MS. HOLMES AND MS. WATSON - APT. 2B

by Kate Hamill

A Dramaturgical Casebook

Director: Kelly O'Donnell
Dramaturg: Liv Fassanella

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PLAYHOUSE ON PARK

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SHERLOCK HOLMES, SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE
by Rivka Galchen

"HOLMES PULLED OUT HIS WATCH."

The Grolier Club, a private society for bibliophiles on the Upper East Side, with its marble foyer and dark wood-panelled gallery, would be a fine stage for a nineteenth-century fictional murder, perhaps done in the library with a candlestick, most certainly involving a will. On January 12th, an exhibit called "Sherlock Holmes in 221 Objects" opened there. It features a proper Baker Street-number of items from the collection of Glen S. Miranker, a former executive at Apple, who has been buying all manner of things Holmesian since 1977. There are a number of Arthur Conan Doyle's letters; an "idea book" in which he jotted notes for possible future stories; and a never-before-displayed speech, written by hand, in which Conan Doyle talks about why he killed off Holmes. There are also handwritten manuscript pages and a pirated copy of "The Sign of the Four," which Conan Doyle apparently signed, despite loathing the pirating practice.

Two Holmes novels receive special attention in the show: "A Study in Scarlet" (1887) and "The Hound of the Baskervilles" (1902). The former is the novel that introduced the scientific detective Holmes to the world. The latter is the one that came nearly a decade after Conan Doyle's apparent killing off of Holmes. When "The Hound of the Baskervilles" came out, readers waited outside the offices of The Strand Magazine, where the novel appeared serially, and reportedly offered bribes for advance copies. But the Holmes we meet in the 1887 novel is notably different from the Holmes of the 1902 novel. And the Holmes who is famously knocked off in the short story "The Adventure of the Final Problem," from 1893, is distinct from the Holmes who returns from apparent death in the short story "The Adventure of the Empty House," which is set primarily in 1894 but was published in 1903. He's a different kind of scientist, one who seems to live in a world that has a more problematic relationship with scientific advances.

The young Conan Doyle loved reading detective stories. Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin stories and Émile Gaboriau's Monsieur Lecoq stories (which, sadly, are now mostly forgotten) were among his favorites—and both are mentioned dismissively by Holmes in "A Study in Scarlet." Reflecting on his creation of Holmes, Conan Doyle once said, "I began to think of turning scientific methods, as it were, onto the work of detection. . . . I thought to myself, If a scientific man . . . was to come into the detective business, he wouldn't do these things by chance. He'd get the thing by building it up scientifically.

So . . . you can well imagine that I had, as it were, a new idea of the detective—and one which it interested me to work out." If you look at how Holmes evolves across time, you can watch this working out in narrative form. You get a moving image, as if on one of those old phenakistoscopes, of the scientist in both the popular imagination of nineteenth-century England and in the particular imagination of Conan Doyle.

What characterizes Holmes in his earliest appearances? "A Study in Scarlet" begins with Watson, who, having returned from war service in Afghanistan, finds himself in London with "neither kith nor kin," living on "eleven shillings and sixpence a day." He is looking to rent a room. A friend mentions that he knows someone looking for a roommate: "A fellow who is working at the chemical laboratory up at the hospital." The friend admits that he finds the potential roommate "a little too scientific for my tastes—it approaches to cold-bloodedness." Conan Doyle then uses an anecdote from his own medical training, when he ingested a mild poison, as a trait for his new invention: "I could imagine his giving a friend a little pinch of the latest vegetable alkaloid, not out of malevolence, you understand, but simply out of the spirit of inquiry in order to have an accurate idea of the effects." The potential roommate has also been seen beating corpses in the dissection room—so as to study how long after death bruises can be produced.

Watson meets the potential roommate (Sherlock Holmes, of course) in a lab crowded with test tubes, bottles, and Bunsen burners. "You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive," Holmes says, in one of his first lines of dialogue. Holmes's powers of deduction make this scientific man seem magical. Also menacing. He is celebrating having developed a test that can detect even the faintest traces of blood. He asks Watson if he would be O.K. living with the smell of strong tobacco, chemicals and experiments, and a roommate who sometimes goes days without speaking. Remarkably, Watson cheerfully agrees.

He's not a roommate most of us would choose.

Conan Doyle was born in 1859 to a loving mother and a difficult, alcoholic father. For parts of his childhood, he lived in squalor, but he was later supported by wealthy uncles who paid for his schooling. As a young man, he was particularly enamored of science, and found his secondary schooling stilted and backward. He went to the University of Edinburgh and trained as a physician. In his autobiography, he recalled fondly the years "when Huxley, Tyndall, Darwin, Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill were our chief philosophers, and even the man in the street felt the strong sweeping current of their thought, while to the young student, eager and impressionable, it was overwhelming." He even wrote some science fiction.

When Conan Doyle came up with Sherlock Holmes, he modelled him in large part on Joseph Bell, a medical-school professor Doyle studied under, worked for, and greatly admired. Like Holmes, Bell used careful observation to make deductions about his patients and stressed how much could be known even before a patient spoke. "Cobbler, I see," he would say, taking note of the worn spot on a patient's trousers which corresponded with the lapstone a cobbler uses to stretch and hammer leather. In another example, which Doyle and other students witnessed, a patient came in to see Bell for treatment for early-stage elephantiasis.

Bell deduced that the man had served in the Army, had been discharged not long before, had been a noncommissioned officer, and had been stationed in Barbados—all of which the man confirmed. After the patient left, Bell explained that the man hadn't removed his hat—a sign of a military man who had not yet transitioned into civilian habits—that his air of authority indicated that he was an N.C.O., and that elephantiasis was not a disease you could catch in England.

Doyle had been sending out stories before he created Holmes, but "they came back to me as straight and true as homing pigeons," he said. Why was his scientific detective so wildly beloved? The literary scholar Franco Moretti, in his book "Signs Taken for Wonders," points out that the Holmes stories were celebrated during a time of great social change in England. Moretti notes that the villains in detective fiction tend most often to be "one of two major sociological types: the noble and the upstart"—figures that want to speed up or reverse change. In this light, Holmes is a stabilizer. Moretti also argues that the crimes that protagonists like Holmes investigate are singular—a rare, interesting murder case, for example—and solvable, and in this way reassuring, like a cure.

But what of the detective being not merely ingenious, but scientific? In the time of the earlier Holmes stories, the Kodak Brownie camera was making photography available to the masses; X rays were seeing through the body; light bulbs were countering the night; snowflakes were being photographed for the first time; the Antarctic was being explored; Francis Galton was advocating eugenics. Science was a wonder; science was a terror. This ambivalence tilts one way, then another. By the time of the later Holmes stories, England had experienced the mechanical nightmares of the First World War.

"The Hound of the Baskervilles" was the first Holmes story that Conan Doyle had published in years, but it is set before "The Final Problem." Conan Doyle revived the stories before he fully committed to reviving the detective.

