"NOT YOUR GRANDFATHER'S - SHERLOCK HOLMES": -

Guy Ritchie's 21st Century Reboot of a - 19th Century British Icon -

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Sherlock Holmes "has enjoyed the most vigorous afterlife of any fictional character" posits Thomas Leitch, adaptation scholar and author of *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents* (Leitch 207). Indeed, a franchise has been built around Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's quirky detective, so much so that Sherlock Holmes has become one of the *most* adapted literary figures of all time, outnumbered only by Frankenstein's monster, Tarzan, and Dracula (207). Clare Parody asserts, "Franchise practice has produced and surrounded some of the highest grossing and best-known fictional texts, characters, plots, and worlds of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries," and *Sherlock Holmes* is no exception (211). From 1900 till the present day, Sherlock Holmes has been portrayed by "nearly 100 actors, in over 200 films, from more than a dozen different countries," and it does not appear like "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's violin-playing, pipe-smoking, cocaine-injecting sleuth" is going anywhere anytime soon (Cook 31). In fact, the twenty-first century has experienced a resurgence in more "straightforward" Holmes adaptations, namely BBC's *Sherlock* (2010), which aired in three ninety-minute episodes and portrays a tech-savvy twenty-first century Holmes, and Guy Ritchie's 2009 and 2011

big screen adaptations, the latter of which will be the focus of this essay. I aim to explore the ways in which Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) adaptation, while inextricably bound to Conan Doyle's storytelling franchise, diverges from its predecessors in that it is *not* an amalgamation of other *Holmes* adaptations. Instead, it is an amalgamation of Conan Doyle's original source texts, Guy Ritchie's distinctive "rough and tumble" filmmaking style, and the star personas of Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law as they inject new flavor into the roles of and relationship between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson.

Even before the past few years' resurgence of *Sherlock Holmes* adaptations, one would be hard-pressed to find someone in today's society who has not heard of the infamous detective. As Jude Law notes in the special features of *Sherlock Holmes* (2009), "There's loads to be interpreted from the originals, and loads that we've locked in our minds that's wrong." Indeed, Ritchie, in adapting this film, aimed to stick closely to the original source material while shifting away from misconceptions created by other adaptations. But the key word here is "interpret," and Ritchie does loads of that in this adaptation. If we go back to the original texts, for instance, we see that Dr. Watson describes Sherlock Holmes as a "tall, spare figure" with a "thin, razor-like face, . . . a great hawk's bill of a nose, and two small eyes, set close together on either side of it" (Conan Doyle, *Memories*, 106). Illustrator Sidney Paget rejected this vision of Holmes, drawing him instead to resemble his model and brother, Walter, who was "a good deal more handsome" (Leitch 209). Ritchie appears to have rejected this vision as well in casting Robert Downey Jr. as Holmes; Downey Jr. is short, stocky, and rough around the edges. Ritchie also rejected Holmes's "patented" deerstalker cap, which was actually Paget's addition to Holmes's image. Ritchie also rejects the calabash pipe that Holmes often clamps between his teeth in other adaptations and instead gives Holmes a straight pipe. Moreover, Ritchie's Holmes never utters the so commonly known phrase "Elementary, my dear Watson," a phrase which is not to be found anywhere in Conan Doyle's canon. Those

were added by American actor and director William Gilette, "whose play *Sherlock Holmes* (1899) provided him the opportunity to play the detective in more than thirteen hundred performances" (Leitch 209). It is ironic that these, some of the most commonly known characteristics of Holmes, are indeed not attributes given to Holmes by his creator. While Ritchie revises the characteristics given to Holmes by adaptors, he also aligns himself with the likes of Paget or Gilette, who recreated Holmes into the detective many are familiar with today. Thus, the line between what Conan Doyle intended and what has been added by adaptors has become so blurred that it raises the question: Just how malleable is Sherlock Holmes that he can be so infinitely re-created?

