

3 Halves of a Whole: Homosexuality and Self-Acceptance in BBC's *Sherlock*

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Abstract

British Broadcasting Corporation, or BBC's Sherlock presents a variety of relationships as it follows the escapades of famous detective duo Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, as they maneuver through their daily lives and work to stop the efforts of supervillain Professor James Moriarty. Over time, the character of Sherlock has been made and remade, presented to fit the day and age in which it is released. First released in 2009, Sherlock has been a discussion point regarding homosexual relationships between men by fans and critics alike. Through a deep reading with a utilization of Queer Theory, this paper will further explore the characters in Sherlock, their relations and contrasts with other characters of homosexual orientation, and how the three fit together to form one single person, displayed in three parts through three characters.

Set in present-day London, BBC's show *Sherlock* stars Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman as the famous detective pair Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson and follows their adventures solving crimes often constructed by evil mastermind James Moriarty, played by Andrew Scott. The show, as well as the productions that precede it, are based on the series of mysteries written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle between 1887 and 1927, which included four novels and fifty-six short stories. Since their initial publication, Sherlock and Watson have been adapted into movies, plays, and most recently, BBC's television production, which is entering its fourth season. This work will explore the character dynamics within *Sherlock*, as well as its relation to society today, exploring appropriations of gay men in popular culture media and media. Research will divulge different extremes of these appropriations, as well as how the continuum of these extremes is seen and reflected in *Sherlock*.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Born in 1859, Doyle's work was influenced heavily by the reign of Queen Victoria, a time period that brought about massive movements and growth in a variety of industries and a time of unmatched growth and development in Europe (*Discovering Arthur Conan Doyle*, para. 2). The rapid growth of London quickly led to overcrowding, poverty, and a great divide between socioeconomic classes. London quickly became "a place of disturbing contrasts, a cosmopolitan city where the middle class drank tea in comfortable drawing rooms while epidemics of typhoid ... ravaged the squalid, overpopulated East End" (*Discovering Arthur Conan Doyle*, para. 2). Even as London's health and sanitization slowly began to improve, the city still remained a criminal's dream. "The over three million people living in Greater London in 1861 more than doubled to become over seven million by the 1910s" (Emsley, n.d.). Doyle's work represents the view of the police force, which at his birth numbered more than 200 units, in the *Sherlock Holmes* adventures painting them as officers who operated "by the book"; constables themselves tended to be seen as good-intentioned, but plodding, and not always successful" (*Discovering Arthur Conan Doyle*, para. 6).

It has been told that Doyle based the character of Sherlock Holmes on his mentor while in school, forensic surgeon Joseph Bell (*Discovering Arthur Conan Doyle*, para 5). Allegedly written as a

pastime between appointments, Doyle wrote the first Sherlock Holmes story in 1886; the four novels and fifty-six short stories that Doyle completed are formally known as The Canon. These stories, as technology and interest have progressed, have also changed and come to life in television series, miniseries, and film.

Early *Sherlock Holmes*

In 1916, the earliest American film adaptation of *Sherlock Holmes* was released, a silent film starring William Gillette. In 1922, John Barrymore and Roland Young were featured in the next adaptation, *Lost and Found*. 20th Century Fox released *Hound of the Baskervilles* in 1939, but had little faith in the project; when the film took the screen by storm, Holmes and Watson, played by Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce, went on to film fourteen *Sherlock Holmes* films together. “Twenty years on, another version of *Hound of the Baskervilles* [was produced with]...a definite British horror feel to the back story” (A Brief History of Sherlock Holmes).

The adventures of Sherlock, Watson, super-villain Moriarty and their accomplices have been adapted and produced for mass audiences more than twenty times since Doyle’s death in 1930; continuing into present-day television. The Sherlock story has been adapted and produced across cultures, mediums and methods since its release in print, along with various studies into the psyche of one of the most famous fictional characters in history, and has been analyzed for a variety of social, psychological and physiological topics.

