

ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR WATSON: WE ARE ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT: This paper investigates the characterizations of Sherlock Holmes in three of Doyle's stories published in the 1890's, "A Scandal in Bohemia", "The Red-Headed League", and "The Speckled Band". The analyses point out that the images of Holmes in England reveal elements of nationalism associated with a positive representation of Holmes as a man of science and reason, as his Englishness is established mainly indirectly in relation to characters from other nationalities.

Keywords: English Literature; Culture; Detective genre; Sherlock Holmes.

RESUMO: Este artigo investiga as caracterizações de Sherlock Holmes nos contos "Um escândalo na Boêmia", "A Liga dos Ruivos" e "A faixa malhada", publicados na década de 1890. As análises apontam que as imagens de Holmes na Inglaterra revelam elementos de nacionalismo associados com representações positivas do detetive enquanto homem da ciência e da razão, enquanto sua identidade inglesa é estabelecida indiretamente com relação às personagens de outras nacionalidades.

Palavras-chave: Literatura inglesa; Cultura; Gênero de detetive; Sherlock Holmes.

1 Sherlock Holmes and the mystery of an ever-changing cultural image

Sherlock Holmes first appeared in **A Study in Scarlet** — a novel written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887 and published in the English magazine **The Strand**. Between then and 1927, Doyle wrote three other novels and five volumes of short stories about Sherlock Holmes. Influenced by Edgar Allan Poe, who is considered the father of modern police detective fiction, as inaugurated in the short story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), Doyle created the first scientific detective. Holmes' deductive method involved observation, formulation of a hypothesis, and its subsequent application. In 1893, Doyle decided to have Sherlock Holmes die along with his archenemy, professor Moriarty, in the story "The Final Problem", in order to dedicate his energies to what Doyle considered more important works

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— namely, historical novels. However, led by public outcry, Doyle brought Holmes back to life in the story “The Adventure of the Empty House”, published in 1903.

Holmes has been so fundamental to the development of the detective genre that, if we look carefully, we will find something of the English detective in all detectives that came after him, even in part of the modern American detective fiction with its ferocious and ultra-womanizer detectives (ALBUQUERQUE, 1979, p. 45). Furthermore, ever since the 1880’s Sherlock Holmes has become a synonym for the detective persona and an icon of English culture, as there have been more than 300 re-creations of the Sherlock Holmes stories, among which more than 150 are film adaptations. In the past two decades, we have witnessed a kind of revival of interest in adaptations of Sherlock Holmes to the screen, especially TV series, such as **House**, **Elementary**, and **Sherlock**, with peculiar modifications and modernizations in terms of characterization, such as a more active role played by Watson (CARLI & INDRUSIAK, 2018). So great was Holmes’ influence and pervasiveness in English culture that for many years 221b Baker Street London, his address, received letters requesting the help of the detective and complimenting his work (ALBUQUERQUE, 1979, p. 48). Today, there is a museum dedicated to the memory of Doyle’s fictional character at the famous address.

Sherlock Holmes is part of a select group of imaginary creatures who have overshadowed their creators, like Frankenstein — although in reality the title name of Mary Shelley’s novel belongs to the scientist, not to his nameless creation — and Dracula, a creature who, due to his vampiric powers, may have sucked all the fame from his creator Bram Stoker. We should also not forget Dom Quixote, whose creator, Miguel de Cervantes, has historically played a supporting role for his creation to lead the way to stardom. Although their creators are first-rate, widely popular writers, it is evident that the popularity of these creatures has surpassed enormously that of their creators, and many of us even take for granted the extent to which these figures have sneaked into the collective imagination and become pervasive in western culture, driving a never-ending process of the intertextual influx of recreations and adaptations, which Robert Stam called the “dialogics of adaptation” (2001), responsible for the longevity and inexorability of these cherished characters.

The current interest in Sherlock Holmes' stories in recent movies and series, especially those that set the detective in Victorian England, can be associated with the tendency for English to locate this sense of Englishness in the past. As John Caughie explains,

adaptation [has become] a cultural dominant in representations of Britain, helping to shape the perception of Britishness — or at least of Englishness — as a quality whose real meaning can be found in the past, and whose commodity value can be found in the heritage industry. (CAUGHIE, 1997, p. 27)

The revival of a distant past can be associated with the desire to escape to more secure time and place when the British Empire was still strong and there was widespread optimism concerning the power of positivist science. Another reason for so many adaptations of the Sherlock Holmes stories is the popularity among a significantly large number of fans. Moreover, Caughie points out that an important reason for the adaptations of well-known literature in Britain is that, to be consumed in the U.S., British films must project the kinds of images of their lives that Americans have come to expect of them (cf. 1997, p. 31).