Sherlock Holmes, as Conan Doyle intended him, prefers the company of his books to that of society, Dr. Watson is the only "visitor" he "encourage[s]" (Conan Doyle, *Mysteries*, 92). Holmes is also described as having a "cold, precise but admirably balanced mind," one which functions by "alternating from week to week between cocaine and ambition, the drowsiness of the drug, and the energy of his own keen nature" (18-19). This description of Holmes lends the impression that he is almost manic, alternating swiftly between languor and frenzy. Ritchie nods directly to this at one point in *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows,* when Watson comments to Holmes that he seems "manic, bordering on psychotic"; Ritchie's film also nods toward Holmes's drug use with Mrs. Hudson's comment that "there's enough [poison] in you already" and in Watson's impatient inquiry to Holmes about whether he realizes he is drinking formaldehyde. Much in the same way that recreational drugs give Holmes his high, he certainly also gets a rush from solving "unsolvable" mysteries, and even goes into a state of "withdrawal" when he is too long without a mystery to solve, evidenced by extreme boredom, reckless behavior, and endless experiments (for example, in *Sherlock Holmes* [2009], Holmes attempts to invent a gunshot silencer in the lull between adventures). Along with his powers of observation and deduction (Holmes often distinguishes to Watson the differ-

ence between passive "seeing" and active "observing"), Holmes also has "amazing powers in the art of disguise" (21). These qualities are ones that filmmakers have consistently paid attention to throughout the years.

Although the Doyle estate prefers close adaptations, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle himself did not seem overly concerned with the way in which his works were adapted. In fact, when William Gilette approached Conan Doyle about adapting his five-act play, the author allegedly said, "You may marry him or murder him or do anything you like with him" (Leitch 218). The contracts between the Doyle estate and Universal pictures stipulated that a certain number of the films be taken directly from Conan Doyle's canon, but the twelve films, in which "Holmes and Watson assumed modern dress to battle enemy agents, master criminals, and continuing evil in a distinctly contemporary world" speak more to the wartime propaganda that prevailed during World War II than to Conan Doyle's stories (Leitch 211, 219). Only two of the fourteen *Holmes* adaptations Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce starred in between 1939 and 1946 were period pieces set in the Victorian era, and both of these films were produced by 20th Century Fox and preceded Universal's adaptations. "The Universal adaptations [in particular] are stellar examples of adapting a franchise in order to put it to new use—in this case, by bringing Holmes and Watson to life once more" in a wartime setting (Leitch 219). While Leitch makes a valid point, it is also worthwhile to note the way in which Rathbone and Bruce, in their portrayals of these characters for two different production companies and in adaptations that take place during two very different eras, are able to defy the logistics of time. In portraying a Victorian Holmes as well as a World War II Holmes, Rathbone embodies the malleability of the Holmes character. On the one hand, Holmes wears the stereotypical deerstalker cap and cape and puffs on his calabash in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1939), and on the other, he is uniformed and gun-wielding, more in keeping "with the imperatives of wartime propaganda and the visual style and narrative structure of the Universal

monster films than with the Holmes franchise" (Leitch 219). Audiences have accepted Holmes both ways, proving the universality of his character.

While Basil Rathbone is often considered *the* Sherlock Holmes of film adaptations, Jeremy Brett is often considered *the* Sherlock Holmes of television. Unlike the 1954 television adaptation starring Ronald Howard, which created new mysteries for Holmes and Watson to solve, the Granada series (1984-1994) closely adapted thirty-six *Sherlock Holmes* stories. The first episode of the series, "A Scandal in Bohemia," follows the original storyline closely, diverging from it only to set up necessary information about Holmes's character. This episode introduces the adventuress Irene Adler, or "the Woman," as Holmes hereafter refers to her; she is the only woman to ever beat Holmes at his own game. Although his interest in Irene is framed as one of intellectual stimulation, one may infer that it is one of romantic interest as well, particularly when Holmes describes her as having "a face that a man might die for," which Watson notes is unusual language for Holmes. This exchange provides a modicum of evidence that argues against Holmes's oft-speculated about (homo)sexuality.

