

UNIVERSITY OF PARDUBICE
FACULTY OF ARTS AND PHILOSOPHY

MASTER'S THESIS

2021

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University of Pardubice
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Women in Detective Prose by Arthur Conan Doyle
Master's Thesis

2021

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Univerzita Pardubice
Fakulta filozofická
Akademický rok: 2019/2020

ZADÁNÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

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Osobní číslo: **H19339**
Studijní program: **N0231A090011 Anglická filologie**
Studijní obor: **Anglická filologie**
Téma práce: **Ženy v detektivní próze Arthura Conana Doylea**
Zadávací katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

Zásady pro vypracování

Studentka se ve své práci zaměří nejprve na historickou a kulturní charakteristiku období, do něž spadá Doyleva tvorba. Zmapuje také soudobý stav skotské identity a zaměří se především na roli ženy ve skotské společnosti a na ženskou variantu soudobého skotství. Neopomene ani charakteristiku detektivního žánru, do jehož kontextu Doyleva díla spadají. Konkrétní ženské postavy, vybrané z různých Doylevých děl, pak bude konfrontovat s dobovou představou o typické skotské ženě. Ve své práci se bude opírat o teoretické koncepty týkající se národní identity a feminismu.

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Rozsah grafických prací:

Forma zpracování diplomové práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Jazyk zpracování: **Angličtina**

Seznam doporučené literatury:

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Datum zadání diplomové práce:

1. května 2020

Termín odevzdání diplomové práce:

2. května 2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D., M. Litt. who provided me with valuable advice and guidance. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their continuous support and encouragement.

ANNOTATION

The master's thesis focuses on the female characters appearing in the detective prose written by Arthur Conan Doyle. The theoretical part of the thesis provides information relevant to the cultural and historical characteristics of Scottish nationality and Scottish identity, description of female roles in Scotland and England during the 19th century, and characterisation of the detective genre. Relevant information about the life of the author is also provided in each chapter. The practical part is divided into eight chapters – each focusing on one story and its female characters. With the use of comparative analysis, the author tries to determine which of the three previously mentioned factors affected the characters in question the most and whether there is a connection between the characters and Scottish womanhood. The conclusion shows how Arthur Conan Doyle's writing was affected by all three aforementioned factors.

KEYWORDS

Arthur Conan Doyle, Victorian England, Scottish identity, feminism, detective genre

NÁZEV

Ženy v detektivní próze Arthura Conana Doylea

ANOTACE

Diplomová práce je zaměřena na ženské postavy objevující se v detektivní próze napsané Arthurem Conanem Doylem. Její teoretická část poskytuje relevantní informace o kulturních a historických rysech skotského nacionalismu a skotské identity, popis ženských rolí ve Skotsku a Anglii v 19. století, a charakteristiku detektivního žánru. Součástí každé z kapitol jsou také relevantní informace o životě autora. Praktická část je rozdělena do osmi podkapitol. Každá z nich se zaměřuje na jeden z příběhů a ženské postavy, které se v něm objevují. Autorka práce využívá srovnávací metodu k zjištění, který ze zmíněných tří faktorů ovlivnil dané postavy nejvíce a zda existuje nějaké spojení mezi těmito postavami a skotským ženským. Závěr ukazuje, do jaké míry bylo dílo Arthura Conana Doylea ovlivněno zmíněnými faktory.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Arthur Conan Doyle, viktoriánská Anglie, Skotská identita, feminismus, detektivní žánr

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INTRODUCTION

“It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important.”¹

This sentence is said by the great literary detective Sherlock Holmes in reaction to one of his cases in the short story “A Case of Identity.” If one would assume the same position with regard to Sherlock Holmes’ adventures, the aforementioned little things could prove that the famous stories possess depth that has not been researched to the full extent. Whilst immensely popular (as the collected novels and stories have sold more than 60 million copies worldwide)² and often adapted, the stories include few female characters. The primary hypothesis being that those characters are very scarcely recurring and often lack depth with the presupposition that there three main factors could have influenced this lack of female characters. Firstly, it could have been the author’s Scottish background. Secondly, the overall position of women in society during this era. And thirdly, the detective genre itself.

The theoretical part of the thesis is focused on the three factors which could influence the female characters. The practical part of the thesis is then divided into chapters focusing on different stories and one novel - *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and their female characters. Using comparative analysis, the author of the thesis presents the character’s story, decisions, and choices, as well as their socio-political status (when it is possible) with addition to possible influences presented in the theoretical part of the thesis. All three aforementioned factors come together in the author himself and subconscious messaging with which he provides his viewer.

Although Sir Arthur Conan Doyle himself is Scottish he spent most of his life living in England. For that reason, Scottish women will not be the only object of research in this chapter, as Conan Doyle’s views on the female sex may have been influenced not only by his early life in Scotland but also his later life in England. Another reason why the research does not focus solely on Scottish women are the characters themselves as Conan Doyle used predominantly English female characters in his writing. This choice will be further analysed in the practical part of the thesis.

¹ Arthur Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories Volume I and II* (New York: Bantam Books, 2003), 153.

² “Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows sold 11 million copies in 24 hours,” Today in History, The Daily Telegraph, last modified July 20, 2017, <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/harry-potter-and-the-deathly-hallows-sold-11-million-copies-in-24-hours/news-story/f2ddc81496fa2a514041e7048028e036>.

To further understand the subsequent chapters, it is important to also provide a further look at the author himself whose identity and Scottishness – or lack thereof, have affected the stories at hand. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born on the 22nd of May 1859 in Edinburgh. Both of his parents were of Irish origin. Conan Doyle was sent to England in his tenth year to a preparatory school in Lancashire, spent a year at a school in Germany and then returned back to Edinburgh to study medical school.³ This is where his readers can actually get a first glimpse of the real-life inspiration behind his most popular character.

Conan Doyle's first detective story took inspiration from Poe's detective novels as well as Fergus Hume's *Mystery of a Hansom Cab* from 1886. His story *A Study in Scarlet* contains clear Gaboriau influences. Despite it not being very successful, American magazine Lippincott commissioned him to write *The Sign of Four* which was published in 1890.⁴ The popularity of the detective genre and Conan Doyle's writing rose thanks to his short stories that found success due to its monthly publication in *The Strand* magazine and were all later published in 1892 in a twelve-story book *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.⁵

Whilst it may seem that Sherlock Holmes is purely an English character, some characteristics of the stories are distinctly Scottish. David Daiches mentions this in his book *A Companion to Scottish Culture*: "Much of Holmes' London bears striking resemblances to Conan Doyle's Edinburgh."⁶ Proving that Conan Doyle does participate in mirroring of his own culture even in a typically unrelated environment. Daiches also goes on to say how arrogant behaviour and scientific dedication that came from the Edinburgh medical faculty is also mirrored in Conan Doyle's main character.⁷ Scaggs adds that Sherlock Holmes was openly based on Conan Doyle's former teacher at the Edinburgh Infirmary, Dr Joseph Bell who dealt with diagnostic deductions.⁸ Conan Doyle writes about Dr Joseph Bell in his autobiography where he also admits the inspiration he drew from the previously mentioned Doctor, though he admits the Doctor's methods were amplified for the character of the famous detective. Conan Doyle writes about Dr Bell as "the most notable character," who was not only a great surgeon but also great in diagnosis "not only of disease, but of occupation and character."⁹

³ Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1924), 1-3.

⁴ John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 24.

⁵ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 25.

⁶ David Daiches, *A Companion to Scottish Culture* (London: Butler & Tanner Ltd., 1981), 184.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 24.

⁹ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 20.

For a reason unknown to Conan Doyle himself, Dr Bell chose him to be his outpatient clerk and, to the young student's surprise, the Doctor was capable of finding out more information about the patient from a few glances, than Conan Doyle had learned from his own questions. The time spent by Dr Bell's side gave Conan Doyle the opportunity to study his methods and provided him with not only the vision for his main character but also for his companion. In his biography, he mentions the students frequenting the Doctor's wards as "an audience of Watsons" who intently listened to the Doctor's explanation which seemed complicated at first but turned out to be quite simple when explained. Dr Bell himself was a fan of Conan Doyle's stories and given him multiple suggestions which, according to the writer, were not very practical.¹⁰ The fact that Sherlock Holmes was moulded after a Scot implies that the writer might draw more inspiration from his personal background. The first possible affecting factor being his nationality.

¹⁰ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 21.

1 SCOTTISH NATIONALISM AND IDENTITY

To understand where Sir Arthur Conan Doyle came from and to better understand the mindset of Scottish and English citizens respectively, one must look into the implications brought by nationalism. Nationalism is an encompassing force that affects not only the culture and the nation as a whole, but also individuals living in said nation. British historical sociologist and author Anthony D. Smith states that: “We are identified first and foremost with our ‘nation’,”¹¹ and goes on to describe nationalism as the most powerful political movement there is. The importance of nationalism has also been reiterated by H. J. Hanham, stating that it is: “One of the most powerful forces in the modern world.”¹² Citing a proof of modern nationalism in the form of Czechoslovakia and explaining how any attempts to make a nation comply can come to a halt when faced with nationalism. Its power comes also from its flexibility and timelessness. Proving its value as a powerful political tool as well as a form of identification for those who belong to a certain country. This part of identification being the most prominent one.

From a psychological and ideological perspective, nationalism provides a certain social group with a meaning of the past, explanation for the present and possible actions for the future. Harrison and Boyd also argue that it is the least intellectual of ideologies and the most irrational and emotional one. The unit of people forming a nation is seen as something natural and therefore good. The individual should be feeling as part of the nation and if the nation struggles, he does too - therefore he should make sure his nation is not destitute so he can also thrive.¹³ Nationalism and its roots are explained by Eugene Kamenka as follows: “a modern and initially a European phenomenon, best understood in relation to the developments that produced, and were symbolised by, the French Revolution of 1789.”¹⁴

According to Hanham, Scotland possessed all the characteristics of a nation since the twelfth century. The country had its own systems, political parties and language. It was and still remains to be a state existing within a larger state, that is very different from England.¹⁵ In the year

¹¹ Anthony D. S. Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 1.

¹² H.J. Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 9.

¹³ Kevin Harrison, Tony Boyd, *Understanding Political Ideas and Movements* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 155.

¹⁴ Eugene Kamenka, “Political nationalism - the Evolution of the Idea,” In *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, ed. Eugene Kamenka (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973), 4.

¹⁵ Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism*, 1.

1603, James VI of Scotland ascended to the throne and became James I of England. This created the Union of Crowns and over a century later became a formal union in 1707 with the Acts of Union. This union arose from dynastic alliances and, according to Hanham, was not popular at the time in neither England nor Scotland.¹⁶ The fact that the Union lasted so long is often seen as quite surprising. Sunter mentions attempts to repeal the Act only a couple of years after it was created. He also attributes its unexpected longevity to multiple factors. The first one being the fact that Jacobites presented themselves as the enemies of the Union and so anyone who was against them (as the anti-Jacobite sentiment was strong in Scotland) was seen as supportive of the union. The second one was the support the Union got from Presbyterians who were not Union supporters per se but chose it as “the lesser of two evils.” Lastly, the problematic parts of the Union were not apparent until the 1850s. This was because during the 18th century, Parliament was not as concerned with legislation as it was with debating. The newly created all-encompassing British Parliament was mostly concerned with the affairs of the English and omitted Scottish problems. This was the reason why Scottish nationalists of the time wanted to get a separate assembly and separate legislature that would conform to the specific needs of their nation.¹⁷ The two countries necessitated a dual system of government with Scotland having its own Scottish institutions, separate from England.¹⁸ Although one nation, it was common to use the terms ‘England’ and ‘English’ by Scots in place of ‘Britain’ or ‘British’ at the beginning of the 18th century - proving Scots themselves often felt distance between these two nationalities.¹⁹ Harrison and Boyd also mention the problematic relationship between “Scottish” and “British” nationalisms - calling them ‘competing nationalisms’.²⁰

Nationalism can come in more shapes and forms and the same view is not shared by all nationalists. For example, theorist David Miller states that in some cases, it is possible to maintain “overlapping nationalisms” where one nationality is “nested” within a larger national context,²¹ similarly to the situation that Scotland and Britain have been in. On the other hand, Anthony D. Smith argues that to create a national ideal, its people must be attached to a clear territory - a homeland which should be self-governed and sovereign.²² Anderson claims that the

¹⁶ Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism*, 10.

¹⁷ Ronald M. Sunter, “The Rise of Scottish Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century,” *The International Review of Scottish Studies* 6, no. 1 (September 1976): 14.

¹⁸ Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism*, 10.

¹⁹ Sunter, “The Rise of Scottish Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century,” 19.

²⁰ Harrison et al, *Understanding Political Ideas and Movements*, 165.

²¹ Catherine Frost, *Morality and Nationalism*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 142.

²² Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 3.

Act of Union did not lead to a merger between the English and the Scots, but rather to a compromise that was heavily leaning towards to English side.²³

In the 18th century, nationalism as a political movement was very rare. Sunter mentions a sentimental and cultural rise of Scottish nationalism - a clear reaction to the very strong English nationalism and patriotism of the time. The neglect and general unpopularity of Scottish nation at the time also helped the case. During this century, three main Scottish institutions survived in the Union and, according to Wilkie, provided Scots with a sense of Scottish identity. It was the Scottish Church (Kirk and Presbyterianism), the Scottish educational system and Scottish law. However, industrialisation in the next century led to problems within these institutions and thus to problems with retaining traditional Scottish identity.²⁴ Industrialisation also brought negativity from some parts of the Scottish population as it seemed to be threatening what was inherently Scottish.²⁵

At the beginning of the 19th century, English patriotism led to attempts to Anglicize the Scots and aimed for a united British nation. Many Scots fled to England to find a better job and started to feel national pride and a sense of patriotism for Britain as they started winning wars. These changes led to a point where it seemed like Scottish nation could cease to exist altogether. Yet, this was somewhat neutralized by the large popularity of Scottish literary nationalists such as Sir Walter Scott.²⁶

Acts of Union left Scotland with one specific body which was used as a tool to deal with many of its issues - the previously mentioned Church of Scotland. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland worked as an assembly which provided members of the government with a ground to consult Scottish issues. The government also appointed its politicians to politically manage Scotland. The manager, two Scottish law officers and the Church organisation substituted some form of government control for the bigger part of the 18th century. However, because of the lack of supervision from above, Scottish politics quickly became riddled with corruption as it laid the foundation of merely few people.²⁷ Although Acts of Union worked differently to what was expected – as a new united British state did not emerge from it, and

²³ Anderson, "University History Teaching, 7.

²⁴ Benjamin Wilkie, "Popular Imperialism, Scottish Identity, and William Wallace in an Australian Colonial City," *Études écossaise*, no. 17 (April 2015): 136.

²⁵ Wilkie, "Popular Imperialism, Scottish Identity, and William Wallace in an Australian Colonial City," 137.

²⁶ Sunter, "The Rise of Scottish Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century," 18.

²⁷ Sunter, "The Rise of Scottish Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century," 16.

actually had the opposite effect of separating the Scots from England even further, it provided economic advantages which made its dissolution improbable.²⁸

The real beginning of the 19th century Scottish nationalism can be traced to the 1850s which saw the founding of the Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights (also called the Scottish Rights Society). This association included Scots of differing political leanings who shared their displeasure with the current situation. Scotland itself was very under-represented in Parliament and so it was very difficult to go further with serious steps. However, this society did not call for a separation of Scotland and England but rather for administrative devolution.²⁹

It is important to note the dissonance between nationalism then and the nationalism that became prolific during the 20th century. According to Sunter, Scottish nationalism of the 19th century was immensely popular and had the support of the majority of Scots. The support stemmed from their dissatisfaction with the position of Scotland within the United Kingdom as most felt that the Westminster Parliament served predominantly English interests and dealt with English issues whilst Scotland was rarely part of the conversation.³⁰ Scottish nationalism at that time was mainly in support for political devolution - their main goal being the decentralisation of the UK administration whose members were mainly English and which heavily focused on the wants and needs of England.³¹

Although the Scottish Rights Society's life was short-lived (collapsing in 1856), the issue of Parliament underrepresentation stayed and was taken up by Duncan McLaren, Lord Rosebery and later on Lord Salisbury, whose government appointed Scotland with its own minister in 1885 (this Minister, however, only gained Cabinet status 7 years later).³² The situation still remained unsatisfactory as the Scottish Office was not appropriately representing issues raised by Scottish voters. Yet, the situation changed rapidly with Ireland's gain of Home Rule to which Scots also felt rightful to.³³ Scotland called for its own Parliament but only received the Scottish Grand Committee in 1894. This Committee proved to be mostly ineffective as it was only permitted to deal with bills that were not deemed as controversial and each bill still had to pass through the House of Commons. The committee was only seen as a way of representing the

²⁸ Sunter, "The Rise of Scottish Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century," 17.