Previous Studies – Drugs, Homosexuality, and Literary Criticism

Explorations into drug use and mental illness as part of Holmes’ character have been studied at great lengths. In one specific study, Dr. J. Thomas Dalby writes that Holmes’ alleged drug use, while “only observed in two stories: *The Sign of Four* (1890) and *A Scandal in Bohemia* (1891),” raises the question: why would Doyle “inflict his character with this behavioral flaw?” (Dalby, 1991, pg. 74). Researchers that have studied this topic believe that Doyle projected his own father’s addiction to alcohol and eventual admittance to a mental institution onto Holmes. Another places Doyle’s reasoning in historical context – in Doyle’s time, cocaine and its use in society were thought to be less harmful; it was not until the 1990s that cocaine and other drugs began to be seen as dangerous, harmful, or addicting. This historical context frames the idea of drug use differently than society as a whole views the use of cocaine and other addictive drugs today (Dalby, 1991, pg. 74).

Benjamin O’Dell’s 2012 literary criticism of *The Sign of Four* examines Holmes’ potential use of cocaine more fully, searching for an answer to the question “was Sherlock Holmes a drug addict?” The answer concluded in Jack Tracy’s *Subcutaneously, My Dear Watson* in 1978 replies “yes, Sherlock Holmes used cocaine; at the same time, evidence of his dependence is slim” (O’Dell, 2012, para. 3). In the 1880s, the first modern theories of drug addiction and dependency arose after a rise in narcotic use in the upper and middle classes in British society, headed by government, organized medicine, the church and press. This “allowed the reform movement to exploit [drug users] connection to the problem and gradually reconfigure public space through the development of social stigmas that would exclude known users from positions of authority” (O’Dell, 2012, para 5). By keeping the users of cocaine and other recreational drugs out of public office and positions of power, a negatively charged stigma was placed on these users as well. No matter the time or era, the Holmes and Watson duo exemplifies a different social stigma that is relevant to their time of release. In this case, the pair address drug use and homosexuality, respectively. Just as drug use was accompanied by a negative label in Doyle’s time, the same can be said about many cases of homosexuality made public in today’s society. In BBC’s production of Sherlock and Watson’s adventures, it is not drug use that is called into question but instead the relationship between

Sherlock and Holmes as a potential couple. Consumers of media today live in a society in which homosexuality or any kind of queerness often come with their own stigma placed on those that fall into that category, as it did in Doyle's time with drug usage. It has been noted that Doyle has a reasonably extensive knowledge of stimulant substances showcased in Holmes' use of caffeine in particular. Just as Holmes is often side-eyed and judged as eccentric, many users of drugs, which were then less studied and cautioned, ostracized.

These notions of shame and exclusion surrounding the use of drugs in Doyle's time are brought into focus by addressing how Watson and Holmes each deal with shame and their acceptance, or lack thereof, of truth and fact. O'Dell continues on to note that if *The Sign of Four* was read through a sociological scope, the character of John Watson would very clearly exemplify "the ultimate form of institutional power through strong associations with medicine and the military," but it is "precisely in the dual nature of Watson's position as both author and physician that ... reveals the split between the immaculate operations of institutional power and the conflicted anxieties of [Watson's] personal fears" (O'Dell, 2012, para. 11). Throughout the rest of *The Sign of Four*, Holmes ignores Watson's concerns about his drug use. O'Dell claims that "by removing himself from the social periphery through drug use, Holmes suggests that he is able to explore "the world's state, avoiding government assistance or direction, and remaining as emotionally detached from his work as possible (O'Dell, 2012, para. 11).

In removing Watson from *The Sign of Four* and placing him in the show's context today, viewers can see similarities between the two. Watson evolves from acting a symbol of reflection of society's view on drugs during the time *Sherlock Holmes* was initially conceptualized to acting as society's view of homosexuals or other out-groups in society in BBC's *Sherlock*. However, regardless of the time or even situation, Watson can be counted on as a voice of reason and rationality, as the more taciturn and logical grounding to Holmes' scatterbrained thoughts and Moriarty's flamboyant schemes.

Sherlock Holmes on Television

Beginning in 1951, numerous television renditions of *Sherlock Holmes* stories have been produced. BBC cast Alan Wheatley and Raymond Francis as Holmes and Watson in a miniseries following the pair's adventures. The first American production began in 1954 and was produced in Paris, France. A series in 1982 produced by Granada Television, *Young Sherlock: The Mystery of the Manor House* told the story of Holmes' childhood. These various renditions of the Holmes story in early television changed with the technology of the age, moving from black and white to color.