Cinematic adaptations of Sherlock Holmes have to deal with the problem of how the character identifies or indeed embodies a sense of Englishness. Whether in England or in Brazil, novels, and films that recreate Holmes account for his Englishness. In terms of national identity, as demonstrated by the stories analyzed below, Sherlock Holmes stands out as an icon of English culture, consolidated through the long-term success of Doyle's stories, as well as the relevance that Holmes has achieved as the prototype detective. The analyses herein focus on how national identity is represented in the characterization of Sherlock Holmes, from props, costumes, and manners traditionally associated with the detective for the portrayal of his role in society.

Within this context, we will analyze three original short stories by Conan Doyle that set Holmes in his homeland, England, at his famous London address, 221b Baker Street. The stories are "A Scandal in Bohemia", "The Red-Headed League", and "The Speckled Band". The main objective is to analyze how notions of national identity are projected onto the images of the English detective, especially about foreign characters, to establish how much a sense of Englishness is created in contrast to a non-English other.

2 A controversial Englishman of science and detection

“A Scandal in Bohemia”, “The Red-Headed League” and “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” were originally published in **The Strand Magazine** along 1891 and 1892. In 1892, they were published together with nine other stories in the collection **The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes** by G. Newnes. These three stories are usually found among lists of the best Sherlock Holmes stories, for instance in Conan Doyle’s list from 1927 and in **The Baker Street Journal**.

As a prototype man of science applied to the resolution of criminal cases, Sherlock Holmes stands out as a cultural representative of rationality and positivist thought. As Catherine Belsey explains,

The project of the Sherlock Holmes stories is to dispel magic and mystery, to make everything explicit, accountable, subject to scientific analysis. (...) The stories begin in enigma, mystery, the impossible, and conclude with an explanation, which makes it clear that logical deduction and scientific method render all mysteries accountable to reason. (...) They reflect the widespread optimism characteristic of their period concerning the comprehensive power of positivist science. (1980, p. 111-112)

Although the realistic portrayal of society is not the main concern of these stories, by analyzing the characterization of Sherlock Holmes we aim to investigate how these three stories situate the detective within society. By observing the role Holmes plays in society we can also analyze to what extent notions of national identity are projected onto the detective’s *persona*.

As we shall see below, Sherlock Holmes’ national identity is defined especially in contrast with foreign characters. From a kind of understanding and identification between characters, a sense of Englishness is articulated and projected onto the image of the detective. While Watson provides us with an explicit characterization of Holmes, an implicit characterization is constituted when he is contrasted with the characterization of the king of

Bohemia, in “A Scandal in Bohemia”, and of Dr. Roylott in “The Speckled Band”. In this sense Holmes’ Englishness is constituted by what he *is* as opposed to what these other characters are *not* regarding their national identity.

2.1 *The scandalous woman in London*

Whenever the topic is the role of women in the characterization of Sherlock Holmes, the debate is inevitably centered on the short story “A Scandal in Bohemia”, in which the hereditary king of Bohemia makes a special trip to England to hire the detective’s services to recover a photograph used by an ex-lover of his, Irene Adler, for the purposes of blackmail. The king tells Holmes that he has been careless to take a photograph together with the well-known adventuress. The case is urgent because the king intends to marry the daughter of the King of Scandinavia, whose family is a very conservative one, but Irene Adler threatens to send the family the photograph. Holmes’ plan to recover the photograph is to go to Adler’s house disguised as a priest, find out where the photograph is kept, and on the next day take the king there. However, Adler proves to be one step ahead of Holmes. Finding out that the disguised priest is the detective, she leaves the house and the country the next morning, never to return, leaving Holmes and the king of Bohemia a note and a photograph.

One interesting point about this short story, then, is that despite Holmes’ brilliant reasoning power this is a case that he does not solve since it is Adler who decides that she is not going to use the photograph against the king. However, at the end, we infer that Holmes feels relieved because he does not fulfill his task, as he manages to be the perpetrator of justice. As the story develops, the king passes from an innocent victim to an inconsequential and selfish tyrant, while the opposite movement happens to the characterization of Adler, who begins the story as a devilish woman and finishes it as a victimized one.