This episode also sets up Holmes as a flawed individual, both in Watson's voiceover which states that he fears what mood he will find Holmes in upon his arrival home after a week in the country, and in a close-up of a used needle in Holmes's desk drawer, pointing to his drug use (in this case, cocaine). When Watson angrily asks Holmes how he can waste his intellectual powers with poison, Holmes asserts, "I cannot tell you how it clarifies and stimulates the mind. . . . My mind rebels its stagnation. Give me problems. Give me work. Give me the most abstruse cryptogram and the most intricate analysis . . . then I can dispense with artificial stimulants." Thus, this monologue sets up cocaine as being the artificial equivalent to the rush he gets from solving mysteries. Additionally, the close-up shot of his face while he mutters these words zeroes in on his features; his "hawk's bill nose," his narrow face, and his close-set eyes are reminiscent of Conan Doyle's description

while still very much resembling Paget's illustrations. In these adaptations, Brett

> played [Holmes] as hectic and hectoring, a clinical case of manic-depression who frequently fell into illness from which only the challenge of new adventure could rouse him . . . Brett showed Holmes constantly swinging between moody self-absorption and full-throated ridicule of the suspects, the police, and even his clients. Although his alarming mood swings were anything but faithful to Conan Doyle, they carried the electrifying potential to make every conversational exchange into high drama without bursting the boundaries of television. The thirteen episodes of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1984), Brett's first season in the role, moved more quickly than any other Holmes adaptations to date. (Leitch 225)

—until the most current adaptations, that is.

BBC's new series, *Sherlock* (2010), though shackled by what Leitch refers to as "the boundaries of television," manages to quicken any pace established by its predecessors with a series of three energetic ninety-minute episodes. Though this show introduces us to a twenty-first century Holmes (Benedict Cumberbatch) and Dr. Watson (Martin Freeman), the influences of its predecessors (including Ritchie's adaptation) are unmistakable. The pilot, "A Study in Pink," borrows from the first of Conan Doyle's short novels, *A Study in Scarlet*, in which Holmes and Watson are introduced, become flat-mates, and embark on their first case together. (This scene is also depicted in the pilot episode of the 1954 television series, *Sherlock Holmes*, starring Ronald Howard.) Rather than sporting the stereotypical deerstalker cap and cape, however, this Holmes sports tailored suits and a long wool pea coat; and rather than puffing on a pipe, Holmes uses nicotine patches. In antismoking London, nicotine patches are the next best thing in terms of "mind stimulation" for Holmes; and at one point, as he works through a particularly difficult case, he refers to it as "a three patch problem," a parody of Holmes's "three-pipe problem" from "The Red-Headed League" (*Mysteries,* 54).

To dramatize the interiority of Holmes's thinking process (not before portrayed until Ritchie's 2009 adaptation), the show uses text to indicate Holmes's observations; this technologically-savvy Holmes also utilizes his cell phone to look up various bits of information, making data he does not already know appear at his fingertips. The incorporation of text on the screen and the utilization of technology by the self-proclaimed "consulting detective" employ technologies unavailable to previous adaptations and "Victorian" Holmes. Furthermore, BBC's adaptation aims to accentuate Holmes's eccentricities. While Howard's (1954) Holmes is fairly amiable and Brett's Holmes manic-depressive, BBC's adaptation heightens Holmes's social ineptitude. Multiple members of the police force refer to him as "Freak" to each other and to his face, which does not seem to faze him at all, and there is a rather amusing moment in which one member of the police force tells him he is a psychopath, to which Holmes immediately retorts that he is "a high-functioning sociopath—do you research." In 2010, Watson, sans mustache for the first time, is given a reboot as well. In an interesting parallel, Watson sustains a gunshot wound in the present-day Afghan War rather than the Anglo-Afghan War of Victorian Watson. What makes this adaptation of Watson different, however, is the way in which it is riddled with psychological terms not yet present in the Victorian era, including Dr. Watson's psychosomatic limp (which disappears under high-stress situations, indicating that Watson thrives when in danger) and post-traumatic stress disorder, both of which are diagnosed by Holmes.

As the series progresses, "plot twists fly as fast as text messages—indeed they frequently take the form of text messages" that appear on the screen, making the viewer privy to private discussions between characters (Wren). With each episode in the series, the crimes' level of intensity increases, culminating in the third episode which is riddled with victims with bombs strapped to their torsos and mysteries that Holmes must solve in the time frame given by the criminal mastermind orchestrating it all (Professor Moriarty, who reprises his role in sev-

eral other adaptations as Holmes's nemesis, including Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* [2011]). The episode ends in a cliffhanger which nods towards an inevitable "sequel" (which aired early in 2012).

