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Marilyn (que le lecteur pardonne cette familiarité
à un auteur qui vit les mythes qu'il analyse)
Edgar Morin *Les Stars*

I hear of Sherlock everywhere

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This year's Super Bowl attracted an audience of 108,41 million viewers on the US market. As everybody knows, the commercial breaks during The Super Bowl display the latest and indeed the highest priced commercials, but the networks also use the extraordinary focus on the event to try to attract audiences for their other shows. Historically, there has been a large spill over from the sports event to the post-Super Bowl show.

The 2013 game was broadcast by CBS, and the network chose to air an episode of one of its freshman series as the Super Bowl lead out. The show premiered last September and had an average audience of around 11 million. Normally it ran Thursday nights at 10 EST, but its 14th episode was aired on the Sunday night when Baltimore Ravens had beaten San Francisco 49'ers by 34-31. The show gained an extra 10 million viewers, reaching 20,8 million in all. The show even started out side of prime time, around 11.15 P.M., as a power cut had delayed the termination of the Super Bowl by more than half an hour. The following Thursday, the ratings were down to normal with a 10,84 million viewers. **In the * weeks to follow ratings have *****



The show in question was *Elementary* and the title of the Super Bowl lead out episode was *The Deductionist*. You do not have to be the world's only consulting detective in order to deduce that the show's central character is Sherlock Holmes. A new Sherlock Holmes: "New Holmes. New Watson. New York" as the CBS poster for the show said.

The premiere of CBS's Holmes-series coincided with the 125th anniversary of the first appearance of Arthur Conan Doyle's consulting detective. The novel *A Study in Scarlet* was published in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in late 1887, but CBS probably did not decide to recirculate Holmes out of veneration for the character and its 125th anniversary. The purpose of commercial television is to sell audiences to the advertisers, which is why one of the central characteristics of commercial television is *imitation*. Therefore, the decision was more likely made on the grounds of the success Holmes has had in other recent adaptations. Warner Bros. have produced two Guy Ritchie films – *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *A Game of Shadow* (2011) and the BBC has produced 2 seasons of their *Sherlock* (2010-2012), each season consisting of 3 1½ hour episodes. As was the case with CBS, BBC underlines the novelty of its product with tagline "A New Sleuth for a New Century". CBS initially approached the BBC in order to negotiate a remake of *Sherlock*, but eventually ended up producing their own series. The international success of Fox's *House* about a very Holmesian diagnostic medical genius might also have influenced the decision. But that's guessing, and after all, paraphrasing Bob Dylan, It's a House, it's not a Holmes.

The films have definitely been blockbusters. With internationally acclaimed stars Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law playing Holmes and Watson respectively, *Sherlock Holmes* has grossed 524 mill \$ worldwide in cinemas alone, whereas *A Game of Shadows* grossed 544 mill \$ (boxofficemojo.com). Imdb.com estimates the total budget for the two films to be 215 mill \$. The BBC TV-series has been popular around the globe, the second season being sold – depending on the sources - to between 180 and 200 territories, which is more or less everywhere. And *Elementary* 'made it' to the Super Bowl: I hear of Sherlock everywhere!

These three adaptations, the Warner films, the BBC series, and the CBS series originate from three different types of media institutions - an American based film production company aiming its blockbusters at international markets with a star director, well known film stars, excessive special effects, and high production values; *the* public service broadcaster of the world, the BBC with its long tradition of high quality adaptations of British literature, and American CBS, one of the oldest commercial television broadcasters of the world. It is my intention to analyze these different takes in relation to the institutions that produced them.

The Hollywood Blockbusters

Starting with the films, they are anti-conspirational action films with a comic or even farcical touch. Set in England and other parts of Europe at the beginning of the 1890's, in the Victorian era of the Saga or the Canon, i.e. Conan Doyle's stories, they depict Holmes'



battles with villains whose schemes are worthy of the villains from the James Bond universe. The villain of the first instalment, Lord Blackwood, schemes to take power in England and to reintegrate the USA into the United Kingdom. He conducts free masonry rituals, and one might suggest that the filmmakers, working within an industry where imitation of success is daily routine, have looked to the success of the *Da Vinci Code* franchise. In the second film, the villain is *the* villain of the Sherlock Holmes saga, Professor Moriarty. By staging acts of terror, it is his plan to destabilise Europe and eventually to sell

weapons to all parties involved in the war he sets out to provoke. During the final confrontation, Holmes in each film overcomes the villain and both films suggest the possibility of a follow-up. The films not only share the concept of the super villain with the Bond universe; just like the Bond films of the pre Daniel Craig Era, they are comic, even farcical at times. There is, for instance, a running joke of Holmes performing experiments on Watson's dog, Gladstone, and Holmes' untidy apparel combined with Downey Jr.'s funny faces and somewhat confused Holmes adds to the farce.

In Doyle's stories, Holmes is a master not only of deduction, but also of disguise. The latter feature is transformed into comedy when in *A Game of Shadows* he is dressed up first as an opium smoking Chinese and later performs in drag. The script makes

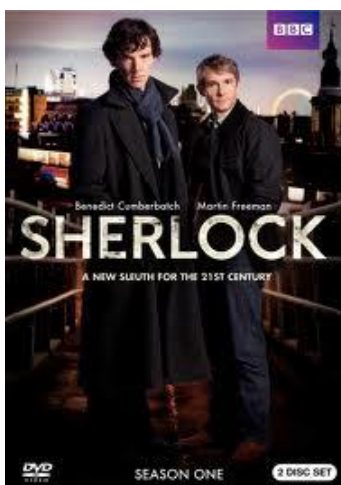
a point out of Holmes not wanting Watson to marry and he refers to the “relationship” between himself and the doctor. On these and several other occasions, the films jest about Holmes being homosexual. His relation to the treacherous female lead Irene Adler, *the* woman of Doyle’s *A Scandal in Bohemia*, is of an indeterminable nature. They know a lot about each other, he has her photograph, she intrigues him, but still she poisons and eventually ridicules him leaving him naked, tied to a bed. As we shall see, the question of his sexuality runs through the three adaptations under discussion here. The answer to the question differs from one adaptation to the next.

Visually the most particular feature of the films is their depiction of Holmes’ calculations on how a fight will develop. He envisages the upcoming fight and performs accordingly:

VIDEO CLIP

BBC’s *Sherlock*

BBC’s *Sherlock* is very different from the films. Produced by *the* public service broadcaster of the world, it can be understood as part of the internationally acclaimed BBC tradition of television adaptations of canonical British literature. It is, however, a very modern adaptation, set in contemporary London. As opposed to the case of the Warner Bros. films, the actors playing Holmes and Watson, or Sherlock and John as they are called, were not stars before the series. Judging from various online fora, many of the fans of *Sherlock* do not consider the show an adaptation of a national literary treasure but rather as a series produced by Stephen Moffat and Mark Gatiss, the duo behind the relaunch of the children’s series about the time travelling doctor, *the* doctor, *Dr. Who*.



As a product of the British public service environment, the series displays an encyclopaedic knowledge of the Saga, which it playfully bends and twists in its stories of “a new sleuth for a new century”. It thus manages to pay its respects to the adapted works while developing its new stories freely around the old ones. The amount of intertextual references is huge, and already announced in the titles of the episodes, *A Study in Pink*, *A Scandal in Belgravia*, and *The Reichenbach Fall* to name but three. The first plays with the title of Doyle’s *A Study in Scarlet*, the second with his *A Scandal in Bohemia*, and the third with the name of the location where Doyle’s

Holmes famously struggled with Professor Moriarty. In *Sherlock* nobody goes to the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland. Instead the explicit reference is to a painting by British



Romantic painter J.M.W. Turner which Holmes recovers at the beginning of the episode. As you may recall, Dr. Watson is an invalid of war, having been injured in the 2nd Afghan War in the late 1880's, and *John* Watson has also returned wounded from an Afghan War, though from a different, recent

one. The majority of Doyle's stories have Watson as the narrator, but in *Sherlock* he does not publish *printed* stories - he blogs. Initially, because his psychiatrist believes blogging to be a good way of dealing with what she thinks is his posttraumatic stress syndrome, but which, however, turns out to be simple boredom. John consequentially starts retelling the 'adventures' they share. He gives them titles which - as were the titles of the episodes - insiders' jokes on Doyleian titles: *The Speckled Band* becomes *The Speckled Blonde*, *The Naval Treaty* becomes *The Naval Treatment* and Watson even blogs about *Sherlock Holmes Baffled*, which was the title of the very first Holmes film, a cinema of attraction piece from the beginning of the 20th century.

Doyle's Holmes read the papers, had his files and send telegrams galore. Sherlock still reads an occasional newspaper, but his foremost source of information is the Internet and his cell phone and text messages are fully integrated in his work routines. When Sherlock deduces, the production adds a certain visual style with written text on top



it indicating his deductions. One of the most striking examples of the visualisation of his reasoning powers comes from the episode *The Hounds of Baskerville*. Needing to find out the connection between and meaning of the words IN and HOUND, he goes into his "Mind Palace"

The subtle ways in which *Sherlock* plays with elements of the Saga makes it a treasure for old school Sherlockians, for knowing audiences. But the creators' relation to *Dr. Who*, the state of the art audiovisual style, and the contemporary setting probably account for

Sherlock's popularity among younger generations unfamiliar with Doyle and with previous adaptations. So do the characters – and along them: the actors.

Sherlock and John are modern day urbanites. Unwilling to admit it, Sherlock is vain, wearing a £1500 designer coat and a carefully carelessly arranged scarf in matching colours. He could be diagnosed with borderline Asperger's due to for instance his problems with social skills, his eccentric behaviour, his unusual preoccupations and, last but not least, his exceptional skills. John becomes his how-to-behave-towards-other-people-guide and is often irritated by Sherlock's manners or lack thereof. Speed talking is a characteristic of Sherlock who thinks so fast that his speech organs have to work overtime in order to try to follow the velocity of his mind.

In the first episode, *A Study in Pink*, the two move in together, and their land lady assumes that they are a gay couple. Not that she minds: "We got all sorts 'round her," she says and continues "Mrs. Turner next door's got married ones". Apart from indicating that at very first sight, Mrs. Hudson considers the two young men more than just roommates to be, her remark contains a subtle or perhaps nerdy piece of Sherlockian intertext typical of the series: the landlady's name in Doyle is indeed Mrs. Hudson, except in one story, *A Scandal in Bohemia*, in which Holmes refers to her as ... Mrs. Turner. Sherlock is negligent to the questions of his sexuality. He considers himself married to his work, but John fights off the many assumptions, that they are gay. He has various girl friends along the line but his preoccupation with Sherlock's adventures and Sherlock's unempathetic remarks to John's girlfriends always end up scaring them away. When in the 6th episode, Sherlock is considered dead, John revisits his psychiatrist for the first time since the 1st episode. Standing at Sherlock's grave at the end of the episode he is heartbroken crying at the grave: "Don't be dead". Though the creators of *Sherlock* insist that Sherlock and John epitomize male friendship and nothing more, the editor of *A Study In Lavender – Queering Sherlock Holmes* believes that the series "more or less flat out says Holmes is gay. Watson, who knows?" (p. xi) he continues.

Though the individual episode lets Sherlock unveil one specific crime, the show does have an overarching story, and had it not been for the ultimate shot, it would have a definite closure. All the crimes in all but one of the episodes are masterminded by Jim Moriarty, whom Holmes meets in the cliffhanger of episode 3 and who becomes very important in the last episode, *The Reichenbach Fall*. The show opens and closes with John

all alone seeing his psychiatrist. The very last shot, however, tell us that Holmes is not dead, and a third season is underway under the headings: “wedding, rat, bow”; the teaser words dropped by co-creator Stephen Moffat.

In the BBC series Holmes becomes an internet phenomenon. So it says on newspaper clippings flashed across the screen, and IRL the character has become an internet phenomenon himself. The BBC offered a website with the blog of John Watson and Holmes himself also had a small site. The sites had few interactive elements but served mostly as a sort of internet surplus value prolonging the diegetic universe of the televised episodes, and the majority of the online activity concerning *Sherlock* is user generated.

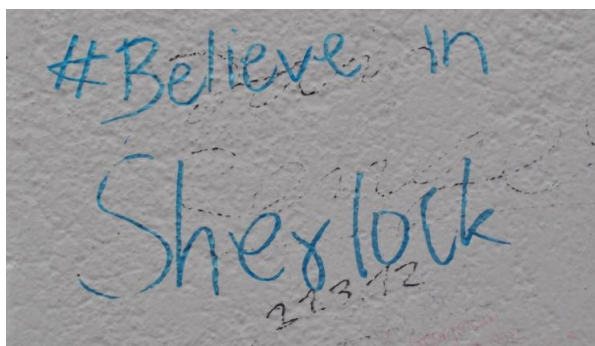
CBS's *Elementary*

Its many tongue in the cheek references to the Saga provide the background for *Sherlock* being described as ‘clever’. In comparison, *Elementary* is just another procedural. It does refer occasionally to elements from the Saga, but compared to *Sherlock* it provides knowing audiences with relatively few intratextual, ‘Sherlockian’ thrills: the CBS *does* listen to classical – mainstream - music and also owns a violin, but it is not referred to on a regular basis. He is also keeps bees just as he does when – in Doyle – he has retired and moved to Sussex. Occasionally he even quotes a famous statement from the old stories: his ‘attic theory of the mind’ for instance, according to which “a man’s brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose” as he says in *A Study in Scarlet* – and in the 2nd episode of *Elementary*. Another of his famous quotes is used in episode 10. Deriving from *The Sign of Four*, the second novel, the quote goes like this: “when you have eliminated the impossible whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.” There are other minor references to the adapted works, such as the one in episode 15 to Holmes’ monograph on 140 types of tobacco ashes, but *Elementary* does not rely on them for giving extra diegetic surplus value to knowing audiences.

When *Elementary* was announced *Sherlock*’s producer, Sue Vertue, publically warned CBS not to copy their show: “We are very proud of our show and like any proud parent, will protect the interest and wellbeing of our offspring.” At the end of the day, the CBS show was made not to resemble *Sherlock*. Updating the old characters is no copyright violation, nor is the fact that the actors playing the two modern day Sherlock Holmeses, Benedict

Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller, have worked together in Danny Boyle's National Theatre staging of *Frankenstein*. These facts, of course, do link the two series, but not closely enough for law suits.

Part of *Sherlock*'s extradiegetic life consisted of fans blogging and tagging in reply to the enormous cliff hanger of episode 6. Moriarty has set off to prove that Sherlock is nothing but a fraud. Without going into details, this forces Sherlock to stage his own death by jumping of the roof a tall building. Everybody believes him dead, and only in the ultimate shot viewers – but not the characters such as the mourning John – understand that he is still alive. Spreading virally via the internet youthful fans started a tagging campaign



writing "I believe in Sherlock [Holmes]" on city walls and college bulletin boards. That exact sentence made its way into *Elementary*, episode 15, where it is uttered by two characters, including Dr. Watson, as a sort of tipping the hat from one show to the other, from one show to the fans of the other, even.

In *Elementary*, British Holmes has just settled in present day New York where he functions as a somewhat dysfunctional consultant for the NYPD under Captain Gregson. BBC had Holmes work with Lestrade of the Scotland Yard and both Gregson and Lestrade are Scotland Yarders in Doyle's stories. Lestrade is a kind man at about Sherlock's age who admires the detective. He is not blind to the consulting detective's odd character, but still protects him, when his own detectives starts getting second thoughts about him. Gregson similarly admires Holmes' skills but their relationship is also one of employer/employee. Gregson is considerably older than Holmes and is more of a stock character of the police procedural, the effective captain with the power to fire his subordinates.

In *Elementary* Holmes is recently out of rehab after having been a heroin addict. It is slowly revealed that his addiction got out of control when his girl friend, Irene Adler, was killed. Now his wealthy father has hired a live-in sober companion, Dr. Joan Watson, to ease his son's transition into a world without heroin. Watson is a former surgeon who had given up former job because a patient died between her hands: both protagonists have serious traumas in their past.

Holmes is very reluctant to accept Joan's help but as the series develops so does their relationship. The central, though rather weak connection between the individual episodes of *Elementary* has to do with two things: Holmes' battle to stay off drugs including his group sessions with other addicts, and Sherlock and Joan gradually becoming psychologically and professionally dependent on each other. Sherlock slowly trusts Joan with elements from his past, and Joan realizes that she loves being on the job with Holmes. Her medical training, her powers of deduction, and even her bravery become increasingly important in Holmes' work as a consultant.

Transforming Dr. Watson into a woman has been done before, but not in the scale of a full blown series. So far there has been no indication of Sherlock and Joan becoming romantically or sexually engaged. Joan has occasional dates and also a number of ex-boyfriends, and Sherlock also has a history of heterosexual relations and - in several cases - is depicted engaged in sexual activities, preferably with two women at a time. In *Elementary* homosexuality is not an issue at all.

The American Sherlock depends on cell phones and computers just like the British one. Only more so. In one episode he displays the new Microsoft Surface Tablet, and his iPhone with an extra photo lens attached is as indispensable to him as was the iconic magnifying lens of Doyle's detective. American Sherlock suffers just as much of an Asperger's Syndrome as does his British namesake. But whereas Jonny Lee Miller's Sherlock also suffers from the kind of psychological trauma wellknown in the products of the American film and television series since the 1940's, Cumberbatch's character has no past of much relevance. He does have some issues with his brother, Mycroft, but *Sherlock* does not put much energy into analysing the relationship between the past and the present as a question of cause and effect.

The major serial element of *Elementary* lies in the slow development of the relationship between the two main characters. Speaking of format, it is mainly a *series* with each episode telling a full and fully solved story of crime. Dramaturgically it is very obvious within the individual episode that the series is intended to reach a dramatic peak before each commercial break. That is of course nothing particular to *Elementary*, but it is important in describing it all the same. A faint touch of the serial, but most of all a series

of episodic nature, then? Yes – and no. For *Elementary* also contains occasional, even random, elements of the seriality. Holmes' history with Irene Adler for instance plays a somewhat important role in episodes 6 and 7, but then it is totally left out of the narrative until it surfaces again in episode 12. Here Holmes finds out that someone named Moriarty killed Irene. As a consequence, the episode ends with our protagonist sitting staring at his bulletin board which has one piece of paper with a single word on it: Moriarty. Episode 13 starts with him looking at the message board again – this time overfilled with newspaper clippings and other material concerning Moriarty. And then ... we hear nothing about Moriarty during the rest of the episode – or during the following **, for that matter. **At episode ** [the last one before the conference], Moriarty still remains to be seen.** On these grounds, *Elementary* might be understood as an episodic series with faint *ongoing* and stronger *temporary* touches of the serial format.

I hear of Sherlocks everywhere

The title of my presentation, *I hear of Sherlock everywhere*, is – as some of you might know – a quote from Conan Doyle. Holmes' brother, Mycroft, says it, when for the first time he meets Dr. Watson and notes that he hears of his brother everywhere, “since you became his chronicler”. The statement is probably truer today than ever before. But *what* I hear of Sherlock, *how* he is depicted - and *why* - differs enormously. I have tried to focus on the differences: their offspring in very different media and thus their different generic modulations within the overarching crime fiction genre and their different reworkings of the adapted works and of the sexuality of the central characters.

The Sherlocks of contemporary audiovisual culture are very different from the Sherlock Mycroft 'knew'. Even his Sherlock, it must be remembered, was a popular hero in a modern world. Holmes' scientific, empiristic views on knowledge was as modern as were the ways in which the stories about him were distributed. John Scaggs characterises *The Strand Magazine* in which they were published as “aimed at the commuting white collar market”, and in his autobiography Doyle claimed to be the first to *write* and *The Strand Magazine* the first to *publish* short stories “with a character which carried through, and yet instalments which were each complete in themselves” (Doyle 1924, p. 90). The stories initially were printed in full length, “complete in themselves” in *The Strand Magazine*, but eventually they were serialised in newspapers around the world, presenting readers with four to eight pages a day. They were also the issued in collected volumes and spread

through other media such as the popular theatre and silent films even only considering the forty year period in which they were written. With regards to media platforms, Holmes has been a modern, 'many-format-guy' all along but the present revitalisation is the biggest so far. Waiting for the new Russian television series, and for new instalments of the films and tv-series discussed here, I conclude by correcting the title of my paper. It was *I hear of Sherlock everywhere*, but rather *I hear of Sherlocks everywhere*.

Literature

To be added ...