in each other’s company.

The intensity of this affection, along with the many homoerotic undertones explored in this section, help to partly explain Holmes’ reaction to Watson’s pursuit of Mary Morstan in *The Sign of the Four*, and to the doctor’s subsequent engagement to her. As Graham Robb notes, Holmes’ evident displeasure and unease about the situation permeate the novel, leading him to attempt to divert Watson’s attention from Morstan. He invites his friend to a meal of grouse and oysters, teasingly suggesting that his Watson has yet to fully appreciate his talents as a housekeeper. Additionally, Holmes goes to lengths such as soothing Watson to sleep with his violin, in a scene which is narrated by the latter, in the following, somewhat erotic manner (2003, 263): “Look here, Watson; you look regularly done. Lie down there on the sofa and see if I can put you to sleep.’ He took up his violin from the corner, and as I stretched myself out he began to play some low, dreamy, melodious air - his own, no doubt, for he had a remarkable gift for improvisation. I have a vague remembrance of his gaunt limbs, his earnest face and the rise and fall of his bow” (Doyle 2004, 163).

As an additional observation regarding the romantic subplot involving Watson and Morstan, it could be argued that Morstan was likely introduced as somewhat of a narrative device by Doyle. This could have been done to deflect any potential suspicion surrounding

the portrayal of two unmarried men, one of whom exhibits, as previously noted, characteristics which could be associated with deviant behaviours, residing together for an extended period. This interpretation is reinforced by Morstan's marginal presence in the stories, often being only briefly mentioned, and her conveniently timed death, which is not elaborated upon in the books but is merely referenced, an event which serves to facilitate Watson's return to his bachelor quarters at 221B, Baker Street.

What could be inferred from the analysis presented in this chapter, is the fact that both Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes are men of their time. They exhibit the anxieties of the period, concerning the Empire, deviant behaviours, and societal decay. However, they not only reflect these concerns but also display conflicting behaviours and actions regarding them, which underscores the notion that individuals cannot detach themselves from their surroundings, regardless of their aspirations to do so. Doyle was a defender of the Empire, yet he could not help but portray it in a way that looked like a critique. He criticised Wilde for his deviation but admired him deeply at the same time. Ultimately, his main creation was a character who embodied the classic traits of the prototypical deviant "bachelor" male, characteristics which Doyle claimed he saw as a pathology, as has been mentioned previously.

Holmes, in turn, attempts to maintain a facade of logic and detachment but inevitably reveals a wide spectrum of emotions, including love, loyalty, and jealousy, when it concerns the person who matters the most to him, John Watson. He also frequently turns to opioids like cocaine and morphine, allegedly to alleviate boredom between cases. However, it becomes evident that these substances serve as a means to numb his emotional pain, as illustrated at the conclusion of *The Sign of the Four*. In the story's closing lines, Holmes acknowledges that with Watson's impending departure from Baker Street to marry, his only remaining comfort lies in numbing the pain this separation brings: "For me," said Sherlock Holmes,

“there still remains the cocaine-bottle.” And he stretched his long white hand up for it (Doyle 2004, 204).

2. FROM PAGE TO SCREEN: CINEMATIC ADAPTATIONS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

2.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO FILM ADAPTATION

Since the advent of the film medium, Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes has been adapted numerous times to television films, cinema, and TV shows. It is estimated that the famous detective has featured in more films and has been played by more actors than any other fictional character, with the earliest depiction, *Sherlock Holmes Baffled*, dating back to 1900 (Christopher Redmond, *A Sherlock Holmes Handbook*, 1993, 164). While some adaptations are seen as superior to others, only a few have achieved a lasting place in the minds of Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts, who often assess the quality of these adaptations based on their fidelity to Conan Doyle's original narrative. Taking this into consideration, many critics and viewers regard the Granada Television production *Sherlock Holmes* (1984) as the most representative adaptation of Doyle's novels (Redmond 1993, 175).

This project originated with the idea that the canon must be strictly adhered to, clearly linking the idea of adaptation to that of literal interpretation in order to avoid violations of the original story, which, according to this vision, characterised non-literal adaptations (Neil McCaw, *Adapting Detective Fiction: Crime, Englishness and the TV Detectives*, 2011, 23). Nonetheless, to understand the potential flaws of emphasising strict literality, it is essential to recognise that the interpretation of a story varies depending on the reader's subjectivity, leading to the paradox that a fidelity-focused adaptation presupposes the notion that there is only one correct interpretation of the source, an idea which needs to be revised.

Brian McFarlane explores this idea in his book *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (1996), which highlights the importance of regarding film adaptations as independent works of art rather than merely as an extension of the supposedly more

refined written medium. As a result of this traditional view, the emphasis on fidelity has often stifled creativity, preventing adaptations from reaching a more satisfying outcome. This stems from the fact that the more complex aspects of the narrative become challenging to adapt when strictly following a literal interpretation of the source, leading to these elements being neglected or handled too vaguely (McFarlane, 1996, 10). It is for this reason that nowaday approaches based on intertextuality – or, rather, intermediality (Rajewsky 2005)- are considered more comprehensive and sophisticated, as they focus on how the adaptation works, following a specific interpretation of the source, to support the message the film tries to convey (McFarlane 1996, 10). Moreover, McFarlane emphasises that to properly analyse an adaptation, it is essential to consider which narrative elements have been transferred to the film medium and how this transfer has been executed.