²⁹ Sunter, "The Rise of Scottish Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century," 20.

³⁰ Sunter, "The Rise of Scottish Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century," 14.

³¹ Sunter, "The Rise of Scottish Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century," 15.

³² Sunter, "The Rise of Scottish Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century," 21.

³³ Sunter, "The Rise of Scottish Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century," 22.

ideas and wishes of the Parliament and to keep Scots under the control of the English instead of actually representing the Scottish point of view.³⁴

What makes the Scottish “Scottish”? One cannot speak of nationalism without mentioning national identity. Ross Bond expresses that the three most prominent indicators of one’s identity are residence, birth and ancestry, calling these “identity markers”.³⁵ Such identity markers might be able to explain the lack of mentions of Scotland by Conan Doyle in his detective stories (as his identity markers are heterogeneous). His residence was mostly England as that is where he spent most of his life. He lived in Scotland only as a student. Scotland is also the place of his birth whilst his ancestry is predominantly Irish. His identity could be classified as a ‘hybrid identity’. Especially when religion is also added to the conversation – Conan Doyle’s Irish parents raised him to be Irish-Catholic³⁶ and he later turned agnostic.³⁷ For Conan Doyle, a unified Britain would prove that each and every part of his identity is accepted. As what is “English” is sometimes seen as an encompassing term for all that is “British”, it could be one of the reasons why Conan Doyle chose to live in England for most of his life and used the more popular and common nationality in his writing. In terms of Britain, however, Stephen Haseler believes that “For what is often meant by “national identity” is really “state identity.”³⁸ In this case, the identity is not part of one of the nations that create the United Kingdom but connected to the United Kingdom as a whole.

According to Bond, Scottish identity is an interesting case, stating: “although a wealth of research demonstrates that it has a strong sense of national identity, it lacks the necessary statehood to formally enshrine any dominant conception of this national identity.”³⁹ With the Union, Scotland abandoned its original constitution tradition that heavily relied on Celtic roots and exchanged it for English Whig tradition based on Anglo-Saxon roots.⁴⁰

Nonetheless, the Union with England brought great prosperity to Scotland during the Victorian era, according to Hanham, this caused the general consciousness to halt the nationalist movement. The end of the 19th century did not see further evolution in national movements mostly because Scotland was promised a devolution. Separate institutions of government were

³⁴ Sunter, “The Rise of Scottish Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century,” 23.

³⁵ Ross Bond, “Belonging and Becoming: National Identity and Exclusion,” *Sociology* 40, no. 4 (2006): 611.

³⁶ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 8.

³⁷ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 27.

³⁸ Stephen Haseler, *The English Tribe: Identity, Nation and Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 8.

³⁹ Bond, “Belonging and Becoming: National Identity and Exclusion,” 613.

⁴⁰ Robert Anderson, “University History Teaching, National Identity and Unionism in Scotland, 1862-1914,” *The Scottish Historical Review* 91, no. 231 (2012): 7.

created in 1885 with a separate Secretary for Scotland. After 1888 the Scottish Liberals were devoted to creating a Scottish parliament and a Scottish administration.⁴¹

The search for independence of the Scots is nothing surprising as nationalism has been a crucial part in the separation of countries such as the USA from the British empire.⁴² Nationalist ideas were so common at the beginning of the 20th century, that a creation of a nationalist party was almost unavoidable. The first catalyst might have been the creation of the paper *The Scottish Nationalist* in 1903. Although short lived, it lit a spark for further nationalist conversations. A year later, Scottish National League was founded. It mostly fought for its own Scottish Parliament and appropriate representation of Scots in the British Parliament.⁴³

Nationalism became a force with the publication of the Scottish Review, which was able to survive the first world war, alongside another publication - Guth nha Bliadhna, which was written in Gaelic. Another more radical goal that was put front, was the dissatisfaction with the current government and the ideal to create a new one from scratch. Such an idea was rather radical; after the first world war, Ruaraidh Erskine - a political activist who stood behind the creation of the Scottish Review, created the National committee in 1919 for the support and recognition of Scotland by the Paris Peace Conference, among others. Although not successful, it later led to the founding of the National party of Scotland in 1923.⁴⁴ According to Barclay et al. Claim that nationalism was the force which led to higher interest in education in Scotland, alongside increasing democracy. Literary works were able to create the Scottish canon and literature was often used as a political tool which necessitated people to be able to read and write.⁴⁵ All of the aforementioned factors ultimately lead to the disbalanced relationship between Scotland and England. Britain favoured England in as the economic giant that it was whilst Scotland and Ireland were left behind often without the ability to solve the issues on their own but also lacking the power to make change in the Parliament.

In regards to university teachings, the term „national identity“ started to slowly be used instead of „nationality.“⁴⁶ According to Anderson, the end of the 19th century created a need for people to have a distinct national identity. Using English literature at schools and universities even in

⁴¹ Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism*, 11.

⁴² Harrison et al, *Understanding Political Ideas and Movements*, 168.

⁴³ Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism*, 133.

⁴⁴ Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism*, 135-145

⁴⁵ Katie Barclay, Tanya Cheadle, Eleanor Gordon. "The State of Scottish History: Gender." *The Scottish Historical Review* 92, no. 234 (2013): 101.

⁴⁶ Robert Anderson, "University History Teaching, National Identity and Unionism in Scotland, 1862-1914," *The Scottish Historical Review* 91, no. 231 (April 2012): 14.

Scotland and Ireland was a way how to instil English identity in other territories. Whilst Anderson separates between English identity in England and British in Scotland, both identities are created through English literature and clearly are one and the same – only with a different name.⁴⁷ During the 19th century, most Scots took no issue with the British state. Wilkie also notes that nationalism does not inherently mean that Scots had to be hostile towards England. The identity created during this century was that of British imperialism up until the time of the Irish Home Rule.⁴⁸

Imperialism became a big part of Scottish identity at the end of the 19th century as it possessed its own features of imperial partnership with England. „Glasgow was the second city of the Empire, and Scotland’s economy was the workshop of the Empire; Scottish parliamentarians in Westminster were taking part in an imperial parliament; and, the Scots themselves were a race of Empire-builders.“⁴⁹ This partnership was able to prevent a hostile anti-English stance between the Scots. Queen Victoria herself was a fan of Scottish Highlands and contributed to their romanticisation. She had visited Scotland many times as her and her husband Albert leased and later purchased Balmoral Castle, which ultimately became their summer home and a retreat for the Queen after her beloved husband passed away.⁵⁰ Faster movement of the monarch between England and Scotland was made possible by industrialisation and growing railways.

This was the creation of Balmorality – the romanticisation of Scottish Highlands and traditions, also epitomised by the likes of Walter Scott. Queen Victoria enjoyed local customs and tradition and thanks to her love of parts of Scottish culture (such as tartan, bagpipes or traditional dancing), such symbols later became well-known aspects of the community. Thanks to the Queen, Scotland became a popular holiday destination which led to the tourist industry which is still prominent in Scotland till this day. Wilkie states that Balmorality helped Scotland to create a British patriotism and see themselves as „the supreme component of the British empire.“⁵¹

The 19th century Scottish identity faced a re-invention and evolved around imperialism. Wilkie cites „militarism, religion, economic expansionism, and monarchism“ as the main ideological clusters of British imperialism which started to be favoured by Scotland itself. Nonetheless, the Scots still believed to have managed to keep something inherently theirs – Scottish

⁴⁷ Anderson, "University History Teaching," 16.

⁴⁸ Wilkie, "Popular Imperialism," 137.

⁴⁹ Wilkie, "Popular Imperialism," 138.

⁵⁰ "About Balmoral," Balmoral, accessed June 30, 2021, <https://www.balmoralcastle.com/about.htm>.

⁵¹ Wilkie, "Popular Imperialism," 142.

characteristics which differed from those of the English or British. Cited by Wilkie as: „thrift, respectability, independence, temperance, the work ethic, and meritocracy.“⁵²

Conan Doyle expressed his feelings regarding politics and nationalism in his writing. In the twentieth chapter of his biography *Memories and Adventures*, he openly speaks of his short-lived political career. Although standing twice for Parliament as a Liberal Unionist, he expresses his uncertainty for the reasons to doing so. Claiming the reasoning for the 1900 Central Edinburgh election may have been his sentimental feelings towards this burgh - a part of the city where he spent his younger years and where he was educated. The Liberal Unionist Party broke off because of Ireland - as one part of the party wanted Ireland to stay within the Union and the other did not. However, Ireland was not Conan Doyle's main concern at the time as he wanted to make sure that the Boer War was carried into complete success. This viewpoint was heavily affected by his own experiences in the Boer Wars in February of the same year which was also the main topic of his chronicle "The Great Boer War" which commented not only on the war itself but also on the organization issues of the British forces.⁵³ He was wrongfully accused of being a Jesuit by his opponents (the accusation stemming from his seven years of studying at an English Jesuit boarding school). Whilst not being true as Conan Doyle, contrary to his upbringing, thought of himself mostly as agnostic, the campaign against him was strong enough to make him lose by a few hundred votes. His second attempt at politics was in 1906 for the constituency of Hawick Burghs where he lost again, and from then on decided that his public service was awaiting him in a sphere different to politics. His next activities included writing pamphlets and letters which were then published in various newspapers, and Conan Doyle believed this activity would help the public even more if he was not a part of any particular political party.⁵⁴

Conan Doyle has never expressed his personal feelings towards Scotland. He mentions his feeling of general disconnection to Scotland as is mentioned by an amusing story in chapter number of his biography. When he took over out-patient work after a surgeon at Edinburgh Infirmary, the surgeon asked Conan Doyle whether or not he understood Scottish idioms as was almost necessary for the job and dealings with his Scottish patients. Conan Doyle fondly remembers of not understanding them.⁵⁵

⁵² Wilkie, "Popular Imperialism," 138.

⁵³ "Biography," Arthur Conan Doyle: The Official Site of Sir Arthur Canon Doyle Literary Estate, accessed April 28, 2021, <https://www.arthurconandoyle.com/biography.html>.

⁵⁴ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 195-203.

⁵⁵ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 21.

2 BRITISH WOMEN IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Conan Doyle's fictional detective stories were written between the years 1887 and 1927.⁵⁶ The first half of this period falls into the Victorian era, whilst the second part could be most notably related to the women's suffrage movement in the United Kingdom and their subsequent win by gaining the right to vote. The United Kingdom faced many changes during the 19th century that shaped British society for the years to come. The Industrial Revolution changed the way people worked, the finances they earned and the way they lived. As a result, the division between the rich and the poor became more apparent than ever and those who were oppressed decided to be heard. This chapter provides a look at the position of English and Scottish women in British society in the 19th and early 20th century. In the first part of this chapter, the author focuses on the Victorian era, its perception of women and how women themselves were oppressed by it. The second part of this chapter deals with the beginning of the 20th century and the jump in female rights that it has caused. A further discussion on whether Conan Doyle has chosen to incorporate some realistic political or feminist agenda into his work will ensue in the practical part of the thesis.

When it comes to writing about the question of women in Scotland, most sources are introduced by commenting on the available source material that is very scarce. This might be because Scottish women hold a unique position in narratives dealing with both feminism and nationalism, as they are marginalized not only within the Scottish society because of their gender, but also within the British society because of their Scottish identity. These two factors create an interesting blend of marginalization that results in limited information and (up until recently) limited interest in the question of Scottish women. Although the issues of nationality and gender are connected, they can also be mutually exclusive. As stated in a journal article released in *Feminist review*: "The debate on nationalism in Scotland has ignored gender, and feminist debates on nationalism have ignored Scotland."⁵⁷ Additionally, it is important to note that marginalisation of Scottish women is not only the fault of Scotland itself but also of forces outside of their homeland that have influenced Scottish society.

⁵⁶ "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Sherlock Holmes," The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia, accessed April 25, 2021, https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Sir_Arthur_Conan_Doyle:Sherlock_Holmes.

⁵⁷ Breitenbach, Esther, Alice Brown, and Fiona Myers, "Understanding Women in Scotland," *Feminist Review*, no. 58 (Spring 1998): 61.

Breitenbach et al. talk about the ever-growing interest in feminism and current appearance of feminist articles in Scottish journals and the growing list of feminist titles.⁵⁸ Although this information is promising, information from the 19th and the beginning of 20th century Britain is rather scarce. It is also important to note that no experience is universal, and each woman's experience could have been completely different. However, especially during the time of the reign of Queen Victoria, Victorian values and virtues were very prevalent. In this part of the thesis, the author maps out possible opportunities that women had as well as those that women lacked, together with the general public perception of the female sex and expectations.

According to Gallagher, during the Victorian era, women were treated as second-class citizens, whatever their social rank was.⁵⁹ At the time, Queen Victoria, the British ruler from 1837 to 1901, "became an icon of late-18th-century middle-class femininity and domesticity."⁶⁰ Her iconicity has created values that would uphold throughout the Victorian era and that women would be held accountable for. For that reason, women had to follow the example and fulfil their duties as wives, mothers and caretakers. This caused the female gender to live a life of submission and restriction. Their set of skills was limited to those typically connected to activities required to take care of a household such as weaving, cooking, washing, and cleaning. Barclay et al. also mention the importance of home in Scotland from the 1800 forwards, a household that is a separate female sphere from the economic working sphere of the males. Being appointed by the task of taking care of the household also had its challenges and disadvantages as such work was often very monotone and because of its existence within one's home, it did not provide a sufficient border between time related to work and leisure time. Thus, many Scottish women created structure for these tasks and provided each other with support within their community.⁶¹

Upper class women did not have to learn any of these skills for their maids took care of them. It was not possible for women to gain education or knowledge similar to their husband – as it was the husband's job to acquire the knowledge necessary to work and provide for his family. According to Richard D. Altick: "a woman was inferior to a man in all ways except the unique

⁵⁸ Breitenbach, "Understanding Women," 45.

⁵⁹ Kara L. Barrett, "Victorian Women and Their Working Roles" (English Thesis, State University of New York, 2013), 1.

⁶⁰ "Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain," History Trails: Victorian Britain, BBC, last modified September 18, 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/ideals_womanhood_01.shtml.

⁶¹ Barclay et al., "The State of Scottish History: Gender," 97.

one that counted most [to a man]: her femininity.”⁶² Femininity (and related concepts) were the only attribute that women could possess a cherish for themselves as everything else was related to either their shared household or family. This caused women to prepare for an already predetermined life (in case the woman was lucky enough to get married).

Marriage was seen as sacred and thus desired by most women. The wealth and property ownership of one’s future husband was an important factor. According to Petrie: “From infancy all girls who were born above the level of poverty had the dream of a successful marriage before their eyes, for by that alone was it possible for a woman to rise in the world.”⁶³ It could be stated that, with marriage, women lost any remaining freedom they had previously had. Up until 1882 any property that a woman had owned previously to the act of marriage, suddenly belonged to her husband. The same happened to her income, in case she had a job of her own (which was still quite a rare occurrence at the time). By marriage, the husband and wife were one person in law.⁶⁴

By passing the Married Women’s Property Act 1882, the law regarding the property rights of women allowed them to both own and control their property in their own right. This act applied in England, Wales, and Ireland and extended to other territories of the British Empire during the late 19th century. Similar act was approved for Scotland a year earlier – on the 18th July 1881.⁶⁵ Divorce was uncommon and divorced couples were mostly in the minority. There was, however, a large group of women who never got married in the first place and whose status within British society was irredeemably damaged as a result. Another problem was caused by inheritance, which women could not enjoy themselves without getting married and thus had to live with their family members or find work.⁶⁶

The late Victorian era saw an influx of women pursuing work and studies. This shift in development was related to the great state of British economy. Saunders claims that between the years 1881 to 1911 there was a 161% increase in middle class women and 24% increase in

⁶² Felicia Appell, “Victorian Ideals: The Influence of Society’s Ideals on Victorian Relationships,” *Scholars: Journal of Undergraduate research*, no. 18 (Summer 2021): 1.
<https://www.mckendree.edu/academics/scholars/issue18/appell.htm>

⁶³ Appell, “Victorian Ideals,” 2.

