1

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Introduction

Sherlock Holmes has a fair claim to being the most immediately and widely recognisable fictional character in English literature, even if this recognition often depends on mythologised versions of Doyle's texts. Holmes's cape and deerstalker are country wear that would appear appropriate in the rural settings of 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery' and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, but would be out of place in *fin de siècle* London; the phrase 'Elementary, my dear Watson' appears nowhere in the canon of Doyle's fifty-six short stories and four novels. Yet whereas Holmes's closest competitors in the cultural recognition stakes – Frankenstein's creature and Count Dracula – are more popularly imagined in terms of particularly iconic cinematic adaptations rather than their literary originals, Holmes exceeds the totalising grasp of any single adaptation or representation, including Doyle's own. Whereas Mary Shelley's monster retains Boris Karloff's face in the popular imagination, the popular Holmes is a mixture of Doyle's writings, the illustrations of Sidney Paget (and, to a lesser extent, Frederic Dorr Steele), William Gillette's theatrical adaptation, the televisual rendering of Jeremy Brett and the cinematic portrayal of Basil Rathbone. Different generations will have their preferred image of Holmes, but with the sense that no one of these excludes the others, or is somehow definitive. It looks likely, however, that the current televisual post-modern Holmeses of Benedict Cumberbatch (in BBC's *Sherlock* (2010–)) and Jonny Lee Miller (in CBS's *Elementary* (2012–)) will exercise a significant impact on this composite image for the generations to come.

Part of Holmes's success lay in the serial nature of his adventures. Doyle's first two novels, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and *The Sign of Four* (first published as *The Sign of the Four* in 1890) were only modest successes; it was only with the move to the monthly short-story format of the *Strand Magazine* in 1891 that Holmes's popularity took off. The repetitive nature of monthly episodes had both contextual and structural significance. In terms of the criminological context, the knowledge that there would be a new Holmes

story each month not only questioned the finality of each adventure, but also signalled a late Victorian concern that crime itself was inherently repetitious; in the 1890s, about 55 per cent of prisoners were repeat offenders, a figure rising to 75 per cent in the Edwardian period.[1] While Doyle's fiction tends to avoid featuring repeat offenders within its fictional universe, it is one of the ironies of the Holmesian canon that the story that sought to definitively end the series – 1893's 'The Final Problem' (Doyle's titular adjective is significant) – introduced modern culture's paradigmatic image of the repeat offender, the criminal mastermind Professor James Moriarty. Moriarty's comparatively sparse appearances in Doyle's stories – he is referenced in several but appears in person only once – have since been compensated for by his use in a wide variety of Holmesian re-imaginings. It is as if readers realised that Moriarty represented a principle of criminalistic repetition left understated by Doyle.

In structural terms, the repetition of the Holmes stories also served to liberate Holmes from the strictures of a set plot. If the original visions of Frankenstein's creature and Dracula were confined to the definitive narratives set out for them by Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker, the variety of Holmes's sixty adventures encouraged the idea that Holmes and Watson could be transplanted into other and diverse textual settings. In this reading, the familiar narrative structures of the stories (formalised in 1912 by Ronald Knox in 'Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes') became generative rather than restrictive; prospective writers of Holmes stories could take the broader structures of Doyle's texts (the opening in Baker Street, the initial display of deductive power, the client's statement of the case and so on) and alter the details to make new narratives. This innovative combination of formal familiarity with variety of content made Holmes particularly amenable to an emerging fandom in the 1890s. It is no surprise that one early manifestation of such fandom, in the so-called 'great hiatus' following Holmes's 'death' in 1893, was a contest in the *Strand*'s sister publication, *Tit-Bits*, inviting readers to write their own Holmesian adventures.[2] Of course, such competitions also acted as advertising for what George Newnes saw as one of his greatest publishing assets, but while in the 1890s Holmes was the commodity being advertised, by the twentieth century he had shifted to become the advertisement itself. Just as enthusiastic readers of Doyle had transplanted Holmes into their own stories, his visibility was consolidated by his frequent appearance in advertising for companies and commodities too diverse to list in full; a representative sample, drawn from Amanda J. Field's survey of Holmesian advertising in the United Kingdom, includes New Golden Glow Beer, Teachers' whisky, the Yellow Pages, Canon typewriters, Kellogg's Crunchy Nut Cornflakes and Kodak. Paradoxically, while Holmes

