

The Deductionist: Surveying the Character of Sherlock Holmes

As the introduction has demonstrated, Holmes' status as half-fictional creation, half-historical figure has been continually toyed with as he has been woven into historical and media developments. Even so, the question, 'Who is Sherlock Holmes?' is by no means an easy one to answer. Indeed, where a character or story's appeal is commonly described as 'timeless', academics become intrigued about how that perception of timelessness came about; all 'timeless' ideas have a history. Perhaps a better way of thinking about the pattern of modernising Sherlock Holmes, over the last century and beyond, is to propose that he is not timeless, but rather consistently renegotiated in order to appear timely.

This chapter is a survey of how the Sherlock Holmes character has been analysed and discussed in the light of the screen adaptations of the twenty-first century, and it's an attempt to introduce the history of stage Sherlocks into these discussions. As I'll show, many of the games played with Sherlock Holmes, his history and fictional status, had been already

'The Deductionist' was the title of an episode of *Elementary* in which an FBI profiler, Kathryn Drummond, writes a thinly veiled depiction of Holmes in a published article of that title (see Matthew J. Elliott, *The Immortals: An Unauthorised Guide to Sherlock and Elementary* (London: MX Publishing), 152). Even in the fictional media of *Elementary* and *Sherlock*, the media are shown to be simplifying and vulgarising Holmes' work. As a title, I thought 'The Deductionist' might work better than the tabloid name for Sherlock in *Sherlock*, 'Hat Detective'.

rendered into a performance medium before *Sherlock*, *Elementary* and the Ritchie films. Following the line of argument set out in Chap. 1, this chapter contends that in the case of the Holmes and Watson stories—unlike most screen and stage adaptations of nineteenth-century fiction—the main adapted element is the lead characters, rather than (and indeed detached from) the narrative. This has many implications for how they work as adaptations, as Chap. 3 will explore further.

The present chapter focuses on two possible explanations of Sherlock Holmes' contemporary appeal. The first is that there are aspects of the character that adapters and audiences have recognised as particularly resonant in the early twenty-first century; hence the seemingly insatiable appetite for new Holmes stories on page, screen and stage. The second possibility that I examine is a more McLuhanesque reading of the character's appeal: that it was Conan Doyle's successful exploitation of the magazine story format that created Sherlock Holmes' original popularity, and that his renewed popularity has much to do with the new serial storytelling possibilities offered by twenty-first century television and film franchises. Both of these interpretations, however, mean that new plays about Sherlock Holmes face particular challenges if they are to evoke the Victorian period powerfully for the present day, or if they are to take the character in new directions with only a couple of hours of stage time.

In surveying the ways that we think about Sherlock Holmes now, and acknowledging the many sources that cannot be included for reasons of space and focus, I can only echo Zach Dundas' defence that 'it may be physically impossible to undertake a truly complete study of Sherlock Holmes. There's just too much stuff. To survey Sherlockiana, at this late date, is like starting out over a wilderness—you finally have to pick a trail and start navigating'.¹

HOLMES THE BRAND

In thinking about the twenty-first century appeal of Holmes, a useful first step is to consider Sherlock Holmes as a brand, as Amanda J. Field has done, and to analyse the components of that brand: the 'essential characteristics' that have evolved over time, even if they are not authentic to Conan Doyle's original conception.² These components include the deerstalker cap,³ the Inverness cape, the pipe (sometimes straight, as in Paget's illustrations, sometimes a meerschaum or calabash), the magnifying glass, the violin, the dressing gown and the tendency to say,

‘elementary, my dear Watson’. As Field notes, in advertising, the components of the brand rarely appear all together, and often the deerstalker and magnifying glass on their own suffice.⁴

Moreover, as Thomas Leitch argues, Holmes draws his iconography not merely from his literary original but ‘from a mixture of visual texts’.⁵ So, for Leitch, adapting Sherlock Holmes is never a matter of communing with the source text in a one-on-one relationship; cultural history has made that impossible. Instead, adapting Holmes is an active process, a question of ‘the need to pick and choose which progenitor texts to follow, which to modify, and which to ignore’.⁶ Hence, a surprising part of Holmes’ continual fascination is that there is a recognisable Holmes at all, given how much his brand has varied. Now twenty-first century adaptations have gone further, drawing headlines and viewers because of their casting of actors who break with the iconography of Holmes as ‘tall and lean, with piercing eyes and a hawklike nose’—what ‘[e]veryone knows’ about him—⁷ such as the relatively compact and muscular Robert Downey Jr and the decidedly un-aquiline Benedict Cumberbatch.⁸ As Lyndsay Faye sees it, ‘no *one* element of the character can now be argued indispensable [...] No single *particular* flourish is cardinal [...] to the character as a whole’.⁹

In stage adaptations of recent years, these elements of the Holmes brand are so familiar that adaptors frequently make a comic feature of them, by ‘constructing’ Holmes’ image before our eyes. So, for example, Clive Francis’ adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (Nottingham Playhouse, 2004) begins with the story being narrated by four Watsons, before one of them is made into ‘Mr Sherlock (*Placing a deerstalker on his head.*) Holmes’.¹⁰ As the detective is then described, he is handed his dressing gown and takes his pipe.¹¹ In Simon Williams’ adaptation of the same novel, Holmes is converted, ‘in a miraculous moment of flurried activity [...] into the well-known silhouette of Sherlock Holmes with deer-stalker and pipe that we all know and revere’.¹² Once the image is completed, ‘the legend freezes and they all pay homage’.¹³ And in Ron Hutchinson’s *Curse of the Baskervilles*, Holmes notices the deerstalker on the head of Dr Mortimer, and Watson places it on Holmes’ head. The stage directions note: ‘Holmes turns, deerstalker on, holding magnifying glass in accidentally-achieved classic image’ as Watson considers a moment, decides, ‘No’, and hands the hat back to Mortimer.¹⁴ Such in-jokes with the audience predate, in some cases by decades,¹⁵ the BBC series *Sherlock*’s playful deployment of the deerstalker, with Benedict