Holmes has evolved quite a bit from his first appearance. He remains exceptional at deducing a person's attributes from small hints like a watch charm and untidy attire. But his scientific side is less present. In "A Study in Scarlet," he had used an ill dog to confirm his conjecture that only one of two pills found at a murder scene was poisonous—the dog's convulsive death is described in detail. In later stories, Holmes speaks of things he knows but cannot prove, sets up optical illusions like a magician, and reveals that he is a master in a Japanese martial art he calls Baritsu. He's more of a Harry Houdini than a scientist.

Meanwhile, Holmes's enemy, Moriarty, is presented as a sort of Holmes gone wrong. Moriarty, though he seems eternal, appears for the first time in "The Final Problem." The reader learns that this nemesis is, like Holmes, "extremely tall and thin . . . ascetic looking, retaining something of the professor in his features." Moriarty had a brilliant career in mathematics, but left it behind because he had "hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind."

Holmes explains to Watson that, in order to imagine what Moriarty would do next, he need only imagine what he, Holmes, would do next. Moriarty is a mirror, but also a foil—Conan Doyle is shifting Holmes toward what he sees as the side of the good. And Holmes remarks to Watson that he wants to get out of the detective business, if he can secure the capture and conviction of Moriarty and his gang. "Of late I have been tempted to look into the problems furnished by nature rather than those more superficial ones for which our artificial state of society is responsible."

Conan Doyle had long been interested in spiritualism—a movement that believed in the ability to communicate with spirits, who had wisdom to impart—but, in the early years of Holmes, his interest was gently scientific. He remarked of spirits, for example, that he could no more say that they didn't exist than he could say that lions didn't exist in Africa simply because he'd been to Africa and hadn't met any. But, as the years passed, his devotion to spiritualism became so strong that he would hold to it even when the mediums were debunked and spirit photography was revealed as a trick. He published his last Holmes story in 1927, and he remained devoted to spiritualism. He wrote nonfiction books, such as "The Coming of the Fairies," "The Edge of the Unknown," and the two-volume "The History of Spiritualism." His second wife, Jean, was a medium, and the couple was often in communication with a spirit named Pheneas, who gave them, among other things, travel advice.

In 1922, Conan Doyle embarked on an American lecture tour, defending spiritualism from its attackers. Houdini also made public appearances related to spiritualism—debunking séances and all other aspects of the movement. Despite their differences, Houdini and Conan Doyle were friends for a time. Conan Doyle tried to convince Houdini of the reality of spiritualism; Jean led a séance that Houdini attended, in which Jean channelled Houdini's dead mother, drawing a cross followed by pages of her testimony written in English. Houdini, who was very close to his mother, was unconvinced. He didn't think that his mother, who did not speak English and was Jewish, would put crosses at the top of her testimony.

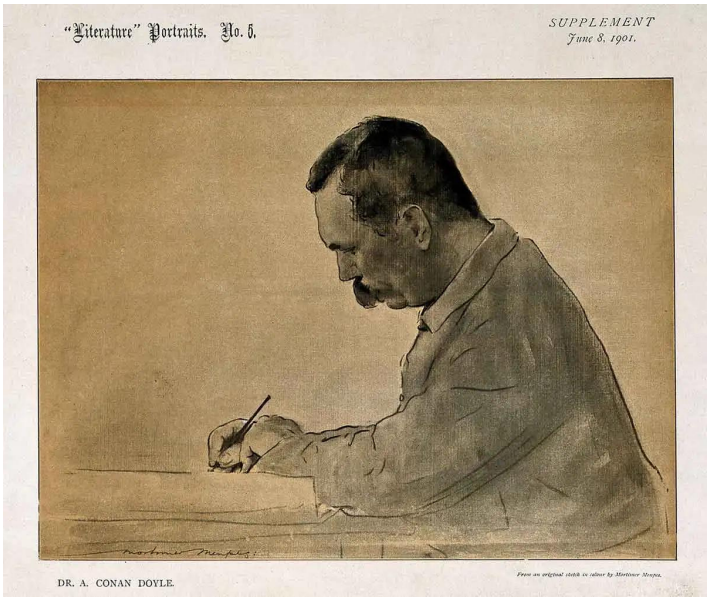
Houdini's attempt to bring Conan Doyle back more fully into the realm of science also failed. He wanted to show, by his earthbound tricks, that he could reproduce the various famous effects of spiritualists, one of them being automatic writing. He asked Conan Doyle to go outside and write a message on paper. Conan Doyle wrote "mene mene tekel upharsin." Those words, which are from the Book of Daniel in the Bible, are what a ghostly hand writes on a plaster wall as the king and all his friends eat and drink from looted vessels; the "writing on the wall" in that moment is the prophecy of the king's downfall. Houdini "magically" made the words Conan Doyle had written on paper appear. He said that it was just a magic trick he'd been working on; Conan Doyle didn't believe him. He was now certain that Houdini had a connection to the spiritual world.

Holmes never wanders as far from science as Conan Doyle did. In "The Hound of the Baskervilles," he is dismissive of the lore about a supernatural hound serially killing members of a local family.

And the Holmes stories, with all the variable Holmeses within them, have proved an effective balm ever since—a medicinal concoction made by scientific methods of observation. Robert Louis Stevenson once wrote to Conan Doyle:

hope you will allow me to offer you my compliments on your very ingenious and very interesting adventures of Sherlock Holmes. That is the class of literature I like when I have the toothache. As a matter of fact, it was a pleurisy I was enjoying when I took the volume up; and it will interest you as a medical man to know that the cure was for the moment effectual. . . . Only the one thing troubles me: can this be my old friend Joe Bell?"

Sherlock Holmes
(illustration by Sidney Paget, august 1893)



Reproduction of a pastel drawing of Arthur Conan Doyle by M. Menpes, 1901, via History Today

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE HISTORY OF THE MYSTERY

by Melinda Caric

In 1887, an adventure novel written by a 27-year-old for a little extra cash was published in the Christmas edition of a British paperback magazine. It would forever change the face of popular culture and usher in a whole new genre of story.

The story, called "A Study in Scarlet," was the first appearance of the immortal Sherlock Holmes and his colleague Dr. Watson, a pair now so colossally influential that subsequent detectives have yet to emerge from under their massive shadows.

THE INSPIRATIONS FOR SHERLOCK HOLMES

Holmes didn't spring fully formed from the mind of Arthur Conan Doyle, of course. He was largely modeled on Dr. Joseph Bell, a Scottish medical professor whose ability to diagnose patient's complaints through minute observations and brilliant deductions made a lasting impression on Conan Doyle when he was a young medical student.

When Doyle took up his pen to write, the detective genre as we now know it had few examples to draw from, but one notable pre-Holmes character that served as an inspiration was the 1841 Edgar Allan Poe detective C. Auguste Dupin, who was an early prototype of the model Doyle would now popularize: a brilliant amateur detective gifted with both a narrator sidekick and an ability to observe and infer. Dupin's perceptive talents allowed him to solve mysteries by scientifically analyzing the facts of a case and shedding light on problems insurmountable to the official police force.