represents specific forms of masculinity, Englishness and epistemological method, in the context of (post-)modern capitalism, he is a surprisingly flexible figure. Field notes that Holmes is 'a floating signifier that can be applied at will to different advertising campaigns in different historical situations'.[3]

Holmes's status as a 'floating signifier' raises further questions of genre. The *Companion* focuses primarily on Holmes as a crucial figure of detective fiction, but while this approach may seem self-evident or beyond question, Holmes's appearance in other genres and modes should not be overlooked. One might claim that Holmes is just as much a figure of science fiction in a twofold argument that both reclaims Doyle's texts as science fiction and notes that Holmes has been an attractive figure for that genre. In the first half of this analysis, it might be noted (as by Neil McCaw) that a story such as 'The Creeping Man' constitutes science fiction in the way that it extrapolates fantastic results from existing scientific discourses (in this case, of degeneration anxieties).[4] The other half of this argument would be to note the frequency with which Holmes is deployed by more immediately recognisable science fiction texts. A recurrent trope of late twentieth-century revisions of Doyle was the resuscitation of a (cryogenically or otherwise) suspended Holmes in the future, whether ours or his. Such a plot occurs in the television films *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1987) and *Sherlock Holmes Returns* (1993) and more strikingly in the animated series *Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century* (1999–2001), where the revivified Holmes is paired with a robot Watson. Hologramatic representations of the Holmesian universe play a crucial role in episodes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* ('Elementary, my Dear Data' (1988) and 'Ship in a Bottle' (1993)), raising questions of perception and of the extent to which literary worlds constitute virtual realities in themselves.

Even more complex intertextual parallels exist between Holmes and *Doctor Who* (1963–89; 1996; 2005–). Both heroes meet in novels such as Andy Lane's *All-Consuming Fire* (1994). The 1977 *Doctor Who* story *The Talons of Weng-Chiang*, set in the world of London's popular theatres at the *fin de siècle*, has the Doctor donning an inaccurate deerstalker and cape to track down a killer (and, not coincidentally, a giant rat, recalling Watson's reference to the giant rat of Sumatra, 'a story for which the world is not yet prepared' ('The Sussex Vampire' 1034)). Such crossovers are not solely intertextual, but paratextual; the Holmesian Doctor of *Talons* was played by Tom Baker, who would go on to portray Holmes in the BBC's *Hound of the Baskervilles* in 1982 (a casting double also achieved by Peter Cushing); more recently, *Sherlock* is produced by two writers with a prominent role in *Doctor Who*'s modern revival, Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat. But the close

relationship between Holmes and *Doctor Who* reveals a further dimension. British culture, rooted in a Christian tradition, needs its heroes to be resurrected, from the promised return of King Arthur to the modern regenerations of *Doctor Who*. Doyle might have sought to kill off Holmes in 1893, but the very act of his resurrection in 'The Empty House' only served to cement Holmes's place as a truly mythic figure of British culture.