⁶⁴ Edward Raymond Turner, “The Women's Suffrage Movement in England,” *The American Political Science Review* Vol 7, no. 4 (November 1913): 590.

⁶⁵ “Married Women’s Property (Scotland) Act 1881,” [legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk), accessed January 13, 2021.

<https://www.google.com/policies/privacy/>. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/44-45/21/enacted>

⁶⁶ Keche, Houda, Mammeri Chahinaz, “Women’s Suffrage Movement in Britain: The Long Road toward Women’s Rights (1850/1928),” (PhD diss., University of Tlemcen, 2017), 8.

working-class women who entered paid work. By the year 1900, women made up about 16% of university students.⁶⁷ Some women struggled to escape the roles given to them by society and made an effort to work, dealing with the consequences of low wages and harassment from male co-workers. Rioting against the system of core Victorian values did not fare well as working women were seen as “less worthy” and “damaged.” Once a woman acquired a job different to working from home, she was seen as undesirable and often never married. Working-class women often worked in domestic services as maids or labourers in factories, mines or textiles mills.⁶⁸

One of the less problematic job positions was the job of a governess – one of the few appropriate jobs for women at the time - as this role gave women the opportunity to familiarise themselves with family life and educating children. However, governesses usually did not receive proper education themselves. Barrett even stated this education was rather “frivolous.”⁶⁹ Many women sought jobs as they believed it would make their lives more meaningful, instead of concentrating on the man of the house. There was also a rise of women as factory workers, mostly in mill industries and cotton manufacturing. According to Johnson, working-class women actually helped fuel the Industrial Revolution, “making up as much as 60 percent to 80 percent of the workforce in light industries such as cotton manufacturing.”⁷⁰

Mill work was very physically demanding for women (according to Barrett, this job often led them to work themselves to death).⁷¹ Such jobs were also viewed similarly as another position which necessitated physical sacrifices – prostitution. Frowned upon by merely everyone in the Victorian era, female prostitutes were a common job for those who had no other option to provide for themselves or their family. Both professions were viewed as “less than” (going as far as to call female prostitutes “fallen women”). Getting away from such a position (or rising above it) was unheard of. For that reason, such women often had no other choice but to stay in this profession till the end of their lives. Prostitution was sometimes used as a part-time job that helped the woman in question acquire extra finances for her needs, as most work was seriously underpaid (especially in comparison to how much money men made for similar jobs). Murray believes that if women were able to have normal jobs at the time and were provided proper

⁶⁷ Samuel Saunders, “Many Suitable Jobs for Women: Examining the Female Character in Victorian Detective Fiction.” (PhD diss., Liverpool John Moores University in Liverpool, 2014–2015), 60.

⁶⁸ Houda Keche, “Women’s Suffrage Movement in Britain,” 9.

⁶⁹ Barrett, “Victorian Women and Their Working Roles,” 28.

⁷⁰ Barrett, “Victorian Women and Their Working Roles,” 3.

⁷¹ Barrett, “Victorian Women and Their Working Roles,” 21.

education and training to those of men, prostitution would have never been such a big issue.⁷²

Butler agrees with this sentiment, stating:

The desire for education which is widely felt by English women ... springs ... from the conviction that for many women to get knowledge is the only way to get bread', calls for education led on especially to the wider question of women's right to work.⁷³

The magnitude of the problematic women's education was felt by many and became a central campaigning issue for the *English Woman's Journal*, created in the year 1858, which was one of the first periodicals that focused on issues women dealt with in English society at the time – mostly connected to employment and equality. The belief with which the journal was created, and that was held by women's rights activists at the time, was that educating women will improve society – an idea that many feminists of the time could identify with. However important the *Journal* may seem to be nowadays as part of feminist studies, it did not reach a large audience at the time and the resistance towards its ideas was still very prevalent. A common argument against the education of women was their sexual difference.

Higher education was seen as something that existed predominantly for the male sex, brain and character. Something that women did not possess because of their gender. Any woman who was able to receive an education was seen as a mere outlier, an exception to the rule, instead of a component of a larger scheme. Even ideas between feminists differed.⁷⁴ For example, Emily Davies and Elizabeth Wolstenholme believed that the characteristics of genders were a social construct and that both men and women were capable of the same achievements. Josephine Butler and Frances Power Cobbe, on the other hand, were convinced that women's femininity was ultimately something that men do not possess but would also be an asset towards a better society.⁷⁵

A distinction must be made when speaking about the terms “sex” and “gender. According to Butler, the difference between them is that sex is biological whilst gender is culturally constructed being a mere cultural interpretation of sex.⁷⁶ Such cultural interpretations then develop into traditional gender roles. According to Tyson: “Traditional gender roles cast men

⁷² Barrett, “Victorian Women and Their Working Roles,” 20.

⁷³ Laura Schwartz, “Feminist thinking on education in Victorian Britain,” *Oxford Review of Education* 37, no. 5 (October, 2011): 670.

⁷⁴ Schwartz, “Feminist thinking on education, 674.

⁷⁵ Schwartz, “Feminist thinking on education, 678.

⁷⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, Inc., 1990), 6.

as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing and submissive.”⁷⁷ These are the roles that each gender was supposed to represent in Britain in the past. Such interpretations were also the reason why the roles of females were constantly shrunk to caring for their household and family as such roles expanded upon the notions of females. Richard Altick attests to this by saying: “The Victorian woman was inferior to man to almost everything except femininity. Her place was at home and emphatically not in the world of affairs.”⁷⁸ Putting a female view on the current worldly and communal affairs on the sideline was one of the reasons for the female suffrage. The lack of women’s vote had been argued about since the end of the eighteenth century which is also when one the beginnings of the feminist philosophy can be traced. In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft published her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. In the book, Wollstonecraft called for representation of women in the government instead of arbitrary governing. It took exactly fifty years for the first women’s suffrage handbill to be produced which argued about representation of both sexes, ruling that a good government cannot be possible without it.⁷⁹ The request was verbally accepted by the then prime minister Benjamin Disraeli in his declaration: “I do not see on what reasons, if you come to right, she has not a right to vote.”⁸⁰

Higher literacy amongst women was also connected to the establishment of a higher number of schools such as secondary schools for girls and colleges, naturally expected to be the goal and work of Victorian feminism. Whilst education was a very important problem that women’s movements wanted to solve and fight for; Schwartz warns against proclamations demonstrating that the establishment of schools was merely the product of feminist activists. According to her article *Feminist Thinking on Education in Victorian England*, the growing number of schools for women more so a part of broader educational reform than a call for equality.⁸¹ Another point being that educational systems for women ensured high discipline from its pupils and, according to Dyhouse, endorsed conservative models of femininity.⁸² Whether or not women should receive proper education and what such education should look like was always part of a discussion anchored in sexual differences between the two genders.⁸³ Up until that point,

⁷⁷ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (London: Routledge, 2014), 85.

⁷⁸ Turner, “The Women’s Suffrage Movement in England,” 589.

⁷⁹ Harrison et al, *Understanding Political Ideas and Movements*, 296.

⁸⁰ Turner, “The Women’s Suffrage Movement in England,” 589.

⁸¹ Schwartz, “Feminist thinking,” 670.

⁸² Schwartz, “Feminist thinking,” 671.

⁸³ Schwartz, “Feminist thinking,” 678.

women were mostly provided with domestic education and, according to studies made by Corr, McDermid and Moore, such education was often put aside to make space for ‘book learning’.⁸⁴ Whilst the education offered to women was gradually growing, feminists themselves could not be in agreement with each other about the proper way of educating women. Whilst some feminists such as Emily Davis and Elizabeth Wolstenhome believed that gender is socially constructed and can be destroyed by educating women in the same way as men – thus helping them set themselves free from the constructed limitations. Others, like Josephine Butler and Frances Power Cobbe believed that the concept of femininity has to be included in the schooling system and thus different kinds of thinking have to be put forward in order to enrich and change current society.⁸⁵ Male education was seen as universal, however Smout and Houston claim that Scottish women had better literacy in comparison to other parts of Britain (although it still fared worse in comparison to male Brits).⁸⁶

All of these cultural shifts may be the catalysts that fuelled the different approach to women in detective fiction from victimised archetypal characters to examples of ‘New Women’. The term ‘New Woman’ was coined by the Irish feminist writer Sarah Grand in 1894. In her article *The New Aspect of the Woman Questions*, she expresses her frustrations about the dominance of men over women and mocks their God complex.⁸⁷ Saunders argues that the New Woman phenomenon also translates to some of Conan Doyle’s stories and other popular detective fiction which followed at the very end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.⁸⁸ Conan Doyle's short stories show more complex characteristics of the characters and often steer away from victimising the women. Saunders even goes as far to say that Conan Doyle expresses the idea of ‘death of the female victim’ in Victorian detective fiction.⁸⁹ That is how, throughout the Victorian era, women started to be moved from victimised positions of characters into the positions of protagonists, antagonists, witnesses, accomplices and narrators.⁹⁰ Saunders argues that although female characters in Victorian fiction were often victimised, their victimisation was self-aware and used for the purpose of criticism against current social issues and ideologies

⁸⁴ Barclay et al., "The State of Scottish History: Gender," 102.

⁸⁵ Schwartz, "Feminist thinking," 678.

⁸⁶ Barclay et al., "The State of Scottish History: Gender," 101.

⁸⁷ Sarah Grand, "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," *The North American Review* 158, no. 448 (1894): 274.

⁸⁸ Saunders, "Many Suitable Jobs for Women", 61.

⁸⁹ Saunders, "Many Suitable Jobs for Women", 79.

⁹⁰ Saunders, "Many Suitable Jobs for Women", 3.

often used especially by female writers to further their campaigning opinions.⁹¹ In relation to critical feminist thinking, Lois Tyson mentions the idea of a Victorian pedestal which served to separate the “good women” from the “bad women.” At the time the worst a woman could do was to be interested in sexual activity which would not lead to procreation – as physical desires were seen as unnatural. An act going against these societal rules of the time would end up in punishment.⁹²

According to Fatallah, the change that Britain was going through at the beginning of the 20th century plays a key role in Sherlock Holmes’ stories. Social issues are brought up as part of the plot. The main character functions as a reassurance for the reader that although the world is changing rapidly and unpredictably, it keeps on being “readable and understandable.”⁹³ Although this thesis deals with the femininity exemplified in Conan Doyle’s stories, it is also important to mention the background on which such femininity operates, and which provides the much-needed contrast to said characters. One argument brought up by Kestner is that the character of Sherlock Holmes exemplifies rational masculinity of Victorian times, namely by the hysteria and disorganisation that his clients usually demonstrate. Stating Holmes’ masculinity is “rational, logical, courageous and patriotic.”⁹⁴ Thus succumbing to classic gender ideals of the time. Conley mentions the ideal Victorian relationship with the male being “the strong protector and guardian” whilst the female was “weak and innocent.”⁹⁵

According to Derek Longhurst, Conan Doyle was an opponent of the suffrage movement of the time, although he berated it on the notion of the criminal acts they performed. His proclamation even led to suffragettes leaving sulphuric acid in his letterbox. Daniel Stashower, however, states that Conan Doyle’s stance against suffragettes does not inherently mean that he opposed women’s rights.⁹⁶ Pascal adds that Conan Doyle’s explanation for not supporting women’s voting was perpetuated by clear Victorian domestic standards, as his explanation was that a man does not want to speak about politics when coming home from work.⁹⁷ Again perpetuating domestic stereotypes of Victorian England.

⁹¹ Saunders, “Many Suitable Jobs for Women”, 78.

⁹² Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 90.

⁹³ Judith May Fathallah, *Fanfiction and the Author* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 47.

⁹⁴ Fathallah, *Fanfiction and the Author*, 48.

⁹⁵ Carolyn A. Conley, "Rape and Justice in Victorian England," *Victorian Studies* 29, no. 4 (1986): 534.

⁹⁶ Miller, *Framed*, 57

⁹⁷ Pascal, *Arthur Conan Doyle: Beyond Baker Street*, 119.

3 DETECTIVE FICTION AND THE GREAT DETECTIVE

Detective fiction is part of popular literature and stems from crime fiction. The origins of the crime genre date from the fourth to the first century BC, from the Old Testament to the myths of Hercules. Another example of very famous stories with crime-story elements would be Hamlet or The Scarlet Letter.⁹⁸ Most critics agree that the beginning of the detective story can be found in the middle of the 19th century in the works of Edgar Allan Poe.⁹⁹ Although Stein mentions that at the time, Poe dealt with unpopularity and his work was deemed unhealthy because of its captivation with death. Acclimatization to crime fiction after Poe had died is seen as a major shift in thinking which helped crime fiction to evolve further.¹⁰⁰ Thomas Love Peacock mentions in his work *An Essay on Fashionable Literature*: “The moral and political character of the age or nation may be read by an attentive observer even in its lightest literature.” Clausen goes on to say how detective story is the type of “light literature” that is actually heavily concerned with current moral issues and thus can provide the readers with a different view at the era in which it was written.¹⁰¹

John Cawelti states: “classical detective story begins with an unsolved crime and moves towards the elucidation of its mystery.” According to him, classic detective stories should have three patterns - situation, action, and character and relationships. They also require at least four main archetypal character roles - the victim, the criminal, the detective and those who are threatened and unable to solve the crime.¹⁰² Thomas M. Leitch writes that each detective story follows the same narrative pattern, this pattern is specified as such: a crime is committed and somebody (whether a detective, an amateur or a professional) becomes interested in solving the crime, evidence is examined, the suspects are interviewed and then the narrative climaxes in the conclusion and explanation.¹⁰³ The archetypal characters as well as the narrative patterns ring true to the stories of Sherlock Holmes.

The interest in detective stories can be easily linked to widespread urban unemployment. At the beginning of the 19th century, the Industrial revolution caused the rise of capitalism and

⁹⁸ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 8-12.

⁹⁹ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Aaron Marc Stein, "The Detective Story—How and Why," *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 36, no. 1 (Autumn 1974): 19.

¹⁰¹ Clausen, "Sherlock Holmes, Order, and the Late-Victorian Mind," 106.

¹⁰² Saunders, "Many Suitable Jobs for Women", 5.

¹⁰³ Thomas M. Leitch, "From Detective Story to Detective Novel," *Modern Fiction Studies* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 1983): 475.

movement of people to urban areas, this was also the cause of unemployment which marked an increase in criminality.¹⁰⁴ Higher number of crimes and organised crime groups led to the creation of the then-kind of police forces. Before their existence, soldiers used to be called in case somebody did not follow the law. The birth of the police started in 1749 with the organisation of “thief-takers” who worked as freelancers and worked on commission. However, they often tangled themselves up in corruption and ended up working for the very criminals they were supposed to catch. In 1828, the Metropolitan Police Act created the first municipal constabulary.¹⁰⁵ The creation of the police force in addition to science, during the 19th century, London police force was able to lower the amount of crime on London streets, making it less threatening and perfect for a detective such as Holmes who dealt not only with crimes but also morally ambiguous issues.¹⁰⁶ To this he added elements of authors such as Poe, Vidocq and Gaboriau and added the character of John Watson to bridge the geniality to readers.¹⁰⁷

Thanks to the growing number of scientific discoveries and usage of science in more aspects of everyday life, science began to take part in detective work by providing more aspects of analytical and rational thinking with direct evidence obtained through scientific means. One example of that would be Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”. The story was published in 1841 and its main character, C. Auguste Dupin is generally viewed as a detective predecessor to both Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie’s Hercule Poirot. Dupin is eccentric, reclusive and analytical. His story has an anonymous narrator who creates a clear picture of the detective with human touches.¹⁰⁸ Scaggs mentions that since the publication of the first Poe’s detective story up until the Second World War, crime fiction writers had created a patriarchal worldview that was later challenged by Agatha Christie’s female detective Miss Jane Marple.¹⁰⁹

Poe’s detective Dupin bears many similarities to Sherlock Holmes. Doctor John Watson from Conan Doyle’s stories was the origin for a so-called ‘Watson figure’.¹¹⁰ Scaggs mentions that a ‘Watson figure’ helps narrator to shorten the distance between the eccentric detective whose mind works in curious ways and the reader. Firstly, the regular mind of the narrator helps to provide a clearer picture of how the detective (Dupin or Holmes)

¹⁰⁴ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 18.