McFarlane's approach is founded on the narrative functions proposed by essayist and literary critic Roland Barthes, which are divided into two main categories: distributional and integrational functions. The distributional functions, or functions proper, relate to the plot itself. They encompass the actions and events that hold the text together, providing coherence and cohesion, and thus pertain to the "functionality of doing". On the other hand, the integrational functions, also called indices, include elements essential for understanding the story's meaning and shaping the reader's interpretation of it. These functions embrace, for example, the characters' psychological details, information about their identities, and abstract notations of the atmosphere and setting, thus relating to the "functionality of being" (McFarlane 1996, 13). Hence, McFarlane's decision to employ Barthes' narrative functions as resources for film adaptation theory stems from these distinctions' ability to determine which narrative elements can be directly transferred to the film and which can only be adapted (McFarlane 1996, 10).

Considering the above, the perception of the Granada TV project as the most accurate depiction of Sherlock Holmes can be questioned. The series, produced by Michael Cox, was based on a "Holmesian reference manual" (McCaw 2011, 23) compiled by Cox himself, reflecting his own interpretation of the original canon, with the goal of presenting the most faithful adaptation of Doyle's stories. When watching the series, it becomes evident that, in terms of plot, the events significantly correspond to those in the original books. In other words, applying Barthes' distinctions, the distributional functions are thoroughly transferred into the film version. The reverence for the canon was such that new scriptwriters of the series had to follow a set of fixed rules regarding structure and characterisation in response to Jeremy Brett's (the actor portraying Holmes) complaints about any sort of departure from the original story (McCaw 2011, 23). This already proves controversial, as characterisation, which falls under Barthes' integrational functions, depends on the reader's subjective interpretation.

Consequently, this insistence on adhering to the canon may have restricted the scriptwriters' creativity. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Cox viewed the series' fidelity in terms of dialogue and plot as a tribute to Sidney Paget, the original illustrator of the Holmes stories in *The Strand Magazine*. Accordingly, the Granada series chose to depict the detective as wearing his famous deerstalker, an element present in Paget's illustrations but not in the Conan Doyle's work. Paradoxically, therefore, in their attempt to achieve maximum fidelity, they ended up portraying a different Holmes than the one Doyle envisioned (McCaw 2011, 24).

Moreover, there is another particularity of this series, related to the historical context of the time it was aired (mid 1980s), which also raises questions about its claimed fidelity regarding the canon. As discussed in the previous chapter of this dissertation, the context of *fin-de-siècle* England was a crucial factor in shaping numerous elements of Sherlock

Holmes's original stories. One key aspect was the prevailing belief that society was undergoing a process of decay, partly due to the influence of the Empire, an idea originating from Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1892). Doyle's stories often positioned the source of evil in the "other", whether in the colonies or continental Europe, thus externalising internal affairs, increasing the perceived threat of reversed colonisation, and enhancing national spirit. Similarly, the mid-1980s context significantly influenced not only the final outcome of the 1984 *Sherlock Holmes* series but also Cox's choice of which canon elements to emphasise. This approach is inherently flawed if the intention is to remain completely faithful to the source, given that having a specific goal in mind, as will be discussed, inevitably involves altering elements of the original literary source to achieve that goal.

Doyle's stories, as previously established, extensively explore the theme of the threat posed by the "other" contrasted with the safety of the homeland. In the Granada TV series, this aspect is accentuated to the point that it occasionally modifies the plot, as can be observed, for instance, in "The Greek Interpreter" (1985). As McCaw elaborates, the restoration of social order in the original story occurs in Budapest, involving the Hungarian police, who arrest the culprit. However, in the Granada series, this scene is transformed so that the restoration of social order takes place in England, with the criminals Latimer and Kemp being killed and arrested, respectively. Moreover, in the series adaptation, the character of Wilson Kemp was purposely cast as French in order to showcase his criminality via his status as a foreigner (McCaw 2011, 24). This resulted in an amplified portrayal of England as the victim of foreign threats, heightening Doyle's original effect. By doing so, the Granada TV series acted as a "vehicle for identity formation" (McCaw 2011, 25), instilling a sense of national pride in viewers by positioning them alongside the heroes and contrasting them with the foreign villains.

As previously mentioned, this decision was influenced by the historical context of England in the 1980s. The "Englishness" and social order depicted in the series sharply contrasted with the socio-economic reality of the time, marked by political conflicts and revolts due to Margaret Thatcher's policies affecting the manufacturing industry and resulting in mass unemployment. Events like the miners' strike (1984-85) and riots in Liverpool, Brixton, and Handsworth in 1985 highlighted this unrest. In this context, viewers found the Granada series nostalgic, presenting a world where values of "authority, law and order, patriotism, national unity, the family, and individual freedom" (McCaw 2011, 26) prevailed. Thus, the canon elements that were exaggerated and sometimes altered in the 1984 series served a specific purpose, compromising their intended goal of creating a literal, faithful adaptation.