SHERLOCK HOLMES BECOMES A SENSATION — AND A CURSE

"A Study in Scarlet" didn't make major waves at the time of publication, but it did well enough to allow Doyle to sell his second Holmes novel, "The Sign of Four." But it wasn't until the format of his stories went from serially published novels to single-serve short stories that the popularity of his characters exploded. The Sherlock Holmes short stories became the must-see TV of the day, and the public appetite for this abrasive, drug-addicted detective and his long suffering friend and sometimes roommate, Watson, was insatiable.

But Doyle quickly found himself locked in a pair of golden handcuffs: He now earned enough money to abandon his medical practice, but it was at the cost of having to write stories about characters he really didn't want to write about. As early as 1891, he was plotting various ways to kill Holmes off so he could focus on his other work, but the paychecks were difficult to resist. Drastically raising his rates to discourage publishers from the Holmes stories did nothing to cool demand, and he became one of the highest-paid writers of his time.

KILLING SHERLOCK HOLMES

Doyle published 24 short stories in The Strand Magazine between 1892 and 1893 before deciding he couldn't stomach it any longer. He sent Holmes tumbling off the side of a waterfall while locked in combat with hastily written archnemesis Prof. James Moriarty.

To say that the public reaction was bad would be an understatement. Hate mail poured in, Doyle was verbally abused, and tens of thousands of readers canceled their subscriptions to The Strand Magazine. Sherlock Holmes fans were intense, and they weren't about to let this outrage stand unchallenged: Readers formed groups like Let's Keep Holmes Alive, demanding that Doyle reverse his decision.

Activism of this kind was previously unheard of. Until this moment, audiences generally accepted whatever fictional event happened in their medium of choice and moved on. When Holmes died, though, his fans took it personally, and their gatherings, protests and letter-writing campaigns were some of the earliest examples of what we now know and recognize as fandom.

Doyle was understandably shocked, but he stood his ground for nearly a decade. Finally, in 1902, after nine years of pressure from his publishers and the public, while remaining careful to let people know Holmes was still dead, Doyle published "The Hound of the Baskervilles" as a sort of prequel, with the events of the novel having occurred in the years prior to Holmes' death.

Doyle had known selling the story as a Holmes novel would guarantee its success, but it also ended up reminding him how much money was to be made off of Sherlock Holmes. One year later, after negotiating a fat paycheck to bring his character back for real this time, Doyle published "The Adventure of the Empty House," revealing that Holmes had faked his own death and was now back in London, ready to pick up again with Dr. Watson (whose wife had conveniently died while Holmes was away). Once again ensconced in their lodgings at Baker Street, Holmes and Watson continued to consult and detect and bring order to London and beyond until the last Sherlock Holmes case penned by Doyle, "His Last Bow," was published in 1917, featuring a retired Holmes on an undercover spy mission against the Germans.

SHERLOCK TAKES THE STAGE — AND ADOPTS THAT CAP AND PIPE

Happening in parallel to the Holmes stories Doyle was publishing were the first Sherlock Holmes stage productions, which started around 1893.

One actor in particular had a huge influence on the character and his future portrayals, and introduced many of the Holmes tropes we have all come to recognize. American actor William Gillette's career as a star of the stage was already well established, but it was his portrayal of Sherlock Holmes for which he is the most well-known.

Doyle never mentioned a deerstalker cap in the stories, for example, but Holmes was depicted wearing one in an early Sidney Paget illustration. The deerstalker was a flat cloth cap worn during country expeditions, which made it appropriate for the rural setting of the case Holmes was on in the story the illustration accompanied. Once it became part of William Gillette's regular onstage costume, though, the deerstalker was always seen atop Holmes' head whether he was in the country or in town.

And while Holmes enjoyed tobacco in many different forms, he never smoked from a curved calabash pipe. The calabash is now synonymous with Sherlock Holmes thanks to Gillette, who found it easier to speak his lines with a curved pipe rather than a straight stem.

You can watch William Gillette as Holmes in a film version of his stage play below. The film was recorded in 1916, but he dubbed his voice 20 years later, when Gillette was 83.

But why change Doyle's written word? Holmes spent most of his time in the stories rather unremarkably dressed: either in suits or, when circumstances required him to go undercover, in an appropriate disguise.

The fashions he is most commonly known for today were either setting-specific, like the deerstalker and Inverness cape, or related to the time of day or night, like the dressing gowns.

But when you're taking a character from the page to a stage, it's natural to empasize the more visually interesting components of the source material. A brilliant consulting detective in a suit is all very well and good, but a brilliant consulting detective in a suit with a gorgeous, silky, quilted, purple dressing gown on top of it? Now we're talking! Give him a few additional props like a magnifying glass and a violin and a hypodermic syringe and you've got the makings of an instantly recognizable character based on the accoutrement alone.

Gillette first brought Holmes to the stage in 1899 with a play creatively titled "Sherlock Holmes" that he'd co-written with Doyle, who once again was in need of money. It was a rehash of the plot points of several previous stories, with original characters and content provided by Gillette. He introduced a love interest for Holmes named Alice Faulkner, and gave the unnamed pageboy previously mentioned in a story a name (Billy) and a larger role. In a nice bit of reciprocity, Doyle stuck with the name Billy when the page boy appeared in subsequent stories.

[Photo by Sarony, New York.

MR. WILLIAM GILLETTE AS SHERLOCK HOLMES

IN DR. CONAN DOYLE'S POPULAR DRAMA OF THAT NAME, DUE AT THE LYCEUM THEATRE ON SEPT. 9.

"Why do you villains always choose underground dens for rendezvous?"

DOYLE IGNORES SHERLOCK HOLMES FOR FAIRIES

The distaste Doyle had for Holmes was always an interesting dynamic. On the one hand, his detective allowed him to live a very comfortable life, free to pursue his highly varied passions. But his lack of appreciation for his own characters in favor of what he felt were more serious efforts were probably his biggest blind spot. Holmes the logician certainly represented some aspects of Doyle's own character, but there was one area in particular where the divide between man and creation could not have been greater: Sherlock Holmes outright dismissed the possibility of the supernatural, while Doyle was a devout spiritualist.

His interest in the supernatural started early, as he was already giving spiritualist lectures by 1917. But his obsession started to grow after a number of family tragedies. His son Kingsley died in 1918, his younger brother Innes a year later in 1919, followed by his mother in 1920 and two sisters in 1924 and 1927. Doyle not only hoped to communicate with his dead loved ones, he also wanted to prove to the world that there was more to it than what the eye could see.

"This agency stands flat-footed upon the ground, and there it must remain," Holmes said in 'The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire.' "The world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply."

His spiritually minded creator, on the other hand, was taken in by fake photographs of fairies in a garden. In 1922, he even wrote an earnest book about the supposed proof of the supernatural, "The Coming of the Fairies." The elfin creatures, however, were simply cutouts from children's magazines. The creator of literature's greatest detective had been hoodwinked by bored girls — one of them only 9.