¹⁰⁶ Menes, “SOCIAL SCIENCE: Sherlock Holmes and Sociology,” 103.

¹⁰⁷ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 25.

¹⁰⁸ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 19-20.

¹⁰⁹ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 20.

¹¹⁰ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 39.

read the case. It could be said that Watson himself is solving a little additional mystery during all other cases - the mystery of Holmes' mind. The narrator's role is figuring out how the detective solves each case. He is often trying to observe the method and analytical steps taken - usually by a question which prompts the detective to explain the complicated jumble of his thoughts which repeatedly lead to the correct answer. Conan Doyle explains his choice of adding Watson as a narrator since Sherlock himself could never possibly speak of his own actions and thus needed a "commonplace comrade"¹¹¹ who would be smart but also active enough to participate in the action as well as narrate it. Secondly, the narrator positions himself on the level of regular men who are below the masterful mind of the great detective. Providing the reader with a representative of their own kind.

Scaggs also mentions, however, that Agatha Christie's legendary characters Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple do not fit into the same pattern of the 'detective genius' as Holmes or Dupin does. Claiming their methods from "careful observation and common sense."¹¹² Conan Doyle specifies his approach to writing detective stories:

I had been reading some detective stories and it struck me what nonsense they were, to put it mildly, because for getting the solution of the mystery, the authors always depended on some coincidence. This struck me as not a fair way of playing the game.¹¹³

Conan Doyle himself mentions the different use of detective story, as he claims in his biography that he created a detective who solved cases on his own unrelated to possible recklessness of the criminal.¹¹⁴ Holmes' deductive powers and extended knowledge of science, chemistry and physics can again be connected to the Victorian approach to scientific innovations and rational thinking. Proving that these are also two important factors in Conan Doyle's stories.¹¹⁵ At the beginning, murder was not the central part of cases taken up by Sherlock Holmes. According to Knight, most of these stories are targeted at wealth which coincides with bourgeoisie lifestyle in Victorian England.¹¹⁶ In his adventures, Holmes deals with all sorts of characters including both rural and urban and aristocratic and thanks to, according to Clausen, provides an overlooked source to study the mindset of late-Victorian society.¹¹⁷ Most stories also have a

¹¹¹ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 69.

¹¹² Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 42-43.

¹¹³ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 38.

¹¹⁴ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 21.

¹¹⁵ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 38.

¹¹⁶ Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 43.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

concern with identity - there are often disguises or deceptions used by Holmes or other characters. Past and present identities also clash with those that are native and foreign.¹¹⁸

In her article *Sherlock Holmes and Sociology*, Bonnie Menes claims that Holmes' position was actually closer to a social scientist than just a consulting detective. She draws this conclusion from his deductions which tend to be mostly sociological (dealing with somebody's marital or occupational status). Another point is brought up in relation to the type of cases Holmes picks to solve. A lot of them are not about breaking the law and often are not even immoral, but they tend to deal with a broken predetermined social rule which Holmes is for some reason willing to defend on a raised suspicion (as in the story *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*, which will later be discussed in the practical part of the thesis).¹¹⁹ The private consulting detective does not always represent the law and sometimes even breaks the law himself. Menes states: "Neither goodness nor justice but social order is Sherlock Holmes's desire."¹²⁰ Each plot then aims to turn disorder into order, the order often concerning the question of right or wrong.

According to Miller, Holmes is a patriot and a nationalist,¹²¹ often helping to cover up aristocratic scandals. He also proves his patriotism in the story "The Musgrave Ritual" where Watson claims one of the walls has a decoration of "a patriotic V. R. done in bullet-pocks."¹²² Whether this patriotism is connected to Conan Doyle's love for his country is not clear. However, Conan Doyle did create an inherently British character represented by the English side.

Stories such as detective fiction tend to blur the lines between public and private as the detective visits the personal space of all participants, witnesses, victims. Saunders calls the use of female characters who are victims are often 'flattened' female characters, used as a type of social commentary.¹²³ In addition, detective stories open up domestic lives on a metafictional level – the viewers are then able to see "intimate images of domestic crime" that often relate to issues on a governmental level.¹²⁴ Holmes uncovers people's personal stories that show possible motives or connections to the crime. Jann adds that crimes that Holmes solves are often more of challenges to current social norms than breaking of official rules.¹²⁵ He himself mentions in

¹¹⁸ Menes, "SOCIAL SCIENCE: Sherlock Holmes and Sociology," 104.

¹¹⁹ Menes, "SOCIAL SCIENCE: Sherlock Holmes and Sociology," 101.

¹²⁰ Menes, "SOCIAL SCIENCE: Sherlock Holmes and Sociology," 102.

¹²¹ Miller, *Framed*, 53.

¹²² Doyle, Estleman, *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*, 329.

¹²³ Saunders, "Many Suitable Jobs for Women", 24.

¹²⁴ Miller, *Framed*, 53.

¹²⁵ Jann, "Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body," 704.

A Case of Identity” stating his wish to fly out of the window and take off roofs of the houses so he could take a good at what is happening inside.¹²⁶

In addition, Holmes and Watson publicly defame acts of violence against women. Calling domestic violence as something could not be invented even by the crudest of writers.¹²⁷ Condemning it to the highest level of crime. This example again aligns with the sociological aspect that Menes focuses on.

To describe Victorian detective fiction, one does not have to steer far from the popular ‘Sherlock Holmes’ stories as they are the most famous examples of Victorian illustration of the genre. According to Saunders, the stories also provided a template for future expectations of reading material of the detective fiction genre.¹²⁸ At the end of the 19th century, detective fiction became quick and digestible¹²⁹ - Conan Doyle’s Holmes being its best demonstration. Whilst most cheap popular fiction of the time was created to cater to wider audiences.¹³⁰ Because of the popular nature of short or long detective stories, it is important to mention more about readers in Victorian Britain. Providing that Conan Doyle was also notorious to make his fans/readers excited and provide them with more material (for example when he brought Sherlock Holmes back from the dead after culminating fan protests). That is another reason why his writing is heavily influenced by the culture surrounding him and general expectations. Unfortunately, no data exists about what percentage of the Strand readers were actually women. Memoirs of Margaret Elizabeth Leigh Child-Villiers, Countess of Jersey however mention that even an Italian Queen referred to The Strand in their conversation as her magazine of preference in English language.¹³¹ This could prove that even aristocrats did not stray too far from cheap story magazines of the time. There were many reasons why reading became popular - the most notable was higher literacy achieved by 70 percent of men and 55 percent of women in 1850.¹³² The difference in numbers was caused by female education. and the development of electricity which brought the possibility to read after the sunset to many households. Thanks to these factors as well as a good economic environment provided publishers with a challenge to publish

¹²⁶ Doyle, Estleman, *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*, 151.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Saunders, “Many Suitable Jobs for Women”, 67.

¹²⁹ Saunders, “Many Suitable Jobs for Women”, 59.

¹³⁰ Saunders, “Many Suitable Jobs for Women”, 34.

¹³¹ Dowager Countess of Jersey, *Fifty-one Years of Victorian Life* (London: John Murray, 1922), 356.

<https://archive.org/details/fiftyoneyearsofv00jersrich>

¹³² Martyn Lyons, “New Readers in the Nineteenth Century: Women, Children, Workers,” in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 314.

short popular stories at a quick rate.¹³³ Saunders also states that writing at the time began to pander to more classes than the previous mostly literal upper and middle class.¹³⁴ Reading was also an activity with which passengers occupied themselves when travelling. The stories of Sherlock Holmes are a perfect example of this, since they were primarily sold at train stations and created in a way which would be perfect for a quick read on one's journey.¹³⁵ Whilst many females enjoyed reading during the Victorian era, some of the reading materials were seen as against morale or were forbidden by their fathers, husbands or governesses. Another reason why reading was sometimes seen as a dangerous pastime was explained by Marisa Knox in her dissertation *Identification Crises: Victorian Women and Wayward Reading*, that female reading created a lot of ambivalence in the 19th century generated mostly by the common misconception of internalised female tendencies to identify themselves with the main characters and for whom such texts could be detrimental.¹³⁶ Such reading would be more active than passive and was thought to make women delusional, immersed in a different world and more vulnerable. Genres for the new market of readers - women - included cookery books, novels and magazines. However, magazines for women were usually filled with recipes, etiquette advice and fashion.¹³⁷

Holmes' distant nature is explained by Conan Doyle in his autobiography where the writer himself explains why he may have gotten a little bit weary of his beloved character. The curious ways in which Holmes thinks was seen as both his advantage as well as a disadvantage as his character "admits of no light or shade" and "is a calculating machine, and anything you add to that simply weakens the effect." Watson has a similar issue as he never makes jokes and does not use humour. According to Conan Doyle himself this is the reason why most of these stories depend on compact plots and romance - as various other characters tend to enrich the stories with higher emotional capacity.

Stemming from this statement, it could be said that the main characters of the stories are very one-dimensional. Clausen agrees with this but also goes on to say that although the works have been spread through 40 years, "intellect at war with mystery" has been a coherent and

¹³³ Saunders, "Many Suitable Jobs for Women", 67.

¹³⁴ Saunders, "Many Suitable Jobs for Women", 34.

¹³⁵ Saunders, "Many Suitable Jobs for Women", 68.

¹³⁶ Marisa Knox, "Identification Crises: Victorian Women and Wayward Reading" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2013), 1.

¹³⁷ Lyons, "New Readers in the Nineteenth Century: Women, Children, Workers," 319.

purposeful part of the story.¹³⁸ Conan Doyle's success with the English might have been because he was able to present an English character with a sense of detachment.

The first novel *A Study in Scarlet* was published on the 20th November 1886 and its sequel *The Sign of the Four* was published in Lippincott's Monthly Magazine in 1890. Conan Doyle noticed that various magazines were coming out with short stories that were disconnected and thought that similar stories with one recurring character would engage the reader enough to be loyal to that particular magazine. This belief is also argued by critic Ed Wiles who believes Conan Doyle's serialization sparked public interest and demand for periodicals.¹³⁹ He was also well aware that such stories should not be continuations of one another but rather each complete in itself so the reader could enjoy a whole story in one magazine issue whilst also enjoy another one if he wishes to do so in the next issue. This theory was put into practice with the help of an already existing character of Sherlock Holmes and *The Strand Magazine* under Greenhough Smith editorship. *The Strand* was a new periodical which was published monthly and was heavily illustrated. Both the stories and the magazine quickly became very popular and led to the creation of other periodicals and stories of similar format. Whether the popularity stemmed from the Conan Doyle's stories or the general format of the magazines has been discussed by critics extensively and most probably seems like a combination of more factors. The connection that detective stories had with illustrations made these two cultural forms inseparable in the eyes of the Victorian reader, according to claims made by Miller.¹⁴⁰ Later on, in 1893 a collection *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* was released, followed by three more collections of short stories – *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* in 1905, *His Last Bow* in 1917 and *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* in 1927.¹⁴¹

The Strand was immensely popular as it sold around 350,000 copies a month. This mass production of periodicals was made possible by quick and rapid shifts in publishing which made the production quick and cheap for citizens of all classes to buy.¹⁴² In comparison to English periodicals, Scotland started to publish periodicals much later, first notable ones being *Scots Magazine* and *Edinburgh Review* at the beginning of the 18th century, and later on *Blackwood's*

¹³⁸ Christopher Clausen, "Sherlock Holmes, Order, and the Late-Victorian Mind," *The Georgia Review* 38, no. 1 (1984): 106-107.

¹³⁹ Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, *Framed: The New Woman Criminal in British Culture at the Fin De Siecle* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 29.

¹⁴⁰ Miller, *Framed*, 27.

¹⁴¹ Saunders, "Many Suitable Jobs for Women", 68.

¹⁴² Miller, *Framed*, 28.

Edinburgh.¹⁴³ In 1922, a notable periodical being *The Scottish Chapbook* which took great care in presenting highly Scottish values and distinguishing itself from English influence.¹⁴⁴ Other periodicals were created and often quickly ended its publication, Daiches explains that the lack of good Scottish writers was apparent during this century, as they decided to drift off to London. Some of them, such as Thomas Carlyle, were able to draw upon their Scottish roots and inspire other aspiring Scottish writers. However, there were also those who were “cut off from their cultural roots” such as a young poet John Davidson.¹⁴⁵

Menes sees Holmes as a character that is very progressive for Victorian fashion. The examples she gives are those of different nationalities which come and go in many stories - often not exemplified as neither victims nor villains. His (non-sexual) preference for women is also broad as he “fancies both clever and sharp-witted women such as Irene Adler, and dependable and commonsensical women like Violet Hunter.”¹⁴⁶ Pierre Norton sees Holmes as a symbol of logical and rational thinking of late Victorian times that create order.¹⁴⁷

Yet Holmes often has issues with deducing women. Miller states that his “visual capacities are often not as effective with women as with men.”¹⁴⁸ Holmes himself explains this is because of their beauty rituals that lead to them not putting forward their true appearance.¹⁴⁹ According to Watson Holmes has an “aversion to women” but from the stories it is clear that Holmes’ relationship with the opposite sex is mostly apathetic and disinterested (with the exception of Irene Adler). It is, however, clear that Holmes is able to identify some sort of beauty of physical appearance or wit as is in the case of Lady Brackenstall from *The Abbey Grange* when he says: “The lady’s charming personality must not be permitted to warp our judgment.”¹⁵⁰

Whilst some of the characters tend to be progressive, Doyle’s personal stance in the question of female empowerment is mentioned by Janet B. Pascal in her book *Arthur Conan Doyle: Beyond Baker Street*. Because of her own work as a justice advocate, a clear parallel can be seen between Holmes’ stances and the writer’s personal views on the question of female

¹⁴³ Daiches, *A Companion to Scottish Culture*, 287.

¹⁴⁴ Daiches, *A Companion to Scottish Culture*, 288.

¹⁴⁵ Daiches, *A Companion to Scottish Culture*, 223.

¹⁴⁶ Bonnie Menes, “SOCIAL SCIENCE: Sherlock Holmes and Sociology,” *The American Scholar* 50, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 105.

¹⁴⁷ Rosemary Jann, “Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body,” *ELH* 57, no. 3 (1990): 685.

¹⁴⁸ Miller, *Framed*, 39.

¹⁴⁹ Arthur Conan Doyle, Loren D. Estleman, *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories Volume I and II*. (New York: Bantam Books, 2003), 572.

¹⁵⁰ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*, 557.

empowerment. Two interesting points can be made as Conan Doyle campaigned for laws that would grant women better position in divorce dealings and erase biases often perpetuated against women during such hearings.¹⁵¹ He himself mentions the Divorce Laws reform in his biography, stating that England was lagging even behind Scotland as well as its colonies in terms of its unions that he sees as “obviously disgusting and degrading.”¹⁵² Conley mentions some of these unfavourable biases in her article *Rape and Justice in Victorian England*. To provide an example, an adultery performed by the wife was enough to get a divorce whilst adultery performed by the husband would not (except if linked to other offenses). Such an act would often also condone violence against the woman.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Janet B Pascal, *Arthur Conan Doyle: Beyond Baker Street* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 119.

¹⁵² Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 231.

¹⁵³ Conley, "Rape and Justice in Victorian England," 534.