Additionally, it is interesting to note that they changed something fundamental about Holmes' character, that is, the reason behind his drug addiction. As discussed earlier in this dissertation, Doyle's stories depict Holmes occasionally resorting to opioids to cope with difficult emotional states, such as what happens in *The Sign of the Four* (1890), where he expresses bitterness about Watson's engagement to Mary Morstan and claims that only the cocaine bottle is left for him. This aspect is completely eliminated from the Granada series, where Holmes shows indifference to Watson's interest in Morstan and does not need to resort to drugs to manage his emotions. Moreover, the 1984 adaptation went so far as to have Holmes give up his use of cocaine and morphine in "The Devil's Foot" (1988), symbolically burying his syringe in the sand. This decision was influenced by Jeremy Brett's concern that a significant portion of the series' audience comprised young people, whom he feared might be encouraged by Holmes' drug use, an opinion he shared with Conan Doyle's daughter (The Internet Movie Database). This deliberate alteration of such a fundamental aspect of Holmes'

character again raises questions about the supposed fidelity to the canon in the Granada TV series.

The above-mentioned facts about what is widely considered the most faithful portrayal of Holmes in cinema serve to illustrate not only the flaws in viewing only those works that replicate the canon as high-quality depictions, but also how traditional adaptations of the Sherlock Holmes canon fail to depict the man behind the detective symbol. In Doyle's stories, Holmes is a man who represents the anxieties of his time and struggles with his own emotional turmoil and hardships. This dissertation has aimed to convey in the previous chapter that Holmes is not merely a one-dimensional character whose sole purpose is to solve crimes elegantly; he is a complex, emotionally intricate individual with as much depth as any other man of his era. For this reason, the following two sections of this chapter will examine two adaptations that address this complexity and portray not only the detective but also the man.

2.2 BILLY WILDER'S *THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*

The first adaptation to be analysed is *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes,* written and produced in 1970 by Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond, and directed by Wilder. Although this film does not adapt any specific story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, it incorporates elements from two of his narratives, namely "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans" (1905) and "A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891), using them as a starting point and framework for an in-depth study of the character of Sherlock Holmes (Gene Phillips, *Some Like It Wilder: The Life and Controversial Films of Billy Wilder*, 2010, 294-295). Wilder, a self-proclaimed Holmes enthusiast, aimed to create a thorough portrayal of Holmes in a costume drama divided into four distinct parts, which would make it his longest film, running just under three hours, with a 260-page script.

However, despite Wilder's great respect for the figure of Sherlock Holmes, he stated that he had not treated the character with "reverence", as was customary. Instead, he aimed not to emphasize the crime-solving or Holmes' deductive prowess, but rather to show him as "vulnerable" and "human", focusing instead on Holmes' canonical addiction to cocaine, his well-known contempt for women, and the ambiguous nature of his relationship with John Watson (Phillips 2010, 295). Therefore, it could be argued that while the film effectively adapts certain aspects of the canon falling under Barthes' distributional functions, such as plot events from two original stories, its primary focus lies on the psychological traits of the detective, thus emphasizing the integrational functions.

As previously discussed, integrational functions cannot be directly transferred from the source to the film adaptation, as they inherently rely on the reader's subjective interpretation of the original material. Nonetheless, this does not compromise the significance of *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, concerning the original stories, as a tool for analysing the character of Sherlock Holmes, since the film draws upon elements which are already present in the canon, although not prominently featured, and highlights them as the most central aspects of the story.

According to Wilder, thus, the four parts would, with meticulous detail, portray different aspects of Sherlock Holmes' life and psyche, each having a distinct tone—drama, comedy, farce, and romance—hence constructing the film itself as a "symphony" (Phillips 2010, 296). Nonetheless, only two of the four sections made the final cut due to a restriction on the film's length imposed by the distributor, United Artists, significantly compromising the final result Wilder aimed to achieve. The first part, titled "The Adventure of the Upside-Down Room", sets the stage for a film that diverges from typical Sherlock Holmes adaptations, since it not only refrains from adapting any of Doyle's stories but also emphasizes Holmes' struggle with drug addiction and the distress this causes John Watson.

In this first adventure, Holmes is presented with a case where a dead man is found in a room with all the furniture nailed to the ceiling. Through a series of astute questions directed at Watson, Holmes quickly deduces that the case was actually fabricated by his friend in order to distract him between cases, preventing him from resorting to cocaine (Phillips 2010, 300). Subsequently, the two men engage in a heated argument over Holmes' severe drug abuse. When Mrs Hudson, the housekeeper, hears their argument and contemplates the potential breakup of their relationship due to this issue, she remarks that she once went through a divorce herself, clearly drawing a parallel between the relationship of the two men and a heterosexual marriage (Gerd Germünden, *A Foreign Affair: Billy Wilder's American Films*, 2008, 149).