The other generic context that stands in a complex relationship to the Holmes canon is that of comedy. Again, such an argument is twofold: although it is not often recognised, Doyle's texts qualify as comic writing while Holmes has been deployed as a figure of parody. With regard to the first part of this analysis, there is a considerable critical tradition which sees detective fiction as an inherently comedic form, most famously George Grella's argument that detective fiction 'remains one of the last outposts of the comedy of manners in fiction'.[5] Just as comedy resolves its problems into a harmonious whole, so too does detective fiction transform its epistemological mystery and social ruptures into a resolution. For our purposes, however, there are two limitations to such an argument. The first is that such an analysis tends towards a conservative model of detective fiction that emphasises resolution and narrative closure: aesthetically conservative in that it promotes formula; politically conservative in that it characterises detective fiction as a narrative of the restoration of polite middle-class norms following social rupture. The second is that while all detective fiction may be comedic, not all detective fiction is necessarily funny; we should not blur the comedic with the comic. Coming back to Doyle, the popular image of Holmes as the ascetic model of rationality tends to obscure the frequency with which he laughs and makes verbal jokes, and the extent to which the stories consciously employ the language of the absurd. When, in 'The Red-Headed League', Jabez Wilson follows up the address of the mysterious League only to find 'a manufactory of artificial knee-caps' (182), we are expected to react to the case in the same way as Holmes and Watson have already done in the preceding paragraphs: with laughter. Doyle's success in comparison to his detective fiction contemporaries (including no-less ingenious writers such as Grant Allen and L. T. Meade) partially lies in his astute recognition of the inherent comedy of the genre. The excessive absurdity of the situations animating stories such as 'The Red Headed League' and 'The Blue Carbuncle' needs to be read through the *Strand*'s conscious policy of mitigating the sensationalist elements in crime fiction and downplaying the risk of disgust prompted by more explicit forms of crime narrative. There is also something about the comic absurdity of the Holmes stories that recalls the parallel Freud draws between jokes and the working of the unconscious and, in particular, the often humorous juxtapositions of dreams. The argument

that Freud found a parallel between psychoanalysis and Holmesian methods of detection is a familiar one; the idea that it is comedy that links the two is less well explored.

Yet there is a gap at the centre of Doyle's comedic vision, which laid the path for parodic reinterpretations from the 1890s onwards: Holmes himself. In Doyle's stories Holmes is rarely, if ever, the explicit butt of the joke. On occasions where Holmes fails ('A Scandal in Bohemia' and 'The Yellow Face'), the humorous potential of such scenes is ironic or understated (indeed Watson explicitly notes that the ending of 'Scandal' causes Holmes to make fewer jokes about the abilities of women (175); merry, if sexist, humour is replaced with serious respect). Yet Holmes would quickly find himself a rich subject for satirists and parodists, representing as he did a perfect model for theories of laughter emerging in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Henri Bergson's argument that laughter is prompted by the perception of the mechanical in the organic (that the 'attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine'),[6] it is difficult not to hear the echo of Watson's disbelief ten years earlier in *The Sign of Four* when Holmes fails to recognise Mary Morstan as an attractive woman: '"[Y]ou really are an automaton – a calculating machine ... There is something positively inhuman in you at times"' (96). Doyle stops short of making Holmes a figure of fun, but the potential for Bergsonian humour is implicit from the start.

Later visions of Holmes have picked up on this comedic subtext. A curious reversal occurs in the careers of Holmes and Watson over the course of the twentieth century. By the mid-twentieth century, Watson had become the foolish target of laughter, most notoriously in Nigel Bruce's cinematic portrayal alongside the competence and control of Basil Rathbone's Holmes. There is a sense in which Bruce's bumbling Watson bears little resemblance to Doyle's original, although the acerbic interchange that opens *The Valley of Fear* hints at this development ('"I am inclined to think—" said I. "I should do so," Sherlock Holmes remarked impatiently' (769)). By the late twentieth-century and early twenty-first, however, it would be Holmes that would gradually become the figure of humour. Harvey O'Brien notes that 1970s and 1980s Holmes adaptations tend to diminish the detective by animalising him, making him the victim of trauma, or regressing him to adolescence. More recent adaptations have pathologised Holmes's intellect by, in part, making it a source of comedy.[7] In Guy Ritchie's two *Sherlock Holmes* films, it is Jude Law's Watson who provides the model of imperial masculine competence, while Robert Downey Jr's Holmes offers laughs with his campy performance and ludicrous inventions. The BBC's *Sherlock* takes a slightly different route in repeatedly characterising the detective as a 'high

functioning sociopath' who, in episodes such as 'The Six Thatchers' (2017), is too distracted by the business of detection to pay attention to details such as his duties at the christening of John Watson's child. Such adaptations bring out the comedy inherent in Doyle's text, but they also run the risk of creating a perversely anti-intellectual model of Holmes whereby the values of the intellect are no longer heroic.