In this sense, “A Scandal in Bohemia” is a story about the inversion of roles. That the king is not exactly who he pretends to be is foreshadowed early in the narrative, when he shows up wearing a mask and introducing himself as someone else. Another hint about the dubious status of his report on the entire case is his unexpected reaction to the news of Adler’s secret wedding. But it is only when Holmes reads Adler’s note that the king’s second mask

falls. As Holmes reads Adler's words, "I love and am loved by a better man than he. The King may do what he will without hindrance from one whom he has cruelly wronged", the detective realizes that the victim is in fact Adler, and not the king (DOYLE, 2010, p. 24).

Holmes' understanding of Adler's situation as well as his identification with her intelligence signal characteristics of their English-speaking cultures. Although Adler was born in the United States, she was well-adapted to English culture for a long time. In this triangular characterization scheme, the mutual understanding between Holmes and Irene Adler is contrasted with the king's characterization as a foreigner, whose selfish and greedy plans to marry the daughter of the king of Scandinavia would make Adler's life even more miserable. As opposed to the English-speaking characters, the Bohemian king lacks elements of *reason* and *civilization*. While his misunderstanding of Adler's miserable situation evinces either his cruelty or his poor perception, his appearance, that of a barbarian deprived of the English taste, illustrates his uncivilized manner:

his dress was rich with a richness which would, in England, be looked upon as akin to bad taste. Heavy bands of astrakhan were slashed across the sleeves and fronts of his double-breasted coat, while the deep blue cloak which was thrown over his shoulders was lined with flamed coloured silk and secured at the neck with a brooch which consisted of a single flaming beryl. Boots which extended half-way up his calves, which were trimmed at the tops with rich brown fur, completed the impression of barbaric opulence which was suggested by his whole appearance. (...) From the lower part of the face he appeared to be a man of strong character, with a thick, hanging lip, and a long, straight chin suggestive of resolution pushed to the length of obstinacy. (DOYLE, 2010, p. 6)

Another point that makes "A Scandal in Bohemia" one of the most read and commented on all Holmes' stories is that in this story we witness an important change in the character of Holmes, as the detective is affected by THE woman. Hence the real mystery that surrounds "A Scandal in Bohemia" concerns Holmes' thoughts and feelings about Adler, as put forward by the first line in the story, "To Sherlock Holmes she is always THE woman" (DOYLE, 2010, p. 1). Since the publication of this short story, Holmes' mysterious imaginings regarding Adler have only increased because in other stories he becomes a detective without love, indifferent to women. Moreover, Watson states explicitly (and contradictorily), "All emotions, and that one [love] particularly, were abhorrent to his cold,

precise but admirably balanced mind” (DOYLE, 2010, p. 1). As Belsey points out, even though the Sherlock Holmes stories constitute “a plea for science” in that they attempt to “dispel magic and mystery” (1980, p. 112), they also evince uncertainties, especially in the characterization of women. She explains that

the presentation of so many women in the Sherlock Holmes stories as shadowy, mysterious and magical figures precisely contradicts the project of explicitness, transgresses the values of the texts, and in doing so throws into relief the poverty of the contemporary concept of science. (BELSEY, 1980, p. 115)

Adler means so much to Holmes because she demonstrates that she can be as clever as he is. Before her, Holmes probably thought that women could not be on a par with his reasoning power. Watson concludes the story saying, “He [Holmes] used to make merry over the cleverness of women, but I have not heard him do it of late” (DOYLE, 2010, p. 25). However, it was more than Adler’s capability of reasoning *per se* that mattered; it was her resemblance to Holmes. His interest in Adler comes at least partly from the fact that, intellectually, she resembles a man’s reasoning, as shown in the king’s description of her: “she has the face of the most beautiful of women, and the mind of the most resolute of men” (DOYLE, 2010, p. 10). The eccentricities and contradictions in the characterization of Sherlock Holmes help us understand why he is such a unique and cherished character in the imagination of Western culture and a source of inspiration for readers and writers of the detective genre.

2.2 We’re alright, Jack, keep your hands off our stack!

Mr. Wilson, a redheaded pawnbroker, was convinced by his assistant to apply for a position at The Red-Headed League. The vacancy is only available to truly redheaded men from London. Mr. Wilson secures the position and spends every day from ten to two in an office copying the **Encyclopedia Britannica**. He is happy because the new job means extra money without interfering with his pawnbroker business, which is left to the care of his clever assistant. Mr. Wilson decides to seek Holmes’ help after he finds his new workplace abandoned, with a sign saying that the Red-Headed League had been dissolved.