The second part, titled "The Dreadful Business of the Naked Honeymooners", introduces the theme of sex, which was uncommon in Sherlock Holmes adaptations up to that point. When two naked bodies are found in bed in their cabin on an ocean liner in the Mediterranean, Watson, eager to impress Holmes, decides to take charge of the investigation. Upon entering the cabin, Watson soon discovers he has mistakenly led Holmes to the wrong place, disturbing the sleep of two naked newly-weds exhausted from a night of lovemaking (Phillips 2010, 300). As previously noted, sex-related issues were rare in the Sherlock Holmes canon or adaptations. Hence, although treated humorously in this instance, it marked a departure from the reverence with which most directors approached the Sherlock Holmes universe.

The two final parts, namely "The Singular Affair of the Russian Ballerina" and "The Case of the Missing Husband", are the ones that made it into the finished version of *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*. As a result, the film runs for two hours and five minutes, meaning almost an hour of material was cut at the demand of United Artists. The film begins with a voice-over from Doctor John Watson, who, in a letter to his heirs, explains his

intention to recount some of Holmes' cases involving "matters of a delicate and sometimes scandalous nature" (Phillips 2010, 302). With this intriguing premise, "The Singular Affair of the Russian Ballerina" starts, and Holmes is called to Covent Garden, where he meets Petrova, a Russian ballerina with a startling request: she asks him to father her child. Her reasons are purely practical rather than romantic—she wants her offspring to inherit both her beauty and Holmes' intellect. She reveals that Holmes was not her first choice; she initially approached the famous composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, preferring him due to his Russian nationality. However, Tchaikovsky declined, as Petrova notes, "women were not his cup of tea" (Phillips 2010, 296).

Holmes, nonetheless, shockingly hints to Petrova that Tchaikovsky is not an isolated case, and that himself, a bachelor who has lived with another bachelor for many fulfilling years, is also the product of that "cruel caprice of Mother Nature" (Phillips 2010, 296). Petrova, finally taking the hint, asks Holmes if Doctor Watson happens to be his romantic interest, to which the detective replies affirmatively. Furthermore, Petrova remarks that she had expected Holmes to be different, that is, taller and naturally interesting in women. In response, Holmes expresses his frustration about having to wear an "improbable costume" in public—the hat, Inverness cape, and pipe—to match the image Watson has created in his stories. This underscores the tension between what is real and what is not, and the portrayal of one's identity versus its true nature, which will be central to the plot of this story (Germünden 2008, 154).

This scene serves as an introduction that already indicates the film's focus on matters of the heart, delving into the psychology and character of Holmes rather than his deductive abilities. Even if one argues that Holmes' comment was simply a tactic to avoid a compromising situation, the mere suggestion of it, particularly in 1970, is shocking in itself. Nonetheless, the ambiguous nature of Holmes' feelings for Watson, which will be analysed

later in more detail, is evident throughout the entire film. Moreover, the issue Holmes raises is indeed significant: two bachelors living together for so many years was relatively uncommon at the time, especially considering the homoerotic implications of their relationship discussed earlier in this dissertation. In fact, Wilder asserted that this homoerotic subtext was intentional and that his original plan was to make it explicit in the film, closely linking it to Holmes' drug addiction. As he explained to interviewer Doug McClelland, "I wanted to have Holmes homosexual and not admitting it to anyone, including maybe even himself. The burden of keeping it secret was the reason he took dope" (Charlotte Chandler, *Nobody's Perfect: Billy Wilder: A Personal Biography*, 2002, 268). However, Adrian Conan Doyle, who represented his father's estate, was completely opposed to this idea. Consequently, Wilder had to depict Holmes' homosexuality in a very subtle manner in the final cut (Phillips 2010, 297).

The first part of the film progresses with Watson discovering the excuse Holmes used to refuse Petrova's offer. The doctor is entirely appalled and furiously threatens to leave Baker Street, to which Holmes replies, "Of course, we can continue to meet clandestinely, in the waiting rooms of suburban railway stations", (Wilder 1970, 00:32:03), making a clear innuendo about secret encounters between lovers. After asserting that many women can testify to his manhood, the scene turns melancholic when Watson asks, "I hope I'm not being presumptuous, but there have been women in your life?" (Wilder 1970, 00:32:54)), to which Holmes responds, in a serious tone, that he is indeed being presumptuous. This exchange concludes "The Singular Affair of the Russian Ballerina" and the first part of the film, which, as previously explained, is heavily charged with homoeroticism and marked by the suggestion that Holmes conceals his true identity to meet the expectations of Watson's readers and conform to the norms of his time, since, as discussed in this dissertation with the

case of Oscar Wilde, being in a homosexual relationship was a criminal offence in Victorian England.