Cumberbatch's character putting on a deerstalker in order to *hide* his face from press photographers, complaining, 'the last thing I need is a public image'.¹⁶

I cannot agree, then, with Zea Miller's claim that, in making Sherlock Holmes anew, adaptations 'cannot simultaneously embody "Sherlockness" while throwing it away'.¹⁷ While, to be sure, 'stock behaviours, stock appearances, and confirmation bias' are significant when an audience has been primed to expect a Sherlock Holmes adaptation or appropriation, I think audiences are able to critique how these are deployed.¹⁸ Their 'belief' in this particular Sherlock Holmes is conditional on how skilfully the adaptation handles the clichés and common elements.

AN EVERYMAN, JUST OUT OF REACH

If the physical attributes and accessories of Sherlock Holmes prove to be somewhat slippery, so are the characteristics that make him a hero. Field's research on the use of Holmes in advertising reveals 'a number of selling propositions which Holmes is being used to convey: principal among these are expertise, observation, common sense, the clever consumer [...] and elegance and distinction'.¹⁹ The advertising, therefore, attempts to flatter consumers into believing that if they choose that product, they are emulating Holmes' cleverness.²⁰ As with all advertising, we might observe: if only life were so simple. Holmes' brilliance, and the confident, decisive actions that he takes as a result, are tantalisingly beyond our reach.

Edgar W. Smith wrote, back in 1946, that part of Holmes' appeal is that he is a wish-fulfilment figure: 'We see him as the fine expression of our urge to trample evil and to set aright the wrongs with which the world is plagued. He is Galahad and Socrates, bringing high adventure to our dull existences and calm, judicial logic to our biased minds'.²¹ As Kyrie Culp comments, passages like this in Smith's appreciation reflect how 'people want to believe that if they work hard enough, they can be like him'.²² Thus, there's a tendency at times—arguably, particularly in this individualised, neo-liberal labour landscape of the twenty-first century—for readers or viewers to project their own productivity fantasies onto him. If, like Holmes, we could only find our vocation,²³ then we too would have written dozens of monographs and be an expert in many esoteric yet highly useful subjects. As Steven Moffat says of the BBC Sherlock, 'He wasn't born with superdetective powers. He learned it'.²⁴ Yet such a reading requires

us to conveniently ignore Holmes' 'malingering', his bouts of unproductive ennui, his indolence: as Alec Charles suggests, it is 'his laziness, coupled with his innate restlessness, which makes his genius possible'.²⁵

In 'The Implicit Holmes', Smith goes on to picture 'we ourselves', the reader, comfortable in Baker Street with Watson, in effect inhabiting Holmes' body.²⁶ Smith's quasi-mystical communion with the sage of Baker Street suggests an element of spirit possession, and there is no shortage of religious parallels to the Sherlock Holmes myth. I have traced one such line of enquiry in a previous essay, 'Sherlock Holmes and the Leap of Faith', comparing the depiction of Holmes in film to that of Christ in films like *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *The Passion of the Christ*.²⁷ Christopher Redmond notes that G.K. Chesterton found this quasi-religious treatment of Holmes objectionable as early as 1935, in his essay 'Sherlock Holmes the God'; but Redmond points also to some parallels with Lord Raglan's study of the 'hero pattern' and the undeniable religious overtones of Holmes' death and resurrection.²⁸ And, as Frunză and Bessemer note, Holmes sets himself up as above the law, a higher form of justice; in some respects, he even resembles an Old Testament God. In their examples, he subjects a character (Captain Croker in 'The Adventure of the Abbey Grange') to testing, judging and ultimately, benediction, and has his own extra-legal code of 'justified revenge' in the novels *The Sign of the Four* and *A Study in Scarlet*.²⁹

What are the implications of these ideas about Holmes for stage adaptations of the character? As explained in the introductory chapter, plays featuring Sherlock Holmes don't have the luxury of long-form storytelling in order to develop the nuances of character. As we've seen, plays utilise the symbols of 'Sherlockness' (to borrow Miller's term) to quickly establish or theatrically construct the hero's identity. Such a process is especially important where the roles played by characters are in question due to the theatrical frame being used.³⁰ It's hard, however, for stage plays to build a subtle, multi-faceted interpretation of Holmes the hero given the limitations of time. So instead, we tend to see Sherlock Holmes returning from the dead—a pattern examined in the chapter, 'The Man on the Tor'—or Holmes accused of a crime, or losing his reputation and having to regain it, or Holmes debunked or satirised as a hero. We are not shown the *development* of a hero, because there isn't the same control of a fictional world as the screen adaptations.

Furthermore, in setting up Holmes as an authority above the law—an exponent of a form of 'natural justice'—he becomes the *deus ex machina*

for the kind of justice dispensed in melodrama.³¹ As the next chapter will argue, adapting Conan Doyle's Holmes stories for the stage reveals the extent to which they rely on the tropes of Victorian melodrama. Theatre productions thus have to choose how to play such associations in front of a live audience: whether to parody the melodrama, to play it straight or whether to distance the show from the melodrama by framing it in meta-fictional or metatheatrical terms.