SHERLOCK HOLMES GOES TO THE MOVIES

The late 1800s saw the birth of film as a new medium, and it took little time for Sherlock Holmes to make his first motion picture appearance. The 1900 film "Sherlock Holmes Baffled," a 30-second drama, features a recognizable Holmes in a dressing gown and smoking a cigar, being robbed by a mysterious, disappearing burglar.

Several other motion pictures of varying quality were released in the 1900s. Would you be surprised to learn that the canon Sherlock Holmes never said, "Elementary, my dear Watson"? The credit for that quote goes to Clive Brook from an early talkie. But it wasn't until Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce made their debut in the 1939 adaptation of "The Hound of the Baskervilles" that film finally had its first iconic Holmes. And while Basil Rathbone gave us a highly respectable if campy Holmes, Nigel Bruce introduced the world to Dr Watson: Certified Clown.

The damage that Bruce's Watson did to the reputation of the poor doctor was both profound and long-lasting. As the portrayal seen in the most popular Holmes films of the day, Bruce became the definitive Watson to the generations that were introduced to the character for the first time through those films. For a long time after that, Watsons veered strongly toward dimwitted comic relief rather than capable sidekicks.

To followers of the literary Holmes, the idea that a man as intelligent and short-tempered as Holmes would willingly suffer the foolishness of a man as incompetent as Bruce's Watson is unimaginable. While Watson is no Holmes, the strengths he brought to their partnership were considerable: Watson's medical experience, military service, loyalty and bravery made him a welcome and necessary companion. He was also crucially a much better shot with a gun than Holmes, so he could be relied on for backup during their more dangerous outings.

The Nigel Bruce portrayal started an unfortunate trend that now seems to have run its course. More recent adaptations have restored Watson back to a place of respectability, with Martin Freeman, Jude Law and Lucy Liu all doing much to make amends.

SMALL-SCREEN SHERLOCK HOLMES

In the realm of serial television, the detective story makes for interesting, entertaining and predictable storytelling highly suitable for an hour-length program. A new mystery introduced once a week keeps the plot fresh, and the audience doesn't need to have watched every prior episode to come in and quickly understand what's going on and follow along. And every television detective still owes something to Holmes. Some are more obvious with their homage than others (House and Wilson from "House" being a prime example), but there are very recognizable Sherlockian traits to be seen in characters as varied as Adrian Monk, Gil Grissom and John Luther, to name just a few.

BBC/Warner Bros./PBS

ARE SHERLOCK HOLMES REAL DETECTIVE STORIES?

So why has Holmes endured? It's been argued that the original tales aren't even real detective stories, since they fail to give the reader the information required to solve them independently. Later detective stories, like those featuring Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, have delved much deeper into the clues, details and complex plots surrounding their respective mysteries than the Sherlock Holmes canon ever did.

Perhaps it's more accurate to think of Doyle's work as adventures rather than whodunits. The Sherlock Holmes canon is more about the friendship between Holmes and Watson, an ongoing character study of the two men and the incredible circumstances they find themselves in. The stories lend themselves to endless re-reading despite you knowing how the mysteries unravel, and they delight the reader not with the thrill of how it ends but the journey along the way. Doyle may have grown to hate the character, but there are frequent moments of artistry and delight to be found within these pages. There is also something very comforting in knowing that no matter how tangled your problem might be or how dark the current situation might seem, there is a man out there with the singular power to shed light where it's most needed and restore order from chaos ("Sherlock Holmes Baffled" notwithstanding).

MODERN SHERLOCK HOLMES FANDOM

Holmes fans haven't gone away, either, if anything they're more fanatical than they were since the early days of organized harassment of Doyle. Arguably one of the best-known fan societies is the Baker Street Irregulars, founded in 1934, which is still going strong with regular meetings, publications and events. New societies and more informal groups continue to form regularly, whether in person or online, and every depiction of Holmes and Watson builds a brand-new on-ramp for a nascent fan to fall in love with the characters and seek out like-minded enthusiasts.

The characters have also proven themselves to be extremely adaptable, and because of this Holmes is the most portrayed fictional character of all time. The mention of Sherlock Holmes initially conjures up images of gaslight and hansom cabs, but the adventures themselves took place over a long period of time when the world was rapidly changing. Telephones, gramophones, submarines and automobiles all made their appearance while Holmes was still active, and he was able to seamlessly incorporate the possibilities of every new technology into his own skill set. A modern-day Sherlock Holmes would know his way around the internet and a smartphone just as well as the original would have made use of his magnifying glass, and as we have all seen firsthand, just because information is accessible doesn't mean you don't need a sharp mind to sift through that all that data and draw the correct conclusions from it.

Holmes has always been a man that is in touch with the times, and as criminals evolve, he's still going to be hot on their trails.

World record for most people dressed as Sherlock Holmes attempted

Selections from
"THE WOMAN" AND THE WOMEN OF SHERLOCK HOLMES
by Cassanra Poole

"To Sherlock Holmes she is always the woman. I have seldom heard him mention her by any other name. In his eyes, she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex." It is impossible for anyone acquainted with the Sherlock Holmes universe not to know to whom this description refers. She is Irene Adler, the only woman to ever beat Sherlock Holmes. But Irene is not the only woman in the canon. Women appear in nearly every Sherlock Holmes novel and short story. Some are Holmes' clients, and others are wives, brides-to-be, or maids, but the vast majority are victims. Much of the oppression of women and women's sexuality in the Sherlock Holmes stories has to do with the way sexuality was treated during the era in which Arthur Conan Doyle was writing. Still, a few women in the canon do stand to overthrow Victorian stereotypes, none so much as Irene Adler. As a result, Irene has become a staple of the Sherlockian universe, appearing in innumerable essays, pastiches, and parodies, as well as stage, television and film adaptations. To understand Irene Adler's enduring popularity, it is necessary to look at Victorian attitudes toward women and sexuality, and at some of the women in the canon who conform to those attitudes, as well as two besides Irene who do not.

Arthur Conan Doyle introduced Sherlock Holmes to the world in 1887. Modern portrayals of the Victorian era paint a picture of prudish, straightlaced people who feared the very idea of sex. In actuality, sex and sexuality were as present then as they are now. As Christopher Redmond notes in *In Bed with Sherlock Holmes*, "The letters and diaries of many proper Victorians," including "Queen Victoria herself," make it clear that these people certainly felt the same passions we do today. But Victorians took a very different approach to sexuality. For them, a person's sexuality was to be expressed "chiefly in private, loving marriages, or else in certain other socially tolerated contexts, as gentlemen did with London's thousands of prostitutes," observes Redmond. Indeed, the middle years of the Victorian era, when Holmes and Doyle were growing up, were a time when "prostitution was widespread and flagrant; when many London streets were like Oriental bazaars of flesh; when the luxurious West End night houses dispensed love and liquor until dawn." Sexuality was just as present, but had to be pursued in a society that "maintained a strong segregation of the sexes."