In the second part of the film, corresponding to “The Case of the Missing Husband”, the psychology of Holmes is further examined. This segment delves deeper into his potentially concealed homoerotic sentiments and severe drug problem, both introduced in the first half of the film. Additionally, it addresses his problematic and misogynistic attitudes towards women, which, like the other elements mentioned above, are also present in Doyle’s stories. The case starts when Gabrielle Valladon, who has travelled from Belgium specifically to consult Sherlock Holmes, requests the detective’s assistance in locating her missing husband, Emile, a prominent engineer and inventor. After uncovering a series of clues from a newspaper, they conclude that Emile is likely in Scotland. Consequently, Holmes, Watson, and Mrs. Valladon embark on a journey aboard the Highland Express to Inverness (Phillips 2010, 303). While on the train, Holmes and Gabrielle Valladon go undercover as a married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Ashdown, while Watson stays in another cabin, playing their valet. A scene of great significance for understanding Holmes unfolds here by means of a conversation between the detective and Valladon. However, in order to grasp the importance of this scene, it is crucial to note that, although Holmes is unaware of it at this point, Mrs. Valladon is actually a German spy named Ilse von Hoffmannsthal, who is using the detective to gather intelligence on England’s plans for developing a submarine.

Hence, while in their compartment, Valladon confronts Holmes about his misogynistic views, leading him to admit that he mistrusts women for various reasons, including their alleged cunning nature and a personal experience from his youth, revealing that he was once engaged, but his fiancée died of influenza the day before their wedding. Consequently, he believes emotional involvement is detrimental to reason and judgment, which showcases how he represses his emotional pain and masks it with a cold-hearted

facade. (Germünden 2008, 148). What Holmes does not know at this point is that Valladon's curiosity about his interest in women is part of her plan to deceive him. She attempts to use seduction and emotional manipulation, which seems to work, as he does not suspect her until his brother, Mycroft, enlightens him about her true identity.

Nonetheless, as Germünden explains, there is a less heteronormative reading of Holmes' misinterpretation of Valladon, more aligned with Wilder's intentions. According to this view, Holmes' failure to see Valladon's true intentions stems not from an excess of emotional involvement but from a complete lack thereof, and not due to rationality but for entirely different reasons since, as previously discussed, the film consistently suggests Holmes' homosexual feelings towards Watson, which is evident in his refusal to reassure Watson that he is not interested in men. Moreover, Holmes' ambiguous sexual orientation is present in the film also in terms of characterization, with the detective always speaking in a significantly affected manner and wearing mascara and chalk (Germünden 2008, 150). Furthermore, Wilder himself chose the actor who plays Holmes, Robert Stephens, because he thought he "looked" homosexual (Phillips 2010, 297).

Upon reaching Inverness, they are able to trace back Emile Valladon's body in a cemetery near Loch Ness. Aware of Holmes' presence in Scotland, his brother Mycroft, who has ties to British intelligence, invites the detective to a clandestine meeting in a Scottish castle. There, Mycroft reveals that the government has been conducting experiments to develop a primitive submarine, a plot element drawn from Doyle's "The Adventure of the Bruce Partington Plans" (1908). Hence, it is discovered that Emile Valladon had been involved in these experiments, working as an engineer, and had died accidentally during one of the trials. Furthermore, it is during this meeting with his brother that Holmes learns the truth: the woman he thought was Emile Valladon's concerned wife is actually a German spy seeking information about the submarine.

This second part of the film diverges from classic detective fiction by making the audience suspicious of Gabrielle Valladon from the start, as she is seen sending messages from 221B Baker Street to someone in another building—something Holmes and Watson miss. Consequently, when Mycroft Holmes reveals that Gabrielle is a German spy, it is unsurprising to the audience, who have long suspected her motives. This subverts a fundamental element of detective stories, that is, the revelation of the culprit. In this case, the mystery of Gabrielle Valladon's identity is absent, highlighting that the story's focus is not on the case itself but on Sherlock Holmes as a human being, centring on his conflicting emotions and how his repression of them leads him to substance abuse. A similar observation was made in the previous chapter of this dissertation, where it was discussed that Conan Doyle's stories rarely concluded with the arrest of the culprit, a common characteristic of detective fiction meant to provide satisfaction to the reader. Instead, this satisfaction ultimately arose from the relationship between Holmes and Watson, their camaraderie, and the sense of safety and seclusion provided by the rooms at 221B Baker Street to both the reader and the protagonists.

Finally, in the final moments of the film, we encounter one of its most significant scenes, revealing the reality of Holmes' drug abuse. Unlike his usual explanation that he uses cocaine and morphine to alleviate boredom during breaks between cases, as suggested in "The Adventure of the Upside-Down Room", here we see Holmes unable to cope with an emotionally complex situation, thus turning to cocaine. In this last scene, Holmes receives a letter from his brother Mycroft seven months after the events in Inverness, informing him that Ilse von Hoffmanstal had been arrested in Japan as a spy and is now dead. Upon learning this, Holmes retreats to his bedroom, seeking solace in cocaine, while a concerned Watson remains in the living room. This scene showcases Holmes' inability to deal with the emotional impact of losing someone who both challenged him intellectually and had an

emotional connection with him. Unable to express his feelings to Watson, he resorts instead to numbing his pain with chemical substances, drawing a significant parallel to the end of *The Sign of the Four* with which Wilder, being a Holmes enthusiast, was familiar. In both cases, we find the detective vulnerable to conflicting emotions: in the novel, it is due to losing Watson to Mary Morstan, while in this case, the pain radiates primarily due to Ilse's death.