As early as Mr. Wilson's narrative about the Red-Headed League, we are almost sure that Mr. Wilson's assistant is the criminal, but we have a hard time associating the extraordinary story about the League with any serious crime. In this short story, the mystery is about the characterization of the crime itself. Sherlock Holmes says that Mr. Jabez Wilson's story is "among the most singular" (DOYLE, 2010, p. 27) and is "refreshingly unusual" (DOYLE, 2010, p. 37). The clues that signal that Vincent Spaulding, Mr. Wilson's assistant, is the criminal are that even though he is a clever worker he was "willing to come for half-wages" (DOYLE, 2010, p. 30), and that he usually spends time in the cellar, supposedly revealing photographs. With this Holmes deduces that Vincent Spaulding is actually John Clay, "murderer, thief, smasher, and forger" (DOYLE, 2010, p. 44), one of the most intelligent criminals in London and that the Red-Headed League is part of a plan to make a tunnel that leads to the bank situated behind Mr. Wilson's pawnbroker business.

Even though Holmes shows knowledge of the crime from the beginning, asking if Mr. Wilson's assistant wears earrings (to confirm that he is John Clay) and knocking on the floor of the street in front of Mr. Wilson's shop to learn about the tunnel, we endure in relative ignorance because we are limited to Watson's perspective. Watson admits his general limitation in comparison to his ingenious friend when he says,

I was always oppressed with a sense of my own stupidity in my dealings with Sherlock Holmes. Here I heard what he had heard, I had seen what he had seen, and yet from his words it was evident that he saw clearly not only what happened but what was about to happen. (DOYLE, 2010, p. 42-43)

Our identification with Watson's perspective serves to enhance suspense and to stress Holmes' reasoning capability. According to Kothe, among Doyle's many contributions to the consolidation of the detective genre, one great innovation was the duplication of the detective into an assistant who observes and registers but does not have the detective's ability to draw accurate conclusions (cf. 1994, p. 119).

Sherlock Holmes' identification with the interests of the English economy can be associated with his characterization as a citizen that defends national interests. In this sense, Holmes' nationalism is stressed by the contrastive characterization of John Clay, whose brilliant reasoning is used against the interests of his nation.

2.3 Be careful with the heat of the tropics

Helen Stoner pays a desperate visit to Sherlock Holmes and asks for help. She suspects that the strange circumstances which surrounded her sister's death two years before were beginning to repeat, so she fears that this time she will be the victim. Although she suspects that her stepfather was somehow connected to the crime, she has no evidence. Julia, Helen's sister, died two weeks before her wedding day, in her room with the door and windows locked. Helen is frightened because now that she is going to get married herself, her stepfather has asked her to move into her late sister's room temporarily.

One characteristic that makes "The Speckled Band" a very enthralling detective story is the fact that it is a closed-room crime (cf. ALBUQUERQUE, 1979, p. 98). For the detective genre reader, while in "The Red-Headed League" the existence and nature of the crime account for the intrigue of the story, in "The Speckled Band" the method of the crime becomes the most mysterious aspect of the narrative. Julia died locked in a room that had no connection with other rooms or the outside, and all clues indicate that the same crime is about to happen again if the puzzle is not solved. The crime presents itself to readers as a jigsaw, with several separate fictional elements that have to be matched correctly.

The solution in "The Speckled Band" is that the stepfather *was* responsible for Julia's death and planned to kill Helen to prevent the stepdaughters from marrying and taking with them part of the money left by the late mother. The method is explained by the fact that Dr. Roylott, the stepfather, sends a trained Indian serpent through a secret ventilator between his room and Julia's, which is next to his.

Unlike "A Scandal in Bohemia", in "The Speckled Band" the young woman is presented as a victim from the very beginning of the story. After her mother and sister died, Helen has been helpless and abandoned in the hands of the cruel stepfather. One of the most interesting elements in such a well-constructed puzzle but a straightforward story is Holmes' ethical bias at the end when he admits to being indirectly responsible for Dr. Roylott's death. After Dr. Roylott is bitten by the poisonous snake, Holmes confesses to Watson that,

Some of the blows of my cane came home and roused its snakish temper, so that it flew upon the first person it saw. In this way I am no doubt indirectly responsible for Dr. Grimesby Roylott's death, and I cannot say that it is likely to weigh very heavily upon my conscience. (DOYLE, 2010, p. 191)

Beyond and above the law, Holmes believes that justice should be sought by individuals. Contradictory enough for a man of science, a man who observed reality so close, Sherlock Holmes believes that good always prevails over evil, as when he says, in a preacher-like manner to Watson, "Violence does, in truth, recoil upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for another" (DOYLE, 2010, p. 190).