Men and women had their own social spheres that were rarely breached by members of the opposite sex. This separation was due partly to the limited knowledge about what actually differentiated the sexes. Until the early 1900s, very little was known about the exact nature of sexuality, sexual characteristics, and hormones. Theorists therefore treated the genders almost as two separate species, each with their own inherent, unique attributes.5 As Elizabeth Lee notes in "Victorian Theories of Sex and Sexuality," men were seen as the "active agents, who expended energy while women were sedentary, storing and conserving energy." In the sexual process, men were involved only in the fertilization stage, while women had to be concerned with "pregnancy, menstruation (considered a time of illness, debilitation, and temporary insanity) and childrearing." Women therefore had no energy to expend in other areas of life like men did. These reproductive differences led to Victorian beliefs in mental and emotional differences between the genders. Women were thought to be less intelligent and more emotional than men. They were thought to belong in the home, tending house and raising children, while the men were free to function in outside society. Women were seen as the weaker, gentler sex; they were innocent creatures with little sexual appetite, while men were seen as sinful and lustful.

Toward the end of the Victorian period when Doyle began writing his Holmes stories, attitudes towards men and women's sexuality had started to change. Women were increasingly viewed as the sinful creatures, while men could not really be blamed. Increasingly, women were portrayed as "either frigid or else insatiable. A young lady was only worth as much as her chastity and appearance of complete innocence, for women were time bombs just waiting to be set off." This perception that women are both innocent, naïve creatures and secretly lustful time bombs plays itself out in many of the Holmes stories. Women are frequently victims of controlling fathers or deceptive lovers, usually motivated by monetary gains, or of blackmail, usually by way of an "imprudent letter" written to a lover. In fact, twenty of the sixty stories revolve around a love affair, and fifteen of the sixty contain explicit or implied adultery.

Women's roles in society changed even more during the forty-year period that Doyle published the Holmes stories, and "'[A new type of women] to whom competent work had given self-confidence and strength' could no longer be ignored." American author Henry James popularized the term "New Woman" to describe the increase in independent, career-minded women toward the end of the nineteenth century. The tensions and anxieties this shift in societal norms caused among the people of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is readily apparent in the Holmes canon. As Rosemary Jan points out in "Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body," many of Doyle's stories have more to do with "challenges to the social and sexual conventions that insured order in his world" than they do with challenges to official law and order.By upholding Victorian gender conventions in his stories, Doyle gives his readers "an antidote for the threatening sexuality of the New Woman"; in its place, he offers "the reassuring spectacle of woman's predicable unpredictability controlled by chivalric conventions, either composed from without for their own good or internalized by the women themselves."

Deducing the Plot

In one of the first short stories to display the characteristic oppression of women and women's sexuality, "A Case of Identity," published in 1891, Miss Mary Sutherland comes to Sherlock Holmes for help in finding her lost fiancé, Hosmer Angel. Mary is a typist with a small inheritance that she hands over every quarter to her mother and stepfather. Her stepfather has refused Mary suitors before, often saying that "a woman should be happy in her own family

circle."Mary met Hosmer Angel at a gasfitter's ball, became engaged to him almost immediately, and saw him in secret when her stepfather was out of town on business. On the day they were to be married, Hosmer Angel disappeared.

After investigating, Holmes realizes that Hosmer Angel was in fact Mary's stepfather, James Windibank. Windibank forbade Mary from seeing suitors to prevent her from marrying and taking her inheritance with her. When he recognized that his stepdaughter would not remain obedient forever, he began dressing up as Hosmer Angel to keep other lovers away. He became engaged to Mary, secured her heart to the fiction of Hosmer Angel, and then ran out on their supposed wedding day, confident that she would wait for her beloved to return.

Mary Sutherland's story perfectly exemplifies the oppression of women as well as the struggle for equality which would culminate in the era of Henry James' "New Woman." It is clear from the story that women in the time of the Holmes canon were generally not allowed to make their own choices; it was the place of a man—her husband or her father—to do it for her. This is evident in Mary's stepfather's willingness to go to such lengths to prevent her marriage. If she marries, Mary's husband will control her assets.16 Were Mary able to continue giving her money to her family after her marriage, there would be no need for such a sham. But because her husband will control her inheritance, it is necessary for her stepfather to prevent her marriage.

Mary is a typically obedient Victorian girl: she does not question the inferiority of her position in society, and she obeys her stepfather without question for most of her life. In an interesting irony, her one disobedient, purely independent action—going to the ball—only serves to further chain her down. Through her mother and stepfather's wicked plot, Mary is forced back into the role of compliant daughter, prevented from evolving into the independent woman she could have become, free of her family's machinations.

A similar situation occurs in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band," published in 1892. Helen Stoner comes to Holmes against the wishes of her terribly unpleasant stepfather, Grimesby Roylott, with concerns about death of her sister Julia, who was engaged to be married before her untimely demise. Now, two years later, Helen is also engaged to be married and has begun hearing the same noises that Julia heard before her death. Holmes eventually surmises that Roylott murdered Julia Stoner to prevent her marriage, upon which he would lose control of Julia's late mother's inheritance. Now that Helen is set to be married, he is attempting to murder her in the same way he killed Julia, using a poisonous speckled snake.

Again, similar circumstances repeat themselves in Doyle's 1892 "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches," in which Alice Rucastle is held prisoner by her father, Jephro Rucastle, to prevent her from marrying a man she met at a party. According to a maid in the story, "Miss Alice had rights of her own by will, but she was so quiet and patient that she never said a word about them, but just left everything in Mr. Rucastle's hands."17 Alice's husband would not be so patient, and so Mr. Rucastle tried to get his daughter to sign over those rights and imprisoned her when she would not.

The Case of the Vanishing Sexuality

The repression of women and women's sexuality in the Holmes canon does not always work through this same formulaic plot. Published in 1904, and set in 1899, "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton" is an often-cited example of the oppression of female sexuality in the canon, played out through the narratives of three women. Charles Augustus Milverton, described by Holmes as "the worst man in London," is a blackmailer extraordinaire who possesses countless letters which "compromise people of wealth and position," including Holmes' client, Lady Eva Blackwell.

Today, such letters might cause a small scandal or a bit of embarrassment, but in conservative Victorian times, they could bring about Armageddon if made public. Indeed, one of Milverton's other victims has been utterly ruined by the exposure of her letters; her husband "broke his gallant heart and died." Milverton's leverage over these women stems from the very moral nature of Victorian times, when sexuality was to be enjoyed in private, but never discussed or written about publicly. The letters these women wrote to their lovers would ruin their reputations, and nothing was as important to a proper Victorian woman as her good reputation. At the end of the story, after Milverton has been murdered by the ruined woman, Holmes and Watson burn all of the letters Milverton possessed, thereby erasing all traces of the women's sexuality.