2.3 BBC *SHERLOCK*

The second adaptation to be analysed is BBC *Sherlock* (2010), co-created by Mark Gatiss and Stephen Moffat, starring Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes and Martin Freeman as John Watson. This series offers a refreshing reinterpretation of Doyle's stories, uniquely set in 21st-century London. In this version, Dr. Watson chronicles his and Holmes' adventures through a blog, which he started as a form of therapy on the advice of his psychologist, upon returning from Afghanistan. Moffat and Gatiss were also extremely influenced by Billy Wilder's *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, as they often mentioned. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Mark Gatiss stated that the film served as "a template of sorts for Stephen Moffat and me as we made our adaptation for the BBC" (Eleanor Morgan, "The film that changed my life: Mark Gatiss", *The Guardian*, November 7, 2010). Gatiss also praised the film's portrayal of the relationship between Holmes and Watson, noting how it was "treated beautifully; Sherlock effectively falls in love with him in the film, but it's so desperately unspoken". The series consists of four seasons, released between 2010 and 2017, adapting a total of twelve stories. Although numerous episodes and instances could illustrate the points discussed in this dissertation, the focus will be on the special episode "The Abominable Bride", released between seasons three and four. This episode is particularly notable for its Victorian-era setting, though this is not entirely straightforward, as will be elaborated upon subsequently.

"The Abominable Bride" has been selected, primarily, for two reasons. Firstly, since it takes place within the mind of the famous detective as a result of drug-induced hallucinations, it offers a unique insight into the psyche of Sherlock Holmes. Consequently, nearly everything that occurs in this episode stems from his unconscious, providing first-person examples of the issues discussed in this dissertation, namely the roots of his drug addiction, his concealed vulnerability and struggles with personal relationships, and the depth of his feelings towards his friend, John Watson. Secondly, being set in the Victorian era, the episode purposefully showcases the anxieties of that period, analysed in the previous chapter of this study, such as the widespread fear that the status quo was under threat by foreign influences, and how the role of women and their growing independence challenged the traditional male-dominated social hierarchy.

To grasp the points which will be discussed, it is crucial to understand the events leading up to "The Abominable Bride" and its Victorian setting. In the final episode of the third season, "His Last Vow", Sherlock kills Charles Augustus Magnussen, a notorious blackmailer, to protect John's wife, Mary Morstan, and by extension, John. Mary, with a dark past as an assassin, had dangerous secrets that Magnussen intended to exploit, putting John at great risk. Due to Magnussen's status as a valuable asset protected by British intelligence, Sherlock faced severe punishment and was sent on a mission for the secret services, with the expectation that he would not survive. Aware of this, Sherlock and John shared an emotional farewell before the detective boarded the plane that he believed would separate him from his friend forever. Nonetheless, only seconds after the plane took off, every TV screen in the country displayed an image of the supposedly dead James Moriarty, who appeared to have returned from the grave. The message, directed to Sherlock, simply said, "Miss me?" and immediately caused the plane to return to land, as the detective was needed to investigate the apparent comeback of his archenemy.

Sherlock Holmes is known for his history of substance abuse, though in the series he claims to be "clean", as mentioned in the first episode, "A Study in Pink" (2010). Despite this, those around him worry he might relapse during emotionally complex situations. This is evident in "A Scandal in Belgravia", when, after the presumed death of Irene Adler, Mycroft Holmes calls John to check if he has found anything "in the usual places", concerned that his brother might turn to drugs to cope with his vulnerable emotional state. A similar situation occurs in "His Last Vow", where Sherlock spends weeks in a drug den, consuming various hard drugs, allegedly working on a case. In reality, the reason for this behaviour is the sense of loss he feels from John's absence, as he has not seen him for a month following his marriage to Mary Morstan. Interestingly, John himself dreams about Sherlock constantly during his honeymoon, which is quite suggestive of the homoerotic undertones that permeate the series.

In "The Abominable Bride", a similar situation unfolds. Initially, it appears to be an alternative Victorian-set spin-off, but the reality revealed throughout the episode is entirely different. Faced with the prospect of never seeing John again, Sherlock takes a highly dangerous mix of drugs, resulting in an overdose that could have easily killed him, as John warns him towards the end of the episode. In this drugged state, Sherlock begins reading John's blog, particularly the story of how they met, corresponding to the episode "A Study in Pink" (2010). However, upon receiving Mycroft's call informing him about Moriarty's widely broadcasted message, his already altered psyche, affected by the cocktail of drugs and his emotional vulnerability, is thrown into a deep hallucinogenic state.