HAVING IT BOTH WAYS

As well as a fantasy of productivity and justice, Sherlock Holmes also functions in some modern iterations as a wish-fulfilment figure for the combination of thought and action, of intellect and brawn that is so difficult to achieve in modern, sedentary societies. The references to Sherlock's expertise in singlestick in the canon have been made into a recurring feature of Jonny Lee Miller's Holmes in *Elementary*, while in Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* "the passing reference to Holmes as having experience among the boxing fraternity, 'the fancy' in *A Study in Scarlet* is blown up into Holmes' brilliant career as a bare-knuckle fighter".³² Jason Durr in Mark Catley's play *Sherlock Holmes: The Best Kept Secret* (West Yorkshire Playhouse, 2013) spent some time with his shirt off as he or Watson tended his wounds from his Reichenbach fall, affording the audience ample opportunity to view Durr's muscular frame.

Contrasting with this is the bohemian element, the unconventionality of Sherlock Holmes. As Dundas points out, the detective's success in the stories relies on the 'less than cinematic' tendency to sit still for a long time in contemplation; he cites the example of Holmes' breakthrough in 'The Man with the Twisted Lip', where Holmes constructs 'a sort of Eastern divan' out of pillows, and smokes, remaining motionless all night, until he has his solution.³³ Paavola and Järvillehto similarly remind us that as well as being a man of reason and a man of action, Holmes 'is also a man of imagination and day-dreaming'.³⁴ Susan Zieger expands on this idea by noting the confluence of reading, thinking and smoking in the depiction of Holmes. For Zieger, 'Holmes's tobacco habit offers a mode of pleasurable effort' and the detective's ability to solve a case like 'The Man with the Twisted Lip' by smoking and thinking all night 'proves that thinking really is pleasure rather than labour—the abiding fantasy that Holmes embodies'.³⁵ Demeter is not the only critic to accuse Holmes of giving a misleading account of his own process, disguising his

reliance on artistic imagination behind his ‘official ideology’ of deductive reasoning. Why, asks Demeter, would Holmes take cocaine, if he wanted to become more logical?³⁶

This bohemianism, the streak of the artist, represents a key attraction of Holmes’ personality.³⁷ He stands for the restoration of order, and yet he is a rebel. He goes by his own code of justice. He commits crimes like fraudulent deception, breaking and entering and the suppression of evidence, and gets away with it.³⁸ Like the hardboiled detectives that followed him, Holmes is in danger but also dangerous; his existence is proof that ‘authority cannot deliver on its promise’.³⁹ As Wiltse, Zieger and Dundas have all recognised, Holmes’ bohemianism is another aspect of his wish-fulfilment quality for the late-nineteenth century ‘independent urban brainworker’ who would read *The Strand Magazine* on their daily commute.⁴⁰ Dundas asserts: ‘The Baker Street scene evolved into an alluring fantasy lifestyle based on irregular hours, self-determination, and tobacco’ where Mrs Hudson’s housekeeping, and a lack of interest in romantic relations, ‘frees up a lot of time to mess around with dangerous chemicals, medieval manuscripts, and whatever else strikes his fancy. He is, in a word, free’.⁴¹ It’s a notion of freedom that is perhaps particularly appealing to the twenty-first century British, who now have strict laws governing the use of firearms, tobacco and cocaine, and who might hark back to the Victorian period as one of danger, certainly, but also of liberty.⁴²

Holmes represents a combination of freedom and reassurance, of comfort and yet danger, of intelligence and muscle.⁴³ His methods combine the scientist’s precision with the flamboyance of the showman and a chivalric passion for justice and mercy.⁴⁴ He is a paradox of imagination and judgement, of bohemianism and mainstream recognition. As Ed Wiltse puts it, ‘Holmes’s flouting of Victorian social mores is remarkable for its apparent total lack of consequences [...] he rises [in his career] with spectacular speed’.⁴⁵ With Sherlock Holmes, we want it, and can have it, both ways. It is difficult not to define him in terms of contradictions, as Wynne does: he is both fixed and flexible with regard to the law; both stable and eccentric, both English and foreign.⁴⁶ Lyndsay Faye draws our attention to how *little* we know about Holmes, despite the many vivid descriptions and details; this ‘concept of heroic opacity’ inspires us to attempt to ‘fill in the blanks on the map’.⁴⁷

Certainly, theatrical Holmes adaptations have, for some time, sought to ‘fill in the blanks’ about the detective, in ways which are usually transformative rather than affirmative (see Chap. 1). But whatever else

Sherlock Holmes on the stage may be, it is hard for him to be convincingly bohemian or a dangerous outsider, because to convey that sense of his difference from mainstream society, a company would either need a very historically well-informed audience, or else a detailed portrait of that society and the man at odds with it. This latter kind of historical verisimilitude has thus far been left to television and film. Instead, an association with bohemianism has to be created by playful references to Holmes' cocaine use, or his occasional appearance in an opium den (as in *Mrs Hudson's Christmas Corker*, or *Sherlock Holmes in Trouble*).⁴⁸ Lip Service's *Move Over Moriarty* ties the reference into a sequence of gags: Watson accidentally sits on a needle, and, discovering it's a knitting needle reprimands Holmes about his 'odious habit of French knitting'.⁴⁹ Holmes reveals that he's been knitting himself a woollen eye patch as a disguise, and sure enough, when he puts it on, Watson completely fails to recognise him. Thus, the dangerous, drug-taking scourge of the underworld is, with two strokes, thoroughly defanged and domesticated.