Situating this adaptation in the twenty-first century also allows for a more open debate about Holmes and Watson's oft-perceived homosexual relationship, something that is often hinted at but not overtly stated or demonstrated in previous adaptations, when the taboo of homosexuality was still rather prominent. In addition to the fact that Holmes is never explicitly given a love interest in Conan Doyle's stories, many cite "A Scandal in Bohemia," which "expressly denies . . . Holmes's love life," as potentially indicating Holmes's sexuality—or, at the very least, his androgyny (Leitch 210). And although Conan Doyle marries Watson to Mary Morstan in his stories, "many [adaptations'] producers departed from Doyle . . . in keeping Watson single so that he can remain at Holmes's disposal indefinitely" (Leitch 216). Simply by eliminating the "love story" component, previous adaptations hint towards a non-heteronormative relationship between Holmes and Watson. The 2010 BBC adaptation deviates from this a bit by giving Watson a love interest in the second and third episodes of the series. Yet, they address the debate by including several instances wherein acquaintances assume that Watson is Holmes's "date." In one particular—and incredibly awkward—scene, Holmes and Watson sit down for a bite to eat, and the waiter not only brings "a candle, small and romantic," but also refers to Watson as Holmes's date. This implies two things: one, that Holmes has never before been seen with a companion; and two, that Holmes's eccentricity is inferred as potential homosexuality. Watson's firm, and somewhat insulted, response of "I'm not his date!" attempts to deny Watson's oft-contemplated sexuality. However, Holmes's response that girlfriends "aren't really his area" prompts Watson to inquire whether Holmes has a boyfriend, "which is fine by the way." This question, one that would not have been prompted in the past (certainly not in Victorian times where a close male relationship was not con-

sidered irregular), nods toward twenty-first century openness regarding homosexuality, while the "which is fine by the way," nods toward the awkwardness that still pervades the topic despite its ever-increasing commonness. To Watson's inquiry, Holmes responds that he "knows it's fine," but his refutation that he does not have a boyfriend does not answer the question of his sexuality, leaving it open for interpretation, as it has been for over 100 years.

Certainly, adding to a franchise over 100 years in the making—in this case, *Sherlock Holmes*—would present a unique set of challenges for any adaptor. One challenge would lie in spicing up the original source material, in which "there is virtually no sex, not much violence, hardly any good strong female roles, and an awful lot of middle-aged men standing (or sitting) around talking" (Cook 31). Enter Guy Ritchie's adaptation, which is rife with action, violence, and explosions, as well as a strong female role in the fearless adventuress Irene Adler (Rachel McAdams). The second challenge in adapting this particular franchise lies in reinventing a Holmes in a way never before experienced, while still remaining as "faithful" as possible to the original source material for Holmesian purists (although this should not be a challenge, as Parody points out, because, "as the sprawling multiverses of superhero franchises illustrate, . . . re-interpretations, of a character, origin narrative, or world, are positioned as revitalizing and giving depth to a creation, not diluting or betraying it, especially when the intervening interpreter is a big name auteur" (216). Unquestionably, BBC's (2010) reboot gives new flavor to the franchise, but does it stray too far from the original in placing Holmes in the twenty-first century? In adapting *Sherlock Holmes* for the big screen in 2009, indie director Guy Ritchie and Lionel Wigram (who wrote the original story that was adapted for the film) were very concerned with sticking to Conan Doyle's original source material while ignoring previous adaptations. In fact, Wigram says that he "knew there as a way to [adapt Sherlock Holmes] that wasn't quite what we'd seen before. The images I saw in my head as I read these books were completely differ-

ent from anything I'd seen in any of the previous movies." But how, then, can we reconcile Conan Doyle's stories, which "are terribly short on drama" with the action-packed film Ritchie produced? Ritchie is, in essence, re-interpreting Holmes, pulling details from Conan Doyle's text and embellishing on them in his distinctive and completely unsubtle "rough and tumble" way, by portraying Holmes as a rather scrappy bareknuckle fighter; by orchestrating high-octane and sometimes life-threatening fight scenes and explosions; and by casting Robert Downey Jr., who comes with his own superhero icon status, as Holmes, and Jude Law as a "slimmed down and pumped up" Watson (Blair).