Hence, Sherlock's drugged mind, influenced by Moriarty's apparent resurrection and his own reading of John's blog, imagines a story set in 1895 where he meets his friend for the first time after the latter's return from the Afghan wars. Their life together at Baker Street goes on much as it does in the present, but with the distinct features of *fin-de-siècle* England,

such as blatant misogyny and paranoia about foreign influence, which are prominent in Doyle's stories, and reflected in this episode. The reason for the Victorian setting stems from the fact that, in this drugged stated, Sherlock fixates on a nineteenth-century case he has read about at some point in his life, which bears similarities to Moriarty's apparent suicide by a bullet to the brain, where the victim also apparently re-emerged from the dead. This case became famous when Emelia Ricoletti, wearing a wedding dress, shot at multiple people in the street before apparently blowing her own head off. However, the bride reappeared days later, which was witnessed by several people, and killed her husband. In Sherlock's Victorian, drug-induced hallucination, his investigation of the case begins when a high society woman, Lady Carmichael, seeks his help, as her husband has received a death threat and is convinced "the bride" will come for him. With this in mind, Watson and Holmes travel to Lady Carmichael's manor by train. During their journey, Watson raises the possibility that they might be confronting the ghost of Emelia Ricoletti, prompting Holmes to mock his friend, questioning when Watson developed such imagination. Watson responds seriously, stating, "perhaps since I convinced the reading public that an unprincipled drug addict was some kind of gentleman hero" (Gatiss and Moffat, 2016, 00:38:57), which brings about the theme of one's true identity versus the image presented to others, a major theme in *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, as previously analysed.

Once they arrive at the manor, they decide to wait until midnight and catch whoever might attack Mr. Carmichael, although this effort proves fruitless, as the man is killed regardless. Nonetheless, while Watson and Holmes hide in a greenhouse for several hours waiting for the attacker to strike, they have an intriguing conversation about matters of the heart. Holmes replies to Watson's inquiries by saying, "the fair sex is your department Watson, I'll take your word for it" (Gatiss and Moffat, 2016, 00:42:42). When Watson presses further, asking why Holmes is "so determined to be alone", the detective responds,

"all emotion is abhorrent to me. It is the grit in a sensitive instrument. The crack in the lens" (Gatiss and Moffat, 2016, 00:43:49). Watson points out that these are not Holmes' own words, but what he has written about him in *The Strand Magazine*, portraying a cold-hearted version of the detective to the public, a depiction he does not believe. This exchange, again, conveys the theme of identity, which was already explored previously. It is also significant that this conversation takes place within Sherlock's mind, as it suggests that he views John as the only person who truly sees through him and can appreciate his human side beyond his intellectual prowess.

The choice by the series' writers of setting the episode in 1895 is also significant, as that was the year of the Wilde trials and also when Watson and Holmes, in Doyle's story "The Adventure of the Three Students" (1904), decided to leave London for a time, alluding to a combination of events which should be familiar to the reader. As discussed in this dissertation, these events could be attributed to the fact that, due to the trials, many of those who might be suspected of "gross indecency between men" left London temporarily to avoid trouble. Furthermore, the date is subtly referenced in a previous episode of the series, "A Scandal in Belgravia", where the visit counter on John's blog is stuck at 1895, as Sherlock himself points out.

Regarding the issue of misogyny, an example of this can already be seen at the beginning of the episode when Dr Watson asks his landlady, Mrs. Hudson, if she enjoyed the latest story he published in *The Strand Magazine*. She replies that she did not, as she barely appears and, when she does, it is only to make tea. Watson responds that making tea is essentially her role in narrative terms. To this, a clearly unsatisfied Mrs. Hudson retorts that she is not a plot device. The same disregard towards women can be seen in the canon, in instances such as "The Adventure of the Dying Detective", when Watson claims that Holmes "disliked and distrusted the sex, but he was always a chivalrous opponent" (Doyle, 1917,

180). Similarly, throughout the episode, women are treated condescendingly, from Watson's maid to Hooper, the forensic doctor who disguises herself as a man to work, only to be ridiculed by Watson, who quickly sees through her disguise. Another clear example of a woman being blatantly wronged and constantly dismissed is Watson's own wife, Mary Morstan. Holmes deduces this when he encounters a mysterious woman at Baker Street, who turns out to be his friend's wife in disguise. The detective remarks, "You have recently married a man of a seemingly kindly disposition, who has now abandoned you for an unsavoury companion of dubious morals" (Gatiss and Moffat, 2016, 00:08:57). While it may appear that Holmes is referring to an affair with another woman, he is actually referring to himself, as Watson spends most of his time with the detective rather than his newly married wife, which underscores the episode's blatant homoerotic subtext.

The issue of women's treatment, and how it was beginning to change due to the Suffragette movement, is foreshadowed early in the episode when Mycroft Holmes summons his younger brother to the Diogenes Club, where he spends most of his time. Upon their arrival, they are greeted by the receptionist named Wilder, an interesting choice of name, seeing as the club's rule of absolute silence prevents him from speaking. This is likely a reference to how Billy Wilder was "silenced" by Conan Doyle's heirs when making *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, which prevented him from portraying the detective as openly homosexual.

In this meeting, an interesting exchange takes place between Holmes, Watson, and Mycroft when the latter asserts "Our way of life is under threat from an invisible enemy, one that hovers at our elbow on a daily basis" (Gatiss and Moffat, 2016, 00:29:10). Watson responds by asking if that enemy might be the socialists, anarchists, the French, the Scots, or even the suffragists, highlighting the fears in *fin-de-siècle* England that foreign powers and influences threatened the country and its imperial supremacy. Additionally, women fighting

for their rights and the rise of social class movements, as previously explained in the dissertation, jeopardized the lifestyle of the English bourgeois man, which, according to the era's ideology influenced by Nordau's *Degeneration* (1892) was seen as an indication of societal decay.