Yet one can still find manifestations of the mid-century comedically dumb Watson. In 2001, the *Guardian* reported on LaughLab, a year-long University of Hertfordshire project to find the world's funniest joke. The *Guardian* reported that, in the first three months of the project, 'more than 100,000 people from seventy countries have visited the laughlab.co.uk website, submitted a total of 10,000 jokes and rated them on a specially designed "laughometer"'.[8] At the time of reporting, the leading joke (with 47,000 votes) featured familiar figures from literary history:

> Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson are going camping. They pitch their tent under the stars and go to sleep. In the middle of the night Holmes wakes Watson up: 'Watson, look up at the stars, and tell me what you deduce.'
>
> WATSON: 'I see millions of stars and even if a few of those have planets, it's quite likely there are some planets like Earth, and if there are a few planets like Earth out there, there might also be life.'
>
> HOLMES: 'Watson, you idiot, somebody's stolen our tent!'

The joke works at a number of levels. Those with only the briefest acquaintance with Holmes and Watson will immediately understand the archetypes represented by those characters. Others who know the canon inside out will perceive nods to Holmes's own camping expedition in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and his supposed ignorance of the workings of the solar system in *A Study in Scarlet*. For more immediate purposes, the joke neatly crystallises many of the concerns of the *Companion*: from the Holmesian method to neo-Holmesian adaptation.

The *Companion* is organised into three parts: 'Contexts', 'Case Studies' and 'Holmesian Afterlives'. Despite the enduring appeal of Doyle's detective, the canon stands in a particular relationship to the late Victorian and modernist periods in which it was originally produced and consumed. On the one hand, it bears the imprint of a range of *fin de siècle* anxieties and preoccupations while, on the other, it helped to shape popular conceptions of criminality, the power of science and constructions of Englishness and empire. The eight chapters contained within Part I offer contextual readings that set the scene, as it were, by offering clear and concise analyses of a range of relevant contexts, from the importance of serial publication through to

constructions of gender and sexuality to new forms of surveillance and power. The three case studies that constitute Part II combine sustained textual analyses of key works with an investigation of broader themes that dominate the canon as a whole: nation, empire and otherness, the problematics of vision and the role of Paget's illustrations, and the uneasy relationship between scientific positivism and its other, the uncanny ambiguity of the Gothic.

In addition to interrogating the appeal of Holmes for literary theory and fandoms, the final part of the *Companion* turns to the afterlife of Doyle's most famous creation in order to explore the many and varied adaptations, re-workings and re-inventions that sustain the Holmesian myth, as well as exploring issues relating to authenticity and originality as source texts and adaptations become increasingly difficult to distinguish. As Neil McCaw persuasively argues in his chapter on adapting Holmes, the BBC's *Sherlock* is best seen as 'a celebration of the rich tapestry of the Sherlockian franchise past and present, in all its shapes and colours' and thus we do it little justice 'if we insist on reading back from this series to Doyle's founding works'. For this reason, the *Companion* is largely silent on this particular manifestation of Holmes's ongoing popularity and readers are referred to the dedicated sources included in the Further Reading. In what follows, we offer a brief account of the contents of each chapter to help readers navigate through the volume as a whole.