The third woman in the story is a maid to whom Holmes becomes engaged under a false identity to acquire information. When Watson questions the morality of this duplicity, Holmes remarks, "You can't help it, my dear Watson. You must play your cards as best you can when such a stake is on the table."21 Catherine Belsey remarks on how "the sexuality of these three shadowy women motivates the narrative and yet is barely present in it."22 Lady Eva never appears in person; the aggrieved widow is never named; the housemaid, whose situation with Holmes parallels that of Miss Mary Sutherland and her fake fiancé in "A Case of Identity," is mentioned only once and then never appears again. As Belsey observes, "the presentation of so many women in the Sherlock Holmes stories as shadowy, mysterious and magical figures" is particularly interesting because it "precisely contradicts" the intended realism of the stories and Holmes' often-repeated pleas for scientific explicitness.

Meet the Woman

Irene appears in the first Sherlock Holmes short story, "A Scandal in Bohemia," published in 1891. Watson begins the narrative by saying,

"To Sherlock Holmes she is always the woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes, she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex…. [T]here was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory."

Even before Doyle tells anything of the actual story, he makes sure readers know that Irene Adler is the woman, the one woman who has earned Holmes' utmost respect. Instantly, Doyle's readers begin to wonder about what makes this mysterious woman so very important.

Irene Adler is a New Jersey-born actress and opera singer, the former prima donna of the Imperial Opera in Warsaw. In her youth, she had a love affair with the Crown Prince of Bohemia, now the King. She possesses a photo of him and herself which could ruin his impending marriage with a Scandinavian princess. The King is certain that Irene will go through with her threat to send the photo to the royal family: "I know that she will do it…. [S]he has a soul of steel. She has the face of the most beautiful of women, and the mind of the most resolute of men," he says. He has come to Holmes to get the photo back, because though he has had Irene's house robbed, ransacked her luggage, and even personally accosted her twice in attempts to recover it, Irene is too clever to be so easily overcome.

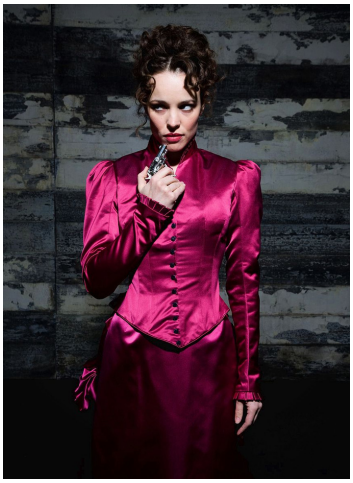
Holmes disguises himself and goes to Irene's home, hoping to learn more about her. He discovers that "she is the daintiest thing under a bonnet on this planet," according to the men on her street. That evening, Holmes manages to gain entrance.

Watson, per Holmes' plan, shouts fire in the street and tosses a smoke rocket into the house, tricking Irene into revealing the location of the photo. According to Holmes, "when a woman thinks her house is on fire, her instinct is at once to rush to the thing which she values most". For Irene, this is the photograph. It seems as though Holmes has won. Holmes and Watson leave and return to Baker Street. As they are entering, a "slim youth" hurries past them down the street, saying, "Good-night, Mister Sherlock Holmes"

When Holmes and Watson return to Irene's home the next day to retrieve the photograph, they find that Irene has outwitted them. She saw through Holmes' disguise, disguised herself as a man,31 and followed him back to Baker Street, impulsively telling him goodnight before fleeing with her new husband and the photograph. All she leaves behind is a cheeky letter for Holmes, a new photograph of herself for the King—which Holmes requests as payment for services rendered, futile as they ultimately were—and an assurance that she will not use the photograph against the King, but keeps it as insurance.

The great Sherlockian myth of Irene Adler is that she is the only woman to ever beat Sherlock Holmes. She outwitted him, foiled his attempts to recover the photograph, and escaped with her new husband, leaving naught but a picture of herself behind for Holmes to brood over. She is an intelligent, capable, spirited woman, a grand adventuress. What's more, she is an honorable woman, as even the King himself is forced to admit: "I know that her word is inviolate. The photograph is now as safe as if it were in the fire." Irene Adler is truly unique in the canon. Although she precedes them both, one can note aspects of both Violet Hunter and Kitty Winter in Irene's character. She is almost a mashup of the two women, smart and confident like Violet, strong and fierce like Kitty. But unlike either woman, Irene Adler has one very unique trait: her overwhelming presence in the extended Holmes universe. Irene has captured the imaginations of Sherlockians since the day she first graced the canon in 1891. In addition to her appearances over the years in numerous pastiches and parodies, she has featured prominently in stage, television, and film adaptations, and even stars in her own book series.

The Extra-Canonical Irene



Rachel McAdams as Irene Adler

The Sherlockian myth of Irene Adler is rarely upheld in the extra-canonical universe. Recent television and film adaptations of Irene in particular are guilty of the crime of not living up to her grand myth; one might even go so far as to say they intentionally demean her character, a fact which frustrates the many Sherlockians who love and admire her. One internet critic notes, "It is repeatedly disappointing that I have yet to see a film or television adaptation of Irene Adler that exhibits her full agency, her intelligence, her refusal to play by strict gender roles, and of course, her fierce independence." Irene's most recent appearance on the big screen is in Guy Ritchie's 2009 and 2011 Sherlock Holmes films, where she is played by actress Rachel McAdams. Early in the first film, Irene arrives in Holmes' rooms at Baker Street while he is sleeping; upon realizing she is there, Holmes' initial thought is to check his wall safe for tampering, and to check his tea for poison. He clearly doesn't trust her.35 They are portrayed as having a history. Watson refers to her having beaten Holmes in the past, perhaps recalling the events of "A Scandal in Bohemia,"

after which Holmes kept track of her movements. He has a file with her name on it, the contents of which Irene reads aloud while Holmes checks the safe: "Theft of Velazquez portrait from King of Spain…missing naval documents lead to resignation of Bulgarian prime minister… scandalous affair ends engagement of Hapsburg prince to Romanov princess."

Although there is little evidence of Irene being a criminal in the canon beyond her attempted blackmail of the King of Bohemia, she is often portrayed as such in extra-canonical material. The first film has her working with Holmes' archenemy, Professor James Moriarty, attempting to use Holmes' feelings for her (which canonically, are little more than fervent respect and wariness, and explicitly stated not to be love37) to get Holmes to unknowingly do Moriarty's bidding. Though she does manage to momentarily outwit Holmes and acquire the item she was attempting to steal for Moriarty, she is tricked by the Professor in the end and used as a scapegoat while he escapes with the device he actually wanted. In the sequel film, Moriarty kills Irene because her feelings for Holmes have compromised her, and she is no longer useful to him.

In some ways, Irene's portrayal here lives up to the Sherlockian myth. She is intelligent, resourceful, and clever: she manages to follow Holmes without being seen; she disables the cyanide machine; she tricks Holmes into ingesting poisoned wine. She is an adventuress: she has traveled around the world and mentions having been in Syria. She is said to have beat Sherlock Holmes at some point in the past. However, she does have her shortcomings. She is not an independent woman; instead, she works for Moriarty. She has fallen in love with Sherlock Holmes—where in the canon, she certainly does not—and those feelings eventually get her killed. She falls victim to the "damsel in distress" stereotype when she is nearly killed in a slaughter house and has to be rescued by Holmes and Watson. She is just not quite the Irene Adler of Sherlockian myth.