4 WOMEN IN DETECTIVE PROSE BY ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

As had been previously mentioned, the Victorian era was very frugal for women's rights, one of the points of analysis in the practical part of the thesis is whether Conan Doyle used the progress surrounding his country as inspiration for his female characters. The detective stories and novels in question are in a unique position, having been popular for over a hundred years and adapted for various media. These adaptations also provide an interesting viewpoint on the old-fashioned portrayal of some of the female characters as well as their (un)popularity. The lack of interesting female characters often made creators of new adaptations resort to changing the gender of some of the male characters - most recently in the CBS show *Elementary* - a modernised adaptation of Sherlock Holmes' stories which put forward not one but two new female characters - the doctor on Holmes' side being changed from John Watson to Joan Watson and his nemesis James Moriarty becoming Jamie Moriarty. Similarly, a popular children's book (and 2020 Netflix film *Enola Holmes*) follows the story of a young girl - Sherlock Holmes' sister who was not part of the canon. Such steps could prove that the lack of female characters is also felt by contemporary fans (or, at the very least, assumed to be felt by the shows' executive producers).

For the purposes of the practical part, various female characters from the Sherlock Holmes canon were chosen for analysis. As the canon provides many stories and characters, the author of the thesis has chosen those that had the most speaking roles, appeared in more than one story or whose story works for or against clear Victorian principles and thus makes the analysis of their characteristics clearer.

It is, among other things, important to mention that Conan Doyle himself has never stated his position on this particular gender discourse. Which is why the research focuses on Conan Doyle's expression through his writing and through the characters' opinions. Another necessary addition is the fact that Sherlock Holmes himself was written as a quirky, unordinary character and so his proclamations should not be taken seriously. Detective stories have been part of popular fiction and, whilst providing the reader a mirror to the culture at the time and the type of entertainment, they also needed to be sold to mass audience and thus it would be difficult to take many risks with female characters.

Liese Sherwood-Fabre researched the number of female characters in the Sherlock Holmes' canon. She found out that out of sixty stories, fifteen of them include a villainess. Nine of these were murders, two thefts and then one blackmail, polygamy, kidnapping and one assault. Sherwood-Fabre classifies these villainesses according to Carl Jung archetypes, stating that most of villainesses fall into the category of parasites (which help their partner commit crime) or fanatics (whose primary motivation is revenge). Out of all these only one was actually prosecuted for her crimes. The others either get away with the crime by escaping or, in more extreme cases, committing suicide. This coincides with the question of morality within the canon which often lets people get away with something.¹⁵⁴

According to Gordon, Conan Doyle most often uses women in his stories as a tool to show Holmes' exceptional detective skills and to further the patriarchal England.¹⁵⁵ Miller adds that women often tend to cause problems in Holmes' investigation as they sometimes suffer from nervous breakdowns or are unconscious.¹⁵⁶ According to her, it also seems difficult for Holmes to pick up on visual cues on female's bodies that could prove their guilt or innocence. Some lack the resolution, the motive, and some only gain those because of help of a male character.¹⁵⁷ Jann states that the portrayal of women in the stories makes them out to be easily manipulated by Holmes in comparison to male characters. There is also an interesting class separation as lower-class women are usually manipulated much easier than upper-class women. The gender provides women with higher malleability than men and a lower class even furthers their malleability.¹⁵⁸ Because of this characteristic, Holmes and Watson can exploit such women easily for information - similarly to how upper-class men could exploit these women sexually or financially.¹⁵⁹ Holmes also often points out female nature to be the reason behind female behaviour (as opposed to logic or rational thinking) – again showing an example of the illegal irrationality of female gender and describing women in a fashion that is conventionally stereotypical of the female sex.

Female sexuality, although often a motive of the crimes, is rarely truly dealt with. This is not surprising, when sexual repression of Victorian Britain is taken into account. However, gender

¹⁵⁴ City of Allen – ACTV, "The Women of Sherlock Holmes," posted March 25, 2017, YouTube video, 7:07, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3RLMncqbew&t=807s&ab_channel=CityofAllen-ACTV.

¹⁵⁵ Gordon, "Women: Worldly, Wordy, or Un-written An Analysis of the Women of Sherlock Holms and the Victorian English Era," 1.

¹⁵⁶ Miller, *Framed*, 40.

¹⁵⁷ Miller, *Framed*, 41.

¹⁵⁸ Jann, "Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body," 697.

¹⁵⁹ Jann, "Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body," 698.

and class is not the only stereotyped input that Conan Doyle put in his works.¹⁶⁰ Female anger is often made stronger by the different ethnicity - mentions of “fiery and passionate” Welsh blood or Peruvian “fiery tropical blood” being proof of this statement. However, it is important to mention that ethnicity often plays a similar role in terms of male gender as well.¹⁶¹ English women exist on the opposite spectrum to exotic women, especially when it comes to those of upper classes. They generally tend to be less malleable and possess better control over their emotions and are capable of logical thinking or hiding their true nature. Classes also create differences in sexual nature of as upper-class ladies’ “sexual vulnerability is more limited” and thus more difficult to fool. One such example would be Lady Frances Carfax from the short story *The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax*, who is described as wealthy enough to be outside of male control which makes her dangerous as she can act how she pleases.¹⁶² Gordon makes her own comment on the discourse related to different nationalities of female characters as she claims that Conan Doyle uses women “to advance the perception of the English as the elite, and all other cultures as lesser.”¹⁶³

Not all female logic is separated by class. Violet de Merville from *The Adventure of the Illustrious Client* is a daughter of a General whose illogical behaviour is unbelievable to Holmes as she foolishly fights for a marriage with an evil Austrian baron. Whilst the attachment is illogical, Jann claims its “genteely asexual” and mostly fanatic.¹⁶⁴

This chapter is divided into subchapters titled by the name of the given female character or, in case more female characters appear in one story, by the name of the given story. These subchapters do contain not only the analysis of notable characters from the Sherlock Holmes’ stories but also description of the narrative which these characters occupy.

4.1 Irene Adler

The first subchapter of the practical part of the thesis is dedicated to no other than Irene Adler. The most famous female character of the Sherlock Holmes canon has made appearances in various adaptations. Irene Adler is Holmes’ main antagonist in the story *A Scandal in Bohemia* published in *the Strand* in 1891 as Conan Doyle’s first story and released in 1892 as part of the

¹⁶⁰ Jann, "Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body," 697.

¹⁶¹ Jann, "Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body," 698.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Meghan R. Gordon, “Women: Worldly, Wordy, or Un-written An Analysis of the Women of Sherlock Holms and the Victorian English Era,” *Rollins Undergraduate Reserach Journal* 5, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 1.

¹⁶⁴ Jann, "Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body," 699.

first collection of short stories named *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.¹⁶⁵ Adler does not appear in any other stories, although she is mentioned in *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle* and *A Case of Identity* - two short stories from the same collection, and also in *His Last Bow*.¹⁶⁶

The plot revolves around the King of Bohemia who comes to Holmes disguised as a Bohemian nobleman. The case he puts he needs help with is one of intimate and secretive nature. Irene Adler comes from New Jersey and used to be an opera singer in Milan and a prima donna in Warsaw. That is where she had met the King - five years prior to his visit to Holmes. The pair became lovers and Adler obtained a compromising photograph with both her and the King in it. The King's reputation is at stake as the family of his future wife is very strict and the lovelorn Adler threatened to send the photograph to them. She is not willing to sell it and it seems impossible to steal as the King's men had already tried five times prior to his visit at Holmes'.

Holmes decides to follow Irene to learn more about her and accidentally becomes a witness of her wedding ceremony to a bachelor called Godfrey Norton. The detective then creates a ruse to find out where it is that Irene hid the photograph. Here we can see one of Holmes' many general presumptions about women: "When a woman thinks that her house is on fire, her instinct is at once to rush to the thing which she values most."¹⁶⁷ With this statement, Holmes creates a separation between the two genders – as is expected at the time. The man and the woman are seen two different entities that behave differently in similar situations. Irene's reaction to the fake fire alarm validates Holmes' supposition as she shows him where her most valuable item - the photograph, is hidden. That is the last time within the story, however, where Holmes is one step ahead of Adler. Believing in his success, he promises to retrieve the photograph only to find Adler's house empty with a letter addressed to Holmes and another photograph showing only Adler herself in her evening dress. The letter states that Adler had defeated Holmes and had fled England with her new husband and the photograph in question.

Adler is the first and only woman to ever defeat Holmes. In the archetypes of villainesses, Irene would be seen as the schemer. To ruse him, she used a similar technique which the detective is seen using in other stories - she disguises herself as a man and follows Holmes to find out what his objective is. When her suspicions are confirmed, she decides to flee with her husband. In the letter, she also promises not to use the photograph to hurt the King's reputation and explains

¹⁶⁵ Saunders, "Many Suitable Jobs for Women", 68.

¹⁶⁶ Antonija Primorac, "The Naked Truth: The Postfeminist Afterlives of Irene Adler," *Journal of Neo-Victorian Studies* 6, no. 2 (2013): 94

¹⁶⁷ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 131.

her decision to keep it in order to safeguard herself from any possible future steps the King might take against her. The King is satisfied with this outcome as he is sure that Adler will keep her word. Holmes asks him for Irene's photograph as a reward instead money. At the end of the story, Watson explains that up until that time, Holmes had often made fun of the cleverness of women, but after meeting Adler he never did so again. Strahan further explains that Adler's win significantly affects Holmes' biases for the rest of the series regarding other female characters in his cases.¹⁶⁸

Because of her wit, Adler is nicknamed to be "the Woman." Whilst later TV and film adaptations often choose to give her the role as Holmes' love interest, the short story does not speak of such connection as it more so shows Adler as a woman of her own means whose main goal is her own selfish happiness that she wishes to pertain.

Critic Francis Gray claims that Adler "offers an endless destabilization and disruption of what seems fixed."¹⁶⁹ Holmes is able to see through the disguise of his client – the King of Bohemia and he is also trying to retrieve a photograph – another visual representation of the issue at hand. Yet, he is not able to see through Adler's male disguise and that ultimately leads to not being able to retrieve the photograph in time and lose to Adler's wit. The oppressive environment of Victorian England is expressed by Adler herself, where she states, in her final note to Sherlock Holmes, that crossdressing is something she tends to use often as it gives her freedom to do whatever she wants to.¹⁷⁰ This statement clearly encompasses Adler's feelings about the position of women in the Victorian era and the lack of freedom they have to deal with.

As has been previously mentioned, class usually plays a major part in most Sherlock Holmes' stories, especially when it comes to women. With that being said, Irene Adler is more of an outlier as her class is not fully stated in the story. In *Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body*, Adler's social class is explained as "demimonde" - the one of women whose position is rather respectable but usually keep wealthy lovers or husbands to support them financially.¹⁷¹ According to Jann, demimonde status puts Adler in a perfect position to marry an upper class man (in this case, a lawyer) but leaves her to be extremely cunning to blackmail

¹⁶⁸ Jeremy Strahan, "Marriage & Scandal: Sherlock Holmes's Treatment of Women in the Doyle Canon" (MA thesis, State University of New York, 2019), 6.

¹⁶⁹ Miller, *Framed*, 41.

¹⁷⁰ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 131.

¹⁷¹ "Demimonde," Merriam-Webster, accessed June 3, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/demimonde>.

the King of Bohemia.¹⁷² Although her plot is clever, both the king and the detective that as a woman she is again acting from emotional incentives - her anger coming from the fact that the King chose a marriage with a daughter of a Scandinavian king instead of a relationship with her. But at the end it becomes clear that Adler only chooses to use the photograph for her protection as she is no longer in love with the King and has found another man.¹⁷³

Although nicknamed “the woman” her characteristics do not inherently match those of her contemporaries within the same literary universe. Irene is an outlier. This may have been because she was the main female character of his first short story. For the female characters that were written after, Conan Doyle may have chosen an easier route and let his writing succumb to stereotyped versions of Victorian women. Another possibility for her actions may be her nationality as she does not have to succumb to classic British norms as she comes from America.

According to Miller, Adler “embodies something distinctively womanly.”¹⁷⁴ Her whole identity is that of a woman which also conveys exactly what Holmes does not understand. When the Woman cross-dresses as a man, her femininity and gender is visually hidden and that gives her the possibility to win over Holmes by “manipulating outward visual codes of gender.”¹⁷⁵ Not only that, Adler used disguise - a thing exclusively used by Holmes in many of his stories – this time cleverly used against him. This proves her intellect and similar logical thinking to Holmes himself. Not only that, Watson even uses a gender comparison to explain the brilliancy of Adler as she has “the face of the most beautiful of women and the mind of the most resolute men.”¹⁷⁶ Frances Gray claims that what Adler does in the story is a “destabilisation and disruption of what seems fixed.”¹⁷⁷ Not only in terms of the female gender but also in terms of regular crimes and their investigation. Conan Doyle’s choice for Adler to get married puts her to the position of domesticity and, with this act, “reprivatizes” her public persona.¹⁷⁸ Adler’s ability qualifies her as an autonomous subject, showing her own control over her agenda, body and identity. She acts selfishly, self-reliantly and independently. From the point of view of feminist literary criticism, she could be characterised as “the bad girl,” however, somehow Adler’s character was able to occupy a morally grey area. Although an adventuress, she is also seen as a respected.

¹⁷² Jann, "Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body," 699.

¹⁷³ Antonija Primorac, “The Naked Truth,” 95.

¹⁷⁴ Miller, *Framed*, 48.

¹⁷⁵ Miller, *Framed*, 49.

¹⁷⁶ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 126.

¹⁷⁷ Miller, *Framed*, 41.

¹⁷⁸ Miller, *Framed*, 50.

Although cunning, she is also seen as clever. Both the King and Holmes also fully believe her when she gives them her word about not sending the photograph. Miller states that by acquiring the photo of Adler herself at the end of the story, Holmes “apprehends” Adler in proxy.¹⁷⁹ Showing another a way of Holmes’ masculine dominance.

Jann claims that a common pattern in Conan Doyle’s detective stories, the upper classes are often able to escape the punishments for their crimes which would also be true in the case of Irene Adler.¹⁸⁰ It seems as if Conan Doyle refuses to let his female characters fully succumb to criminality. Miller claims that such rejection of criminality also rejects women’s full citizenry.¹⁸¹ As their characters are not treated equally to their male counterparts.

As has been previously mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis, Holmes often works as a moral compass within his stories. An example where this theoretical approach does not work would be *A Scandal in Bohemia* where Irene Adler is able to blackmail the King in case she desires to. Holmes does not put things into order as he is morally obligated to. Menes claims that the reasoning for it is the disdain that both Holmes and Conan Doyle feel for royalty. His respect for the Woman is higher than the respect for the King and so, although not fulfilling his duties fully, he closes the case without retrieving the photograph as he had intended.¹⁸²

4.2 The Women of The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton

The short story *The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton* was first published in 1904 in *The Strand* and then in 1905 in the collection *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*.¹⁸³ This story contains three female characters. The main antagonist of this story is Charles Augustus Milverton - a well-known blackmailer who collects compromising materials and uses them to blackmail wealthy upper-class women. Holmes himself titles him “the worst man in London.”¹⁸⁴

4.2.1 Eva Blackwell

The case is presented to Holmes by Lady Eva Blackwell - a debutante who has been blackmailed by Milverton. The blackmailer is asking her for 7000 pounds in exchange for not

¹⁷⁹ Miller, *Framed*, 45.

¹⁸⁰ Jann, "Sherlock Holmes Codes the Social Body," 699.

¹⁸¹ Miller, *Framed*, 62.

¹⁸² Menes, “SOCIAL SCIENCE: Sherlock Holmes and Sociology,” 104.

¹⁸³ “Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Complete Works,” The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia, accessed May 5, 2021, https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Sir_Arthur_Conan_Doyle:Complete_Works.

¹⁸⁴ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 495.

making her past compromising letters public. All negotiations prove to be unfruitful and Holmes decides to take the matter into his own hands. To find out where Milverton stores the scandalous materials and to learn about the criminal's house, he disguises himself as a plumber. When he comes back, Watson is shocked to find out that Holmes had become engaged to Milverton's housemaid. He did so to find out as much information about Milverton's house as possible.