ANTIHERO AND GENIUS

As these ideas of Holmes build up over time, it becomes harder to reconcile all the character's supposed qualities. Ashley D. Polasek outlines this problem when she argues that it 'becomes difficult to reinvigorate Holmes as, with each new adaptation, the battle to create a lasting challenge to the homogeneity of the character—to redefine what are perceived as his definitive qualities—becomes harder to win'.⁵⁰ For Polasek, the solution that the three major post-millennial screen adaptations have found is to play with the boundary between hero and antihero that Holmes' characteristics suggest; this is 'the key to maintaining the interest of the demanding and acutely engaged audiences of the twenty-first century'.⁵¹ Bill Condon, director of the film *Mr Holmes*, reflected that, 'Because he's so mildly sociopathic, that makes him feel modern. There are all these facets you can reveal about him. There are a lot of re-thinkings of him. It comes out of being so anti-social; he can thrive and be misanthropic at the same time'.⁵² As Marinaro and Thomas argue—and I would say this is particularly true of the first two series of *Sherlock*—Benedict Cumberbatch's Sherlock 'demands the intense scrutiny of his audience even as he seems to defy a definitive characterisation'.⁵³ Once again, this 'intense scrutiny' by audiences of a developing character arguably is more difficult to allow for in a single play than over a series.

Bran Nicol traces this tension about the character's makeup back to the canon; even then, 'there is something monstrous about Sherlock Holmes himself, which remains after the cases are solved'.⁵⁴ For Nicol, the 'problem faced by any Sherlock Holmes adaptation' is 'how to present an appealing yet reassuring picture of the eccentric genius who does not conform to social norms [...] after the serial killer narrative in particular'.⁵⁵ He argues that after films like *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1990), the serial killer and the detective have come closer together. *Sherlock*, in particular, plays with this ambiguity, as Benedict Cumberbatch's character describes himself as a 'high-functioning sociopath', while Sergeant Sally Donovan tersely categorises him as a psychopath who 'gets off' on weird crimes.⁵⁶ For Nicol, Robert Downey Jr's Holmes by contrast contains this monstrous threat, keeping Holmes 'on the merely eccentric or "weird" side of abnormal', and 'emphasising his physical bravery and skill' while playing down the significance of his Hannibal Lecter-ish intellect.⁵⁷ In theatrical adaptations since 2009, plenty of plays have, in general, emphasised this Downey Jr-style eccentricity in preference to psychopathology: Laura Turner's three plays for Chapterhouse, for example,⁵⁸ or Tobacco Tea's *Accidental Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, or *Sherlock Holmes and the Invisible Thing*.⁵⁹

THE WAY WE WORK NOW

The modern screen Sherlocks in *Sherlock* and *Elementary* also chime with audiences because they reflect our relationship with work in the twenty-first century. The new Sherlock adaptations emerge at the same point in cultural history where 'Do What You Love' has become a mantra for many in the developed world, an outlook given massive exposure by Steve Jobs' Stanford University commencement speech in 2005, where he insisted, 'You've got to find what you love'.⁶⁰ Although this idea, along with the neoliberal assumptions behind it, have been effectively attacked from a number of standpoints,⁶¹ it continues to hold a tenacious appeal, particularly in areas like writing and academia where paying or permanent jobs are increasingly scarce.

In precisely the way that Miya Tokumitsu describes in *Do What You Love and Other Lies about Success and Happiness*, Sherlock Holmes, even in the canon, seems to reflect the modern preoccupation with the self-as-project.⁶² As Holmes tells Watson early in their relationship: 'Well, I have a trade of my own. I suppose I am the only one in the world.

I'm a consulting detective, if you can understand what that is'.⁶³ Holmes stresses to Watson that he has trained himself, and has begun to theorise in the magazine article they are discussing, about a job that doesn't yet exist. He has found a unique niche for himself. According to Zieger, Holmes embodies a 'fantasy of thrilling intellectual labour' that defies industrial work schedules.⁶⁴ And it should perhaps also be acknowledged, in this modern age of 'hope labour',⁶⁵ that Watson is as much of a fantasy worker as Holmes. A dissipated, wounded ex-serviceman when we first encounter him, Watson just happens to stumble into the career of a successful writer, having had to do nothing more than write up the adventures that he and Sherlock take on, in a slightly colourful fashion, 'tinge[d] [...] with romanticism', as Holmes notes in *The Sign of the Four*.⁶⁶

So yet again, it seems, the Sherlock Holmes phenomenon can have it both ways: it can be interpreted as a ringing endorsement of 'Do What You Love' or as a critique of it. From the former standpoint, Sherlock, like every television 'maverick cop' of the last half-century, may need to employ unorthodox methods to get to the truth; and it may win him no friends at Scotland Yard, and may necessitate a life without romantic entanglements; but 'the work' is undeniably significant, vital indeed. His work is often a matter of life and death. From the latter point of view, Sherlock pays a heavy price for always being right, always being the cleverest person in the room. In *Sherlock*, for example, he is initially friendless, chronically socially awkward, and often comes across as cold and arrogant, or having no 'filter' to stop him saying what he thinks, or caring about hurting others' feelings.⁶⁷ So Sherlock Holmes' brilliance at his work is a facet of his life that appeals because it feeds a need we have to view our work as special and significant. At the same time, however, it allows us to slightly pity those who are so dedicated to their work that they have failed to develop other aspects of their life or personality. Indeed, Watson employs the same defensive strategy himself when he first lives with Holmes, compiling his famous list, 'Sherlock Holmes—his limits'.⁶⁸