In addition to being adapted to different technologies, Sherlock and Watson have been edited and written to be geared toward different ages – popular animated show *Alvin and the Chipmunks* aired an episode entitled *Elementary, My Dear Simon*, starring each of the three chipmunks, Simon, Theodore and Alvin as Holmes, Watson and Moriarty, respectively. Children's television saw another adaptation of the Holmes tales in *The Adventures of Shirley Holmes*. In this adaptation, Shirley is a descendent of Holmes who has inherited Holmes' knack for crime solving.

In 2012 the CBS television show *Elementary* takes a new approach to the Sherlock Holmes/John Watson dynamic with Lucy Liu starring as Dr. *Joan* Watson alongside Jonny Lee Miller's Sherlock Holmes. In CBS's rendition of the story, Holmes and Watson reside in Manhattan, New York, leaving London after Holmes finishes rehab. Having been a former doctor who now is dedicated to helping addicts remain restrained, Watson is a sober living companion, hired by Holmes' father. Watson and Holmes work closely with NYPD, helping them solve crimes. A 2012 review of the show notes this pairing of Sherlock and a female Watson adds "an unexpected frisson

to their relationships; making [Watson] a strong, smart woman shifts [the relationship] even further toward a more equal partnership” (*Bianco, 2012*).

Sherlock’s story has even been put into puppet form – Japanese broadcast company NHK has released 18 episodes of this show voiced by actors and played through puppets. It follows teenagers Holmes’ and Watson’s adventures at boarding school and won Japan’s Sherlock Holmes award in March 2015.

BBC’s *Sherlock*

In 2009, BBC in the United Kingdom began the production and airing of *Sherlock*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman as the unstoppable pair. Set in modern day London, in this rendition of the story, Holmes and Watson are often questioned by their landlord, Mrs. Hudson, on the status of their relationship. Mrs. Hudson is adamant the pair are romantically involved and is relentless in her questioning. However, unlike in many renditions of the duo’s adventures, *Sherlock* has a third key component – Professor Moriarty.

Professor James “Jim” Moriarty is the resident supervillain and criminal mastermind in the BBC’s show. Audiences of *Sherlock* may note that Moriarty is not a typical criminal – his mind-games, planning and strategy are impeccable; even after being arrested, Moriarty has formulated and executed a plan so precise that there is no way to convict him, even though he most certainly has committed a myriad of crimes.

Moriarty and Sherlock’s rivalry is almost playful – they openly discuss tactic and strategy, with Moriarty even being referred to by Holmes as his “intellectual equal.” At one point in Doyle’s original novels, Sherlock even says “my horror at his crimes was lost in my admiration of his skill” (Conan Doyle, 1894). Moriarty juxtaposes Holmes’ ability for using knowledge, wit, and skill as a gateway to better society with his constant need to challenge Holmes, balancing the need for an extreme on both ends of the spectrum of good and evil. Societal myth has a need for both extremes of great good and great evil, and Sherlock and Moriarty’s relationship satisfies that need.

Character analyses of Moriarty generally paint him as your average person – with an abnormally strong skill set and passion for power and money – yet both of Moriarty’s desires are generally accepted as completely reasonable desires. In BBC’s production, Moriarty is a far more relevant character than in Doyle’s novels. “Doyle, having done it once, didn’t think he could keep introducing supervillains,” notes *USA Today*’s Brian Truitt. In Doyle’s writing, “Moriarty was an enigma . . . no one has heard of him” (Truitt, 2011, n.p.). Throughout Doyle’s writing, Moriarty is mentioned but only comes into scene twice. In contrast, within the narrative of *Sherlock*, Moriarty is the source of the majority of conflict and crime in London. His role as not only a supervillain but also sometimes a mentor and challenger brings forward a different kind of relationship, as well as a different kind of intimacy than that between Watson and Holmes. For two geniuses with opposing purposes to find a common ground in order to challenge and eventually better themselves at their craft is a new approach at intimacy but is a vital relationship dynamic within *Sherlock*.

Previous studies analyzed Sherlock Holmes as a drug user and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as a person. However, the BBC rendition of the story has a new focus of conversation – homosexuality. Many of the studies focus on the relationship between Holmes and Watson and its characteristics. While several studies have been done on the relationship between Watson and Holmes, the inclusion of Moriarty and the exploration of the three as symbols for prevalent issues in current society surrounding homosexuality remain untouched. Because Sherlock Holmes and his undertakings have been preserved and recreated throughout time, the characters and storyline of *Sherlock Holmes* have coined themselves as important pieces of history and entertainment.