4.2.2 Agatha

The housemaid's name - Agatha - is mentioned only twice within the story, in passing. The readers do not get to learn much about her as Holmes' main target is to gain information about Milverton's house and not about her as a person. Watson has his objections about Holmes' behaviour. If Agatha's name becomes sullied by a broken engagement, Holmes would not be a better man than Milverton. However, Holmes informs Watson that Agatha has another suitor that will surely take his chance once the detective is out of the question. In relation to Agatha, Strahan points out the similarities between Holmes and Milverton in their treatment of female characters. Whilst Milverton sees women as a way to obtain compromising material, Holmes sees Agatha as a way to obtain information about Milverton. Both male characters using the woman for their own gain.¹⁸⁵

Thanks to the information, Holmes and Watson are able to break into Milverton's house and safely reach his study where he keeps the compromising materials in a safe. Once they get there, however, Milverton enters the room with a woman.

4.2.3 The Unnamed Woman

Holmes and Watson hide to see an unprecedented end to Milverton's life. The woman pretended to be a maidservant trying to compromise her Countess but, once she reaches the study with Milverton, she takes off her disguise and explains to Milverton who she actually is. Materials sent by Milverton broke her husband's heart and led to his death. She came to avenge it. After explaining her motives, she shoots Milverton multiple times in cold blood.

Holmes and Watson witness this murder but do nothing, as justice seems to be served. At the end of the story, the detective and his companion find out who the woman was as they see her face in a shop window amongst celebrities. Yet, they both empathize with her case enough not to share her name with the police and let her go without further punishment, even when

¹⁸⁵ Strahan, "Marriage & Scandal," 17.

Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard asks Holmes about further information. Her crime is explicitly seen as a physical embodiment of justice itself conquering the villain. Holmes himself adds that, in this case, his sympathies lie with the killer and not the victim. Miller mentions that with this character, Conan Doyle was able to put first-wave feminism in accessible fashion.¹⁸⁶ However, even Miller conveniently forgot about the other female characters in the story - specifically Agatha, whose femininity and clear goal of marriage was used to her disadvantage. As was previously mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis, one of Conan Doyle's troubles with female criminals is the problem of fully commit to their criminality. The unnamed murderer shows the same issue. Before the murder, she shows her face, which is described as "dark, handsome" and "with a curved nose and strong dark eyebrows."¹⁸⁷ These features would more commonly be found in male criminals. Her reaction is cold and unemotional - quite unfitting of women of the time. Once she is sure her victim is dead, she quickly escapes the crime scene without any fuss.

The blackmailing letters in question were most probably not of sexual nature. In true Victorian fashion they could have expressed gratitude or slight fancy.¹⁸⁸ However, even that was enough at the time to ruin a lady's reputation and sully her name forever. Even Holmes mentions this fact when he states that putting Milverton in jail would not have helped the women whose lives were already ruined.¹⁸⁹ Although the story was written a few years after the end of the Victorian era, Victorian values are ever present in it as sullying one's name is seen as an abominable crime that can ruin somebody's whole life.

Holmes decides to take the case not only because of Milverton's previous terrible behaviour but also because Milverton himself claims that Lady Blackwell's payment will ensure that his future victims will fear him more.¹⁹⁰ In this case, Holmes is put into the position of a protector of women – as they are the villain's primary target.

Strahan states that because readers never learn the murderess' name, this gives her character the possibility to stand in for all Milverton's past female victims.¹⁹¹ Her long monologue before shooting Milverton does not provide a lot of information about her life except for the death of her husband and how it has affected her. However, it is long enough to grant it to be one of the

¹⁸⁶ Miller, *Framed*, 69.

¹⁸⁷ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 500.

¹⁸⁸ Strahan, "Marriage & Scandal," 17.

¹⁸⁹ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 495.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Strahan, "Marriage & Scandal," 19.

longest speeches that a female character has ever had in Sherlock Holmes' canon. Not only that, Strahan believes that this character also serves as "a stand-in for Victorian women" that have been oppressed by male dominance in their everyday life and who had to suffer for their missteps much more than men had ever had to.¹⁹²

It could be said that this story possesses a clear feminist message and is, without a doubt, the most morally charged story in Sherlock Holmes' universe in terms of favouring the female gender. It puts the power to kill the oppressor into the woman's hands. Yet, one must also not forget to notice that the reason for the murder was love and marriage - so the woman is again, according to Victorian standards, acting upon emotion and her relation to a marital union. As mentioned by Strahan, this is also one of the few times when Holmes decides to disregard given laws completely for the sake of women as he recognises their difficult position within society.¹⁹³

Whilst the unnamed female character is able to stand up for herself and avenge her husband - thus stepping out of her role of a weak and innocent Victorian woman. Holmes and Watson are those who eventually protect her identity. This act still leaves both men in dominant positions over the woman, as not keeping her secret would leave to her ultimate demise.

4.3 The Women of The Hound of the Baskervilles

The Hound of the Baskervilles is one of the four novels written about Sherlock Holmes which was first published as a series in *the Strand* during the years 1901 and 1902 and later during the same year was printed as a novel.¹⁹⁴ Three female characters appear in the novel with varying characteristics.

The plot revolves around the mysterious death of Charles Baskerville who was the owner of a considerable fortune. A possibility is raised that he had been killed by a hound that is part of an old family curse and is said to roam the moors surrounding the house. At least this is believed by Baskerville's friend Dr. Mortimer, who has one lead - a paw print of the hound. Dr. Mortimer contacts Holmes to solve the mystery and to protect the heir to Baskerville's fortune - Sir Henry. Sir Henry himself is not afraid of the curse but various mysterious situations happen to him whilst he is in London. Watson is sent to observe the Baskerville household by Holmes and share his findings information in writing. This provides the readers with an unreliable narrator

¹⁹² Strahan, "Marriage & Scandal," 19.

¹⁹³ Strahan, "Marriage & Scandal," 1.

¹⁹⁴ The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia, "Complete Works."

as Watson does not act as a mere reporter of Holmes' words but is also given space to create his own observations and deductions - which are often, as readers had previously learned in other instances, false. This also provides Conan Doyle with the opportunity to keep a part of the story - the truth - hidden from the reader till the very end.

4.3.1 Mrs. Barrymore

When Watson arrives at the crime scene – the Baskerville Hall to investigate on his own, he meets the first female character in question - Mrs. Barrymore. Her and her husband work at the Baskerville Hall as the butler and the housekeeper. She is described as “a large, impassive, heavy-featured woman with a stern set expression of mouth.”¹⁹⁵ Watson points out hearing female sobbing in the middle of the night coming not far from his room in the house. Whilst Mrs. Barrymore has swollen red eyes and is clearly the one who had been heard sobbing, Mr. Barrymore claims it could not have been her. In this case, the husband puts himself in the dominant position within the relationship, speaking on behalf of his wife.¹⁹⁶ Getting to know the housekeeper better, Watson finds her previous behaviour to be interesting as she is normally not a highly emotional person. This brings more mystery to the character and her characteristics get even more specific throughout the story as she is described as a solid, respectable person with inclination to be puritanical.¹⁹⁷ One of the possible explanations for her late-night crying would be domestic violence which as, as has been previously mentioned, common at the time.

It is later proven that the crying indeed belonged to Mrs. Barrymore but her husband was not the perpetrator of an angry act but rather acted as her protector, as he could not share the reason for her sadness with his master for it would give away her family secret. Although first seen as a crude husband, Mr. Barrymore later on proves his dedication to his wife as he accepts the termination of his job instead of exchanging for information that would defame his wife. It is then explained that Mrs. Barrymore's brother is an escaped convict roaming the moors and she and her husband bring him food every night. Mrs. Barrymore then protects her husband and claims it is not his fault as he did everything for her. Proving the previous implication of possible domestic violence and the subordinate position of Mrs. Barrymore in the relationship as false.

¹⁹⁵ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 609.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 616.

Watson is shocked that such a respectable person such as Mrs. Barrymore would be related by blood to one of the biggest criminals and would also support him, showed him compassion and, in the meantime, also risked her and her husband's long-term employment. Sir Henry respects Mr. Barrymore's decision to stand by his wife and lets them stay in his household.

The first look shows Mrs. Barrymore as a classic Victorian woman that is subordinate to her husband and, as a housekeeper, to her masters - the Baskerville clan. As has been previously mentioned, she is credited as "impassive" by doctor Watson in his short description of her. But is later proven to be the sole reason for the escaped convict's presence for which she must have put her Christian values aside to help her younger brother. Her initial description could have been wrong because of Watson's unreliable narration but could also be seen as a comment on the multi-dimensionality of women.

4.3.2 Beryl Stapleton

Another female character in the novel is Miss Beryl Stapleton who lives with her brother in a house that neighbours the Baskerville estate. She is said to be a woman of uncommon beauty. When she meets Watson for the first time, she mistakes him for sir Henry and quickly warns him to leave the moors as soon as possible. When she realises her mistake, she tries to apologise to Watson and explains her reasoning for such warning as "a woman's whim."¹⁹⁸ Although Mr. Stapleton tries their marital happiness to Watson, Beryl clearly does not share the same enthusiasm about staying at the moors. Sir Henry later also makes acquaintance of Miss Stapleton and becomes infatuated with her. This becomes a problem with Mr. Stapleton as he becomes protective of his sister and is not satisfied with her entanglements with Sir Henry. This makes both Sir and Watson curious as to why that is, as Sir Henry is presented as a rather illegible suitor - a rather important variable when a female at the time searched for a husband.

Once Holmes enters the story once again, he explains that Miss Stapleton is, in actuality, Mr. Stapleton's wife. Her marital status was hidden by Stapleton because he saw her more useful as a single lady. This information also provides them with answers to who wrote the warning letter to Holmes. While trying to catch Stapleton, they find Beryl tied up and gagged. As they free her, she shows various bruises and a weal on her neck caused by her husband.

Beryl Stapleton provides an example of a wronged wife who had been a victim to domestic abuse and abuse of power from her husband. Her feelings about the situation are stated: "But

¹⁹⁸ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 613.

this is nothing—nothing! It is my mind and soul that he has tortured and defiled.”¹⁹⁹ Pointing out the toll that domestic abuse takes on a person not only physically, but also mentally. With her statement, she provides a poignant social commentary on the topic and even refers to herself as her husband’s “tool”²⁰⁰ which connects to the sexist viewpoint which often sees women as mere objects used by men for their own pleasure or purpose. After she is freed, Beryl proceeds to help others find her husband who had fled the scene. Watson even points out how her merry attitude towards leading them to her husband proves how terrible her life with him must have been.

There is not a lot of description of Beryl related to her personality as the main focus of her characteristics are her good looks. Coming from Costa Rica, her looks could also be connected to her different origin which Conan Doyle often points out. She is even described as “tropical and exotic”²⁰¹ by Watson. Her character is discussed by Holmes and Watson at the end of the novel. Focusing on the influence which Stapleton had over his wife - which may have been caused by love, fear or a mixture of both. Holmes even points out that these two emotions are not incompatible - possibly providing another commentary on desperate marriages. Beryl is not afraid to warn Sir Henry and turn on her husband who, finding out she betrayed him, ties her up, hoping she would forgive him once Sir Henry finds his ultimate doom. Holmes also points out that even if they had not found Beryl, her husband would meet the same fate. Here comes another female centred generalisation, this time connected to Beryl’s ethnicity - “A woman of Spanish blood does not condone such an injury so lightly.”²⁰²

4.3.3 Laura Lyons

The third female character does not play a very important part, but exemplifies yet another type of a Victorian woman – this time the disobedient daughter. Her name is Laura Lyons. Her father did not approve of her marriage to Mr. Lyons and wanted nothing to do with her. She went on and married without her father’s consent, but later her husband deserted her. She was helped by other families on the moors to set up a typewriting business which is how she then makes her living. Mr. Stapleton uses Laura to connect with Charles Baskerville with whom Laura is supposed to speak to obtain money for her divorce. He then advises her not to visit Baskerville and that is the night when he uses the hound to kill him. Once it is explained to her how

¹⁹⁹ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 648.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 615.

²⁰² Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 653.

Stapleton had used her as a part of a greater plan, she ultimately turns on him and provides Holmes with evidence against him.

Her looks are again described as very beautiful; however, Watson also notes something negative about her that taints the first impression. "There was something subtly wrong with the face, some coarseness of expression, some hardness, perhaps, of eye, some looseness of lip which marred its perfect beauty."²⁰³

Whilst this case contains an actual murder and a lot of mystery with added horror, its content is again built on the basis of marital disagreements and familial issues dealt with by couples - as each female character is coupled up and part of some sort of secret connected to her partner.

The previously mentioned Holmes' negative views on rural English life are also apparent in this novel. The Hound is a horrifying creature which runs around the moors in a secluded area of Dartmoor. Both the creature and the moors exemplify gothic elements which can be related to the detective story predecessor E. A. Poe. The terrifying nature of the hound is purposely set as part of rural England. Clausen mentions that such a threat could have never materialised in urban London that is seen as more civilised.²⁰⁴

Two of the female characters in this novel are described as extremely beautiful, yet their beauty is not important for the story. The story often deals with topics that are related to positive appearances afflicting positive feelings in others and the possibility to use these good looks to one's advantage. However, in comparison Irene Adler, the ladies in this novel do not use their good looks themselves - either they are not aware of them or do not know how to. In all cases, the male counterparts are the brains behind further action.

4.4 Mary Morstan

Introduced in *The Sign of the Four*, Mary Morstan (later Watson) is Doctor Watson's first and only love interest. Although she becomes the wife of the detective's closest friend and companion, Mary is by no means a main character. Her introduction in *The Sign of the Four* is also the only story which centres around her and, although she is mentioned in other works such as *The Adventure of the Crooked Man* and *The Botoscombe Valley Mystery*, she does not play any part in them.

²⁰³ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 629.

²⁰⁴ Clausen, "Sherlock Holmes, Order, and the Late-Victorian Mind," 116.

In the story, Mary begins as Holmes' client, searching for her lost father who served in India. Although Watson is immediately attracted to her, he finds his feelings inappropriate and unethical, as Mary is supposed to inherit a fortune and that would make Watson an unsuitable suitor for her. Watson's behaviour may be a proof of two things - first of all, Conan Doyle wants to make sure that readers see Watson as a proper gentleman who, as a man, chooses reason over feelings. Secondly, it proves the differences between social classes of the time - if Mary was to inherit the fortune, she would automatically belong to a higher class than Watson and their marriage would not be accepted within the community. Once the treasure gets lost at the end of the story and the case is resolved, Watson lets go of his doubts and proposes to her, and Mary accepts.

She is described as a small blonde with blue eyes, dressed in the most perfect taste. After she marries Watson, she becomes a housewife. She is not mentioned regularly in other stories nor does she play a major part in them. After Holmes' return, it is mentioned that Mary died, the cause of her death is unknown.

It seems as if Mary is an example of the perfect Victorian woman - her good looks and dainty attitude lure Watson in. The circumstances create a perfect situation for them both to marry, and they spend their life together. A woman's place during the Victorian times was at home, creating a perfect environment for a husband which Mary, as readers learn, did. This point is mentioned by Holmes himself in *A Scandal in Bohemia*, where he comments on Watson's weight gain after marriage.²⁰⁵ Mary would be considered the ultimate "good girl" in this narrative as there is nothing wrong about her – whether it be from the point of view of her physicality, or her personality. It can be expected, however, that Watson – a character of high morals, would be paired with somebody like her.

It is interesting that the woman who the main character has the closest relationship with is actually not present in other stories nor do the readers get her further description. The reasoning could be Doyle's own personal preference. Although she is viewed rather positively, her characteristics fade in comparison to other previously mentioned characters that may have only been mentioned in one short story, but their effect and form was much more thorough. It is almost as if Mary is not very interesting to Holmes, Conan Doyle, nor the readers.

²⁰⁵ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 123.

4.5 The Women of The Adventure of the Copper Beeches

The short story *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* was first published in *the Strand* in 1892 and released later the same year as the last story of the story collection *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.²⁰⁶ This story introduces not one but three different female characters. However, one of them stands out the most in terms of her active approach.

4.5.1 Violet Hunter

Violet Hunter is the main character of the story as she is present as much if not more so than Holmes and Watson. She is Holmes' client, visiting him to ask for advice whether she should accept a job as a governess under very strange conditions. The readers learn that she decided to seek Holmes' help because she does not have any family nor relations that she could turn to in case of trouble. As many middle-class women of the time, she is a governess, currently on the lookout for a new job. A job offer has appeared from a man called Jephro Rucastle. However tempting the offer may seem, it also comes with strange conditions. To Violet it is very clear to from the very beginning, that her main job will have very little to do with the one of a governess and more to do with something else. Her salary of 100 pounds per year seems too good to be true for taking care of one child. In addition to that, Mr. Rucastle asks her to obey any rule and command his wife gives her and to cut her hair short, which she declines to do. Rucastle sends her a letter where he promises additional 40 pounds to her salary, if she decides to take the offer on.