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND SERIALITY

This idea of an addiction to detective work and to danger connects with the second explanation for Holmes' popularity that I want to explore, the serial nature of his adventures. In this interpretation, the Holmes

and Watson stories were the right format and the right genre for the right audience at the right time.⁶⁹ As Wynne argues, the Victorian *fin de siècle* ‘produced a panoply of sensational fictional creations’, including Stevenson’s Jekyll and Hyde, Rider Haggard’s She, Oscar Wilde’s Dorian Gray and Bram Stoker’s Dracula,⁷⁰ and as Clare Clarke has recently shown, there was a vast range of detective fiction published in the late Victorian period.⁷¹ As Conan Doyle himself records, ‘A number of monthly magazines were coming out at that time, notable among which was the *Strand* [...] Clearly the ideal compromise [between ‘disconnected stories’ and ‘the ordinary serial’] was a character which carried through, and yet instalments which were each complete in themselves, so that the purchaser was always sure that he could relish the whole contents of the magazine’.⁷²

In Magali Rennes’ view, these formal and contextual aspects contribute to Holmes’ longevity; building a fictional world piecemeal, by following one central character through a series of adventures, each consumed in a single sitting, replicates the experience of viewing sit-coms, detective shows and crime dramas today: ‘In effect, Holmes inaugurates “prime time”’.⁷³ Ed Wiltse agrees: ‘it was a watershed moment in the history of narrative, one with crucial implications for twentieth-century fiction, film, radio, and especially television’.⁷⁴ Sabine Vanacker adds that Conan Doyle’s format ‘is indeed both paradoxical and compelling [...] Holmes and Watson are forever setting off from and returning to 221B Baker Street; their unequal relationship is restated throughout; Doyle regularly repeats Holmes’s scenes of instruction and observation’.⁷⁵ This static quality of endless repetition is what produces a ‘yearning for change’, for further information about Holmes, leaving the reader always wanting more.⁷⁶ Like Holmes and Watson, we as readers, as audiences, can become vicariously addicted to ‘the work’, to the solving of problems that are ‘bizarre and outside the conventions and humdrum routine of daily life’, as Holmes puts it in ‘The Red-Headed League’.⁷⁷ And paradoxically, that addiction then itself becomes a routine of daily life: the regular reading of pastiches, the watching of new episodes.

In seeking to explain the appeal of *Sherlock* to a contemporary audience, co-creator Mark Gatiss notes the popularity of ‘pathology programs [*sic*]. They’re very gruesome, but people don’t mind watching it over their Sunday tea’.⁷⁸ Of the police procedural genre, Gatiss remarks, ‘The popularity of Sherlock Holmes is the beginning of that’.⁷⁹ Hence, as Polasek has argued, there is a sense in which contemporary television

genres have created a space for a modern Holmes when key elements of their appeal were derived from Holmes' genre of fiction in the first place.⁸⁰ Ana E. La Paz lists US television series *Law & Order*, *CSI*, *Psych*, *Criminal Minds* and *Bones* as procedurals featuring Holmesian characters (2012: 84),⁸¹ while Polasek, Round and Charles highlight the correspondences between Sherlock Holmes and Gregory House in the series *House, M.D.*⁸²

If this is the case, then clearly television has an advantage over the single play or film in that episodes appear regularly (though some would dispute this claim with regard to *Sherlock*). It is therefore easier to create the impression of repetition and 'carrying through'. Nevertheless, films and plays about Holmes often attempt to give the impression that they are the latest in a series, by showing a previous case being 'wrapped up' at the beginning, as a way of introducing Holmes and his prowess. It happens at the start of the first Guy Ritchie film in the series, *Sherlock Holmes*, where Watson, Lestrade and Holmes interrupt Lord Blackwood's occult ritual and arrest him, and again at the end, where it's clear that the bigger villain lurking in the shadows, Moriarty, must be pursued in the sequel.⁸³ In the theatre, Laura Turner's *Casebook of Sherlock Holmes* (2015) begins with Holmes having already arranged for Watson to travel with him on a case, and ends with a reference to the next adventure 'just around the corner'.⁸⁴ Turner's *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (2014) ends with a suggestion of the continued 'game' with Moriarty, as does the musical *The Revenge of Sherlock Holmes* (1993, revived 2010).⁸⁵ Ken Ludwig's *Baskerville* (2015) ends with an explosion in an opera house that instigates Holmes and Watson's next case, while in Greg Freeman's *The Invisible Thing* (2016), Holmes is called to the home of Lucy Grendle, for whom he has worked an aggravating case in the past.⁸⁶ Thus, even in the single play format, adapters often work to make the current case seem to be one of many.

CONCLUSION

What role, then, is left to theatres in the economy of post-millennial Sherlock Holmes adaptations? They cannot replicate the minutiae of the Victorian world, or the working patterns of our twenty-first century lives, or devote large stretches of time to character development at the expense of plot (or, certainly, they *could*—but almost all choose not to follow that path). As Francesca Coppa argues, all television and film fan fiction is in

a sense performative, in that it is written as an extension of a world mediated through drama.⁸⁷ And some Holmes plays explore the conceit that Watson was ‘really’ a playwright, in order to make his presence as narrator make more sense on the stage.⁸⁸ But what the theatrical appropriation of Holmes is really able to do is to be playful with those signifiers, to roll together the canonical Holmes and a whole range of points in the network of adaptations of the character, and to play the game of filling in the blanks on the map about who he is, with a live audience. Such a game is often overtly metafictional and metatheatrical, akin to putting lots of previous Sherlocks in a washing machine to tumble them all together and see which colours bleed. While filling in the blanks in his character has been part of the stage history of Holmes for many years, in the last decade the exploration of character has intensified and become more complex, as it references newer points on the adaptational network than in the past. The nature of the network of Holmes adaptations will be the subject of the next chapter.