Purpose

The function of this work is to examine more fully the relationship between Sherlock Holmes, John Watson, and James Moriarty as three halves of the same person, the first two “halves” being an ongoing internal battle of acceptance and denial, packaged into one person with a set of outward behaviors. The two internal halves meet and battle constantly but are masked for a great deal of time by the outward presentation. The purpose of this paper is to identify the present-day issues that the BBC production of *Sherlock* addresses, namely homosexuality, and the emotional journey that may accompany an individual realizing and coming to terms with this often socially unaccepted reality. The argument of this work is that the character of John Watson is a symbol of one end of the extremes that gay men in media are less feminine and more accepting of their sexuality, James Moriarty as denial and often eccentric and wild, and Sherlock Holmes as the outward portrayal of this intrapersonal battle.

Methodology

The methodology for this study is a deep reading, coding for relationships and their tendencies, characteristics and qualities, with an added lens utilizing Queer Theory. Analyzing the extrinsic portrayal of an intrinsic journey to self-acceptance can more fully define and articulate the importance of the relationship between James Moriarty, John Watson, and Sherlock Holmes – stressing the idea that no one could exist without the others and that directors Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss may be pushing forward a discussion on homosexual relationships and how they are viewed in society by taking viewers on a 3-sided journey to acknowledging a personal reality.

The deep reading method of analysis encourages consumers to critically think, explore, and understand the concepts and messages within the texts they are examining. Deep reading is not limited only to books and print, however. Deep reading can be used to analyze television shows, songs, and other forms of media in order to locate and explore metanarratives that help consumers better and more fully understand and interpret potential messages and themes within different artifacts (*Deep Thinking and Deep Reading*, para 1).

Coined in 1990, Queer Theory as a study began with a thought to individual identity and was used for “theorizing lesbian and gay sexualities,” according to its founder, Teresa de Lauretis (Hawley, 2009, pg. 595). Lauretis continues to note that Queer Theory acts as a tool for exploring the ways that lesbian, or in this case gay, relationships are formed, as well as the discourses and repressions of voice that surround these relationships. In coding for relationships with a queer gaze, it is important to recognize and understand the role each symbol within the artifact has, as well as how they fit together to create a collective index of queer relationship tendencies in *Sherlock*, or a collection of symbols that support the same ideal being signified.

An Encyclopedia of Queer Studies considers this method of analyzation as the most modern deconstructionist method; one that when combined with a deep reading technique can open a new line of discussion and new concepts to be discovered within an artifact (Hawley, 2009, 597). Looking at an artifact with what is referred to as “queer gaze” often involves searching for subtle hints and tendencies that indicate things outside of social cues or norms, whether they be sexual or not (Hawley, 2009, pg. 978-993).

Queer lenses have been added to analyzation of media dating back centuries. The 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz* is largely considered one of film’s most beloved movies but when read for queer subtexts, finds connections with 1977 box-office flop *Desperate Living*, whose narrative follows a mentally insane housewife who ends up with in a land called Mortville surrounded by criminals,

lesbians, and a power-crazy queen. *Desperate Living* is often referred to as a “lesbian soap opera;” how could this film possibly have connections to the classic *Wizard of Oz*?

Readings coding *The Wizard of Oz* for lesbian and gay relationships explore Dorothy’s relationship with both of the witches – witches that can be viewed as extremes of the lesbian portrayal – the Wicked Witch of the West painted as a “butch” lesbian and Glenda the Good Witch of the North as the more feminine, delicate lesbian portrayal. *Desperate Living* plays off these interpretations and eccentrically and dramatically polarizes the two in the film. While falling into different genres of entertainment, both *The Wizard of Oz* and *Sherlock* can be read for their importance to potential representations of homosexuality in media.

Queer gaze, when added to other forms of analyzation like deep reading, presents the ability to deconstruct overall messages and narratives to find more subtle, easily overlooked characteristics of queerness that many other forms of analyzation cannot. The result of these kinds of studies can find connections and characteristics that society as a whole cannot as easily see because of their preoccupation with other generalizations like the characterizations of witches as evil and green or glittery and good like in *The Wizard of Oz*.