The *Companion* opens with Merrick Burrow's lively discussion of the place and importance of Sherlock Holmes within the history of detective and crime fiction, both explaining and challenging popular teleological readings that construct Doyle's detective as a 'Victorian giant who eclipses his literary forebears and peers alike'. Drawing inspiration from Dr Joseph Bell, one of his lecturers at the University of Edinburgh, where Doyle studied medicine between 1867 and 1881, Doyle was determined to create a new type of detective, one able to transform the act of detection into 'something nearer to an exact science' (*Memories* 75). Having examined the precursors and contemporaries against which Doyle defined this new detective, Burrow explores a range of Holmes's contemporaries, including Fergus Hume, whose *Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1886) far eclipsed the rather meagre sales of *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes's first outing, published the following year. The chapter surveys Doyle's competitors, who were all too willing to step into the gap left by Holmes's 'death' in 1893, as well as his influence on the Golden Age whodunits and the hard-boiled thriller. It concludes, finally, by acknowledging the global legacy of Holmes's influence, a topic which dominates Part III.

As Clare Clarke asserts in Chapter 3, 'Doyle, Holmes and Victorian Publishing', Sherlock Holmes 'was the progeny of a fortuitous marriage between a new type of author, publication and reading public that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century'. Having traced the technological, social and cultural changes that contributed to the death of the triple-decker novel and the concomitant rise of a new periodical market and readership, Clarke offers an extended analysis of the *Strand* and, more specifically, how George Newnes's mission to offer 'cheap, healthful literature'[9] influenced Doyle's presentation of Holmes at the same time that Holmes's popularity influenced the fate of the *Strand* (and its sister-publication, *Tit-Bits*). It is worth noting that the tension between art and commerce, which Clarke identifies in Doyle's dealings with Newnes and others, was a keynote of his literary career as he struggled to balance the public demand for Holmes with his own literary ambitions.

Tracing the centrality of urban spaces to crime narratives, Stephen Knight posits that 'there can be little doubt that a word-association test of the terms "city" and "detective" would most often, all around the world, generate two names: London and Sherlock Holmes'. As Knight goes on to argue, however, the relationship between Holmes and London was initially problematic and consistently more complex than this universal association suggests. In addition to exploring the relationship between Holmes's encyclopaedic spatial knowledge, detection and authority, the chapter allows twenty-first century readers to view London from a late-Victorian perspective, shedding light on the connotations of the various settings of the canon. Adopting one of the best-known stories, 'The Man with the Twisted Lip', as a case study, Knight explores what this narrative reveals about Doyle's understanding of urban space, class and epistemology.

Turning from the urban to the rural, Christine Berberich's 'Englishness and Rural England' reads the canon against the rise of New Imperialism in order to explore how the canon's traditional English, rural settings – particularly the country house – are juxtaposed with, or threatened by, foreign 'Others'. According to this reading, such spaces are consistently Orientalised and 'contaminated' by returned colonials (having been themselves contaminated by their travels) or actual foreigners. In the process, these homely, English spaces are rendered *unheimlich* (uncanny), thereby destabilising normative national identity. Against this threat, Berberich argues, stands the figure of Sherlock Holmes: 'the quintessential Englishman, the seemingly perfect representative of a stable and permanent Englishness'. Fulfilling a national desire for stability in a period of political volatility was just one of the many ways in which Doyle was involved in a two-way dialogue with

his public: his work shaped by as well as shaping the attitudes of his contemporaries.

In Chapter 6, 'Gender and Sexuality in Holmes', Stacy Gillis offers a two-part discussion of the detective as 'the embodiment and arbiter of absolute masculine authority'. Gillis first explores how Doyle's emphasis on logic, reason and rationality helped to establish Holmes's masculinity, as well as how it was re-enforced through a network of cross-textual references across a range of early twentieth-century detective and mystery fiction. The second half of the chapter then traces how the rise of gender and queer studies led to new ways of analysing Doyle's narratives. Focusing on 'A Scandal in Bohemia' as a case study to illustrate the destabilising powers of disguise, Gillis demonstrates the value of re-reading the canon through recent and varied methodological approaches – a topic that Bran Nicol picks up in Chapter 13 in Part III.