As Violet visits Holmes and Watson, she also expresses that her mind is already made up and that she will accept the offer. However, she wants to consult Holmes to see what the great detective might make up of her situation. Not only that, she also comes up with her own theory as to what is actually happening in the house - thinking that maybe Mr. Rucastle's wife is dealing with mental health issues and her husband is trying to make sure these issues do not become public knowledge. The detective himself agrees that this is the most probable explanation. Holmes and Watson thus become part of Violet's backup plan in case she needs help in the future. Holmes himself admits that Violet "seems to be a young lady who is very well able to take care of herself." but he also finds something strange about the situation and expresses that he would not like his own sister to be in a similar position – proving his

²⁰⁶ The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia, "Complete Works."

empathetic view on the situation.²⁰⁷ Again, proving that her character goes beyond the obedient female model of the Victorian times.

Once settled into her position as the governess, Mr. Rucastle asks Violet to dress in an electric blue dress. She is then asked to sit by the window and listen to Mr. Rucastle telling jokes. Thinking that it is strange, she decides to hide a piece of mirror in her handkerchief to find out what is going on behind her in the window to which she should not turn. She sees a man standing on the road watching her and as the Rucastles notice him as well, they ask her to wave at him to go away. Later on, Violet finds a piece of hair similar to hers locked in one of the drawers in her bedroom. She also notices that one of the wings of the house seems inhabited and its visit is forbidden by her master. Being a curious active participant in her story, she chooses to visit the wing. She even explains her thought process as a womanly instinct that something good might come out of her going there. She hears noises and sees a shadow of somebody or something in one of the rooms. Feeling frightened she runs away right into the arms of Mr. Rucastle. His behaviour towards her seems changed and for that reason, just as she had previously expected, she decides to telegram Holmes and Watson to ask them for help.

After telling her whole story to Holmes, he commends her for her bravery and cleverness. He also asks her to help them solve the mystery by locking up one of the other servants in the wine cellar. Holmes solves the case once he has all the variables - the suite in the forbidden wing is inhabited by Rucastle's daughter Alice who Rucastle said had gone to America.

Violet comes a long way as she ends the story as the head of a private school, Watson claims she meets with considerable success. Holmes calls her to be "quite exceptional woman"²⁰⁸ and is impressed by her bravery, cleverness and independence. Watson actually goes as far as to say that she would be the perfect woman for Holmes. Although not as popular as Adler, she is in most writings considered to be the very opposite of an obedient woman of Victorian values as she is not afraid to go against the dominant sex and wittedly investigate.

The characteristics of Violet and Alice show a contrast between the new progressive Victorian woman and classic Victorian femininity that is dominated by fathers and lovers.

In the story, Violet is put into the position of a pseudo-detective.²⁰⁹ As she is trying to trace the clues and does most of the work. She is Holmes' eyes and ears and he only helps her put the

²⁰⁷ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 268.

²⁰⁸ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 273.

²⁰⁹ Saunders, "Many Suitable Jobs for Women", 71.

puzzling pieces of the mystery together. However, it is not the first time that a female detective has entered British literature. The first traceable female detective from British literature was Miss Gladden from Andrew Forrester's novel *The Female Detective* from 1864.²¹⁰ In addition to that, she also acts as a second narrator, as most of the story is told from her perspective as she describes it to Holmes and Watson.

Part of the story are also Holmes and Watson's ruminations on English countryside as Watson ponders on its beauty whilst Holmes is more sceptical and sees it as ridden with crime that is easily hidden from others and committed without punishment. This discourse is relevant to this thesis' main topic as in his speech, Holmes clearly alludes to various acts of violence that can be committed behind closed doors in one's domestic area. As women were highly connected with domesticity at the time, it is without a doubt that they would be the presumed victims of such violence. Holmes even mentions that if Miss Hunter went to be a governess to a different more inhabited area he would not have feared for her as much. This also explains why Holmes concerns himself with a lot of cases that are centered around marriage. This relates to what Strahan focuses on in his thesis - claiming that most of Holmes' cases are centered around struggles that are deeply connected to Victorian domesticity - especially those highlighting "the drama of middle and upper-class marriage" as well as Victorian values "on love, marriage, and masculinity."²¹¹

4.5.2 Alice Rucastle

Mr. Rucastle wanted to spend his daughter's inheritance, and all had gone well until Alice met a man whom she fell in love with. Violet was chosen as a visual substitute for Alice as she resembled her in height, disposition and hair colour. Because Alice had gone through a disease that led her to lose hair, Violet's hair also had to cut off. The man on the road was Alice's fiancé who was supposed to think Alice was happy and sent him off, which is what Violet unknowingly did. As the trio goes to save Alice, they find her gone and encounter angry Mr. Rucastle's. A mastiff that guards the house at night from unsuited visitors is let loose and almost kills Alice's father. The trio then learn that the maidservant was actually Alice's friend and had helped her fiancé save her.

²¹⁰ "The First Ever Female Detective in British Fiction Will Appear on Bookshelves Once Again," Press Office, British Library, accessed July 1, 2021. <https://www.bl.uk/press-releases/2012/october/the-first-ever-female-detective-in-british-fiction-will-appear-on-book-shelves-once-again>

²¹¹ Strahan, "Marriage & Scandal," 1.

Alice is described as quiet and patient, leaving her fortune in the hands of her father. After she had met her fiancé, her father wanted her to sign a paper giving him the possibility to use all of her fortune whether she got married or not. As he kept on troubling her, she got brain-fever and her hair had to be cut off. This change of appearance did not make any changes to the feelings of her fiancé, so Mr. Rucastle decided to pretend like she had left for America and locked her in her room.

Alice and her fiancé get married and leave the countryside for a governmental position in Mauritius.

4.5.3 Mrs. Rucastle

Mr. Rucastle's wife is another female character in the story. The narration does not explain her situation in too much detail, which makes sense as her character is not very important for the plot. She is even described by Violet herself as a “nonentity.”²¹² It seems that her passions lie in her family life - her husband and son. Yet, she is often seen crying or with a sorrowful look on her face. There is no further explanation within the story as to why Mrs. Rucastle behaves this way, and no empathy nor further antipathy is shown during the story. One possible reason could be her son who is described as having a larger than normal head and who often throws angry fits. This would further the theory that Mrs. Rucastle's negativity stems from issues within her own family. She could be seen as an example of a proper Victorian wife whose household is always the top priority. However, she does not seem oppressed by the system as the relationship with her husband is described as happy. Whether or not she had a say in locking up Alice is not mentioned. She stays with her husband after he survives the dog attack as his carer.

The author of the thesis cannot help but notice (maybe accidental) allusions to a prolific female British character and heroine Jane Eyre. Both Jane and Violet find themselves without a family and take on the job of governesses in strange families. In both stories something is hidden. In the case of Violet's story, it is Mr. Rucastle's daughter whilst in the case of Jane, it is the wife of her master Mr. Rochester, Berta. If the similarities were done on purpose or not has not been confirmed. Yet, because of the popularity of Bronte's novel, one must assume that Conan Doyle had taken some inspiration from the story and twisted it to his liking for the purposes of the detective genre. The authors also chose different endings for their female protagonists. Whilst

²¹² Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 270.

Jane Eyre finds love at the end of the novel, Violet lives a happy life with a new advanced career. These different endings can be credited to the growing popularity of women's rights movement or to the differences in genres itself. Both works feature gothic and mysterious elements. And whilst Bronte's novel possesses more romance and its ending is inevitably entangled with her coupling with Mr. Rochester, Watson does not mention any romantic endeavors in Violet's future. Her career is the most important aspect of her future - the success lies in the fact that she has levelled up professionally and also has gotten out of the rural setting which had been degraded previously in the story. Watson never mentions whether Violet gets married in the future. There could be multiple reasons for omitting this information - firstly, Violet's storyline did not revolve around romance and thus it does not seem important to mention. Secondly, Violet did not marry. Thirdly, Conan Doyle did not choose to write about Violet's romantic life as she is a woman with bigger ambitions than marriage, closely followed by the fact that her character may not need marriage to have personal fulfilment as she is clearly devoted to her work.

4.6 The Women of "The Adventure of the Yellow Face"

The Adventure of the Yellow Face is a short story first published in *the Strand* magazine in 1893.²¹³ Once again, the story possesses heavy moral undertones as is not concerned with murder but only unknown misconduct that Holmes is supposed to clarify. The position of the main female character is also rather curious as she is not Holmes' client nor a victim.

4.6.1 Effie

In this story, Mr. Grant Munro comes to ask Holmes for help concerning his wife Effie, who has been leaving the house in the middle of the night and asking her husband for money for unknown purposes. Munro swears that he and his wife love each other deeply and would have never lied to each other. Effie had already been divorced and had had a child before she married Munro, both her husband and the child allegedly died of yellow fever in America. Munro, provoked by her strange behaviour, follows her to find out where goes at night and finds that a cottage close to their house has been inhabited by a strange creature with an inhuman face. When confronting his wife about it, she begs him not investigate any further. Holmes wrongly assumes that Effie's ex-husband is actually not dead and became unbearable to live with, which

²¹³ The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia, "Complete Works."

is why Effie left for England. Her husband came to look for her and is now living in the cottage and blackmailing Effie.

When they arrive at the cottage with Munro, they find that the strange face in the window was actually a child with a yellow mask on. The removed mask uncovers a young African American girl. The case is solved - Effie's previous husband was of African American descent and left her with a sick daughter. Effie kept this a secret from Munro as she truly loved him and thought he could never love her back knowing this. The story ends with Munro taking accepting the child in his family and promising his wife to discuss about the matter further. Holmes and Watson leave the scene - solving the case without any moral punishment.

Firstly, this is one of the few stories that deal with something inherently female such as maternal love and affection. Secondly, the story deals with an Afro-American marriage and child. The fact that the child is also of female gender might have been a choice that provides the character with more innocence. Thirdly, this is a case which Holmes has trouble solving as he assumes Effie is visiting her ex-husband and is being blackmailed by him and his new partner. Probably considering numerous other stories concerning female victims or clients throughout his cases. At the end of the story, he even tells Watson to remind him of this case whenever he feels too sure about his deductions. The fact that such a flaw has appeared in Holmes' deductions when it comes to a female suspect might have been just a simple coincidence. But, in relation to the emotional attachment that a mother has to her child and the inherent connection between women and domesticity, one possible explanation would be Holmes' defect in understanding women as well as he might have liked. It also refers back to Holmes' all-encompassing explanations of women that have been previously mentioned in this thesis. The detective's deductions are not perfect and everything he says is not always one hundred percent correct, female behaviour included. This could also be Doyle's attempt to further exemplify to the reader that Holmes is not an all-knowing genius, but a human who is not always right. However, the stories do not only show the female character in a positive light as Munro himself is proven as a good husband and partner, he himself stating that although he is not a good man, he is better than she expects.²¹⁴ It is also important to add that Effie's marriages - both with her previously deceased and her current husband were, in fact, happy. Even through the issues which would inevitably come through interracial coupling.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 302.

²¹⁵ Strahan, "Marriage & Scandal," 15.

4.6.2 The Nurse

Another female character in the story is nameless. It is a Scottish nurse who is left to take care of the young girl when Effie leaves America. She later brings the girl to England and protects her from the (possibly racially charged) cruelty of the outside world in the cottage. Her appearance is also described as Munro encounters her when knocking on the cottage door. She is described as “a tall, gaunt woman with a harsh, forbidding face,”²¹⁶ who speaks with a strong Northern accent.

She never appears later on after she closes the door right in front of Munro’s face. Whilst readers later learn that she was, in fact, the little girl’s nurse and was the reason for the girl’s well-being, the characterisation set by the narrative shows her in a rather negative light. A rude Scotch Woman with a strong accent was intentionally put in this position. It could have been an attempt by Conan Doyle to create a character who seems ruthless to the outside world by its origins but is later proven to be innocent and kind-hearted. This might be the way for him to participate in his own commentary on the Scottish identity which might be harsh on the outside. Similarly to the Scottish national symbol of thickly purple thistle.

4.7 Mary Sutherland

The 1981 story *A Case of Identity* opens up with Miss Mary Sutherland coming to Holmes for advice about finding her lost fiancé. Her case is quite peculiar as Mary’s fiancé disappears on his way to church and nobody can find him. Mary decides to take the matter in her own hands when her father does not listen to her demands to deal with the issue himself. The readers learn about Mary’s background - she has around a hundred pounds a year that were left for her by an uncle from New Zealand from which she can only use the interest. She is also a working woman – as Holmes himself deduces, her job is typewriting. With these two sources of income, she finds herself in a comfortable financial situation. However, her money will actually belong to her mother and stepfather Mr. Windibank, as long as she stays in under one roof with them. That is also the reason why she has taken up typewriting.

Mr. Windibank is described as a man of a rather controlling character - never letting his wife or stepdaughter visit any social occasions. However, when he is out of town, Mary and her mother attend a gasfitter’s ball. That is where Mary meets her future fiancé - Mr. Hosmer Angel. She meets up with him in private when her stepfather is away and writes letters to him when

²¹⁶ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 297.

her stepfather is home. Mary's fiancé makes her swear to always stay true to him no matter what. Before their wedding he disappears, leaving Mary heartbroken.

Mr. Windibank is in the position an angered controlling father. Stating that: "A woman should be happy in her own family circle."²¹⁷ This statement in connection to his prohibition of his wife and daughter's social interactions are clear indications that the characteristic of the female sex is seen as very one-dimensional and fully encompassed by their domesticity. His daughter expresses the wish to create her own circle - although standing in the position of domesticity herself, she wants to choose the kind of domestic life she will one day most probably have. She wants to have a choice, although she seems to strive for a traditional life.

Whilst this story shows Holmes in a position that clearly fights against female oppression, he also says a few statements that put forth generalisations about the female gender. Specifically, when he talks about what it means when a woman oscillates on the pavement - according to him, this behaviour always means she was wronged by a man and it is a typical activity done by all members of the female sex. Although such stereotypical observations are a part of Holmes' deduction method which is crucial for his work (and which is used for both - women and men), it is also important to see that the distinction between male and female is clearly stated in these deductions. Naturally, that does not inherently prove Holmes himself believes one gender is above the other, but it displays a Victorian separation between the sexes which goes beyond sexual differences and affects behaviour.

The resolution of the story shows that Mary's stepfather pretended to be her fiancé so as to make her promise to wait for him no matter what happens to him and thus to keep the money which belong to Mary. The whole plot of the short story revolves around the oppression of Victorian women that often happens behind closed doors - by the hands of their fathers or other family members. Because of similar situation, it was very difficult to be independent and to make one's own life choices. Miller believes that Conan Doyle employs interventionism as a clear feminist strike against patriarchy through cases which show that British homes are rarely ever okay.²¹⁸ The story may have been a direct reaction to the previously mentioned The Married Women's Property Act of the 1822.

²¹⁷ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 153.

²¹⁸ Miller, *Framed*, 54.

4.8 Mrs. Hudson

Mrs. Hudson is a female character that appears the most often in Sherlock Holmes' canon appearing in *The Sign of the Four*, *A Scandal in Bohemia*, *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle*, *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, and others.²¹⁹ Although she is the most recurring female character in the Sherlock Holmes' canon, her role is miniscule.

Mrs. Hudson is Holmes and Watson's landlady in 221B Baker Street. She mainly concerns herself with having a tidy and calm home (which is a challenge with the messy detective). No description is ever given of her physicality. Watson once describes her as a "long-suffering woman"²²⁰ who has to deal with Holmes' eccentricities and messiness. However, the advantageous probably outweigh the disadvantageous, as Watson describes Holmes' rent payments as "princely."²²¹

Mrs. Hudson is essentially a servant for Holmes. Her character never grows out of the position of a landlady as most dialogues revolve around her bringing tea and biscuits to Holmes and Watson, or their clients. She also often acts as a messenger – bringing Holmes telegrams or cards from new clients. She also accompanies visitors to Sherlock's flat. Her attitude towards Holmes changes between admiration of his intellect to annoyance because of his habits.

Although her title is "Mrs." there is no mention of her husband within the stories. She is also described as a good cook. Her nationality is also not clear – Holmes one says: "Her cuisine is a little limited, but she has as good an idea of breakfast as a Scotchwoman."²²² This statement is not further explained and so it is not clear whether it means that she truly is a Scotchwoman and thus is a really good cook. Or whether Watson only compares her to a Scotchwoman who would, in this case, be a good cook. As this is one of very little mentions of the Scottish nationality within Sherlock Holmes' universe, it could be a reflection of Doyle's own personal experience of Scottish cuisine as well as Scottish women. Her role within the story is that of a matriarch – somebody who is able to provide the main character's household with a form of care and the occasional meal.

She usually stays in the background of the story except for *The Adventure of the Empty House*, where she actively helps Holmes with catching a criminal by confusing the sniper - an

²¹⁹ The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia, "Complete Works."

²²⁰ Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 801.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*, 397.

unexpectedly brave step for a character mostly known only as a passive landlady. In *A Scandal in Bohemia* the landlady is referred to as “Mrs Turner.” This could have been because her character was not yet firmly established, or it could have been just a simple mistake created by Doyle’s negligence.

Similarly to Mary Morstan, Mrs. Hudson represents a classic Victorian woman who tends to her house. Another similarity between these two characters would be their lack of presence within the stories probably caused by the fact that their roles are common and thus could be seen as less interesting.

Another reason why these minor characters do not appear very often might be that Conan Doyle tried to create his stories in such a way that would be easy to consume for anybody. Thus, any connection between stories that would grant his audience to pay more attention to more than two characters and their personal stories, might alienate some of his readers.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, Conan Doyle's Scottish nationality (or lack thereof) is not explicitly represented by female Scottish characters in his detective prose. There are only two instances of representation – the only character who has been described as actually Scottish was the nanny from the short story *The Adventure of the Yellow Face*, and in her case, thick Scottish accent and standoffish behaviour only brought roughness to her character, although she eventually turned out to be a selfless person. Another possible representation of a Scottish female character is Mrs. Hudson – Sherlock Holmes' landlady who may or may not be a Scotswoman.

The previously attained knowledge about Scottish nationalism and national identity that was favoured during the 19th century may explain why Scottishness was not a bigger part of Doyle's writing as the time of imperialism led to the creation of a new Scottish identity which shared many traits with the British identity. Since Conan Doyle travelled a lot and spent most of his life in England, a deeper connection with the English part of the country (or what was seen as "British" at the time) could be another reason why there is a distance between him and his Scottish roots. In a way, the author himself overlooked his own Scottish identity in favour of the dominant imperial all-encompassing British identity.

The position of women within society and the position of Scotland within England has many parallels as both the gender and the nation suffer from oppression. Most female characters within the canon exemplify Scottish feminine values of the time. As has been previously mentioned, especially during the 19th century, Scots heavily valued „thrift, respectability, independence, temperance, work ethic, and meritocracy.“ Not much can be said about thriftiness of the characters as such topic was never part of the conversation in the detective stories. However, respectability and independence both play important roles. Characters such as Irene Adler or Violet Hunter both make independent decisions and do as they please while also being respected by the male characters around them. With these two characters, Conan Doyle provides a mirror to British society about how such society could be made better if women were treated as equals. Some female characters are respected even when it goes against morals – such as the unnamed female murderer from *The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton*, who is left to flee the scene as both Holmes and Watson respect her decision to avenge her husband by killing Milverton. However, Holmes also tends to disrespect some characters – an example being Agatha, Milverton's servant, who he becomes engaged to in search for her master's safe. It is not mentioned whether this character actually deserves any

form of disrespect, however Holmes treats chooses to use Agatha as a means to achieve his goal.

In true Victorian fashion, temperance can be seen in most analysed female characters except for those that are victims or have been seriously wronged by members of the opposite sex. Mrs. Barrymore cries at night because of her brother, Beryl Stapleton is part of an unhappy marriage and left tied up by her husband, the Unnamed Murderess avenges her dead husband, Effie protects her African American daughter and Alice Rucastle is locked inside her room. Domesticity plays a big part in these stories as all causes of bad temper in the aforementioned characters are related to familial issues – most often connected to their husbands and fathers. The one Scottish character is also seen as rude and thus does not exemplify the qualities attributed to Scottish female ideal of the time.

Work ethic is crucial for some of the female characters, most commonly mentioned professions are housemaids and housekeepers (Agatha, Mrs. Barrymore, Mrs. Hudson), there is also one governess (Violet Hunter), one artist (Irene Adler), a nurse and one working in typewriting (Mary Sutherland). Meritocracy is difficult to exemplify in these characters as women still dealt with oppression and did not receive the same opportunities as men.

Whether or not Conan Doyle intended it, his stories prove high dissatisfaction on domestic grounds, experienced mostly by the female gender. The author provides many of his female characters with liberation from the traditional Victorian domestic systems prevalent both in England and Scotland. Holmes and Watson often help women with overcoming their issues when they are in the position of victims and also decide who is morally corrupt and who deserves a punishment in the cases of villainesses. The detective provides a moral compass that comments on the problems women dealt with at the time – often connected to the oppression on both domestic and also governmental levels. Not only does Holmes often comment on similar cases, but he is also an active participant in helping the female victims.

The detective genre is a helpful tool that can help uncover secrets that happen behind closed doors – in the private feminine sphere, and thus provide the reader with information that often stays hidden from the public. Three stories published in the span of nine months - *A Case of Identity*, *The Speckled Band* and *Copper Beeches* all had similar plotlines with fathers trying to stop their daughters' marriages to claim their finances for themselves. All three of these stories bare feminist undertones and indirectly comment on women's property rights at the time and

how the gain of such rights changes familial and romantic relationships.²²³ These, among some of the other stories, again show the destruction that can be done by men who are high in familial structures - fathers, stepfathers, or husbands.²²⁴ Female criminals are not very common in Conan Doyle's stories. However, when they do appear, their motives usually stem from an unhappy or problematic marriage. From one point of view, Sherlock Holmes stories are inherently connected to (usually dysfunctional) domesticity. Through the committed crimes, Conan Doyle provides commentary on the Victorian standards at the time that were often unhealthy and oppressing to women. The genders in the detective stories are not treated equally as female criminals usually tend to get let go by Holmes without larger punishment, possibly as a compensation for their more difficult lives. The main focus stays on women from middle and upper classes.

The detective genre also took part in how some of the female characters are portrayed, viewed, and also characterised – through certain tropes. As part of popular fiction, the audience must also be considered instead of just the pure expression of the author and his wishes. *The Strand* magazine was written to be bought and consumed by masses in England. Writing for the English, Conan Doyle could have made a conscious choice to choose the easiest path and write about what was closer to the English instead of writing about his birth country. The popularity of the characters at the time may have asked for a representation of people and things that were either seen as regular (thus English) or exotic (such as Beryl Stapleton – a woman of Spanish blood). Scottish women were often overlooked, especially in the British narrative and their inclusion may not seem familiar to the reader but also not exotic enough. However, it is known that Conan Doyle drew inspiration from his younger years in Scotland (as exemplified by the confirmed inspiration for the character of Sherlock Holmes or the fictional London which shared similarities with Edinburgh). Another reason for omitting his nationality might be the growing nationalist movement which Conan Doyle may not have wanted to comment on – this could again be related to the fact that the stories were part of popular fiction and such opinions could alienate some of his readers.

The primary hypothesis that female characters within the stories often lack depth and do not play an important part has been proven false. Although some of the characters play into specific tropes and their number is limited, a lot of them affect and give direction to the stories themselves. They do usually appear in the story only when necessary and are used to present

²²³ Miller, *Framed*, 56.

²²⁴ Miller, *Framed*, 55.

Holmes with information. However, considering the historical era in which these stories were written and the detective genre – which functions this way with most characters, regardless of their gender, it seems like an acceptable choice.

The question of whether Conan Doyle has chosen not to use Scottish female characters in his writing for a specific reason, unfortunately, remains unanswered as there is a lack of data that would support or disprove such claims. The author of the thesis supposes that the lack of Scottish representation within the stories and novels has been caused by a blend of all three factors.

RESUMÉ

Diplomová práce „Ženy v detektivní próze Arthura Conana Doylea“ se zaměřuje na okolnosti, které ovlivnily ženské postavy vyskytující se v příbězích o detektivovi Sherlocku Holmesovi. Práce se zabývá třemi hlavními vlivy, které mohly stát za nízkým počtem ženských postav v daných dílech.

Tyto vlivy jsou poprvé představeny hned v úvodu diplomové práce. Jmenovitě se jedná o otázku skotské identity, postavení žen ve společnosti v Británii v 19. století a samotný detektivní žánr. V návaznosti na ně se vyskytuje stručné představení autora příběhů sira Arthura Conana Doylea, které dodává více informací o prostředí, z kterého autor pocházel a z něhož čerpal ve svých dílech.

První kapitola se zabývá otázkou Skotského nacionalismu a Skotské identity. Oba pojmy jsou definovány v kontextu Skotské historie a dobové kultury. Též jsou zde vysvětleny v návaznosti na život autora.

Druhá kapitola je zaměřena na otázku ženství v Anglii a ve Skotsku na konci devatenáctého a začátku dvacátého století. Kapitola obsahuje informace o dobových problémech žen spojených s domácností, prací, vzděláním a s ženskou podřízenou pozicí ve viktoriánské společnosti. Též poukazuje na rozvíjející se hnutí sufražetek a začátky feministických myšlenek.

Třetí kapitola definuje detektivní žánr, jeho zrod a nejčastější aspekty. Kapitola zároveň pojednává o bližší specifikaci postavy Sherlocka Holmese, jehož charakteristika je relevantní vzhledem k pohledu na ženské postavy, který čtenáři poskytuje.

Čtvrtá kapitola zahajuje praktickou část diplomové práce. Její úvod představuje obecné informace o ženských postavách vyskytujících se v daných detektivních příbězích. Kapitola je dále rozdělena do osmi podkapitol, každá z podkapitol je věnována jedné nebo více ženským postavám z konkrétních příběhů Sherlocka Holmese.

První podkapitola se věnuje Irene Adler – postavě ze slavného příběhu Skandál v Čechách. Adler je jednou z nejnámějších postav příběhů Sherlocka Holmese a též je jedinou ženou, která kdy dokázala detektiva porazit. Zápletka příběhu je vysvětlena a analyzována z pohledu ženské otázky ve viktoriánské Anglii a soudobého skotství.

Druhá podkapitola se věnuje příběhu Charles Augustus Milverton, ve kterém se objevují hned tři ženské postavy. Text se nejvíce zaměřuje na postavu nejmenované vražedkyně, která

zavraždí vyděrače Milvertona kvůli zločinu, který spáchal na její cti, a díky kterému zemřel její milovaný manžel. Chování postavy a reakce detektiva a jeho společníka na tento typ vraždy je další součástí analýzy. Další postavou je služka Agatha, jejíž naivitu využije Sherlock Holmes v prospěch případu. V příběhu se tak objeví dva rozdílné přístupy k otázce ženství – empatický přístup vůči problémům, kterým ženy čelí ve viktoriánské době a sexistický přístup, který vnímá ženu jako prostředek splnění vlastních cílů.

Třetí podkapitola se věnuje románu *Pes Baskervillský*, ve kterém se též vyskytují tři ženské postavy. Tou první je Mrs. Barrymore, služebná v sídle pana Baskervilla, která skrývá tajemství o svém bratrovi – uprchlém vězni. Další postavou je Beryl Stapleton, žena pocházející z Kostariky, která je nucena předstírat, že je sestrou svého manžela a pomáhat mu v cestě zločinu. Třetí postavou je Laura Lyons, která byla do zločinu zapletena náhodou díky zalíbení ve vrahovi Stapletonovi. Celá podkapitola též obsahuje informace o gotických prvcích vyskytujících se v románu.

Čtvrtá podkapitola je o manželce doktora Watsona – Mary Morstan z příběhu *Podpis čtyř*. Mary je Holmesovou klientkou a svým postojem, vzhledem i chováním reprezentuje ideální viktoriánskou ženu. Možná právě proto je vybrána jako partnerka hodna Holmesova společníka. Je zde však kladen důraz na Maryinu nevinnost, díky které není tato postava příliš zajímavá.

Pátá podkapitola je o příběhu *Dům U měděných buků*, který pojednává o třech různých ženských postavách. Tou hlavní je Violet Hunter – Holmesova klientka, která se přijde poradit ohledně práce guvernanky, která jí byla nabídnuta za podivných podmínek. Violet je v kapitole dán prostor samostatně jednat a přemýšlet. Vytváří vlastní teorie o případu a její přesvědčení nezávisí na Holmesovi. Další postavou je Alice Rucastle – dcera Violetina zaměstnavatele, která je uvězněna v pokoji svým otcem. Tato postava ukazuje další typ represivní mužské dominance v domácnosti – v tomto případě z rukou vlastního otce. Poslední postavou je nevýrazná paní Rucastle, která miluje svého manžela, ale zároveň je z nejasných důvodů nešťastná. Violet je jednou z mála ženských postav, jejíž příběh se neodvíjí od romantické zápletky. V této části se autorka též zabývá rozdílným vnímáním města a vesnice v daném díle.

Šestá podkapitola se věnuje příběhu *Žlutá tvář*, který pojednává o jedné rozvedené vdově Effie a jejím novém manželovi Grantu Munroovi. Pan Munro přijde za Sherlockem Holmesem kvůli neznámému tajemství, které před ním Effie skrývá – půjčuje si peníze a často v noci mizí z domu. Ačkoliv své ženě věří a vztah popisuje jako šťastný, chce od Holmesa pomoci s vyřešením záhady. Holmes předpokládá, že bývalý manžel Effie doopravdy nezemřel a nyní

jí vydírá. Tato teorie se však prokáže jako nepravdivá, když se přijde na to, že její manžel byl Afro-Američan a zplodil s ní též dítě, které Effie nyní skrývá před jejím novým manželem. Jedná se o jeden z mála příběhů, ve kterém je Holmesova dedukce nesprávná. Tato dedukce také poukazuje na častost podobných případů a očekávání nastavena v manželských svazcích viktoriánské doby. V tomto příběhu se též objeví jediná výslovně skotská ženská postava – služka, která se stará o Effiinu mladou dceru.

Sedmá podkapitola je o Mary Sutherland – dalším případě ženské postavy, která je utlačována mužem ze svého nejbližšího okolí. Tato postava se objevuje v příběhu Případ totožnosti. Mary přijde za Holmesem s prosbou o nalezení jejího snoubence, který zmizel po cestě do kostela v den svatby. Holmes zjistí, že daný snoubenec nikdy neexistoval a jednalo se pouze o Maryina otčíma v převleku. Tuto lest využil proto, aby se Mary již nikdy nevdala za jiného a on mohl nadále využívat finance ze zdrojů, které zanechal její otec.

Poslední podkapitola se věnuje bytné Sherlocka Holmese a doktora Watsona – paní Hudson. Autorka textu rozebírá vlastnosti paní Hudsonové a její nepříliš častý výskyt v příbězích. V kapitole se též zaměřuje na její možný skotský původ a co by mohl znamenat.

Závěr diplomové práce shrnuje dohromady všechny tři vlivy, které mohly ovlivnit ženské postavy v dílech Sherlocka Holmese. Pojednává o možnosti, že se Conan Doyle rozhodl vynechat typicky skotské postavy z důvodu vlastní nejistoty svou národností nebo z důvodu popularity detektivního žánru, který byl psaný především pro Angličany. Zároveň je však vyzdvihnuta Doyleova snaha o vyobrazení těžkostí, se kterými musely bojovat ženy ve viktoriánské době. Závěrem zůstává, že všechny tři faktory – postavení Skotů ve společnosti v dané době, ženská otázka i detektivní žánr příběhů měli svůj dopad na konečný výsledek autorovy práce.

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