The characters in *Sherlock* act as symbols of extremes on the homosexual spectrum that have been created through media portrayal. These characters symbolize the extremely under-the-radar, subtly gay man in Dr. John Watson and the extremely flamboyant gay man in James Moriarty. These social appropriations of homosexuality are present in a variety of media and will be discussed at length regarding how they fit into the overall show and into cohesion with each other. Deep reading will be used as a way of stepping back from the surface of the narrative and looking deeper into the relationships and interactions between characters. A queer lens will be added to this deep reading in order to code specifically for elements of homosexual relationships within the characters’ relationships and personalities.

Discussion

The concept of a homosexual relationship between Sherlock and Watson is not an uncommon theme when discussing *Sherlock* as a television show. In a 2015 study done at Virginia Commonwealth University, Cassidy Sheehan addresses the concept of queer-baiting, or luring homosexual or bisexual viewers into consuming a particular form of media using homoerotic subtexts. Steven Moffat, creator of *Sherlock* “states ‘I don’t think there is anything that suggests Sherlock is gay,’ and agree[s] that he always wanted to play on the confusion of Holmes’ and Watson’s relationship,” nor does he intend to reveal either character’s sexuality (Sheehan, 2015, n.p.). Another study examines the depiction and reception of same-sex desire and male relationships in *Sherlock*. Stephen Greer notes that although “*Sherlock* may not be an explicitly queer series, it is consciously inflected by the possibility of same-sex desire – a self-awareness that has not gone unnoticed by the press or fandom” (Greer, 2014).

Viewers and fans of the show have, in large part, spearheaded the campaign that adamantly insists Holmes and Watson are romantically, or at least sexually involved with each other. Blogs and postings entitled “Sherlock: A Guide to the 9 Gayest Moments,” “Did Benedict Cumberland Just Imply That BBC’s Sherlock is Gay?,” and “Sherlock Holmes Is Not Gay, Not Straight, Says Steven Moffat” provide examples and readings of the relationship between Holmes and Watson on a level that extends far past being crime-fighting partners and roommates.

While both Holmes and Watson deny a relationship within the narrative plot of *Sherlock*, Holmes on the grounds of a disdain for relationships and preference toward remaining asexual and Watson adamantly insisting he is straight, there are certainly patterns between the two and their relationship that support the contrary. While *Sherlock* is clearly designed to have an undertone of a

homosexual desire, producers, director, and characters alike seem to enjoy the line of questioning that accompanies these ideas. Holmes and Watson are largely co-dependent on each other, raising questions of their sexuality both within the show's narrative and from fans alike.

Sexual relations between the two characters have not been directly implied during the show, but branched-off explorations in the form of books and even pornographic film have been created around the dynamic of Watson and Holmes. In BBC's adaptation, suggestive jokes and actions are recurring and noticeable episode after episode. In the pilot episode of the series, Sherlock and Watson's landlord Mrs. Hudson (Una Stubbs) suggests that the pair will only need to rent one room, assuming their status as a couple. Immediately following Mrs. Hudson's assumption, the two go to dinner together, where a waiter at a local restaurant also deems the pair a couple, saying "I'll get a candle for this table, it's more romantic." From here, Watson questions Sherlock on his relationship status, asking "you don't have a girlfriend then?" to which Sherlock replies "Girlfriend, no. Not really my area" (Moffat, Season 1 Ep. 1). While none of these situations are outward acknowledgements toward one sexual orientation or another, they are queer behaviors. In season two, reporter Kitty Riley observes Watson and Sherlock in action, and when she questions Sherlock about their dynamic and is promptly silenced, says "You and John Watson, just platonic? I'll put you down for a 'no' there" (Moffat, Season 2 Ep. 3).

The more overt exhibitions of queer behavior are dominant in the relationship between Sherlock and Watson. Sherlock and Watson have encounters in dangerous situations that move their focus from the danger of the situation to the question of a relationship between the two. In season one, Sherlock removes Watson's jacket, which has been rigged with a bomb. Following the disposal of the bomb, Watson says "I'm glad no one saw...you, ripping my clothes off in a darkened swimming pool. People might talk." His fear is met by a small smile and "People do little else" as Sherlock's response (Moffat, Season 1 Ep. 3). Their relationship moves past the moderately uncomfortable situations into highly emotional ones. Sherlock and Watson have an emotional conversation preceding Sherlock's jump off of the building, in which Sherlock apologizes to Watson, admits to having "created" Moriarty, and eventually jumps to his "death," Sherlock seems to begin to come to terms with a variety of personal matters, matters that are never openly revealed to the audience.