NOTES

1. Zach Dundas, *The Great Detective: The Amazing Rise and Immortal Life of Sherlock Holmes* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), 45.
2. Amanda J. Field, *England's Secret Weapon: The Wartime Films of Sherlock Holmes* (London: Middlesex University Press), 20–1, 23.
3. Dakin notes in passing that the popularity of the deerstalker in the visual iconography of Holmes can be traced to the stories’ American illustrator F.D. Steele, who showed Holmes wearing the headgear more frequently than Paget (D. Martin Dakin, *A Sherlock Holmes Commentary* (Ashcroft, BC: Ash-Tree Press), 1387–1403). See also Lynette Porter for a further discussion of the deerstalker and its use as ‘a centerpiece for discussions about the differences between private and public personas’ in recent Holmes adaptations (Lynette Porter, “Modernizing Victorian Sherlock Holmes and the BBC’s *Sherlock* Special,” in *Who is Sherlock? Essays on Identity in Modern Holmes Adaptations*, edited by Lynette Porter (Jefferson, NC: McFarland), 497.
4. Field, *England's Secret Weapon*, 23.
5. Thomas Leitch, *Film Adaptation and its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), 208.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

8. Here, I disagree with Deborah M. Fratz's claim that Benedict Cumberbatch 'matches Conan Doyle's description' of Holmes, and interpret the Steven Moffat comment that she cites ('Benedict has got the look ... of a Sherlock Holmes') as a tacit admission by the series co-creator that Cumberbatch does *not* have the usual obligatory physical features, but captures some essence, some 'look', nevertheless (Deborah M. Fratz, "A High-Functioning Sociopath Married to His Work: On Hegemonic Masculinity in the BBC's *Sherlock*," in *Who is Sherlock?: Essays on Identity in Modern Holmes Adaptations*, edited by Lynette Porter (Jefferson, NC: McFarland), 1672).
9. Lyndsay Faye, "Prologue: Why Sherlock? Narrator Investment in the BBC Series," in *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom: Essays on the BBC Series*, edited by Louisa Ellen Stein and Kristina Busse, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland), 91.
10. Clive Francis, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (London, Oberon), 12.
11. Ibid.
12. Simon Williams, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, unpublished typescript, British Library, London, 31.
13. Ibid.
14. Ron Hutchinson, *The Curse of the Baskervilles*, unpublished typescript, British Library, London, 11–12. The play closes with Holmes again 'striking the classic pose' and musing to Watson, 'You know—I think it suits me after all' (Ibid., 72).
15. For example, a deerstalker joke features in the Rathbone/Bruce film *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* (1943), where Holmes 'picks up his deerstalker, only to be rebuked by Watson [...] Holmes picks up a modern trilby instead. The deerstalker remains on the coat stand throughout the series' (Field, *England's Secret Weapon*, 131).
16. See Joseph S. Walker, "The Woman and the Napoleon of Crime: Moriarty, Adler, *Elementary*," in *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes: Essays on Film and Television Adaptations since 2009*, edited by Nadine Farghaly (Jefferson, NC: McFarland), 121.
17. Zea Miller, "The Veneration of Violation in *Sherlock*," in *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes: Essays on Film and Television Adaptations since 2009*, edited by Nadine Farghaly (Jefferson, NC: McFarland), 211.
18. Ibid., p. 212.
19. Field, *England's Secret Weapon*, 25.
20. Ibid.
21. Edgar W. Smith, "The Implicit Holmes," in *Sherlock Holmes by Gas-Lamp: Highlights from the First Four Decades of the Baker Street Journal*, edited by Philip A. Shreffler (New York: Fordham University Press), 16.

22. Kyrie Culp, "‘The Man Who Never Lived’: An Examination of Sherlock Holmes’ Endurance Through Time," in *The One Fixed Point in a Changing Age*, edited by Kristina Manente et al. (Indianapolis, IN: Gasogene), 209.
23. Mihaela Frunză and Anatolia Bessemer, "I Suppose I Shall Have to Compound a Felony as Usual," in *Sherlock Holmes and Philosophy: The Footprints of a Gigantic Mind*, edited by Josef Steiff (Chicago: Open Court), 89.
24. Quoted in Dundas, *The Great Detective*, 273.
25. Alec Charles, "Three Characters in Search of an Archetype: Aspects of the Trickster and the *Flâneur* in the Characterization of Sherlock Holmes, Gregory House and Doctor Who," *Journal of Popular Television* 1, no. 1 (2013): 95.
26. Edgar W. Smith, "The Implicit Holmes," p. 16.
27. Benjamin Poore, "Sherlock Homes and the Leap of Faith: The Forces of Fandom and Convergence in Adaptations of the Holmes and Watson Stories," *Adaptation* 6, no.2 (2013): 165–6.
28. Christopher Redmond, *A Sherlock Holmes Companion* (Ontario, Canada: Dundurn), 62–3.
29. Mihaela Frunză and Anatolia Bessemer, "Compound a Felony," 90–91. Ian Ousby in *Bloodhounds of Heaven* had made similar remarks on Holmes’ mock trials (168–170). See also Rhonda Lynette Harris Taylor, "Return of ‘the woman’: Irene Adler in Contemporary Adaptations," in *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes: Essays on Film and Television Adaptations since 2009*, edited by Nadine Farghaly (Jefferson, NC: McFarland), 43–4.
30. For example, *Adventures of the Improvised Sherlock Holmes* (Edinburgh Fringe, 2015 and 2016) used a lightweight, sleeveless cape and deer-stalker to denote Holmes, because one of the actors would only decide to be Holmes during the performance, and the props signified, to the other actors onstage, whom they were addressing. In *The Accidental Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, Holmes is cast against type as a petite young woman. The role-playing, deceptions and multi-rolling in the show are given an anchor in that only Holmes wears these items.
31. Poore, "Sherlock Homes and the Leap of Faith," 160–161.
32. *Ibid.*, 165.
33. Dundas, *The Great Detective*, 85–6.
34. Sami Paavola and Lauri Järvillehto, "Action Man or Dreamy Detective," in *Sherlock Holmes and Philosophy: The Footprints of a Gigantic Mind* (Chicago: Open Court), 52.

35. Susan Zieger, "Holmes's Pipe, Tobacco Papers and the Nineteenth-century Origins of Media Addiction," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 19, no.1 (2014): 37.
36. Tamás Demeter, "A Touch of the Dramatic," in *Sherlock Holmes and Philosophy: The Footprints of a Gigantic Mind*, edited by Josef Steiff (Chicago: Open Court), 198, 206, 207.
37. In one of the few references to Holmes's background in the canon, he tells Watson in 'The Greek Interpreter', 'My ancestors were country squires ... [but] ... my grandmother [...] was the sister of Vernet, the French artist. Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms' (Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Homes* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), 435). Perhaps predictably, this striking line has been used as the title of at least one pastiche Holmes story, *Art in the Blood* by Bonnie MacBird.
38. Mihaela Frunză and Anatolia Bessemer, "Compound a Felony," 87.
39. Ronald S. Green and D.E. Wittowker, "The Case of the Dangerous Detective," in *Sherlock Holmes and Philosophy: The Footprints of a Gigantic Mind*, edited by Josef Steiff (Chicago: Open Court) 79.
40. See Ed Wiltse, "'So Constant an Expectation': Sherlock Holmes and Seriality," *Narrative* 6, no.2 (1998): 1107; Susan Zieger, "Holmes's Pipe," 34–5; Dundas, *The Great Detective*, 87.
41. Ibid.
42. This period nostalgia, I might add, is a daydream more often enjoyed by white males; women and ethnic minorities tend to be all too aware of how Victorian society would have denied them such freedoms.
43. Even in the canon, Doyle shows off Holmes' strength in 'The Speckled Band', for example. On that story, he bends back into shape the poker that Dr Grimesby Roylott had bent into a curve. Perhaps it's telling, however, that in the canon Holmes waits until Roylott has gone before doing so, so as not to be confrontational or show his hand too early (Conan Doyle, *Complete Sherlock Homes*, 265).
44. Ian Ousby, *Bloodhounds of Heaven: The Detective in English Fiction from Godwin to Doyle* (London: Harvard University Press), 140.
45. Wiltse, "'So Constant an Expectation'," 118.
46. Catherine Wynne, "Introduction: From Baker Street to Undershaw and Beyond," in *Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle: Multi-Media Afterlives*, edited by Sabine Vanacker and Catherine Wynne (Basingstoke: Palgrave), 4.
47. Faye, "Prologue: Why Sherlock?" 98, 111.
48. *Mrs Hudson's Christmas Corker* (Wilton's Music Hall, December 2014); *Sherlock Holmes in Trouble* (Manchester Royal Exchange, December 2003).

49. Maggie Fox and Sue Ryding, *Move Over Moriarty*, unpublished typescript, British Library, London, 4.
50. Ashley Polasek, "Surveying the Post-Millennial Sherlock Holmes," 384.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 392.
52. Quoted in Lewis Beale, "Sherlock Holmes' appeal is elementary, even after more than a century," *Newsday*, 2015, Accessed Sept 16, 2016, <http://www.newsday.com/entertainment/books/sherlock-holmes-appeal-is-elementary-even-after-more-than-a-century-1.10593014>.
53. Francesca M. Marinaro and Kayley Thomas, "'Don't Make People into Heroes, John': (Re/De)Constructing the Detective as Hero," in *Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century*, edited by Lynette Porter (Jefferson, NC: McFarland), 72.
54. Bran Nicol, "Sherlock Holmes Version 2.0: Adapting Doyle in the Twenty-First Century," in *Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle: Multi-Media Afterlives*, edited by Sabine Vanacker and Catherine Wynne (Basingstoke: Palgrave), 127.
55. *Ibid.*, 128. Similarly, April Toadvine has argued that without Watson to provide what is missing in Holmes, the detective and the society he polices are equally sociopathic (April Toadvine, "The Watson Effect: Civilizing the Sociopath," in *Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century*, edited by Lynette Porter (Jefferson, NC: McFarland)). However, Toadvine's suggestion is that John in the television series *Sherlock* enables Sherlock's sociopathic behaviour rather than putting a brake on it. By contrast, Marinaro and Thomas in the same volume argue that both Guy Ritchie's films and the BBC *Sherlock* 'ultimately establish Sherlock Holmes as not strictly a hero but a man whose heroic potential must be shaped by Dr Watson' (Marinaro and Thomas, "Don't Make People into Heroes, John", 79).
56. Bran Nicol, "Sherlock Holmes Version 2.0," 128.
57. *Ibid.*, 128–9.
58. *Sherlock Holmes and the Hound of the Baskervilles* (2013), *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (2014), and *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes* (2015).
59. In fact, Sherlock Holmes plays have a longer history of 'transformative' plots in which Holmes is a killer (David Stuart Davies' *Sherlock Holmes—The Last Act!* 1999) or Watson thinks he's a killer (Charles Marowitz's *Sherlock's Last Case*, 1974) or Holmes suffers from mental problems which caused him to invent Moriarty (*The Secret of Sherlock Holmes*, 1988, starring Jeremy Brett and Edward Hardwicke).
60. See "Steve Jobs Stanford Commencement Speech," Apple History Channel, YouTube. 2006, Accessed Sept 16, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1R-jKKp3NA>. See also "'You've got to find what