The fact that Holmes acts as a catalyst for justice and kills Dr. Roylott is backed up by Doyle's interesting characterization of the stepfather as a devilish man. As in the characterization of the king of Bohemia, a sense of Englishness, or character, is associated with Sherlock Holmes in contrast to Dr. Roylott, as Roylott's devilishness is associated with his long residence in India. According to Helen, Dr. Roylott's propensity for violent behaviors was "intensified by his long residence in the tropics" (DOYLE, 2010, p. 169). Holmes also remarks that "the idea of using a form of poison which could not possibly be discovered by any chemical test was just such a one as would occur to a clever and ruthless man who had had an Eastern training" (DOYLE, 2010, p. 191). The method of the crime is explained by an exotic and foreign element (a swamp adder, the deadliest snake in India) and accounts for the fantastic in the story, but also suggests anxiety regarding foreign countries, such as those colonies and ex-colonies which were markedly different from England and with which Holmes' country had so much contact.

Whereas Dr. Roylott is depicted as a violent and greedy man, traits associated with his foreign experience, Holmes' Englishness signals a calm and generous man. When Helen says that "At present it is out of my power to reward you for your services", Holmes comforts her saying that, "my profession is its own reward" (DOYLE, 2010, p. 167-168). Holmes loves his work and does it for personal satisfaction, not a material necessity. The fact that he always helps someone (Helen in this short story) or some institution (the bank in "The Red-Headed League", for example) is secondary to him. The detective explains to his friend that these

“little problems” help him escape boredom, as his last exchange with Watson in “The Red-Headed League” demonstrates:

“You reasoned it out beautifully”, I exclaimed in unfeigned admiration. “It is so long a chain, and yet every link rings true”.
“It saved me from ennui”, he answered, yawning. “Alas! I already feel it closing in upon me. My life is spent in one long effort to escape from the commonplaces of existence. These little problems help me to do so”.
“And you are a benefactor of the race”, said I.
He shrugged his shoulders. “Well, perhaps, after all, it is of some little use”, he remarked. (DOYLE, 2010, p. 50-51)

However, it is difficult not to infer that precisely because of Holmes’ lack of pretension to be recognized as such he is a kind of superhero to those he helps. On the one hand, Doyle didactically shows us that it was Watson who made Holmes a national hero, while Holmes himself never had such pretension. On the other hand, we are left with the impression that because Holmes acts out of a personal passion and does not seek wealth, he does general good without second intentions (cf. PEREIRA, 2018).

2.4 It’s a bird... It’s a plane... It’s Sherlock Holmes

Despite the coldness often attributed to Sherlock Holmes’ character, another aspect of Holmes’ Englishness as it pertains to his characterization by Doyle is a remarkable balance between introspection and seriousness, on the one hand, and humor and affection for Watson, on the other. Holmes is usually introspective and always alert, but often seems absent-minded, which is the effect of his mental absorption. In “The Speckled Band”, for instance, Holmes invites Watson to go to St. James Hall to listen to German music. “German music”, says Holmes, “is rather more to my taste than Italian or French. It is introspective, and I want to introspect” (DOYLE, 2010, p. 39-40). More than a way to relax, listening to music satisfies Holmes’ interest in music, especially in the violin, and means a journey into thinking. Furthermore, the fact that Holmes likes German more than Italian or French music indicates his affiliation with the relatively contained manners associated with his Englishness, as opposed to warmer and more relaxed manners associated with the other two nationalities.

Nevertheless, Holmes also displays a considerable sense of humor in these stories. In “A Scandal in Bohemia”, he mocks at Watson’s new life as a husband, “Wedlock suits you”, “you have put on seven and a half pounds since I saw you” (DOYLE, 2010, p. 3). In “The Red-Headed League”, Holmes bursts into a roar of laughter when Mr. Wilson tells him about the mysterious dissolution of the League. When Mr. Wilson complains about having been the object of a prank, Holmes makes an ironic remark, “you are, as I understand, richer by some 30 pounds, to say nothing of the minute knowledge which you have gained on every subject which comes under the letter A” (DOYLE, 2010, p. 38).

Above all, as the first scientific detective, the defining trait of the characterization of Sherlock Holmes is his extraordinary intellectual abilities, a man who was “the most perfect reasoning machine that the world has seen” (DOYLE, 2010, p. 1). In this sense his Englishness is indivisible from his accurate capacity to reason, as he becomes the very embodiment of science and positivism. So clever was Holmes, that Watson was happy to observe his friend’s reasoning and to register his cases. Watson, besides being a suitable narrator, as his role in “The Red-Headed League” illustrates, emphasizes Holmes’ brightness. As in “A Scandal in Bohemia”, Holmes’ deductive method involves the rapid retrieval of information from indices of people and things, a system similar to Internet search engines nowadays, the study of scientific articles and criminal cases, but his most outstanding quality is his ability to associate knowledge. As a result, he always comes to “rapid deductions, as swift as intuitions, and yet always founded on a logical basis”, as Watson points out in “The Speckled Band” (DOYLE, 2010, p. 166). In the disclosure of the mystery in that short story, Holmes says that “I had come to these conclusions before ever I had entered his room” (DOYLE, 2010, p. 191). The difference between Holmes and Watson’s reasoning is well explained in Holmes’ comment, “You see, but you do not observe” (DOYLE, 2010, p. 4).

3 Concluding remarks

The line, “Elementary, my dear Watson”, a phrase never really spoken by Doyle’s Holmes, captures well the relative vanity attributed to Holmes because of his explicit attitude of intellectual superiority regarding his partner. Moreover, the stories analyzed herein suggest

that this air of superiority is constructed little by little about other characters, especially those connected with foreign nationalities which represent a type of otherness from a cultural standpoint, thus indirectly defining a highly distinctive sense of Englishness associated with one of the main icons of English culture.

Furthermore, the persona of Sherlock Holmes as an icon of the English national identity can be traced to the concept of “gentleman”, as we have explored in more detail elsewhere (cf. PEREIRA, 2019), from a cultural perspective, whereby it is identified with social practices and behaviors rooted in history, and this idea has a relationship with Queen Victoria’s reign, due to the confidence it conveyed to the population of Great Britain. Like the queen of England, the detective is presented to the reader as a trustworthy character who never lets anyone down. Carli and Indrusiak have also noted that Holmes and Watson’s interactions in the stories evince a strong sense of Victorian morality, especially related to behaviors that valued work ethic, respectability, and modesty (cf. 2018, p. 257).

The time when the Sherlock Holmes stories were written coincided with the end of the Victorian Era in England. It was a time when the British Empire was expanding, and the population consequently felt happy and confident with Queen Victoria on the throne. Thus, Sherlock Holmes sums up this confidence, as he is an English gentleman who can solve any problem, and defeat any enemy. On top of that, he is polite, intelligent and presents control over the situations he seeks to solve, thus representing what is meant by being a gentleman during this period. As Robert Barnard puts it, during the second half of Queen Victoria’s reign,

Britain certainly put up a tremendous *appearance* of being the confident world leader she had been at mid-century: she ran, without serious threat, the most extensive Empire the world had ever known, and she was central to decision-making in Europe. (BARNARD, 1994, p. 132)

At times Holmes has some attitudes that can be interpreted as morally ambivalent, such as his drug-addiction, but even in that respect his characterization translates into a sense of Victorian cultural ambivalence, as this trait aimed at “increasing the detective’s bohemianism, his flamboyancy making the character more alluring to the Victorian middle-class reader who loved to flirt secretly with such vices” (DAVIES, 2004, p. XII). At the end

of the day, he could always be framed as a gentleman when his behavior and professional conduct involved other people since the detective was always punctual, he never took unfair advantage of any situation, and his only objective was to solve the cases with which he accepted to work. Precisely because of Holmes' lack of ambition to be recognized, he becomes a true superhero to those he helps.

According to the characterization of the detective found in "A Scandal in Bohemia", "The Red-Headed League", and "The Adventure of the Speckled Band", Holmes is capable of helping people and institutions, but he does not aim at becoming a representative of the community. However, whereas Holmes' motive for becoming involved with detection is based on a personal interest in crime and in puzzle solving, his recurrent success and recognition by the community make him almost a superhero.

In terms of the representation of national identity, the images of Sherlock Holmes in England project elements of nationalism associated with a heroic characterization of the detective. In Doyle's stories, Holmes' Englishness is portrayed indirectly vis-à-vis characters with a foreign origin or background. In sum, the images of Sherlock Holmes in England project relevant elements of nationalism associated with a positive and heroic characterization of Holmes as a man of science and reason. In Doyle's stories, Holmes' Englishness is established mainly indirectly to other national identities, as in the characterization of the king (Bohemian) and Dr. Roylott (Indian).

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