Sherlock and Moriarty's relationship, as mentioned before, is extremely unorthodox when compared to other superhero-supervillain dynamics. The two seem to be almost like twins, paralleling each other in every way possible but equally as brilliant. The two find motivation to succeed, grow and excel with each other. Both men also have a strong desire for power, control and to conquer the other. While their intentions and actions seem to directly oppose each other, the two are extremely similar as well, operating off elaborate thought processes, behaving eccentrically, and often straining to understand the workings of their own minds. Brilliant none the less, the two have a relationship that is vital to the plot of *Sherlock*. Additionally, when read through a queer lens, some underlying messages of homoeroticism come forward. Holmes and Moriarty first meet, Moriarty is dating Molly, Sherlock's lab assistant. In this initial meeting, Sherlock makes a subtle comment based on his primary observation of Moriarty. When introducing himself, Sherlock says "Gay...nothing, ehm, hey." Even in the first episode of the first season, there are already questions raised within the narrative about homosexuality (Moffat, Season 1 Ep. 1). In the third season, Sherlock has a moment of recollection about his last conversation with Moriarty, and in his recollection, the two sit laughing together before a brief pause and what audiences assume to be kiss between the two. The scene cuts before their lips actually meet, but this is the first contact that Moriarty and Sherlock share. This is the only overtly homosexual relation the two have in the BBC production this far.

Dr. John Watson and Sherlock's relationship is the primary relationship that is explored by scholars and even within the storyline of the show. The pair are continuously asked about their sexual orientation and also treated as a couple on a variety of occasions. The two are reliant on each other for motivation, support, and general success in their work. Viewers of *Sherlock* most clearly identify what they perceive as tendencies of gay couples when viewing the relationship between Sherlock and Watson. However, Professor James Moriarty also has queer tendencies and plays an invaluable role in not only the narrative of *Sherlock*, but also in the relationship formed between each of the three main characters.

Character Analyses

Professor Moriarty is openly eccentric, flamboyant, and peculiar in his crimes, relationships, and overall demeanor in *Sherlock*. Moriarty says that he finds staying alive to be "boring...just staying" and that his entire life has been spent searching for distraction, usually in the form of causing havoc. When conducting a queer view analysis on Moriarty, keeping in mind the question of locating queer behaviors, it can be seen that Moriarty has tendencies that are frequently seen in other gay men shown on television. His eccentric attitude and flamboyant entrances and exits are akin to those of Kurt Hummel, one of the leads on Fox's *Glee*. *Glee* utilizes its plotline as a narrative about a performing glee club to include the character's whimsical attitude and sometimes unconventional ideas to play into his sexuality. Kurt, like Moriarty, is categorized as extremely emotional, often irrational, and known for his atypical ideas and sense of style that is unorthodox to the conservative town *Glee* is set in. James Moriarty behaves as though life is a constant performance, he even at one point dresses in drag. The manner in which he speaks is extremely dramatic and places Moriarty at the far end of the spectrum that society has constructed to categorized homosexual men in that meets with characters like Kurt Hummel or RuPaul Charles, a famous drag queen.

In viewing Dr. John Watson from a queer lens, he shares similarities with other gay men in television and media. Watson is consistently providing feedback, almost always worried about Sherlock's safety and well-versed in scolding him for his often rash and dangerous decision-making. John Watson often presents himself in the same way that many straight men do, but his actions and mannerisms are not heteronormative. Watson is more emotional, more caring, and more openly invested in those around him, namely Sherlock. On the spectrum of homosexual behavior portrayed in media, Watson falls into the most nurturing and what many would consider feminine role in *Sherlock*. NBC's *Will and Grace* was a popular sitcom in the 1990s and early 2000s. Will is an openly gay man but does not present the same kind of characteristics or tendencies that James Moriarty and his counterpart are known for. Characters like John Watson and Will Truman are not flamboyant or excessive in any way. Episodes of *Will and Grace* have been said to enforce societal "gender norms of both gay and straight men," norms and characteristics that are still being seen in media today (*The Heteronormativity of Will and Grace*). Characters like Will from *Will and Grace*, Blaine from *Glee*, and John Watson fall into the opposite end of the spectrum from Moriarty, Kurt Hummel, and RuPaul.