Chapters 7 and 8 are best read in tandem, with Jonathan Cranfield's concise introduction to the key scientific concepts and controversies of the period paving the way for Stephan Karschay's more focused exploration of criminal anthropology as a specific field of scientific research during the *fin de siècle*. Doyle's scientific detective demands to be read against the 'durable reference points' provided by Charles Lyell, Charles Darwin and Cesare Lombroso – all of whom, according to Cranfield, share an emphasis 'on everyday empirical observation allied to deductive and abductive reasoning' – and the chapter is essential reading for those not familiar with their ideas. At the same time, Cranfield offers a necessary corrective to those who accept, without question, Doyle's characterisation of Holmes's method as a '*science* of deduction' (*A Study in Scarlet* 19, emphasis added). Referring to a wide range of stories, Cranfield reveals the scientific status of both Doyle and Holmes to be far more ambiguous and ambivalent than they first appear. Ambivalence is also a feature of Doyle's engagement with the deterministic tenets of criminal anthropology as espoused by its founding father, Cesare Lombroso. In addition to offering a clear account of Lombroso's key ideas relating to inborn criminality, together with its visible signifiers, and the principles of atavism, whereby the criminal is conceived as a primitive evolutionary throwback, Karschay explores how such ideas are deployed and challenged by Doyle. Of particular interest are the discussions of infant criminality and the connection between the atavistic criminal and so-called primitive races within the canon, the latter providing further evidence of the jingoistic anxieties explored by both Berberich and, in Part II, Caroline Reitz.

The final chapter of Part I, Jeremy Tambling's Foucauldian reading of 'Holmes, Law and Order', traces the rise of a panoptical society where law is inextricably bound up with violence. Tambling's wide-ranging discussion

explores the relationship between crime and guilt and the uncanny alignment of criminal and detective. Focusing on 'The Abbey Grange', Tambling also offers a fascinating analysis of the mechanisms by which texts persuade readers into accepting their ideological presuppositions – even when these go against extratextual objections and moral codes – including the various criminal acts committed by Holmes himself.

The first of the three case studies that constitute Part II is Caroline Reitz's 'The Empires of *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four*'. Adopting a narratological approach to these 'formally messy' novels, Reitz offers a compelling analysis of boundaries – bodily, textual and national – in order to explore 'what constitutes the jurisdiction of the English detective and the boundaries of the detective story in a violent, messy world'. Although Doyle has been labelled 'one of the great Victorian apologists of empire',[10] the picture that emerges from Reitz's reading is more nuanced and complex than such a statement suggests. Like the volume as a whole, the intention is to defamiliarise – to render queer or strange through the adoption of varied perspectives – what has often been taken for granted about Doyle and his detective.

Building on existing discussions of visuality within the canon, Christopher Pittard's chapter breaks new ground by focusing on the stories' treatment of the visual in the context of their material production, illuminating the interplay between Sidney Paget's illustrations and Doyle's words in the pages of the *Strand*. Moving from Paget's method to a detailed compositional analysis of key illustrations from the first two series of adventures, Pittard explores a range of visual tropes, the imagistic chains within and between stories and the role of Paget's illustrations in shaping the meaning of Doyle's narratives. In the final of the three case studies, 'Gothic Returns: *The Hound of the Baskervilles*', Janice Allan explores the very different topographies – geographical, psychological and symbolic – that dominate Doyle's most famous and successful novel. Exploring the extent to which the novel destabilises the various binaries – science/superstition, legible/illegible, definite/amorphous – on which it also depends, Allan's discussion focuses on the moor as a site of Gothic undecidability that resists the principles of circumscription on which Holmes's method depends.

In the first chapter of Part III, 'Holmes and Literary Theory', Bran Nicol explores the appeal that Sherlock Holmes – and detective fiction more generally – holds for literary theory. Having established that Holmes 'embodies the kind of "suspicious logic" which literary study in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, informed by theory, demands', Nicol offers a wide-ranging discussion of both Holmes's method and the extent to which it is illuminated by – as well as illuminating – a range of critical approaches,