There are still-worse portrayals of Irene, perhaps most notably the BBC Sherlock episode titled "A Scandal in Belgravia." In this modern-day recreation of Sherlock Holmes, Irene Adler is no longer a foreign adventuress, but instead a London dominatrix who possesses incriminating photos of the royal family. Sherlock is tasked with getting the photos back. Upon his first meeting with Miss Adler, she greets him completely naked, in what she calls her "battle suit." On one hand, this tactic prevents Holmes from reading any information about her from her clothing, so it is almost clever. On the other hand, it is overly sexualized and rather distasteful. Taking an intelligent, cunning woman—arguably the most important female character in the Sherlock Holmes canon—and turning her into a dominatrix, someone who uses her body instead of her mind to get her way, is bad enough without the nudity. However, the dominatrix angle could nearly be forgiven if it was just another tool a smart woman uses to get the information she wanted. But Irene is not portrayed as intelligent here; she is not even smart enough to know what to do with the information she has gathered until Moriarty hires her to use it to blackmail Holmes and his brother Mycroft.40 Perhaps that too could be forgiven if she had actually succeeded. But she does not. The only woman to ever beat Sherlock Holmes does not actually manage to beat him in this adaptation.

She comes so very close. She has all her blackmail information stored on her cell phone, which is locked with a passcode Sherlock could not break even with several months to try. She has a list of demands for Mycroft to fulfill in exchange for her not using the information to destroy Britain. She is literally seconds away from victory when Sherlock reveals that he actually knows the passcode. He punches in the code and turns her phone to face the audience. It says "I am SHER-locked."

By making her password a silly pun on Sherlock's name, which she did because she has fallen in love with him, she ensures her own defeat. Any other password in the world and she would have won. But her feelings got the better of her intelligence, and so the woman who beat Sherlock Holmes in 1891 fails to beat Sherlock Holmes in 2012. To really solidify that this is not the Irene Adler that Sherlockians know and love, the episode ends with Sherlock rescuing Irene from execution by a terrorist cell, like a white knight saving the damsel in distress from a fire-breathing dragon.

Even Sherlockians who bemoan the desecration of Irene Adler in film and television adaptations are guilty of excesses in authoring fan works which bend her character. There is an overwhelming tendency to "ship" Irene with Sherlock, i.e. to write fan works in which Irene and Sherlock are involved in a romantic relationship, which presents an interesting question.

Why do fans who admire Irene for her independence also desire to see her in a romantic relationship with Sherlock Holmes? This discrepancy perhaps has to do with the nature of fans. As Henry Jenkins writes,

"Unimpressed by institutional authority and expertise, fans assert their own right to form interpretations, to offer evaluations, and to construct cultural canons. Undaunted by traditional conceptions of literary and intellectual property, fans raid mass culture, claiming its materials for their own use, reworking them as the basis for their own cultural creations and social interactions."

Television fans are notorious for writing fanfiction to correct the story whenever a show does something they do not like, but literary fans do it too. When Sherlockians read "A Scandal in Bohemia," they see a powerful, beautiful woman; they hear Watson saying that she is the woman to Sherlock, the only woman; they see her beating Holmes at his own game, and think, "We have to see more of her!"

Love is a natural human need; everyone wants to be loved, so it only makes sense that fans look for it in what they read and watch. That is why every hero has to have a love interest; even Sherlock Holmes. And Irene is the best character in the canon for that role. She is the only woman to catch the interest of the ever-aloof Holmes. She fascinates him; she proves to him that women can be intelligent, can be more than a match for him.42 Perhaps the fact that the very fans who admire Irene for her independence and strength also desire to see her in a romantic relationship with Sherlock Holmes is not a conundrum at all. Perhaps it is a testament to the remarkable nature of her character, an ode to her status as the only woman to prove herself Holmes' equal, and therefore, the only woman worthy of his romantic attentions.

HOW SHERLOCK HOLMES CHANGED THE WORLD

By Jennifer Keishin Armstrong

Modern fandom wouldn't exist without Conan Doyle's famous creation, writes Jennifer Keishin Armstrong.

In 1893, author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle shoved detective Sherlock Holmes off a cliff. The cliff was fictionally located in Switzerland, over the Reichenbach Falls. But Conan Doyle did the dirty work from his home in London where he wrote. "It is with a heavy heart that I take up my pen to write these the last words in which I shall ever record the singular gifts by which my friend Mr Sherlock Holmes was distinguished," narrator Dr John Watson says in Conan Doyle's story The Final Problem, which appeared in The Strand magazine in December 1893. Conan Doyle himself seemed a little less emotional in private. "Killed Holmes," he wrote in his diary. One can imagine Conan Doyle, slicked-back hair shimmering in the candlelight, twirling his ample mustache with glee. He later said of his famous character: "I have had such an overdose of him that I feel towards him as I do towards paté de foie gras, of which I once ate too much, so that the name of it gives me a sickly feeling to this day."

Conan Doyle may have thought, at the time of finishing Holmes off in print, that that was that. If he did think this, he did not understand fans – particularly fans of Holmes – very well. The public reaction to the death was unlike anything previously seen for fictional events. More than 20,000 Strand readers cancelled their subscriptions, outraged by Holmes' premature demise. The magazine barely survived. Its staff referred to Holmes' death as "the dreadful event".

Legend has it that young men throughout London wore black mourning crêpes on their hats or around their arms for the month of Holmes' death, though that has recently been questioned. (Some Holmes aficionados have suggested the story could have been an exaggeration perpetuated by Conan Doyle's son in interviews.) Outraged readers wrote to the magazine in protest: "You brute!" one letter addressed to Conan Doyle began. Americans started "Let's Keep Holmes Alive" clubs. Conan Doyle stuck to his guns in the face of the protests, calling the death "justifiable homicide" – referring, presumably, to his own justifications, not Moriarty's.

This sounds, of course, like just another day on the internet in 2015. But at the time, Conan Doyle had every reason to be shocked by the torrent of vitriol. Fans simply did not do this before then. (In fact, they weren't even called "fans" yet. The term, short for "fanatic", had only recently begun use in reference to American baseball enthusiasts.) Readers typically accepted what went on in their favourite books, then moved on. Now they were beginning to take their popular culture personally, and to expect their favourite works to conform to certain expectations. They seemed to actually expect a reciprocal relationship with the works they loved.

Fan frenzy

Sherlock Holmes' avid readers helped to create the very modern practice of fandom. Interestingly enough, Holmes' intense following continues to this day, spawning endless reimaginings, such as the US crime-solving series Elementary and the BBC's Sherlock, which returned with a highly-anticipated special on New Year's Day, its modern-day Sherlock and Watson returning to Victorian times.