Sherlock Holmes provides a different view of homosexuality when he is viewed through a queer lens. While Watson and Moriarty provide examples on the extreme ends of the spectrum that chronicles how homosexual men are portrayed on television, Sherlock lies somewhere in the gray area, showing characteristics of both and gravitating toward one or the other during different situations. His generally awkward nature and lack of openness and expressed interest in a relationship are contradicted by jealous tendencies and sporadic fits appear to resemble a character who seems to continue to repress their feelings of homoeroticism and desire. Holmes identifies with Moriarty's side of the spectrum in the way that he is concerned with his appearances and has open opinions on fashion and dresses to trends. He falls into Watson's more feminine side as well; while

Sherlock is insistent that he does not have feelings past a need to analyze problems, he demonstrates that he truly cares for Watson. Sherlock forces himself to form an apology, his first expression of emotion. Holmes demonstrates examples on both ends of the spectrum, but spends much of his time wavering between either end, somewhere in the middle, showing tendencies on either extreme end during different situations.

While there is no direct acknowledgement of a homosexual relationship or any kind of physical involvement between the characters of *Sherlock*, there is a connection to be made looking at Watson, Sherlock, and Moriarty's relationship as a single phenomenon. In examining a relationship as closely knit and dependent as that of this trio, the idea occurs that the three men are separate sides of the same being, a homosexual man solving crimes and living in present-day London. Moriarty, at the end of season two says to Sherlock, "you're me, you're me...thank you." John Watson and Sherlock are undeniably reliant on the other throughout the course of the narrative. However, without Sherlock Holmes, John Watson may never have become the John Watson that viewers have come to identify as Sherlock's trusted sidekick. It is not until Sherlock comes into Watson's life that Watson transforms from being a war veteran, doctor, and hermit into the vital partner that he is in *Sherlock*. Without one, there would be no purpose for the others, linking them together as a single entity.

Throughout history, Sherlock Holmes has been a cultural staple of mystery, wit, and knowledge, contrasted by Dr. John Watson's equally intelligent but more emotionally driven mannerisms. The pair's ability to do good is juxtaposed by Moriarty, whose relentlessness in causing havoc only reaches full circle when he and Sherlock discuss their methods and plans together. Sherlock Holmes has been made and remade, fitting into the scope of technological ability and social topics of discussion during its release. When *Sherlock* was first published, it raised questions of drug use, a social topic of discussion and debate at that point in time. As time and technology progressed, variations of Holmes' quests have been released, varying in time, color, and even in animation and puppet form. The 2009 *Sherlock* produced and aired by BBC fits into present-day London, with present-day issues raised.

Through both overt and more subtle occurrences alike, *Sherlock* addresses the different appropriations of gay men that we as consumers have come to know and presents various examples in the relationships that have are active within the narrative to a bigger picture of homosexuality, through the use of Sherlock, Watson, and Moriarty as three sides of the same individual, coming to terms (or avoiding doing so) with their sexual orientation. While the vast majority of studies that code *Sherlock* for queer tendencies and relationships focus on the dynamic between John Watson and Sherlock, Sherlock shares some very similar moments with Moriarty. In the season two finale, Sherlock meets Moriarty and stands on the edge of a building in London, preparing to jump to his death, and in the aftermath, he and Moriarty, as well as he and Watson have a sort of coming-to-terms conversation. The way that the three are so tightly linked and dependent on each other, symbolizing two different extremes of appropriations of homosexuals and their meeting in the middle creates an argument that the three men are actually all linked as one individual that is expressing himself and his orientation as a gay man in three different ways, two on the polar ends of the spectrum and one in the middle that fluctuates and changes with each situation.

No creator, writer, or actor that is a part of *Sherlock* will ever quell the questions raised by critics and fans regarding the sexual orientation of any of the characters. In consistently dodging these questions, Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss leave this distinction and this interpreting to be done by viewers. In this analysis, the ideas that Sherlock, Watson and Moriarty are all examples of media-driven appropriations of gay men were addressed; additionally, due to the dependent nature of each character for the others' own purpose and function, an argument that the three men are

three outward portrayals of the same man came to view. *Sherlock* and the evolution of tales dating back centuries reflects the characters' importance to society; Sherlock Holmes and his companions' importance extends past exploring crimes and motives, into exploring relationships, both externally and internally.

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