- you love,' Jobs says," Stanford News, 2005, Accessed Sept 16, 2016, <http://news.stanford.edu/2005/06/14/jobs-061505/>.
61. See Rob Asghar, "Five Reasons to Ignore the Advice to Do What You Love," *Forbes.com*, 2013, Accessed Sept 16 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/robashghar/2013/04/12/five-reasons-to-ignore-the-advice-to-do-what-you-love/#cb38d9d36351>. See also Bourree Lam, "Why 'Do What You Love' Is Pernicious Advice," *The Atlantic*, 2015, Accessed Sept 16, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/08/do-what-you-love-work-myth-culture/399599/>.
 62. Miya Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love and Other Lies About Success and Happiness*, New York: Regan Arts, 2015, 12.
 63. Conan Doyle, *Complete Sherlock Homes*, 24.
 64. Susan Zieger, 'Holmes's Pipe', 35.
 65. Cited in Tokumitsu, *Do What You Love*, p. 88.
 66. Conan Doyle, *Complete Sherlock Homes*, 90.
 67. Eva Kirbach, "Rational Scientist or Mad Eccentric? An Investigation of Sherlock Holmes's Character as Portrayed in 'A Study in Pink'," In *The One Fixed Point in a Changing Age*, edited by Kristina Manente et al. (Indianapolis, IN: Gasogene), 99–102.
 68. Conan Doyle, *Complete Sherlock Homes*, 21–2.
 69. See, for instance, Dundas, *The Great Detective*, 86–7.
 70. Catherine Wynne, "Introduction," 3.
 71. See Clare Clarke, *Late Victorian Detective Fiction: In the Shadows of Sherlock* (London: Palgrave, 2014).
 72. Quoted in Wiltse, "'So Constant an Expectation'", p. 105.
 73. Magali Rennes, "The Final Final Problem," In *Sherlock Holmes and Philosophy: The Footprints of a Gigantic Mind*, edited by Josef Steiff (Chicago: Open Court), 349.
 74. *Ibid.*, 106.
 75. Sabine Vanacker, "Sherlock's Progress through History: Feminist Revisions of Holmes," In *Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle: Multi-Media Afterlives*, edited by Sabine Vanacker and Catherine Wynne (Basingstoke: Palgrave), 94.
 76. Sabine Vanacker, "Sherlock's Progress," 94.
 77. Conan Doyle, *Complete Sherlock Homes*, 176.
 78. Mark Gambino, "Why everyone is obsessed with *Sherlock*," *The New Daily*, 2015, Accessed Sept 16, 2016, <http://m.thenewdaily.com.au/entertainment/2015/12/26/sherlock-bbc-mark-gatiss/>.
 79. *Ibid.*
 80. Ashley Polasek, "Surveying the Post-Millennial Sherlock Holmes: A Case for the Great Detective as a Man of Our Times," *Adaptation* 6, no. 3 (2013): 385.

81. Ana E. La Paz, "Making the Transition", in *Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century*, edited by Lynette Porter (Jefferson, NC: McFarland), 84.
82. Polasek, "Surveying the Post-Millennial Sherlock Holmes"; Julia Round, "Out of House and Holmes," in *Sherlock Holmes and Philosophy: The Footprints of a Gigantic Mind*, edited by Josef Steiff (Chicago: Open Court); and Alec Charles, "Three Characters in Search of an Archetype."
83. Admittedly, this suggestion of seriality suggests a linear overarching narrative, whereas the Holmes stories in the *Strand* were 'complete in themselves'. Nevertheless, Ian Ousby among others has argued that Holmes does change and develop as the stories go on (see Chap. 3).
84. Laura Turner, *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, unpublished manuscript, 3–4, 71.
85. Laura Turner, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, unpublished manuscript, 71. Leslie Bricusse, *The Revenge of Sherlock Holmes: A Musical Mystery*, London: Samuel French, 1994, 113.
86. Ken Ludwig, *Baskerville*, p. 90. Greg Freeman, *Sherlock Holmes and the Invisible Thing*, Tabard Theatre, July 2016.
87. Fan fiction, Coppa argues, is 'more a kind of theatre than a kind of prose', and, intriguingly, concludes that 'fandom is what happened to the culture of amateur dramatics' (Francesca Coppa, "Writing Bodies in Space: Media Fan Fiction as Theatrical Performance," In *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press), 218, 236). Also relevant to this chapter is Coppa's notion of fictional characters as 'behavioural strips, able to walk out of one story and into another, acting independently of the works of art that brought them into existence' (Ibid., 222–223).
88. See, for example, Carl Miller's *The Athenaeum Ghoul* (Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds, 2005), or, by extension, *The Accidental Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and *Holmes for Rent* (Edinburgh Fringe, 2016), which both posit that Watson scripts the cases and hires actors to create the detective's reputation.

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