Nonetheless, when asked how one can eliminate this invisible enemy, Mycroft responds, "We don't defeat them; we must certainly lose to them […] because they are right, and we are wrong" (Gatiss and Moffat, 2016, 00:29:57). Indeed, towards the end of the episode, it is revealed that Emelia Ricoletti's apparent resurrection and the murder of her husband, along with the other crimes attributed to "the bride", were actually the result of an organised effort by a group of women seeking revenge against the men who had wronged them and advocating for their rights, especially the right to vote. In this context, Mycroft's comment is better understood, as in *fin-de-siècle* England, the fight for equal rights, which gained prominence at the end of the previous century with Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), had become an unstoppable force.

Overall, this episode provides a distinctive study of Sherlock Holmes' psyche and unconscious, seeing as the events are the product of his own subconscious. Hence, although the plots of the cases are taken as framework for the episodes, the series emphasizes elements of the canon which define the detective's personality and his inner life. Therefore, it can be stated that BBC *Sherlock* primarily focuses on adapting what Barthes referred to as integrational functions. Thus, the series delves into themes discussed in this dissertation, such as the reasons behind his substance abuse and the true nature of the feelings he harbours for his friend, John Watson. Moreover, the Victorian setting of the "The Abominable Bride" is significant as it underscores the anxieties of *fin-de-siècle* England, which permeate Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's original stories.

3. CONCLUSION

This dissertation has aimed to shed light on the fact that, contrary to common belief, the character of Sherlock Holmes embodies the anxieties of his time—an era characterised by fears of the Empire's impending collapse and by the adverse effects of reverse colonisation. Alongside this, the emergence of social rights movements, driven by class disparities, created a widespread sentiment that the dominance of the bourgeois male subject in *fin-de-siècle* England was under threat, and that society was undergoing a process of degeneration, as argued by Max Nordau in his essay *Degeneration* (1892). This context, as this dissertation has aimed to demonstrate, shaped the narratives of the period, including the Sherlock Holmes stories.

Therefore, this dissertation has focused on analysing the character of Sherlock Holmes within the nuances of this historical context. This analysis directly relates to understanding the character's psychological traits, including his disregard for women, his inability to healthily express emotions—especially concerning his most significant relationship with his fellow detective and friend John Watson—and his recurring drug addiction, which he uses to numb his mind in emotionally complex situations.

The first chapter of this dissertation has established how the historical context of *fin-de-siècle* England permeates Doyle's Sherlock Holmes narratives, showing that the resolution of the cases consistently emphasizes the externalization of supposedly internal affairs. Crimes occurring in England are depicted as being influenced by foreign individuals or systems, whether coming from the colonies or from secret societies in continental Europe, thus placing the source of criminality outside English borders. Additionally, it has been established how the character of Sherlock Holmes embodies these anxieties regarding the Empire, the position of women in society, and how he serves as an example of the bourgeois male presiding over

the Victorian English society. Furthermore, this dissertation has shown how one of the most prominent elements which has captivated readers over the decades has been the relationship between Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, which exhibits numerous traits, suggesting that such a relationship extends beyond mere friendship. By analysing elements from the time associated with "deviant" sexualities, it has been established that these traits are prominently present in the character of Sherlock Holmes himself.

The second chapter of this dissertation has evidenced the value and quality of the chosen screen adaptations, Billy Wilder's *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1970) and Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss's BBC *Sherlock* (2010), as tools for analysing the character of Sherlock Holmes. The analysis of the film has highlighted the deep connection between Holmes and John Watson, emphasizing Holmes' severe drug addiction as his primary mechanism to cope with solitude and his concealed homoerotic feelings. Similarly, this analysis has examined the roots of Holmes' distrust and disregard for women, linking it to his past and his broader difficulty in maintaining human relationships. The analysis of the TV series has further affirmed that the relationship between Holmes and Watson is instrumental in the detective's life, emphasizing how Holmes's drug abuse, intricately linked to his emotional repression, is crucial for comprehending his inner turmoil. Furthermore, the analysis has evidenced how the societal anxieties prevalent in Victorian times and reflected in Doyle's original Sherlock Holmes narratives provide a framework for the plot development of the episode, including concerns about corrupting and corrupt foreign influences and the challenges posed by the emerging women's rights movements in a predominantly male-dominated society.

The exploration of Sherlock Holmes' psychological traits is an area that deeply interests me and one I aim to explore further in the future. An intriguing approach would involve examining Holmes's drug addiction alongside other behavioural issues he displays,

not only in Conan Doyle's original stories but also in modern adaptations, through the lens of modern psychology. Hence, while Holmes' drug addiction is clearly linked to his struggle in managing complex emotions, it can also be inferred from Holmes' characterisation that this difficulty may stem from the unique workings of his brain, as he exhibits characteristics which can be associated with neurodivergence.

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