In other words, Ritchie's adaptation is a successful part of the Holmes franchise precisely because it is the perfect "balance of familiarity and novelty" (Parody 211). The first scene of the film embodies this balance, both by keeping with the familiar Victorian landscape and by introducing us to a new Holmes to which the twenty-first century audience can relate: a Holmes that is "part intellectual sleuth" and "part action-hero" (Blair). In the first few moments of the film, the insignias of the production companies involved in the making of this film intermingle with the uneven cobblestones of Victorian London, before the camera smoothly pans away from the direct shot of the cobblestones and toward a dark and dreary London street. Two horse-and-carriages quickly enter the shot from the side and the camera stays on them for a moment, setting the scene, before zooming in to keep up with their pace and bringing us on their journey. The bars across the back window of the carriage indicate to us that this is a police carriage; the camera zooms past the bars to the inside of the carriage, where two men sit across from each other. We are unsure, at first, whether these men are police officers or criminals; they are not uniformed, and in the shadows of the night, both appear plotting and menacing. Cut to a shot of a double-barrel gun being loaded by a man shrouded in shadow, while the mustached man sitting across from him spins the barrel of his revolver. Their guns portend that they are police officers, and

we would be half-right. One thing we know for sure: the guns indicate that they are heading into a potentially dangerous situation.

A man then emerges from the shadows running at a pace almost as fast as the carriages, his figure silhouetted by a fire burning on the side of the road. As the film cuts between shots of the carriage and the man, we learn that the carriage holds gun-toting uniformed police officers as well, but the identity of the running man remains uncertain. Whether he is in pursuit or he is being pursued is ambiguous. We can see that he is fit, as he runs at a steady pace, easily leaps over obstacles, and jumps from a rooftop, rolling to a stop on the ground. This is when we get our first glimpse of Sherlock Holmes, his hair matted and in disarray, a wild gleam in his eyes (Robert Downey Jr.). He quickly enters the building he landed in front of by kicking open the gate. He stealthily moves down a flight of stairs, peers around a corner and sees a man standing with a lantern, and retreats back into the shadows to await his arrival. At this moment, the audience is given interiority to Sherlock Holmes's thinking process for the first time in a voiceover, as he sets up his attack on the man holding the lantern step by step:

> Head cocked to the left. Partial deafness in ear. First point of attack [he cuffs his opponent on the ear]. Two: Throat, paralyze vocal chords. Stop screaming. Three: Got to be heavy drinker. Floating rib to the liver. Four: Finally, dragging left leg. Fist to patella. Summary prognosis: conscious in ninety seconds. Martial efficacy, quarter of an hour at best. Full faculty recovery, unlikely.

In slow motion, each of these steps is demonstrated to accompany each step Holmes lays out. Then, we revert back to real time, in which Holmes attacks the man in the precise steps he mapped out, bringing him down in a matter of seconds and stealing his hat as an impromptu disguise.

This first scene of the film establishes several things. First, as Robert Downey Jr. puts it, the film is "a bit of a love letter to

Victorian London." Via the *mise-en-scene*, we are immediately catapulted into the heart of Victorian London, from the Gothic architecture lining the uneven cobblestone streets to the primitive horse-drawn cab and lanterns lining the streets. Though this scene is dark, we are still able to distinguish the costuming as distinctly late-nineteenth century, particularly the costuming worn by the policemen in the back of the police cab (bucket helmets with straps snug on their chins). Because Sherlock Holmes navigates the streets of London as swiftly—if not more so—than the horse and cab, we immediately understand his familiarity with the city; as Wigram puts it, "London was always a character, obviously, because Sherlock Holmes is synonymous with London." (Holmes's extensive knowledge of the city is elaborated upon a bit later in the film, in fact, when he is placed in the back of a cab with a man who places a bag over his head in an attempt to keep him from knowing his end location; but he deduces his final location without the aid of sight, instead keeping track of every turn made as well as characteristic bumps in certain roads.)