Holmes first appeared in 1887, in the novelette A Study in Scarlet. He was popular from the start – so popular that soon Conan Doyle began to regret having created him, since Holmes stories so completely overshadowed what Conan Doyle considered his serious work, such as his historical novel Micah Clarke. Readers lined up at newsstands for The Strand on publication day whenever a new Holmes story was to appear inside. Because of Holmes, Conan Doyle was, one historian wrote, "as well-known as Queen Victoria".

Holmes fans were truly the emerging middle-class, the exact sort of group whose tastes would be denigrated by snooty critics as populist for more than a century to come. They were the ones priced out of concerts, the ones who had to wait for the cheaper versions of popular novels. Historian David Payne describes them as "largely the lower-middle and middle-middle classes of the cities, the non-intellectual, non-public school, hardworking, rising… people – the first true mass moderns." The Strand targeted them with what we'd now recognise as exciting, high-concept genre stories – mysteries and science fiction – from writers such as HG Wells and Jules Verne.

The demand for Holmes stories seemed endless. The Strand would pay Conan Doyle nicely for whatever he could give them. But he hadn't meant to spend the rest of his life inventing and solving fictional crimes. He'd meant to make some money to support his real art, novels full of what he felt were important ideas and political statements.

By 1893, when Conan Doyle was 34, he'd had enough. He wanted to be Sir Walter Scott. So he had the evil Professor Moriarty push Holmes down the falls. It took eight years, but by 1901, however, public pressure grew so great that Conan Doyle wrote a new story, The Hound of the Baskervilles, featuring Holmes before his fall. In 1903, in The Adventure of the Empty House, he went one step further, resurrecting Holmes with the explanation that only Moriarty had died in the fall, while Holmes had faked his own death. Fans rejoiced.

Life after death

Holmes fans have only grown more obsessive since then. The only difference is that now we're used to super-fandom. Even so, the BBC series Sherlock, in particular, has stoked the most passionate strand of Holmes fandom in some time. Fans of the show, which stars Benedict Cumberbatch as a modern-day Holmes, frequent the London sandwich shop favoured by Sherlock and his Watson (Martin Freeman), Speedy's Café. They crowd the streets when the crew films on location, to such a point that it has caused production problems. (Nearly a thousand once showed up at the Baker Street location, which is Gower Street in real life.)

In China, fans have popularised elaborate fan fiction positing this particular Sherlock (whom they call "Curly Fu") and Watson as a gay couple. Japanese fans pore over Sherlock manga. Korean pop group SHINee recorded a tribute song. Cumberbatch fans have their own squad name: 'Cumberbitches', known for their Beatles-level reactions to the dreamy star.

As a TV show, Sherlock has maintained a complicated relationship with its fans. Sometimes the producers throw in a scene to wink at fans – or in the first episode of series three, an entire episode built out of fan theories about how **Sherlock faked his own death**, also a callout to The Adventure of the Empty House. But the show's co-creator, Steven Moffat, has often been **dismissive of fans**, while Cumberbatch uncomfortably wrote off Sherlock fan fiction as absurd. Never mind that the show itself could be considered 'fan fiction' based on Conan Doyle's Victorian-age work.

Of course, Sherlock's ability to cause such intense emotion among its fans is only an indication of how much they love it.

What's remarkable is that Sherlock Holmes fans have been engaging in such histrionics over the fictional detective for more than 120 years, through many, many adaptations.

Sherlock co-creator Mark Gatiss, who also plays the detective's brother Mycroft, has credited Conan Doyle for creating characters that transcend time: "I think more than anything, what people have responded to is the fun of the show, which is so much what Doyle's stories were actually like," he **told Al Jazeera America**. "Over years and years of accumulating various versions and Victoriana, people had slightly lost sight of the fact that they're enormous fun! They're quick reads, they're jolly thrilling, blood-curdling thrilling adventures and really, that's what we wanted to do."

Gatiss has also pointed out that Holmes is one of the original fictional detectives – most other crime-solvers created thereafter were copies of him or a direct reaction to him: "Everything onwards is people drawing a line from Sherlock and Doctor Watson. Agatha Christie does it explicitly and makes Poirot short and round as opposed to tall and lean. He needs a Watson, so she creates Captain Hastings. Everywhere you go, this is the model. That's why it's imperishable I think."

J. ust look at the landscape of current TV heroes, many of which play on Holmes's brilliant-but-damaged formula. "Even outside the world of detection, I think Doyle began the idea that super-intelligence comes at the price of some kind of social dysfunction, something that we've grasped as a narrative possibility ever since," Moffat has said. "He's a genius, therefore he's a bit strange. I don't know how often that happens in real life, but it happens a lot in fiction."

In other words, pushing Sherlock Holmes off a cliff has no chance of killing him. He'll always come back, in this lifetime and the next. The fans will see to it.

The Hound of the Baskervilles Playhouse on Park, 2013

GLOSSARY

**Definition from Meriam Webster*

Iconoclast - a person who attacks settled beliefs or institutions*

Consortium -an agreement, combination, or group (as of companies) formed to undertake an enterprise beyond the resources of any one member*

Confician - of or relating to the Chinese philosopher Confucius or his teachings or followers*

Wunderkind - one who succeeds in a competitive or highly difficult field or profession at an early age*

Lucre- monetary gain*

People and Pop Culture

Laverne & Shirley- A 1970s sitcom about two women living together in California.

Emma Goldman- A born propagandist and organizer, Emma Goldman championed women's equality, free love, workers' rights, free universal education regardless of race or gender, and anarchism. For more than thirty years, she defined the limits of dissent and free speech in Progressive Era America. - *(from PBS.com)*

Chairman Mao- A principal Chinese Marxist theorist, soldier, and statesman who led his country's communist revolution (from Britanicca.com)

Mrs. Warren's Profession- A play by George Bernard Shaw that discusses prostitution from a moral and ecominic standpoint.

Eat. Pray. Love- A memoir by Elizabeth Gilbert that chronicles her journey of escaping the American dream she thought she wanted and finding her own happiness through traveling and learning about herself.

Alexander the Great- Former King of Macedonia

Angela's Ashes- A memoir by Frank McCourt. Born in Depression-era Brooklyn to recent Irish immigrants and raised in the slums of Limerick, Ireland (from book description).

Sun Tzu- Chinese general and strategis

WATCHING/READING LIST

Things to read and watch if you love the world of Sherlock!

Movies/Shows

- *Enola Holmes (2020)*
- *The Great Mouse Detective(1986)*
- *Elementary (2012-2019)*
- *Sherlock (2010-2017)*
- *Murder Rooms: Mysteries of the Real Sherlock Holmes (2000)*
- *The Irregulars (2021)*
- *Young Sherlock Holmes (1985)*
- *How Sherlock Changed the World (2013)*

Books

- *Mycroft and Sherlock* by Kareen Abdul-Jabbar and Anna Waterhouse
- *The Sherlockian* by Graham Moore
- *A Study In Scarlet Women* by Sherry Thomas
- *Moriarty* by Anthony Horowitz
- *The Devil and Sherlock Holmes* by David Grann

Sherlock Hemlock, Sesame Street

Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock