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Deconstructing Doctor John Watson in Sherlock Holmes series

Tesis de Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa



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TO MY HEROES: MY MOTHER AND FATHER.

TO MY TWO LOVELY DAUGHTERS: MATILDA AND FELICITAS.

ABSTRACT

The character of John Watson is portrayed as the world-famous companion of the Great Detective, Sherlock Holmes. Yet, he is hardly ever thought as the detective who solves the cases, up to now. This idea has motivated this work, and the aim of this study is to confirm whether the character of John Watson fulfils the role of detective in the episode “The Hounds of Baskerville” from the television adaption *Sherlock*. This thesis has an introduction in which the emphasis is placed on the problem statement, the research question, and its hypotheses. Subsequently, it is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, the theoretical framework of the analysis is presented, particularly Todorov’s typology of detective fiction and his concept of the fantastic; the literary narratology proposed by Mieke Bal and Propp’s ideas presented in his work *Morphology of the Folktale*. The second section is focused on the author, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and his relation to his own work. In this regard, this second part is devoted to the scrutiny of the original version of the novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and its modern version- “The Hounds of Baskerville”- written by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, which is the episode chosen to prove the hypotheses of this work. Chapter three is dedicated to the study of the characterization of John Watson and his new role in the contemporary series aforementioned. Finally, this investigation reveals a new way of (re) configuring the character of John Watson.

Key words: John Watson, T. Todorov, detective fiction, The Hounds of Baskerville, deconstruction.

RESUMEN

El personaje de John Watson es conocido mundialmente como el famoso compañero del Gran Detective, Sherlock Holmes. Por lo tanto, casi nunca se lo ha considerado el detective que resuelve los casos, hasta hoy. Esta idea ha motivado el trabajo de investigación con el objetivo de confirmar que el personaje de John Watson cumple el papel de detective en el episodio "Los Sabuesos de Baskerville" en la adaptación televisiva *Sherlock*. En el recorrido de esta investigación se encuentra la introducción en la que se pone el énfasis en la declaración del problema, la pregunta de investigación y sus hipótesis. Seguidamente, se divide en tres capítulos. En el primer capítulo se presenta el marco teórico del análisis, en particular la tipología de ficción detectivesca de Todorov y su concepto de lo fantástico; la narratología literaria propuesta por Mieke Bal y las ideas de Propp presentadas en su obra *Morfología del Cuento Popular*. La segunda sección se centra en el autor, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, y su relación con su propia obra. En este sentido, esta segunda parte está dedicada al escrutinio de la versión original de la novela *El Sabueso de los Baskervilles* y su versión moderna, "Los Sabuesos de Baskerville", escrita por Steven Moffat y Mark Gatiss, episodio elegido para probar las hipótesis de este trabajo. El capítulo tres está dedicado al estudio de la caracterización de John Watson y su nuevo papel en la serie contemporánea antes mencionada. Finalmente, la investigación revela una nueva forma de (re)configurar el personaje de John Watson en sus conclusiones.

Palabras clave: John Watson, T. Todorov, ficción detectivesca, "Los Sabuesos de Baskerville", deconstrucción.

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INTRODUCTION

Problem statement

There seems little need to introduce Sherlock Holmes, or the sixty stories about him written by Arthur Conan Doyle between 1886 and 1927. In the intervening decades, the character of Holmes- along with his companion and chronicler, Dr. John H. Watson, has taken a life of its own, and has become almost certainly the most famous character in all fiction, readily identified by people who have never read one of the stories. Translations of the Holmes tales have made the character recognizable in almost every country in the world. The first Holmes film was made in 1900, and since then the great detective has appeared in more movies than any other fictional character. There have been Sherlock Holmes stage plays, musicals, graphic novels, radio dramas, comics, cartoons, even a ballet; and several TV series that have been produced lately.

Sherlock is a modern-day series co-created by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss in 2010 and produced by the BBC. Despite the fact that the iconic details from Conan Doyle's original book remain- the characters live at the address of 221b Baker Street, they have the same names- the series reinvented Sherlock for a new audience, making Holmes and Watson living, breathing, modern men. This reconfiguration of the characters has opened up new possibilities for the interpretation of their roles, especially the role of John Watson considering the fact that, even though he is not the main solver of the cases, he plays an important and necessary role to figure them out.

Furthermore, most of the time, John Watson is portrayed as the world-famous companion of the Great Detective, but he is hardly ever thought as the detective who solves the cases. Unfortunately, there have not been deep investigations about this, so this idea motivates this work, and we propose a study of the characterization of this new Watson to confirm whether he fulfils the role of detective or not.

Literature review

It is widely known that the Sherlock Holmes 's stories are considered to be detective stories. According to Albuquerque (1979), detective stories had their origin in adventure

novels, due to the duality of good vs evil, and, throughout time, the genre was developed, and it became what we know today as the famous mystery and investigative stories.

In his essay, *The Typology of Detective Fiction*, published in 1966, Tzvetan Todorov presents three kinds of detective fiction: the whodunit, the thriller and the suspense novel. The author classifies the whodunit as having relatively strict rules, and as consisting of two stories, the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. The former tells what really happened, whereas the latter explains how the reader has come to know about it. Furthermore, the characters of this second story do not act, they learn, and they are immune from danger. From this, Todorov states another form of detective fiction: the thriller, which suppresses the first story and vitalizes the second. While the whodunit relies equally on both the crime and the inspection of the criminal, the thriller primarily revolves around the second story and instead of a strict factual approach to catching the criminal; the main characters are constantly intertwined within the events of the story. In some cases, the detective risks his health, if not his life. The final genre of detective fiction which is introduced is that of the suspense novel. This novel keeps the suspense of the whodunit while adding some of the elements of a thriller novel. The reader is interested not only by what has happened but also by what will happen next. Taking into account these miscellaneous components, the author divides this last genre into two subtypes. The first one, called the story of the vulnerable detective, delineates the figure of the detective as its main character who many times risks his life and, therefore, he becomes integrated into the universe of other characters. The second type, described as the story of the suspect-as-detective, illustrates a personal aspect of the crime in which the main character, inequitably suspected of and charged with murder, seeks to find out a real culprit and becomes a potential victim of the murderer.

Another important and original contribution in literary studies made by Todorov is the concept of the fantastic. In his work, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1973), he is the first scholar to differentiate between the genre of fantasy and that of the fantastic. According to Todorov, the fantastic is a very specific term which is defined as a moment of hesitation between belief and disbelief of the supernatural. It is a very fragile literary form as it can easily swing from one side to the other. Only that suspension

between the two makes literature fantastic. As he (1973: 31) says: “[...] I nearly reached the point of believing [...] either total faith or total incredulity would lead the reader beyond the fantastic: it is “the hesitation” which sustains its life [...]”.

Thus, the fantastic stands between two other literary genres: the uncanny and the marvelous. Todorov explains that when the reader finishes the text, they opt for one solution or the other, that is to say, if they decide that the laws of reality are not affected and are able to provide an explanation of the phenomena described in the text, it can be said that the work belongs to the uncanny. If, on the contrary, the existing laws of nature are not able to provide an explanation of the phenomena described in the given text and new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, the reader enters the genre of the marvelous. Lastly, Todorov characterizes two more sub-genres of the fantastic as the fantastic-uncanny and the fantastic- marvelous. In the former subgenre, the events, which have been presented as supernatural throughout the story, receive a rational explanation at the end. In the latter, however, the work is presented as fantastic, and it ends up accepting the supernatural.

All things considered, it can be concluded that the fantastic seems to be located on the frontier of two genres with sub-divisions, rather than to be an autonomous genre.

Objectives

The Sherlock Holmes stories and television adaptations have captivated innumerable readers and viewers since the first moment they were published and produced. In view of this, we intend to

- define whether *Sherlock's* “The Hounds of Baskerville” episode belongs to the genre of fantasy or fantastic following Todorov’s work: *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*;
- define whether the episode belongs to the classic whodunit, the thriller or the suspense novel following Todorov’s essay: *The Typology of Detective Fiction*;
- explore, deconstruct and amplify Watson’s role in the series;
- confirm whether he fulfils the role of detective or not.

Research question and hypotheses

Considering all the ideas aforementioned, this paper will try to answer the following question:

- Up to what extent can we consider that the character of Dr. Watson in the TV series *Sherlock* is a true detective?

Two hypotheses are derived from the research question:

- 1- Dr. Watson transgresses the rules of the classic whodunit in *Sherlock*'s "The Hounds of Baskerville" episode.
- 2- Not only does Dr. Watson fulfil the role of companion but he also fulfils the role of detective in the investigation of the case in the episode "The Hounds of Baskerville" from the television adaption *Sherlock*.

Methodology

A structural approach to detective fiction delineated by Tzvetan Todorov and the audiovisual corpus constituted by the television series *Sherlock* (2010) were selected in order to prove the hypotheses as valid. To be able to perform a more punctual analysis, we chose the second episode of the second season entitled "The Hounds of the Baskerville" because we believe that here John steps out of his comfort zone and shows signs of more autonomy in the investigation of the case. Our focus, then, will be on the texts themselves and we will perform a close – reading-and watching- of the chosen materials. However, we will not limit our considerations only to the corpus chosen; we will also apply different authors, reviews of the series, the original novel, etcetera in order to help us achieve our goals.

Organization of the work

This thesis will have an introduction and it will be divided into three chapters. The first one will present the theoretical framework of the analysis, particularly Todorov's typology of detective fiction and his concept of the fantastic. Allan Hepburn's *Detectives and Spies*

(2009) and Propp's ideas presented in his work *Morphology of the Folktale* (2009) will be also applied here.

The second section will present an introduction to the author, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and his relation to his own work, along with an analysis of the main characters of the stories: Sherlock and Watson in order to see the contrast between them and, finally, an overview of "The Hounds of Baskerville", which is the episode chosen to prove the hypotheses as valid.

Chapter three will be dedicated to the study of the episode aforementioned, focusing on Watson's new role and, finally, the conclusion in which we will confirm whether he fulfils the role of detective or not.

CHAPTER 1: Literature Review

Eduarda De Carli (2017) has written her thesis called *The Role of Adaptations in the Reconfiguration of Dr. John Watson within the Sherlock Holmes Canon* and she stated that the main objective of her work has been to investigate the role of adaptations in the characterization of John Watson and how these adaptations have been able to influence and, even modify, the doctor's image that is presented to the spectators nowadays.

Two television series *Sherlock* (2010) and *Elementary* (2012) have served as the writer's source of analysis and, in order to perform a more detailed study, she has selected two episodes, one from each series: the second episode of the second season, entitled "The Hounds of Baskerville" from *Sherlock*, and the first episode of the first season, entitled "Pilot" from *Elementary*.

The findings of her work indicate that adaptations indeed are able to modify the original characteristics of the detective genre. The contemporary Watson then, whether woman or man, is someone who is in constant supervision of the detective, managing his interactions with other people, making amends when he is unsociable or inappropriate in conversations. Moreover, this new Watson is someone who is able to call the detective's attention due to the fact that Sherlock's great skills are no longer a factor that justifies his actions. Finally, John is not a passive character anymore. Rather, he has become Sherlock's true partner. April Toadvine, the author of the essay *The Watson Effect- Civilizing the Sociopath*, published in the book *Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century. Essays in New Adaptations* (2012) has claimed that the character of John Watson, both in Guy Ritchie's movie *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and in the BBC series *Sherlock* (2010), is depicted as a sociopath on par with the character of Sherlock Holmes and this transformation reflects cultural shifts in the conceptualization of the term sociopath¹. To prove her hypothesis as valid, she has

¹ According to the essayist, during the mid-Victorian period, the citizens who showed lack of empathy and disinterest in relationship with other people were often diagnosed as mentally ill, in other words, as sociopaths. As time went by, "the definitions of antisocial personality disorder have shifted from the Victorian concern with moral health to the contemporary interest in preventing the sociopath from committing acts of violence toward others", claimed the author (p.58). In other words, young men, usually of lower-social economic status are considered sociopaths.

compared the original literary depiction of the character John Watson with his recent depictions in the Ritchie film and the BBC series show.

With reference to the results shown in the essay by the author, it is concluded that, in Conan Doyle's original texts, John Watson has acted as a character who has the ability to judge Holmes and classify him as eccentric but not morally insane: situation which can be observed in the film versions as well. However, she has also affirmed that it is possible to notice signs of sociopathy in Watson's characterization in the audiovisual corpus chosen. According to her, it is clearly seen that John's morality becomes situational and inconsistent as the character is placed in more and more difficult situations, showing that the doctor has a split personality, that he is similar to Sherlock and that individuals with antisocial personalities are everyday professionals capable of coping with the stress of daily life and not people from lower-social economic status as it used to be believed.

The essay "*Don't Make People into Heroes, John*"- *(Re/De) Constructing the Detective as Hero* (2012) written by Francesca M. Marinaro and Kayley Thomas has also contributed to the selection of the topic of study.

The essay, which has also been printed in the book *Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century. Essays in New Adaptations* (2012), deals with the concept of heroism. According to Marinaro and Thomas, readers from Conan Doyle's stories have regarded the character of Sherlock Holmes as a hero due to Watson's descriptions of the great the detective and his admiration for him. Nevertheless, observing the pair's relationship in the contemporary adaptations- Guy Ritchie's films (2009 and 2011) and Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss' *Sherlock* (2010), they contend that what Watson identifies in Holmes is heroic potential² rather than actual heroism and it is John, the character, who complements and cultivates Sherlock as a hero.

² According to the writers, heroic potential refers to the fact that the character of Sherlock Holmes has a strong untutored intellect but lacks emotional perception.

Throughout the essay, they have pinpointed the characteristics that define a hero and they have claimed that Sherlock and John respectively represent the two essential elements that create one: greatness and goodness, being the former embodied by Sherlock and the latter, by Watson. In this way, the essayists have reached the conclusion that John is the hero figure and Sherlock is his quest: Holmes can only achieve true greatness if his genius is tempered by Watson's goodness.

The scholar Dean Lobo has written the paper *Alpha Sherlock* (2014). The author's main objectives have been to examine and explore ideological themes in Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss' series *Sherlock* (2010) and to look at how the characters of the show and their relationships are used in conveying these themes. To achieve his goals, he has classified the process of collection and analysis under four broader parts which are: the Holmes – Watson Relationship Dynamics; Sherlock versus the various Institutions; Women in Sherlock's Universe and Sherlock versus Moriarty.

Having analyzed all the characters of *Sherlock* in the paper, Lobo has demonstrated that although there are ideological themes that emerge from the narrative, the most dominant ones are those based on gender, sexuality, class and race. Furthermore, he has concluded that Sherlock is the alpha protagonist of the show, claiming that all the characters and the character relationships are designed to make Sherlock Holmes emerge as the true hero, the true alpha male in the story.

The thesis *A Study in Sherlock: Revisiting the Relationship between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson* (2013) written by Rebecca McLaughlin takes a closer look at the considerable interest that the stories of Sherlock Holmes and his companion Dr. John Watson- both the originals and the adaptations- have sparked across the globe during centuries and she suggests that it is the consistency of their friendship that continues to capture audiences.

The series *Sherlock* (2010) is the audiovisual corpus she has chosen to perform a more detailed analysis of her work. She considers that, throughout the show, the writers Moffat

and Gatiss have explored the reasons for Sherlock and John's male friendship. Furthermore, McLaughlin states that the screenwriters have fully understood the relationship between Sherlock and John in the original texts, and they have been able to place emphasis on the characterization and development of this homosocial relationship within the show, achieving considerable success.

To conclude, she claims that the friendship between Holmes and Watson has proved to be the crux of the stories and, although the Sherlock Holmes narratives have given rise to a number of adaptations, the BBC's show has integrated literary criticism and masculine friendship in the best way. Finally, she affirms that Sherlock and John offer a sense of stability in a professional, male friendship that has the ability to span generations.

So far to this point, it can be observed that not only has the Sherlock Holmes universe been present in books, but it also has been present in other media, and since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been a renewed interest in adapting the detective's original stories to the small screen. This interest has generated the different pieces of work previously mentioned. Notwithstanding this, any of the material described here has focused on John's figure as a detective himself, and that is the reason why our main goal in this project will be trying to determine whether John's fictional character fulfils the role of detective or not in *Sherlock's* "The Hounds of Baskerville" episode.

Literary Genres

Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1973) has a main objective: to define what constitutes "the fantastic" in literature but, in order to achieve it, the author considers that firstly, it is necessary to clarify and define the concept of genre.

According to him, literary genres have their origin in human discourse and they "are precisely those relay-points by which the work assumes a relation with the universe of literature" (p.8). The specialist in fantastic literature continues stating that there has never

been literature without genres and, as literature is a system in continual transformation, so are genres. Thus, his theory encompasses the idea that genres interpenetrate, as he claims:

“...there is no necessity that a work faithfully incarnates its genre, there is only a probability that it will do so. Which comes down to saying that no observation of works can strictly confirm or invalidate a theory of genres. A work can, for example, manifest more than one category, more than one genre” (p.22).

Therefore, he affirms that a new genre is always the transformation of one or several old genres, a transformation which can be done by inversion, by displacement or by combination and the fact that a work disobeys its genre does not make the latter nonexistent, it simply creates hybrids. Todorov’s following proposal is the definition of the fantastic genre and his relationship with other genres.

The Fantastic

Tzvetan Todorov is best known for his contribution to literary theory in the form of his definition of “the fantastic” in literature. When he discusses the fantastic, he does not refer to fantasy³ literature. Although many critics, such as the French writer Marcel Schneider and the American writer Eric S. Rabkin, often refer to fantasy stories as fantastic, Todorov clearly adopts the word as a term explicitly separated from fantasy. Instead, Todorov’s theory of the fantastic refers to a much smaller number of literary works, such as *The Saragossa Manuscript* (1805) written by Jan Potocki.

Todorov breaks fiction that strains the boundaries of realism into three categories: the uncanny, the fantastic and the marvelous and, in order to understand the genre of the fantastic, it is important to draw the distinctions between these categories.

The uncanny occurs when the narrative seems to stray beyond the realm of what is possible or realistic, yet in the end the events prove to be merely unusual as opposed to

³ According to Cambridge Online Dictionary, the terms fantasy and fantastic are related to strange, imaginary, and not reasonable situations/activities/worlds.

supernatural⁴, that is to say, if, at the end of the story, the reader “decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described” (Todorov, p.41), the work belongs to the uncanny.

The marvelous occurs when overtly supernatural elements are brought into play, such as in myth or fairy tales. Much as the uncanny might at first seem impossible, the marvelous might also begin by straddling the line of plausibility, but in the end, it will clearly resolve itself as existing beyond the limits of what is known to be possible or realistic: this genre is what Todorov calls “the supernatural accepted”.

Finally, the fantastic is a very specific term in which a supernatural element is present in the narrative, and this genre is defined as the moment of hesitation between belief and disbelief of the supernatural. The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty and “it is hesitation which sustains its life” (Todorov, p.31).

The critic describes the formula of the fantastic as “I nearly reached the point of believing.” (p.31) and this genre exists solely within the hesitation in the decision between uncanny and marvelous—and within whatever ambiguity is left for the reader at the end of a narrative. Only that suspension between the two makes the literature fantastic, becoming it in a very fragile literary form- ephemeral temporariness of doubt.

As he expands upon this definition, Todorov puts forth three essential conditions for the fantastic to exist:

“...First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and supernatural explanation of events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus, the reader’s role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work—in the case of naive

⁴ Supernatural is a term that Todorov applies equally to fantasy elements, such as werewolves or vampires, and science fiction elements, for example, intelligent robots and starships.

reading, the actual reader identifies himself with the character. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as ‘poetic’ interpretations.” (p.33).

These three requirements do not have equal value. The first one- the text should be capable of convincing the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons- and the third one – the reader should reject allegorical as well as poetic interpretations of the text- actually constitute the genre; the second one- ideally the hesitation felt by the reader may also be experienced by a character of the description- may not be fulfilled. Nonetheless most examples satisfy all three conditions.

Todorov also refers to neighboring genres of the fantastic, the uncanny and the marvelous, and he states that:

“...in each case, a transitory sub-genre appears between the fantastic and the uncanny on the one hand, between the fantastic and the marvelous on the other. These sub-genres include works that sustain the hesitation characteristic of the true fantastic for a long period, but that ultimately end in the marvelous or in the uncanny” (p.44).

and he defines them as the fantastic-uncanny and the fantastic-marvelous.

In the first sub-genre, the fantastic-uncanny, the events which have been presented as supernatural throughout the story receive a rational explanation at the end. This can be possible due to the fact that there is an unaccustomed character in the story and, both the characters and the reader hesitate during the course of the story. Here, doubt has been sustained up to this point between two poles: the existence of the supernatural, on the one hand, and a series of rational explanations, on the other.

As regards the types of rational explanations that erode the case for the supernatural, Todorov enumerates them: they can be accident or coincidence; dreams; the influence of drugs; tricks and prearranged apparitions; illusion of the senses and lastly, madness. The critic continues explaining:

“There are obviously two groups of “excuses” here which correspond to the opposition real/imaginary and real/illusionary. In the first group, there has been no supernatural occurrence, for nothing at all has actually occurred, what we imagined we saw was only

the fruit of deranged imagination (dreams, madness, the influence of drugs). In the second group, events indeed occurred, but may be explained rationally (as coincidence, tricks, illusions).” (p.45).

In the second sub-genre, the fantastic-marvelous, we find the class of narratives that are presented as fantastic and that end with an acceptance of the supernatural. According to Todorov:

“These are the narratives closest to the pure fantastic, for the latter, by the very fact that it remains unexplained, unrationalized, suggests the existence of the supernatural. The frontier between the two will therefore be uncertain; nonetheless, the presence or absence of certain details will always allow us to decide.” (p.52).

What influence does the genre of the fantastic have on detective stories?

It is important to note that the fantastic can exist within a narrative that, in the end, proves not to be—that is, this can happen within the context of a detective story. In his work, Tzvetan Todorov suggests a connection between the fantastic and the detective story due to the fact that, like the literature of the fantastic, detective fiction is dependent on narrative rules that help classify it as a particular kind of story. Todorov declares that a detective narrative operates on two levels:

“[...] on the one hand there are several easy solutions, initially tempting but turning out, one after another, to be false; on the other, there is an entirely improbable solution disclosed only at the end and turning out to be only right one [...] The story of the fantastic also has two solutions, one probable and supernatural, the other improbable and rational” (p.49).

Todorov’s typology of detective fiction

As a literary form, detective stories have represented an essential part of the 20th century British literature. They have its norms: there must be a detective, a criminal and a crime itself and, as a genre, they have subdivisions with certain specificities that distinguish them from one another. In his essay, *The Typology of Detective Fiction*, published in 1966,

Tzvetan Todorov presents three kinds of detective fiction: the whodunit, the thriller, and the suspense novel⁵.

According to Todorov, the first genre, the whodunit, is the one which does not transgress the rules of the traditional detective stories postulated by George Burton, on the contrary, it conforms to them. In this way, the novel contains two stories: the story of the crime-*the fable*- and the story of the investigation-*the plot*⁶. The first story, that of the crime, ends before the second story, that of the investigation, begins and, in their purest form, these two stories have no point in common. Moreover, “the characters of this second story, the story of the investigation, do not act, they learn. Nothing can happen to them: a rule of the whodunit postulates the detective's immunity” (Todorov, p.139). Finally, the author states that these types of stories must always lead to curiosity and the culprit of the crime must not be professional. The story of the investigations is crucial by virtue of the narrative voice, as it is usually told by a friend of the detective, who admits straightforwardly that they are writing a book.

Another genre examined by Tzvetan Todorov is the thriller⁷, which was created in the United States before and after World War II. This kind of detective fiction also contains two stories, as the whodunit, but it “suppresses the first and vitalizes the second” (Todorov,

⁵ Tzvetan Todorov bases his subdivisions of detective stories on historical grounds: he takes as a point of departure the classical detective fiction which thrived in Great Britain in the interwar years. The critic analyzes step by step each kind of detective stories, focusing on their structure and theme and he takes as a reference the model of detective fiction stated by the literary theorist George Burton which affirms that “all detective fiction is based on two murders of which the first, committed by the murderer, is merely the occasion for the second, in which he is the victim of the pure and unpunishable murderer, the detective,' and that 'the narrative . . . superimposes two temporal series: the days of the investigation which begin with the crime, and the days of the drama which lead up to it.' (Qtd in Todorov,1966, p.139).

⁶ Here, Todorov refers to the terminology of Russian Formalists, *fabula* and *sjuzet*, and he makes a distinction between the story, in which the reader gets to know “what happened”, and the plot, which explains “how the reader (or narrator) has come to know about it”. (Todorov, 1966, p.140). The story and the plot have different status; the first one is important since the characters really act in it, while the second one consists in a mere investigation and revelation of the murderer.

⁷ The first time the thriller was published was in France and it was published under the rubric '*série noire*'

p.141), that is to say, “we are no longer told about a crime anterior to the moment of the narrative; the narrative coincides with the action.” (Todorov, p.141). Furthermore, in this genre, the detective and the narrator- often being one person- are not as safe as before, and anything can happen to them during the investigation, as Todorov claims: in the thriller “everything is possible, and the detective risks his health, if not his life” (p.141)

Curiosity, an indispensable element of the whodunit, is absent here. However, the interest is sustained in the form of a twofold curiosity: the reader is willing to get to know the motive of the crime, and they wait for the outcome of the story: it is clear that until the end of the book, the reader is not certain whether the detective will be alive or dead. Finally, what mark the thriller is its themes which are violence; generally sordid crime; the amorality of the characters.

The third, and last genre, is the suspense novel which appears after the great years of the thriller. The suspense novel borrows elements from the previous two genres, as Todorov points out:

“It keeps the mystery of the whodunit and also the two stories, that of the past and that of the present; but it refuses to reduce the second to a simple detection of the truth. As in the thriller, it is this second story which here occupies the central place. The reader is interested not only by what has happened but also by what will happen next; he wonders as much about the future as about the past.” (p.141).

As regards the detective, Todorov declares that, in this kind of stories, the detective is always at risk, they can be vulnerable as well as hurt. In other words, the detective is portrayed as a character who can move around more freely in the real world than the detective of the whodunit stories.

Finally, the author divides this last genre into two subgenres. The first one, called the story of the vulnerable detective, delineates the figure of the detective as its main character who many times risks their lives and, therefore, they become integrated into the universe of other characters. The second type, described as the story of the suspect-as-detective, illustrates a personal aspect of the crime in which the main character, inequitably suspected

of and charged with murder, seeks to find out a real culprit and becomes a potential victim of the murderer.

Watson, A Modern Folk Character?

Vladimir Propp is the most widely known Russian folklore specialist in the literary world thanks to the impact of his 1928 book *Morphology of the Folktale*. The purpose of his *Morphology of the Folktale* (2009) has been to analyze the characters of the folk/wonder tales. This study has allowed him to establish thirty-one functions available in the tales. According to him, these functions are common to all folktales and they “fit into one consecutive story” (Propp, p.25). Furthermore, the author distinguishes seven “spheres of actions”, that is to say, the string of actions or events fulfilled by the different dramatis personae. The spheres of actions are: the sphere of action of the *villain*; the sphere of action of the *donor*; the sphere of action of the *helper*; the sphere of action of a *princess*; the sphere of action of the *dispatcher*; the sphere of action of the *hero* and the sphere of action of the *false hero*.

The first type, the villain, has the purpose of defeating the hero. The donor, the next role, is the person who gives the hero valuable information. The helper is the one who helps the hero in their quest. The fourth type, the princess, is the hero’s motivation and reward. The dispatcher is the person who sends the hero on the quest. Finally, we have the hero and the false hero. The former is the protagonist of the story and the character around whom the action revolves, and the latter is the character who brings complication to the plot and would try to steal what the hero possesses.

After having described the seven spheres of actions, the writer explains that these spheres can be distributed among individual tale characters in three possible ways: the first possibility is the one in which “the sphere of action exactly corresponds to the character [...] The second one includes the possibility that one character is involved in several spheres of action [...] and the third one is the reverse case: a single sphere of action is distributed among several characters” (Propp, p. 81). In this way, it can be concluded that one character can fulfil more than one role, and that one role can be fulfilled by more than one character.

An inventive analysis of detective narratives by Allan Hepburn

In the book *The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth-Century English Novel* (2009), chapter 14, Allan Hepburn examines the tradition and characteristics of detective fiction. According to him, “British detective fiction descended from nineteenth-century adventure narratives, come of age in the twentieth century” (p.210) and emphasizes action over character, qualifying as thriller.

As regards the subject matter of this genre, Hepburn claims that murder mystery is central to detective fiction. Detective stories inevitable concern a corpse, bloodiness, and inheritance with the UK. Furthermore, these stories insinuate the legitimacy and criminality course through characters’ veins: a fundamental law of British detective fiction is that a body’s singular identity can always be determined.

As regards the moral and social implications of detective fiction, Hepburn quotes W.H. Auden who claims that the genre requires “a closed society so that the possibility of an outside murderer (and hence of the society being totally innocent) is excluded; and a closely related society so that all its members are potentially suspect. The perfect closed society is comprised of “blood relations” (pp.149-50) as mentioned previously. Furthermore, Hepburn adds that British detective fiction figures the closed society as a family first, a village second, and a nation third: a crime inside the family is a crime against the village and the nation, on the grounds that blood relations determine nationalism and nationality.

As regards the characters, the author mentions detectives and murderers. For the purpose of this work, we will focus only on detectives. Hepburn states that detectives deduce; explain; expose; solve. They are almost never culpable, they are experts at unmasking false alibis and impersonations, and they work alongside the police, drawing on their services, while showing superior reasoning ability. Curiosity is the cause that stimulates the detectives’ interests to solve the crimes, which are detected thanks to the detectives’ superior intelligence.

All in all, the author concludes that detective fiction represents “continuing attempts to define cultural and political phenomena that go by the name “British” (p.222).

Mieke Bal on Character analysis

Narratology is the study of narrative structures: it is the theory of narratives; narrative texts; images; spectacles; events; cultural artifacts that ‘tell a story’. In this way, what Mieke Bal offers in her book *Narratology* (1994) is basically a method for describing narratives. Her initial proposal is that any narrative can be divided into three layers: text, story and fabula. On the one hand, the text is the layer in which the story is told by a narrator to a narratee; on the other hand, the story is the content of the said work; and finally, the fabula is the series of chronological events.

According to Bal, at the text level of a narrative a character is “[...] a complex semantic unit [...] presented with distinctive human characteristics” (p.115) so that they can look like real-life people. Characters are the most crucial category of narrative, they differ from each other and “on the basis of the characteristics they have been allotted, they each function in a different way with respect to the reader” (p.115).

In order to establish a framework for the characterization of characters and explain the effect on readers, Bal claims that this framework must be simple, and this can be possible due to the “[...] the kinds of information the readers have at their disposal” (p. 118) about characters which allows them to construct an image of the character. Furthermore, while her proposal is centered on the written text, it is important to highlight the fact that “[...] direct or indirect knowledge of the context of certain characters contributes significantly to their meaning” (p. 118), that is, the reader’s reading and overall cultural baggage can play its part to bring new meanings to the characters in a way that makes them more or less predictable in the text. This usually occurs with what she refers to as historical and legendary characters who are often brought to life in novels. These characters, when presented in a fictional work, have predictability surrounding them, because the reader expects them to behave a certain way and have such appearance consistent with their background information, and if they don’t, “[...] they would no longer be recognizable” (p.

120). However, a deviation from that could bring an element of surprise and innovation to the text.

After that, Bal lists four principles to the construction of the image of a character: repetition, accumulation, relationship with other characters, and transformation. Repetition implies that the relevant characteristics about a character are repeated throughout the narrative work, not always in the exact same form, but they still will mark appearance, behavior, or any other aspect. The second principle, “the piling up of data also fulfils a function in the construction of an image. The accumulation of characteristics causes odd facts to coalesce, complement each other, and then form a whole” (p.125). The third one, relationships with other characters, is important due to the fact that the reader can see how characters behave, talk, think, and establish the differences among them. “Finally, characters may change. The changes or transformations which a character undergoes sometimes alter the entire configuration of the character” (p.125).

The next type of characterization of characters, for Bal, happens in the fabula level. Taking as a basis A.J. Greimas’s actantial model, the scholar explains that in this model, “the actors have an intention: they aspire towards an aim. That aspiration is the achievement of something pleasant, agreeable or favourable, or the evasion of something unpleasant, disagreeable or unfavorable.” (p.197). At the same time, these actors, who are considered actants, have functional roles to the development of the narrative, and they are divided into different classes.

The most important is between subjects and objects. The actors that have a goal, an aspiration, are the subject-actants, while the goal itself is the object-actant – the goal might or might not be a person, and in case it is not, it can be a state of being the subject-actant wants to achieve.

Since “the intention of the subject is in itself not sufficient to reach the object, there are always powers that either allow it to reach its aim or prevent it from doing so” (p. 198), it is necessary to consider more classes of actors. The class of actors that is supportive of the subject-actant and act in aid is named power and the person to whom the object is given is the receiver, who is often the same character as the subject.

When considering those who aid the subject-actant, the author makes the distinction between power and helper. While the power is often abstract and often remains in the background, the helper is mostly concrete and often comes to the fore. Furthermore, “the same points of difference can be pointed to between a negative power [...] and an opponent” (p. 201). When the power is negative, it prevents and makes it difficult for the subject to approach their goal/object. When the helper is a negative force, we refer to it as opponent, who opposes the subject at certain moments of the pursuit of their aim.

All in all, although this actantial model is structural, it can help us interpret and analyze John Watson’s role in the adaptation chosen for this work, further aiding us in the identification of the role and how different the actantial structure is in the original novels as compared to the new audiovisual work.

E. M. Forster on Character Analysis

E. M. Forster is a renowned English author who wrote *Aspects of the Novel* (2002). The book is a treatise on writing and literary criticism, and it is made up of a series of lectures delivered by Forster at Cambridge University and later published as a book.

In *Aspects of the Novel* (2002), the author defines the genre essentially as “a fiction in prose of a certain extent” (p.8) and, while English literature is any work written in the English language rather than those only from a specific country or location, the specialist imparts his desire to envision that all the best authors all through time are sitting together around, writing their books all the while, as he claims:

“We cannot consider fiction by periods; we must not contemplate the stream of time. Another image better suits our powers: that of all the novelists writing their novels at once. They come from different ages and ranks, they have different temperaments and aims, but they all hold pens in their hands, and are in the process of creation.” (p.13).

Subsequently, Forster explains that a novel tells a story, which is the highest factor common to all novels and he claims that “the basis of a novel is a story, and a story is a narrative of events arranged in time sequence.” (p.24). The story should be founded on the

question: what happens next? Moreover, from his point of view, a good story must add value.⁸

As regards the characterization of characters, Forster mentions a fundamental aspect of the novel: the actors. He claims that “the actors in a story are, or pretend to be, human beings” (p.33). Then, he clarifies that, in some cases, a reader will believe that the actors appear to be more genuine than the real individuals in the reader's life. This happens since the author uncovers the character's inward life and, in real life, this does not happen.

Afterwards, Forster describes five main facts of human life, which include birth, food, sleep, love, and death. Then, he compares these five activities as experienced by real people- homo sapiens- to these activities as enacted by characters in novels -homo fictus- and concludes that while activities like sleeping and eating do not occupy much space in stories, love is typically over-represented.

Finally, the novelist distinguishes between “flat” and “round” characters and clarifies the contrast between them. On the one hand, flat characters are those that only have one or two characterizing attributes, they are easily recognized by the reader and “they never need reintroducing, never run away, have not to be watched for development, and provide their own atmosphere” (p.49). On the other hand, round characters are completely developed, they are like complex people who undergo a change in the course of the story and remain capable of surprising the reader. In this sense, Forster expresses the following idea:

“[...] the test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprised, it is flat. If it does not convince, it is a flat pretending to be round.” (p.55).

In the end, he concludes that both characters are necessary in a story.

⁸ Forster believes in the idea that literature should have an effect on the reader: if the novel does not make the reader want to know what happens next, it does not have value.

Discovering Watson's Multiple Intelligences⁹

Howard Gardner is a world- renowned psychologist who published *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* in 1983. In his book, the author describes a new way of thinking about human intelligence, challenging the traditional view that there is one kind of intelligence which can be measured by standardized tests.

According to Gardner, an intelligence involves a person's ability to solve a problem or do something considered valuable in one or more cultures. In the early 1980s, he identified seven intelligences and about a decade later added an eighth. We will now describe them along with end-states that exemplify them.

Linguistic intelligence is the first one and it involves strong linguistic skills. People who possess this intelligence can use their native language, and sometimes other languages, to understand people and express their thoughts. Examples of professionals with above average intelligence levels in this area include writers and orators.

Logical-mathematical intelligence involves using and appreciating numerical, causal, abstract, or logical relations. It is exemplified by mathematicians, scientists, and engineers.

Spatial intelligence involves the skills that people have to represent the spatial world. Spatially intelligent people tend to become painters, sculptors, and architects. Spatial intelligence is used more often in certain sciences like anatomy and topology.

Musical intelligence refers to the ability to create, communicate, and understand meanings made out of sound. It can be seen in musicians and music critics but also outside the musical sphere, for instance; auto mechanics and cardiologists make diagnoses based on careful listening to patterns of sound.

The fifth kind of intelligence is called bodily- kinesthetic. This intelligence relates to the ability to use whole or certain body parts to create something, solve a problem, or display

⁹ All pieces of information in this section are references to Howard Gardner's official web site: <https://www.howardgardner.com>.

skills involving bodily movement at an event. Examples of professionals strong in this intelligence include athletes and dancers.

Interpersonal intelligence involves the capacity to recognize and make distinctions among the feelings, beliefs, and intentions of other people. Interpersonal intelligence enables people such as Martin Luther King and Mao Zedong to communicate with others and do their work effectively.

Intrapersonal intelligence involves an enhanced understanding of oneself. A developed intrapersonal intelligence enables people to anticipate how they would react to experiences and how to choose the experiences that can be beneficial. It also helps people be aware of the difficulties they might encounter.

Finally, we can find naturalist intelligence. This type has been added to the original seven. It relates to an individual's ability to differentiate among living things. People strong in this intelligence are good at classifying plants, minerals, and animals as well as rocks and grass. After describing the eight intelligences, the psychologist mentions that the linguistic intelligence appears to be the one most widely shared by humans across the world because without linguistic skills in semantics, phonology, syntax, and pragmatics, people would have difficulty functioning with efficacy in the world. In contrast, the abilities of gymnasts, mathematicians, musicians, and visual artists are often perceived as remote and even mysterious by the average person.

Another interesting point to consider is the fact that the extent to which various intelligences are correlated is unknown; for instance, a person may be engaged with one type of content but be inattentive with another type.

To conclude, Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences has proven to be a crucial theory that sheds light on the different ways human beings can learn and use the intelligence for good purposes. Furthermore, Howard Gardner's MI theory invites us to question the idea of intelligence by revisiting and resignifying the characters-particularly the character of John Watson- of the well-known stories of Sherlock Holmes.

CHAPTER II: The Hound Through Time

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: The Distinguished Author behind the Good Doctor

Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was born on May 22nd, 1859, in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was born a storyteller: partly, it may be assumed, through “art in the blood”: he had a natural talent inherited from the artistic Doyle family: his grandfather, John Doyle, was a fine political cartoonist and satirist; his uncle, Richard Doyle, was a fine illustrator and diarist; and his father, Charles Altamont Doyle, was also an artist who played a part in the design of the fountains at Edinburgh’s Holyrood Palace.

The young Conan Doyle spent many hours listening to tales of his forebears while he sat at his mother’s knee, he was an avid and rapid reader, and he presented signs of literary inclinations at an early age: he wrote a very short story when he was 6 years old.

At the age of nine, Doyle was sent to England to the Jesuit preparatory school Hodder Place, Stonyhurst in Lancashire¹⁰. During his school years, he developed a closer relationship with his mother, Mary Foley Doyle, by corresponding frequently through letters. His relationship with his father, however, was not close due to the fact that Charles Doyle was an alcoholic and this led to many financial problems for the family. Then, he was educated at the Jesuit Stonyhurst College in Lancashire.

At school, Arthur was quite good academically and he achieved good grades for university. In this way, he enrolled as a student of medicine at Edinburgh University in 1876 and graduated as a Bachelor of Medicine in 1881. Throughout this period of his life, besides studying medicine and being assistant to a few doctors, Conan Doyle never distanced himself from literature: he divided his time between his medical obligations and writing.

Money was always in short supply, and in 1880, to help with the family expenses, Conan Doyle enrolled as a ship’s surgeon on the steamship *Hope*, a Peterhead whaler bound for

¹⁰ He was enrolled at this school by his successful uncles who recognized his potential.

the waters of the Arctic. He served a further similar term in 1881-1882 aboard the steamer *Mayumba* headed for West Africa.

After a disastrous partnership in Plymouth with the wily, conniving Dr. George Turnavine Budd, he went into private practice in SouthSea, where he erected his plaque at 1 Bush Villas, waited for patients, and passed his considerable spare time writing. The short stories he produced at this time met with success, and some of them achieved magazine publications, including the magnificent Victorian ghost story *The Captain of the "Pole-Star"* (1890).

Following his marriage in August 1885, Conan Doyle decided that he should venture in writing longer works. For many years, he had been fond of the work of French novelist Émile Gaboriau, creator of police detective Monsieur Lecoq; and C. Auguste Dupin, Poe's masterful detective, had been one of his heroes from boyhood. So, he pondered how he could bring about his own addition to the detective story canon. As an inspiration for a character, he thought about one of his professors from medical school, Dr. Joseph Bell, and, in this way, the character of Sherlock Holmes emerged. But, according to Doyle, the character of Sherlock could not tell his own exploits, so the writer thought that Sherlock should have a commonplace comrade as a foil- an educated man of action who could both join in the exploits and narrate them. He thought of a drab quiet name for this unostentatious man: Watson. Once Conan Doyle had his characters, he wrote *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). After a number of rejections, the novel was eventually accepted by Ward, Lock & Co.

Conan Doyle had given little thought to writing more Holmes stories, but as a result of the modest success that *A Study in Scarlet* achieved in America, he decided that he would bring Holmes back for another adventure. In little more than a month, he was writing in his diary: *The Sign of the Four* (1890) finished and dispatched, but this time published in *The Strand* magazine.

Due to this success and writing more Holmes's short stories-and being paid for it- he quit the practice of medicine. By the end of 1890, Conan Doyle had closed his Southsea practice and it is from this period of reflection and inspiration that the characters of Sherlock

Holmes and John Watson emerged, fully formed. The speed of composition of the early stories showed just how inspired Conan Doyle was at this time. *A Scandal in Bohemia* was written on April 3, 1891; *A Case of Identity* was completed on April 10; *The Red-Headed League* was sent off on April 20; *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* emerged a week later on April 27, and finally, *The Five Orange Pips* was dispatched on May 18.

As Conan Doyle became a household name, he felt the time was right to revive his interest in writing historical novels. *The Strand*, meanwhile, had been pressing for further Sherlock Holmes stories: the first series had been very successful with the public, and the magazine's fortunes were going from strength to strength. He considered how he could get around *The Strand's* latest approach and decided to ask one thousand pounds for the new series in the hope that this would prove a deterrent. The ploy didn't work, the *Strand* accepted his terms without hesitation, and he was forced to begin considering ideas for the stories that would eventually become *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*.

By the time the final story of the "Memoirs" was completed, the decision to "kill off" Holmes had been executed. Christmas 1893 was to be a sad one for readers of the *Strand*: *The Final Problem* appeared in the December edition of the magazine. As soon as the story came out, newspapers ran headlines about Holmes's death, and passionate fans wore mourning garb in the streets.

In 1900, Conan Doyle was enjoying a golfing holiday in Norfolk with a young journalist friend, Bertram Fletcher Robinson. In the course of an afternoon's conversation, Robinson mentioned the legend of a ferocious black dog which haunted the countryside. This set Conan Doyle's imagination on fire, and the two of them began working out the plot for a story that would become *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902). Initially Conan Doyle described it as "a real creeper", but there was no mention of it becoming a Sherlock Holmes story. Naturally, however, Conan Doyle recognized the attraction of Holmes, and used the opportunity to increase his terms, writing to his editor at the *Strand*. In this way, Conan Doyle "resurrected" Holmes, though he set the novel retrospectively to the story in which the detective died- *The Final Problem*- in order to avoid having to continue writing about him.

The rest is history. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was a runaway success, and the *Strand* needed to go to a seventh printing for the only time in the magazine's history. The decision to include the story in the American issue of the *Strand* boosted circulation by 200,000 copies. When *The Hound* appeared in book form in America, 50,000 copies sold within 10 days of publication. The success of *The Hound* paved the way for Holmes's revival: thirteen stories were written, eventually to be collected as *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*.

Further Holmes stories appeared less regularly, and the detective's next book appearance was to be in *The Valley of Fear* (1915). By 1917 there were sufficient stories for a further collection, *His Last Bow*, and the Canon was completed in 1927 with the stories collected as *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*. In all the Holmes adventures numbered four novels and fifty-six short stories. They are considered by most to be the very finest of Conan Doyle's work.

While readers favored his detective and adventure stories, Conan Doyle harbored loftier literary ambitions and considered his historical novels—*Micah Clark* (1887), *The White Company* (1891), and *Sir Nigel* (1906)—of greater consequence. In addition, Conan Doyle wrote a number of other novels, including *The Lost World* (1912) and various non-fictional works. These included a pamphlet justifying Britain's involvement in the Boer War, for which he was knighted and histories of the Boer War and World War One, in which his son, brother and two of his nephews were killed.

In later life, he became very interested in spiritualism and he served as president of several spiritualist organizations, including the British College of Psychic Science, the London Spiritualist Alliance, and the Spiritualist Community. In 1925, he opened the Psychic Bookshop on Victoria Street in the shadow of Westminster Abbey. He spent thousands of pounds of his own money to keep it open and never wavered in his belief in the existence of spirits. Doyle recorded his own psychic experiences in countless articles and many books, including his last, *The Edge of the Unknown* (1930).

Conan Doyle died on July 7, 1930, from heart disease.

Fantastic Success in Arthur Conan Doyle's Hound of the Baskervilles

The Hound of the Baskervilles is Conan Doyle's greatest Holmes full-length detective novel. The story was a huge success upon its first appearance in *The Strand* magazine, where it ran from August 1901 to April 1902. The novel is Holmes and Watson's first adventure after the hiatus that followed Sherlock's death, but it is set before the short story *The Final Problem* (1893)¹¹.

As it has been mentioned previously, the idea for *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was conceived on a holiday in Norfolk. In 1901, Doyle was taking a golfing break with his friend, the journalist Bertram Fletcher Robinson at the Royal Links Hotel near Cromer. There, they spent time between rounds of golf discussing various topics of interest, including folklore. One afternoon, Robinson recounted the legend of a spectral hound that supposedly haunted the barren countryside of Dartmoor, near where he lived. Doyle was greatly taken with this account. It sparked his imagination. He thought that a ghostly hound threatening a noble family would form the basis of a very exciting novel. He later visited Robinson at his Dartmoor home to pick up some local colour and, in this way, the novel began to take shape.

As regards the plot, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is the story of a seemingly supernatural hound that haunts Dartmoor. The story begins with Sir Charles Baskerville's death, and, after he is found dead with his face twisted in stark terror, Holmes and Watson are called upon to protect his heir, Sir Henry Baskerville. Once Holmes and Watson have listened to Dr. Mortimer and the young Baronet, they immediately decide to take the case to investigate the mystery of the hound that haunts the Baskerville property and has supposedly been murdering people based on an old family curse. However, in an unexpected turn of events, Holmes affirms he cannot leave London for an unknown period of time, too busy to be able to go to Dartmoor to investigate it himself, and suggests Watson go with the men, saying: "If my friend would undertake it there is no man who is better worth having at your side when you are in a tight place. No one can say so more

¹¹ Story in which Doyle decided to kill Holmes.

confidently than I” (Conan Doyle, 2009, p.663). This surprises Watson, but he accepts the indication and sets off with the young Baskerville.

While there, the setting is extremely important for the doctor, and it has a direct influence on Watson’s feelings, as he informs Holmes that the melancholy of the moor and the weird sound which has been associated with the grim legend of the Baskervilles tinge his thoughts with sadness.

Moreover, Watson is extremely attentive in this new setting. At Baskerville Hall, he observes the relationship between the people in there, such as Mr. and Mrs. Barrymore, he confronts other characters in the region, such as Mr. and Miss Stapleton and he is also constantly paying attention to his surroundings, more so with the mission to report back to Holmes.

As time goes by, more unsettling events occur, including the death of a convict and the appearance of an unknown figure on the moor. Watson later discovers that this mysterious person is Holmes, who has been conducting his own investigation. At the beginning, Watson shows surprise, but also relief at the detective’s presence there. However, he is also displeased, claiming Holmes used him and did not trust him to do the investigation on his own. Of course, Holmes tries to make amends for the situation, he praises Watson on his zeal and intelligence in the reports of the investigations he pursued on his own, without any instructions. Having heard this, Watson smiles and accepts more easily the fact that Holmes lied to him about being too busy in London.

Towards the end, Watson explains the last details of the solution of the case: Holmes deduces that the killer is Jack Stapleton, the neighbour who is actually Rodger Baskerville. Hoping to inherit the family estate, he has plotted to kill his relatives using a vicious hound that he has painted with phosphorous to appear sinister. The superstitious Charles suffered a heart attack after being frightened by the animal. Stapleton also hopes to kill Henry Baskerville but is thwarted by Holmes. Finally, Stapleton flees and is believed to have died, swallowed by Grimpen Mire. And, even though the mystery is solved, the myth remains intact: the curse that has hounded the Baskervilles is improbable and impossible but true as ever.

The Hound of the Baskervilles is arguably the most famous detective story in fiction. Part of the appeal of the novel lies in Conan Doyle's skillful blending of the disparate elements: there is mist, murder, and mayhem but there is also a powerful extra ingredient that strengthens the mixture making the novel unique in the Holmes canon: the world of the supernatural.

As a result of this huge success, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by far has been the most adapted story for screen, and the choice continued in 2012 by Moffat and Gattis for the BBC's television series, *Sherlock* (2010) but this time called "The Hounds of Baskerville".

Contemporary Hound

For more than a century, Sherlock Holmes has been a significant character in British literature and a cultural icon in the world. The original stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle were first published as magazine serials in 1887 but gained greater popularity four years later. Novels soon joined the stories, and the last tale was published in 1927.

Due to their great success, Holmes and Watson made their television debut on the little screen in 1930, and since that time, they continued on film and TV throughout the twentieth century. Many actors played the famous duo; for instance, in the mid-twentieth century, Basil Rathbone served most famously as Sherlock Holmes, alongside Nigel Bruce as Dr. John Watson, in American film adaptations. At the end of the twentieth century, the BBC launched the BBC Granada Series with Jeremy Brett as Holmes and Edward Hardwicke as Watson. This particular series served as the dominant media representation of Holmes from the 1980s through 2009, when Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* came to the big screen, only to be overshadowed in 2010 by the launch of a contemporary Holmes in the BBC series *Sherlock*.

The series *Sherlock* stars Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman as the great detective and distinguished doctor, respectively and it is a modern interpretation of the classic stories of Victorian era author and physician Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The co-creators and writers Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss have cleverly played with the story, managing to include key components but changing enough on it to keep even the most ardent Sherlock Holmes

fans guessing. The way they have used details of Doyle's work but have altered their significance is one of the key trademarks of the show: staying loyal to the source material but giving the audience and the faithful readers something new.

The huge success of the show has demonstrated that the BBC series has reimagined Holmes and Watson on television, and the careful reading of the original stories that Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss have done shows that Sherlock Holmes and John Watson are on adventure side by side and the dynamics between these two men is, of course, integral to any Sherlock Holmes adaptation.

In the following section, we will include a brief synopsis of *Sherlock's* "The Hounds of Baskerville" episode.¹²

Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss ' Version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

Dr. John Watson and Sherlock Holmes receive a visit from Henry Knight, a man who had witnessed his father's death by a "gigantic hound" at Dartmoor 20 years earlier. Recently, Henry has visited the hollow where the killing had occurred and has seen the footprints of a huge beast. He suspects that the nearby Baskerville government research station is breeding mutant animals, prompting his request for help from John and Sherlock who accept the case.

The next day, John and Sherlock head down to Dartmoor to investigate. Once there, they visit Baskerville and gain access to the facility using Sherlock's brother's identity card though their ruse is quickly found out by secretive Major Barrymore. Fortunately, they are rescued by sympathetic Dr. Frankland, Henry's friend.

That night, Henry tells John and Sherlock about the words "Liberty" and "In" in his dreams. Then, the three characters visit the hollow in the hope of confronting the hound. There, Sherlock's faith in his abilities is shaken to the core when he too sees the creature,

¹² Episode chosen for the analysis of this work.

something that genuinely frightens him. Later that night, in the inn, a skeptical John tries to calm him down, suggesting that he is imagining things, but Sherlock does not listen to him.

The following morning, Sherlock, with John's help, realizes that "hound" may be an acronym rather than a word and, after calling Mycroft, they gain access to Baskerville again. There, they find confidential files that explain that "H.O.U.N.D." was a secret C.I.A. project in Liberty aimed at creating a hallucinatory anti-personnel weapon. The project had been abandoned several years before. However, Frankland, who participated in the project, has continued to experiment with the drug in secret.

Immediately, having received a call from Henry's therapist, they rush to the moor. There, they find a delirious Henry Knight about to commit suicide. Fortunately, Sherlock manages to talk Henry out of it, explaining that the hound has just been a hallucination and that his father had been attacked by Dr Frankland, wearing a gas mask with red-colored lenses and a jersey with "Hound. Liberty, In" written on it. As Henry calms down, they all see the hound, which is a dog. As John shoots the dog, Sherlock finds Frankland and catches him. Frankland admits he had murdered Henry's father because he had found him in the middle of an experiment. He also reveals that Henry's father actually had died by hitting his head on a rock whilst being attacked by him. Frankland attempts to escape but runs into the base's minefield and is blown up. In this way, the mystery has been solved.

A postmodern analysis of Todorov's notion of the fantastic and typology of detective fiction in *Sherlock's* "The Hounds of Baskerville"

Having discussed Todorov's notion of the fantastic which allowed us to delineate the categories and sub-genres of this genre, we will analyze *Sherlock's* "The Hounds of Baskerville" episode in order to define whether the episode belongs to the uncanny, the fantastic-uncanny, the fantastic-marvelous or the marvelous, focalizing in the environment, the characters, and the way the story is solved in the end.

To start with, it can be said that the episode occupies that dividing line between the fantastic and the realistic due to the fact that, once Henry says: “Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound” (0:12:23), the characters and the viewers are caught in a mythic web which resonates throughout the episode¹³. It is clear that the existence of a monstrous hound defies logical analysis completely. Moreover, the hound is rooted by a historical past of the landscape that reinforces the mythic dimension to the episode and, also, according to Todorov, the environment in which “the sort” revolves is a dominant feature of the fantastic genre: the moor, in effect, fuses the scientific with the fantastic, the material with the supernatural.

Another important point to highlight is the fact that the characters are not in their usual environment in London, and this opens up the possibilities for both to act and react differently to the investigation. Although we are used to seeing a rational Sherlock, in this episode he is completely vulnerable, viewers can see him doubt throughout the episode, and as he hesitates, so too does the viewer. Furthermore, Sherlock’s ambivalence towards the case becomes a metaphor for the fantastic hesitation that occurs within this genre.

As regards John, he remains rational all the time, he is the one who suggests that there must be some logical and probable explanation for this hound, one that does not devolve into superstition and the supernatural. The fantastic has no place in John’s universe and his impressionistic perception of things makes him a good detective with a great intuitive sense of truth.

As the episode moves on, the climactic scene emerges and this one revolves around John’s killing of the real hound: real bullets killed a real dog. What is more, Inspector Lestrade is also in the scene, which is further proof of reality. At the same time, Sherlock fills the gaps and solves the case: all this time, the characters have been drugged by Doctor Frankland through the fog and that influence of drugs has made them see a hound, which in fact, has

¹³ The episode opens with a seven-year-old boy running through the trees and panting heavily in woodland. He is repeatedly looking behind him and having flashbacks to the dramatic event he has recently witnessed: a man has been attacked and killed by an unknown creature- the sound of an animal growling and snapping its teeth can be seen and heard. Then, at present time, we get to know that this man was Henry’s father.

been a normal dog- there has never been a monster. Now, the mystery has been all explained neatly, all accounted for realistically.

In this way, it is concluded that *Sherlock's* "The Hounds of Baskerville" episode is a story with a rich fantastic texture between two narrative worlds: one real and one of fantasy, so it can be classified as a fantastic- uncanny story since "the events that seem supernatural throughout a story receive a rational explanation at its end" (Todorov, 1973, p.44). The story emerges from the class of detective stories that simply evoke the supernatural, to join the ranks of the fantastic but, once the characters and the viewers eliminate all other factors, it leaves no doubt as to the absence of supernatural events. However, as Todorov claims: "...it must be noted, finally, that we are less concerned here with a resemblance between two genres than with their synthesis" (1973, p.51).

As regards Todorov's typology of detective fiction, it can be observed that "The Hounds of Baskerville" indubitably conforms to the first rule of the whodunit, according to which it is built upon a narrative duality, that is to say, the whodunit comprises two stories: the story of the crime, which must be told in reverse, and the story of the investigation, which must be told chronologically. This is justified by the fact that, as viewers, we see that the episode opens with a seven-year-old boy running through the trees and panting heavily in woodland (0:0:12). He is repeatedly looking behind him and having flashbacks to the dramatic event he has recently witnessed: a man has been attacked and killed by an unknown creature- the sound of an animal growling and snapping its teeth can be seen and heard. The scene then cuts to the present time, and we can see the same boy, but as an adult now, standing in the midst of heavy fog in the same moor, looking confused and afraid, and then, he starts walking to get out of there. The following day, this young man, Henry Knight, is sitting at 221b, Baker Street (0:05:27), asking for help and explaining the situation to Sherlock and John: his father had been killed twenty years ago by a gigantic hound and he saw the same type of footprints the previous night in Dewer's Hollow- the moor-, and of course, he fears for his life. What we see as viewers the rest of the episode is how Sherlock and John solve the case: they go to Dartmoor; they investigate the village; the Great Grimpen Minefield – a Baskerville testing site-; the moor; they talk to the different inhabitants, professionals and, in the end, they figure out who murdered Henry's father twenty years ago.

Curiosity and the culprit's lack of professionalism are two more salient features of the whodunit included in the episode. The former is shown in the scene in which Henry is retelling his story, especially when he says: "Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound" (0:12:23) This utterance awakens Sherlock's curiosity and makes him change his mind and take the case. Furthermore, some minutes later (0:13:58), he exclaims: "20-year-old disappearance? A monstrous hound? I wouldn't miss it for the world!". Here, it is important to mention the fact that this curiosity can also be found in John's action of taking down notes while Henry is retelling his story (0:07:28).

As regards the murderer's rule of not being professional, it can be alleged that Doctor Frankland is only a research scientist who got obsessed with project H.O.U.N.D. when he was a young man. At that moment of his life, he was convinced that the drug would one day work, and, albeit the project was cancelled, he continued testing it on people. When Henry Knight's father discovered what he was doing, Frankland was forced to act and murder him. Unfortunately, twenty years later- present time-, Henry starts to remember what really happened that night so Frankland has no other choice but to start reviving his project: he puts pressure pads in the ground at Dewer's Hollow so as to drug Henry and turn him insane whenever he goes there. By doing this, Frankland is preventing Henry from unveiling the truth. Nevertheless, he has no intentions of killing him; he is only avoiding going to prison. In this way, it is demonstrated that he is not a serial killer.

While we continue inspecting "The Hounds of Baskerville" more closely, it can be conceded that the episode is also equipped with certain typical features of the suspense novel. According to Todorov, the suspense novel contains the two stories, but the plot constitutes a pivotal part of the story. This principle is clearly present in the episode due to the fact John and Sherlock are constantly intertwined within the events of the case, not only trying to solve it, but also undergoing personal struggle; for instance, the scene in which Sherlock apologizes for having hurt John's feelings in the inn scene (0:52:50)

Taking into consideration the role of the "detective's immunity", Todorov claims that "the detective risks his health, if not his life" (1966, p.141) in the suspense novel and there is evidence as regards this premise. Firstly, we have the scene in which John, Sherlock and Henry go to the moor for the first time to find out whether the hound exists or not. At the

beginning, we can see the three characters from afar, holding torches, and entering the woods (0: 34:20). As they are walking, John hears a noise coming from his right, and stops, at first, just looking, and then going in that direction to investigate, risking his life (0:34:59). As the scene unfolds, Sherlock and Henry stop at Dewer's Hollow. The next shot shows the viewers a zoom in of a big paw illuminated by Sherlock and then, the camera zooms out of Sherlock, going up, as he points his light where they were before, and we hear an animal growling and see the detective's expression becoming frightened. Besides, Sherlock seems to doubt what he saw for a moment, and later, he denies having seen it. The three characters leave the scene.

Later on, John and Sherlock are in the inn (0: 39:57) and the following dialogue ensues (0:40:47), showing Sherlock's vulnerability:

SHERLOCK: Henry's right.
JOHN: What?
SHERLOCK: I saw it too.
JOHN: What?
SHERLOCK: I saw it too, John.
JOHN: Just ... just a minute. You saw what?
SHERLOCK: A hound, out there in the Hollow. A gigantic hound.
JOHN: Um, look, Sherlock, we have to be rational about this, okay? Now you, of all people, can't just ...
JOHN: Let's just stick to what we know, yes? Stick to the facts.
SHERLOCK: Once you've ruled out the impossible, whatever remains – however improbable – must be true.
JOHN: What does that mean?
SHERLOCK: Look at me. I'm afraid, John. Afraid.
JOHN: Sherlock?
SHERLOCK: Always been able to keep myself distant ... divorce myself from ... feelings. But look, you see ...
SHERLOCK: ... body's betraying me. Interesting, yes? Emotions.

This scene clearly shows how John does not let the situation cloud his mind, whereas Sherlock, for as rational as he can be, is extremely affected and needs his companion to help him, revealing a more human John and Sherlock.

All in all, after having scrutinized Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss' *Sherlock's* "The Hounds of Baskerville" and taking into consideration that the screenwriting duo has created a postmodern version of the classical novel, bringing the consulting detectives into modern society, it can be concluded that the episode represents a mixture of the classic whodunit

and the suspense novel, achieving an adaptation in tune with contemporary times. Furthermore, this mixture coincides with Todorov's conclusion in his essay which states that the three forms he has just described "can exist simultaneously" (1966, p.144).

CHAPTER III: Watson as a Detective

It may be that you are not yourself luminous, but you are a conductor of light.
Conan Doyle (2019, p. 636)

As viewers, it may be conceded that one of the most remembered scenes in *Sherlock's* “The Hounds of Baskerville” is the one in which John is walking through town¹⁴ (0:51:42) and Sherlock is following him, trying to compensate for what he had done the night before. John is not looking at him, he is still clearly mad, and he keeps on walking as if to get away from Sherlock, not talking to him as usual. But suddenly, the following dialogue ensues (0:53:03):

SHERLOCK: You are amazing! You are fantastic!
JOHN (not stopping): Yes, all right! You don't have to overdo it.
SHERLOCK (catching up and overtaking him, then walking backwards in front of him): You've never been the most luminous of people, but as a conductor of light you are unbeatable.
JOHN: Cheers. ... What?
(Sherlock turns round and walks beside him, taking out his own notebook and starting to write in it.)
SHERLOCK: Some people who aren't geniuses have an amazing ability to stimulate it in others.
JOHN: Hang on – you were saying “Sorry” a minute ago. Don't spoil it. Go on: what have I done that's so bloody stimulating?
(Sherlock stops just outside the pub door and turns back to John, showing what he has just written in his notebook:
HOUND
JOHN: Yeah?
SHERLOCK (pulling the notebook back and writing in it again): But what if it's not a word? What if it is individual letters?
(He shows him the page of the notebook again, which now reads:
H.O.U.N.D.
JOHN: You think it's an acronym?
SHERLOCK (putting his notebook away): Absolutely no idea but...

John is the person who has actively worked in the investigation and influenced Sherlock to have this breakthrough.

In drawing attention to the episode aforementioned, it can be seen how the construction of the character John Watson has been developed and presented to the spectators of the small

¹⁴ All dialogues and quotes in this subchapter are references of *Sherlock's* “The Hounds of Baskerville”, directed by Paul McGuigan, produced by BBC Wales, and released in 2012. The numbers refer to the timestamp.

screen: he has now become a character with more acting potential and autonomy as well as a person whose professional background and intelligence have made us rethink about his role in this partnership.

Captain John Watson, Fifth Northumberland Fusilier

*Being a Reprint from the Reminiscences of John H. Watson, M.D,
Late of the Army Medical Department.*

Conan Doyle (2019, p. 3)

The aim of this section is to present a narratological analysis of Dr. John Watson in the series *Sherlock* (2010), particularly in “The Hounds of Baskerville” episode and to discuss how the creators of the series have been able to construct, explore and amplify the role of the character in the audiovisual work.

As it was mentioned in chapter two, the BBC series’ creators Steven Moffat and Mark Gatton have brought John and Sherlock into modern London, and, in doing so, not only have they preserved John’s characterization and role but they have also reconfigured them thanks to the process of adaptations. This television procedure allows the writers to modify the original version of the characters in order to captivate modern viewers.

To start with, and from a global perspective, according to Mieke Bal (1994) and her ideas regarding characterization, a character, at the text level of narrative, is “[...] a complex semantic unit [...] presented with distinctive human characteristics” (p.115), so that they can resemble real-life people. In this way, and to develop the theory aforementioned, in “A Study in Pink”, the first episode of the series, John is depicted as an imperturbable character due to the fact that he has returned from service overseas. Then, he meets the brilliant Sherlock, and they tackle the case of the impossible suicides. In “The Blind Banker”- second episode of the series- John changes his attitude and starts spending his time investigating the crimes with Sherlock, which makes him fail to do his duty as a doctor in a local clinic. This situation fosters the new idea of writing a blog, <http://www.johnwatsonblog.co.uk>, about the cases they solve together. Here, Moffat and Gatton have been faithful to Doyle’s stories: at the beginning, John fulfills the role of

character-narrator in the series. Moreover, this information allows us to construct an imagine of the character: the doctor perfectly fits into the category of detective novels proposed by Todorov (1966): the narrators of the stories are the companions/ friends/ roommates of the detectives, not themselves and it shows how, in the specificity of the genre, especially in the whodunit subgenre, the stories abide the rules, and do not transgress them (Todorov, 1966).

In this brief analysis of the character's presentation, we can affirm how the writers of show have been loyal to John's original characterization and role, maybe to pay tribute to Conan Doyle. Notwithstanding this, we will show in the following paragraphs how, as the series moves on, the character of John has been deconstructed, especially in "The Hounds of Baskerville" episode.

In this sense, and continuing applying Bal's theory, another way of coming to grips with the concept of characterization of characters is to state that "a distinction among categories of character is possible on the basis of the actantial model" (Bal, 1994, p.118) proposed by the structuralist A. J. Greimas. The division between actants, at the fabula level, that Bal (1994) considers to be the most important is the one between subjects and objects. The characters that have a goal, an aspiration, are the subject-actants, while the goal itself is the object-actant- the goal might or might not be a person, and in case it is not, it can be a state of being the subject -actant wants to achieve. However, "the intention of the subject is in itself not sufficient to reach the object, there are always powers that either allow it to reach its aim or prevent it from doing so" (Bal, 1994, p.198), enabling us to consider more classes of actors: power; receiver; helper and opponent.

In "The Hounds of Baskerville" episode, John has more agency and a different actantial role: he does not limit himself to the companionship function, he is a subject himself and it is his background- his medical condition and his experience as a previous soldier- which allows this behaviour and makes him crave his adventures with Sherlock. The scene in which John and Sherlock go to Baskerville- the secret government testing site- is a clear example of his subject-actantial role (00:22:39). After succeeding in entering the military base (00:23:58), the characters get out of the jeep and start being led into a building. The

visual narrator shows them very attentive to their surroundings until a young man approaches them and the following dialogue ensues (00:25:02):

LYONS: What is it? Are we in trouble?
SHERLOCK (sternly): “Are we in trouble, sir?”
LYONS: Yes, sir, sorry, sir. (Nevertheless, he steps in front of them and holds out his hands to prevent them getting nearer to the entrance.)
SHERLOCK: You were expecting us?
LYONS: Your ID showed up straight away, Mr Holmes. Corporal Lyons, security. Is there something wrong, sir?
SHERLOCK: Well, I hope not, Corporal, I hope not.
LYONS: It’s just we don’t get inspected here, you see, sir. It just doesn’t happen.
JOHN: Ever heard of a spot check?
(He takes a small wallet from his pocket and shows the ID inside to the corporal.)
JOHN: Captain John Watson, Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers.
(Even before he finishes speaking, the corporal comes to attention and salutes. John crisply returns the salute.)
LYONS: Sir. Major Barrymore won’t be pleased, sir. He’ll want to see you both.
JOHN: I’m afraid we won’t have time for that. We’ll need the full tour right away. Carry on.
(The corporal hesitates.)
JOHN (instantly): That’s an order, Corporal.
LYONS: Yes, sir.

John’s military experience was a necessary condition so they could primarily enter the facility using Mycroft’s ID, enjoying the hierarchy. This also shows how location or environment is relevant to one’s behaviour, as we see a more confident John once he is acting as military in Baskerville. Here, it seems evident that Dean Lobo’s idea regarding that Sherlock is the alpha protagonist of the show and that all the characters and the character relationships are designed to make Sherlock Holmes emerge as the true hero is not correct.

Another example is the segment in which John and Sherlock are in the inn (00:42:30). As viewers, we observe a weakened and vulnerable Sherlock after having seen the hound for the first time, and a rational John who calls Sherlock’s attention for the impossibility of such creature. It is the doctor who tells the detective to remain calm and logical and, after not being heard, John decides to leave the place. The following shot shows him outside the inn, alone at night (0:44:35). Suddenly, he sees again the same flashing lights from before- the one he interpreted as Morse code- and decides to go to see what they really are,

showing that he investigates his own theories, that he acts as his own detective, and that he can maintain quite rational for his objective: discover the truth, that is to say, we find here the axis of desire of our subject-actant.

To sum up, after having scrutinized Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss' postmodern version of the canon, it is clear how this screenwriting duo has broken the rules of John and Sherlock's partnership, allowing the viewers to construct an image of a more capable and professional John, as well as a representation of a character who displays a more actantial role consistent with 21st century life. To put it simply, John's character transformation makes him become Sherlock's professional partner, having a protagonist/hero role as his friend.

John's mind: rethinking his intelligence

"[...] those who consider Watson to be a fool are simply admitting that they haven't read the stories attentively... Certainly Watson was no fool."
Adrian Conan Doyle¹⁵

Once the initial credits of the show have finished, the title "The Hounds of Baskerville" appears on the screen (00:01:45). The following shot displays a bloody Sherlock holding an also bloody harpoon. He is completely frantic since he neither has drugs nor a case to solve. Suddenly, he starts to search for something, throwing papers into air and calling Mrs. Hudson to help him. Throughout this sequence, John remains seated, calm, not affected by him, and he keeps on perusing the newspaper on his lap (00:03:01). When Mrs. Hudson enters the room and offers Sherlock a cup of tea, he starts making deductions on her whereabouts that morning, hurting her feelings (00:04:08). Immediately, John orders Sherlock to go after the landlady and to apologize to her, but instead of doing that, Sherlock says: "Oh, John, I envy so much" (00:04:57). John hesitates a little, seeming to clench his jaw as if controlling himself not to say anything but ends up asking: "You envy me?", and Sherlock explains to him why by saying: "your mind, it's so placid, straightforward, barely used. Mine's like an engine, racing out of control; a rocket tearing itself to pieces trapped on the launch pad" (00:05:08).

¹⁵ Cited in Accardo, Pasquale (1987). *Diagnosis and Detection: The Medical Iconography of Sherlock Holmes*. (p. 102).

The example that preceded clearly shows the antithetical behaviour of the two characters: John is completely relaxed while Sherlock is completely frenzied. Furthermore, this passage also sheds light on how Sherlock underestimates John's cleverness in his ironic game. For this reason, the aim of this chapter is, on the one hand, to interrogate the very concept of intelligence through the figures of John and Sherlock and their personal and working relationship. On the other hand, we will try to demonstrate how John embodies multiple intelligences, thus eclipsing the traditional binary of the smart detective and his slower-witted assistant.

According to Howard Gardner¹⁶, the chief demand of the traditional Western view of the mind is that there is a single intelligence which is highly heritable, and which can be assessed by standard psychometric instruments. This intelligence entails linguistic and logical/mathematical intelligences. The former describes the ability to perceive or generate spoken or written language and the later involves using and appreciating numerical, causal, abstract, or logical relations. With reference to this conventional line of thought, and considering the specificity of the detective genre, Sherlock represents the ultimate archetype of the genius, and this premise can be seen in the scene in which Sherlock and John are in Baskerville again (01:00:25). Here, the viewers can see the two characters and Dr. Stapleton swipe into a large room which has Major Barrymore's office in the corner (01:13:34). Once there, Dr. Stapleton tries to access the computer, using her log in and password and typing the letters HOUND as Sherlock dictates them, but she cannot see the file since it is CIA classified (01:13:56). At that moment, John, knowing the military, says that there must be an override and password, so Sherlock goes to Barrymore's office, right on the side of the room they are at, and asks Stapleton to describe the man so that he can deduce the password. While he is listening to her, he says:

SHERLOCK: Good, excellent. Old-fashioned, traditionalist; not the sort that would use his children's names as a password. He loves his job; proud of it and this is work-related, so what's at eye level? Books. Jane's Defence Weekly, bound copies. Hannibal; Wellington; Rommel; Churchill's "History of the English-Speaking Peoples", all four volumes. Churchill, well, he's fond of Churchill. Copy of "The Downing Street Years"; one, two, three, four, five biographies

¹⁶ All pieces of information in this subchapter are references to Howard Gardner's official web site: <https://www.howardgardner.com>.

of Thatcher. Mid nineteen eighties at a guess. Father and son: Barrymore senior. Medals: Distinguished Service Order.

And as he rapidly says these sentences, the visual narrator zooms in on the objects, showing exactly what he is observing (01:15:00). He looks at John, who comments on the date and who deduces that Barrymore's father was probably a Falkland's veteran (01:15:03). Thanks to John's accurate comment, Sherlock concludes that Thatcher's name would be the correct password, so he types Maggie in the authorization code box, and it works: the files from project H.O.U.N.D are now available to them (01:15:27) This scene marks a turning point in the episode: due to Sherlock's intellectual capacity and deductive methods, part of the case has been solved.

Though the character of John does not necessarily possess that level of skill and genius as Sherlock, he is reasonably intelligent as well and, what is more, he challenges this traditional concept with the construction of his postmodern character, demonstrating that there is space for different types of intelligences.

As stated previously, the theorist Howard Gardner, based on the traditional view of intelligence and after having collected data from many different sources, has provided a different perspective of the concept, putting forth a broader definition: "an intelligence is the biopsychological potential to process information in certain ways, in order to solve problems or fashion products that are valued in a culture or community" (5:43, 2016)¹⁷.

Accordingly, he has developed the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) and, drawing on diverse sources of evidence, Gardner's analysis has yielded a list of eight intelligences which are spatial intelligence; musical intelligence; bodily/kinesthetics intelligence; interpersonal intelligence; intrapersonal intelligence and naturalist intelligence.

On such basis, and through a textual analysis of the episode, we will try to prove the presence of some of these intelligences in John's character through his thoughts, actions, and language.

¹⁷ Retrieved from: <https://youtu.be/8N2pnYne0ZA>.

To start with, the character of John adheres neatly to linguistic and logical/ mathematical intelligences- their definitions have already been established- and the shot which displays John and Sherlock arriving at the village for the first time (00:15:56) illustrates this premise clearly. As soon as the characters get out of the jeep at the Cross Keys Inn, they park by a group of people gathered around a poster written “Stay away from the moor at night if you value your lives” (00:16:17). While they are walking past them, Sherlock curiously grabs the collar of his coat and puts it up, eliciting a long look from John and defending himself with an “I’m cold” as to clarify that he is not scared of the hound. John simply laughs at his reaction (00:16:30), proving how rational he is towards this situation: as a man of science, his scientific knowledge comes to the forefront when dealing with empirical knowledge.

To continue with the classification made by Gardner, another type of intelligence is interpersonal which involves the capacity to recognise and make distinctions among the feelings, beliefs, and intentions of other people and, according to the theorist’s point of view, possessing this intelligence enables the individual to establish bonds with different members of society and to be “able to work with them” (9:21, 2016). A careful watching of the episode allows the viewers to see John as a character who shows a willingness to be polite and mindful of others and who is respectful of people’s beliefs albeit he does not share them. To repeat the point made recently, he does not argue with the group of people at the entrance of the inn. Therefore, the doctor is genuinely affected by the thought of individuals in danger and by Sherlock’s lack of empathy: it is John who calls Sherlock’s attention by saying: “Sherlock” (01:22:46) and “Timing” (01:22:49) when he laughs in a near-maniacal way upon solving the case while his client is still visibly shaken (01:22:50): here, the doctor acts a mediator and, with his precise phrases, he invites Sherlock to synthesize empathy with his cerebral intelligence. It may be perceived here that Marinaro and Thomas’s conclusion that Sherlock can only achieve true greatness if his genius is tempered by John’s goodness is viable.

Finally, Professor Gardner’s thought invites us to continue constructing the character of John thorough intrapersonal intelligence. This type of intelligence enables individuals to form a mental model of themselves and to draw on that model to make decisions about viable courses of action.

Throughout the different scenes in the episode, it is possible to see that John has achieved the right balance between his thoughts and feelings: he displays his emotions when he considers them necessary, but, when he does not, he has the autonomy to keep them to himself. For instance, when John says to Sherlock: “And why would you listen to me? I’m just your friend”, and Sherlock answers: “I don’t have friends”, John only responds: “Nah. Wonder why” (00:46:02), walking out of the inn and taking deep breaths to calm down. Here, John is completely angry at Sherlock’s lack of consideration towards him, by what he said of having no friends, but the doctor simply leaves him alone and it is through his silences that John expresses the control of his emotions. Moreover, this short dialogue displays, one more time, the anthesis between the characters: John’s few words are relevant all the time and give away Sherlock’s arrogance and lack of empathy.

On balance, it could be said that not only does the character of John Watson offer a more elastic representation of cleverness, but he also reveals an emotional side that is more in tune with the representation of modern men. As a result, this new John is able to call Sherlock’s attention and to influence his perception of the world and of other people, blurring the traditional binary detective/assistant and becoming an equal partner.

John’s autonomy

John looks back to the light on the hillside, which is still intermittently flashing, and gets his notebook out of his pocket (00:35:28)

So far to this point of the analysis, we have already investigated how John’s actantial role and his multiple intelligences have been developed and presented to the spectators of *Sherlock's* “The Hounds of Baskerville”. In the following section, we will try to prove whether John has professional autonomy throughout the case.

With these considerations in mind, we will start defining the word autonomy. According to Cambridge Online Dictionary, this term means the ability to make our own decisions without being controlled by anyone else. Furthermore, the word includes qualities such as self-determination, individuality, and independence. In view of this, different scenes from

the episode have been selected to determine whether John possesses these attributes mentioned in the definition.

To begin with, when Henry Knight, a new client, appears at 221b, Baker Street, asking for help, John participates actively in the interview by asking questions such as “Did you see the Devil that night?” (0:07:27); “Why come to us now?” (0:08:40); “Man’s or woman’s?” (0:12:01). In addition, he is the one who takes notes in his small notepad and applies deductive methods, for instance he says: “Red eyes, coal-black fur, enormous: dog? Wolf?” (00:08:06) when Henry is describing the mysterious creature. At the same time, observing John’s body language in this shot, it can be noticed how he is absorbed, writing down his inner thoughts as he is listening to the client. These parts of the episode illustrate how John has substantial credentials of his own and how he is part of the investigative process as much as Sherlock. Furthermore, it is here that we closely look at the intricacies of the character: the readers and audience of Sherlock Holmes stories are used to seeing Dr. John Watson as the auxiliary/helper of Sherlock: he is the doctor whose previous medicine knowledge is relevant to the cases. Nevertheless, based on Vladimir Propp’s ideas presented in his work *Morphology of the Folktale* (2009) that one character can fulfill more than one role, and that role can be fulfilled by more than one character, it is possible to see John as a detective himself as well: the examples recently mentioned show John’s independence at the moment of asking questions, taking down notes and keeping immersed in his own thoughts and deductions, characteristics which have been also suggested by Allan Hepburn.

Another interesting scene in which John’s individuality can be analyzed is the one in which John and Sherlock are in the inn they are staying at. Here, Sherlock enters the dining area while John is already waiting at the bar for the man behind the counter to hand him the key to their room. At that moment, John notices that there is a sales invoice of a meat delivery in the counter, but he remembers that the sign on the front of the inn said it was a vegetarian cuisine so, he immediately picks it up without being seen (0:17:48). Here, it can be observed the manner in which John deals with this situation: firstly, he observes the sales invoice and links it with the sign on the front of the inn. Then, he makes his own

deductions and, finally, he is determined to act albeit he knows that he is risking himself with that decision. As Eduarda de Carli writes in her thesis *The Role of Adaptations in the Reconfiguration of Dr. John Watson within the Sherlock Holmes Canon* (2017): “This shows that the character-narrator, being on his own, is able to be more active and do his own detective work without Sherlock's aid” (2017, p. 95).

Finally, the segment in which John, Sherlock and Henry go to the moor for the first time to find out whether the hound exists or not helps us to continue performing a deeper analysis of John's behaviour. At the beginning of the shot, we can see John, Sherlock, and Henry from afar, holding torches, and entering the woods. By the time they reach the woods, it is almost full dark, and it becomes even darker when they head into the trees. John, bringing up the rear, hears rustling to his right and turns around to look (0:35:09). The other two don't notice this and continue onwards while John walks cautiously towards the sound he has heard. He shines his torch into the bushes as an owl shrieks overhead, but he can see nothing. Raising his head, he sees a light repeatedly winking on and off at the top of a hillside a fair distance away. He looks around to alert his friend, but he realizes that the other two have disappeared out of sight. John looks back to the light on the hillside, which is still intermittently flashing, and gets his notebook out of his pocket because he has inferred that the flashes are Morse code. He starts to write down the letters while speaking them aloud “*U ... M Q... R ...A.*” The light he sees suddenly stops, so he decides to go after the two men, whispering Sherlock's name. This scene shows that John's actions are not subordinated to the main character of the series and, as De Carli (2017) claims: he “[...] steps into the role of detective as he goes off on his own to investigate the Morse code lead; it turned out to be nothing, but the fact that he had a supposed clue and does not wait for Sherlock to investigate it himself matters [...]” (2017, p.166).

In addition to this, casting a light upon John's characterization and following Forster's (2002) ideas as regards the difference between flat and round characters¹⁸, it can be said

¹⁸ In his book, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), the novelist E.M. Forster divided characters into flat and round. On the one hand, “flat characters are constructed round a single idea or quality” (p.48) and they adhere to a personality form from beginning to end.

that John belongs to the last category as he is a character who “surprises the audience in a convincing way” (2002, p.55) due to the fact that his personality has completely changed in relation to the literary character in Conan Doyle’s stories.

On the whole, it can be contended that all the previous scenes emphasize John’s independence and his ability to work properly out of his normal field of expertise and, although his results are not the expected ones, his clues pave the way to solve the case. Consequently, John can be seen as an individual character who is brave, who is proactive with the investigation and who has developed similar abilities as his friend, placing himself in a plane of symmetry with the detective character and leaving aside his classical subordination place to this role.

On the other hand, Forster did not define round characters. According to flat character, it can be inferred that they are those with complex and contradictory personalities and their personalities in the plot of the novel show variability.

CONCLUSION

In this last and final section of our work, we will start commenting on our initial goals before delving into the conclusion.

Our main objectives in this work have been to explore; deconstruct; amplify John Watson's role in the episode "The Hounds of Baskerville" from the television adaptation *Sherlock* (2010) and to confirm whether he fulfils the role of detective or not. To reach the objectives, this paper has tried to answer the following question: Up to what extent can we consider that the character of Dr. Watson in the TV series *Sherlock* is a true detective?

Two hypotheses have derived from this research question: firstly, it has been considered that Dr. Watson transgresses the rules of the classic whodunit in *Sherlock's* "The Hounds of Baskerville" episode, while in the second hypothesis, it has been suggested that not only does Dr. Watson fulfil the role of companion, but he also fulfils the role of detective in the investigation of the case in the episode "The Hounds of Baskerville" from the television adaptation *Sherlock*.

As regards the first hypothesis, it has been possible to demonstrate that the construction of the character of John Watson in the series differs considerably from the characteristics proposed by Tzvetan Todorov in the traditional pattern of the whodunit subgenre in which the narrators of the stories are the companions/friends/roommates of the detectives, not themselves. It is known that having a roommate is a very common feature in detective stories, and great part of the companions share similar characteristics, such as being of inferior intellect as compared to the detective and making the explanation of all the details of the investigation a necessity for the narratee. Albeit it is true that, in the first couple of episodes of the series, the viewer is able to see John as a modern character-narrator, accompanying Sherlock on the cases, aiding him with the investigations and writing extensively about the cases in his blog, they can also observe how the character of John Watson has been reconfigured, developing from a passive character to an active one, especially in the episode chosen for this work.

In “The Hounds of Baskerville”, our contemporary John asks questions, takes notes, goes to investigate clues by himself, demonstrating that he has a more relevant role.

Furthermore, though John does not possess that level of skill and genius as Sherlock, he is reasonably intelligent as well, and his multiple intelligences allow him to be a more worldly person; to call Sherlock’s attention and actually get heard, to have strong disagreements; to strike the balance with his sense of morality and social skills and to be a very loyal friend. In other words, this new John Watson is someone who no longer accepts being always second in hierarchy, therefore, erasing this difference as much as he can and having more autonomy in the solving of the cases.

As far as the second hypothesis is concerned, it is widely known that John Watson’s traditional role is that of the helper to the detective: he is the doctor companion whose previous knowledge of medicine is relevant to the cases: he is the person who is with Sherlock while he solves the cases, as Holmes is the detective. Notwithstanding this, it is possible to see in the television adaptation and the episode chosen that John does not limit himself to this companionship function, John does not just accompany Sherlock without any influence at all in the solving of the crime, he actively works in the investigation: he goes off on his own to investigate the Morse Code lead, he is the one to notice the meat invoice for the vegetarian inn and he is the one who provides Sherlock with clues and what is necessary for the conclusion of the case, having a more actantial role and stepping into the role of detective when he is alone, but also when he accompanies Sherlock. In many ways, this new John is still a character who helps Sherlock, but he is also able to fulfill detective functions. To put it simply, John’s character transformation makes him become Sherlock’s professional partner, having a detective role as his friend.

To sum up, and through our analysis of the character of John Watson, we conclude that John Watson is indeed a true detective. Although it seems that John does not perceive himself as a detective in this deconstruction, it is apparent that he ends up in that position without intending it to be.

In this vein, *Sherlock*’s John builds up Sir Conan Doyle’s original vision but with a contemporary twist: he is Sherlock’s loyal companion but he has evolved into a more

autonomous and relevant character who considers himself and Sherlock a duo in the cases. Along with this, it is noteworthy to trace the arc that John's character takes in this audiovisual adaptation: from a traumatized army doctor, John has transformed into a man who has substantial credentials on his own, who writes in his blog, who craves his adventures and who solves cases with Sherlock Holmes.

LIMITATIONS

It is worth mentioning that this research has its limitations. Firstly, in order to be able to perform a more punctual analysis, we have only analyzed one episode from the TV series *Sherlock*. Secondly, due to the finite length of this paper, the structural approach delineated by Tzvetan Todorov and the different authors we have selected to achieve our goals have been briefly focused on. Notwithstanding this, we have been able to prove our hypotheses as valid and we have suggested a new way of (re) configuring the character of John Watson.

IMPLICATURES

Finally, since our main goal has been to investigate and deconstruct the construction of the character Doctor John Watson in the television adaptation *Sherlock*, we hope to have made a substantial contribution to character studies on detective fiction and to the teacher-training college students who are finishing their career. By the same token, we have tried to demonstrate how television adaptations can explore and amplify the role of characters, allowing us to have a more holistic view of them.

To conclude, a detective deduces; explains; solves and, as John claims: "You can trust me" (1:08:16).

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