Once the location of the film is firmly established, then Sherlock Holmes is quickly established as an action hero. Ritchie "liked the idea that [Holmes is] very intellectual but also a very visceral and physical guy," and this idea is established especially well in the scene where Holmes describes his attack on the man holding the lantern (Special Features). Not only does this scene employ Ritchie's trademark method of using high-speed photography in action sequences, but the voiceover of Holmes's "plan of action" also provides the audience with interiority to his thinking process *in the moment*, rather than retrospectively in Watson's second-hand narration. More importantly, Holmes's powers of observation are applied in an intellectual way to physical combat; in this way, Ritchie "makes Holmes's predictions-deductions palpable" to his audience (Atkinson 78). In previous adaptations—and even in Conan Doyle's texts—Holmes relies solely on his intellect, but this Holmes is as quick with his fists as he is with his wit. Few are familiar with this action-hero version of Holmes; they are far

more likely to be familiar with a "Holmes [who] solves many of his best cases from the sedentary comfort of his armchair" (Cook 31). Even in "The Final Problem," the story in which Conan Doyle unceremoniously kills off Holmes (an event recreated in Ritchie's sequel *A Game of Shadows* [2011]), the moment of conflict between Holmes and Professor Moriarty that sends them plummeting into the depths of the Reichenbach Falls is conspicuously absent. But according to Downey Jr., "It's all in the books, you know. He's a single-stick fighter, a master of the strange art of baritzu, a bareknuckle boxer . . . all that stuff"; and according to Ritchie, "He was the first martial artist, really, of Western culture" (Special Features). The way in which Ritchie's film embellishes small details perhaps merely mentioned in Conan Doyle's texts is just one example of the way in which the film offers a fresh perspective in recreating "Conan Doyle's timeworn narrative" (Atkinson 77).

What aids Holmes's action hero identity in this particular adaptation is the persona of the actor who portrays him, Robert Downey Jr., whose previous role as *Iron Man*, personal struggles with drug use, familiarity with jujitsu, and the ways in which he "thinks a bit like Sherlock Holmes" culminate in "this vision of Holmes as an eccentric, irresponsible manic-depressive who can hold his own in a fight" (Special Features; Lambert). When the project first came to Ritchie, he considered portraying a younger Sherlock Holmes, perhaps in his late twenties, but once he "got to know Robert a bit," Ritchie says, "it seemed conspicuously obvious after a while, and now it's almost ridiculous to think back, that it could have been any other actor" (Special Features). But what of Watson, played by Jude Law? Law himself admitted that

> I think a couple of people were surprised that I was cast as Watson, but if you go back to the original text you realize that this is a guy in his mid- to late-thirties, he has just left the army, he was a bit of a war hero. (Special Features)

As Downey Jr. puts it, "Watson is a badass, a ladies' man, a man of action," but never before has he been portrayed this way. In

previous adaptations, Watson "is kind of a heavy guy . . . who sits around and talks about things" (Special Features). In the opening scene described above, Watson is the grim-faced, revolver-toting man in the carriage with the police squad. Immediately following that scene, when Holmes observes the satanic sacrifice of a young woman whose life he is trying to save, a man sneaks up behind Holmes, and Watson puts him in a stranglehold almost as soon as Holmes spins around to incapacitate him himself. While a nunchuck-swinging Holmes knocks out Lord Blackwood's henchmen, Watson is in the thick of it, too, knocking out his own crew of henchmen. Watson is an interesting contradiction: a respected doctor and military man, yet a man always ready for adventure, with his sword hidden in the walking stick he uses to compensate for his limp. Though the "orthodoxy-hungry" Watson is planning on settling down soon with his soon-to-be fiancée, Mary Morstan, he has too much fun with the "helpless, nervous, trouble-maker" Holmes to abandon him (Atkinson 78).

While it is impossible to ignore the action and adventure of *Sherlock Holmes* (2009), at the heart of it, Ritchie is "interested in the partnership between men, the humor and irony and the quirks that go with it. [Downey Jr. and Law] captured the levity and humor, but at the same time they captured the sincerity" of the male relationship (Special Features). Whereas previous adaptations kept Watson single to always be at Holmes's disposal, as previously mentioned, Ritchie's adaptation allows Watson to propose to Mary, as he does in Conan Doyle's texts. This introduces a new conflict between the "dynamic duo" as Holmes fights to steal Watson away from his betrothed with new adventures. Adding Irene Adler (described by Watson as a "world class criminal") into the mix as the only woman Holmes has ever cared about (implied previous lover, current love interest) does not do much to squelch the bisexual overtones that infiltrate this film. A more subtle example of this occurs in the scene where Watson introduces Holmes to Mary. Mary makes a comment about detective novels seeming "a bit far-fetched" in the way they make "these grand assump-

tions out of such tiny details." Holmes retorts that "the little details are by far the most important." Then he looks toward his friend and says, "Take Watson," to which Mary promptly replies, "I intend to." This halts Holmes before he begins his diatribe. He looks taken aback, almost jealous, and a nervous laugh escapes his lips. We know from the previous scene that he has resisted meeting Mary for some time; essentially, he has resisted the idea that Watson is going to leave him for someone else.

In recreating Holmes and Watson for this film, Jude Law says that "it was clear to [Robert and me] that we wanted to create a chemistry that was both incredibly typed but also has that wonderful sort of humor where friends bicker" (Special Features). In gesturing toward "a chemistry that was incredibly typed," perhaps Law is gesturing toward the homosexual overtones that pervade the doctor and detective's relationship throughout the franchise. As in BBC's *Sherlock* (2010), the fact that this film was made in the twenty-first century allows it to more fully explore the potentially homosexual relationship between the two men, but also has to remain a bit more refined because of its Victorian setting. The word "chemistry," more often used to describe the sparks between a male and female, is an interesting choice for Law to use here, and the fact that Holmes and Watson bicker as they do lends more of a feeling of a married couple than of two friends. According to Michael Atkinson, "Ritchie's film isn't coy about it—we're supposed to acknowledge the *possible* tension as a given, and be amused by the character as they try to adopt 'respectable' lifestyles but still get off on each other" (77). Though the sequel elaborates on this sexual tension between Holmes and Watson a bit more, I would argue that *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) is coyer about it given its Victorian setting, though certainly still rather droll; for example, there is a moment during the slaughterhouse scene in which Watson is incapacitated, and Holmes reaches into his front pocket to fish out his pocket watch. Holmes quips, "Don't get excited." Forget the "endless henchman brawls and elaborate plot machinations" of this film, Atkinson argues;

those only detract from "the real, even poignant story of two men, a filthy apartment they share, and the ways they constantly rescue and then insult each other. Sure, there are explosions, but it's the man-love that captivates" (78).

In the special features to the *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) DVD, Jude Law states that "we have been faithful [to the original text], but I do think we've also injected it with life." Indeed, Guy Ritchie's reboot remains faithful to the essence of Holmes—his almost superhuman observation skills, his reliance upon drugs and experimentation in the absence of work, his incessant violin-playing as he contemplates a mystery, his attachment to his pipe. In other ways, it pinpoints attributes that we never dreamed of Holmes possessing—and indeed, the very way that he focuses on the tiny details and embellishes them into grand assumptions is something that even Holmes would appreciate. Guy Ritchie asserts that "previous productions of Sherlock Holmes have obviously been shackled by one thing or another, but we are really going for it." The result? An interesting contradiction: a period piece that still remains rooted in the present day, a no-holds-barred, intellectually stimulating yet visually arresting, witty yet playful, respectful yet highly entertaining adaptation, a fresh perspective on a nineteenth-century British icon around which an enormous franchise has been built. By now, *Sherlock Holmes* could easily be timeworn, but Guy Ritchie's adaptations have achieved what every adaptation should strive for: they have "prolong[ed] customers' encounters with an entertainment brand and refresh[ed] their awareness of it, insofar as [they invite] consumers [like this reader] to remember other branded products and experiences" (Parody 215). If the success of Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* films—collectively grossing $396 million in the US alone—is any indication, we have not seen the last of Sherlock Holmes.

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