WHAT WERE THE LOGISTICS OF ADAPTATION PRODUCTION ON BRITISH TELEVISION IN THE 1980s AND 1990s AS DEMONSTRATED BY GRANADA'S *SHERLOCK HOLMES* SERIES (1984-1994)?

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Abstract

In this thesis I will be examining the logistics of television adaptation, with regard to the Granada series *Sherlock Holmes* (1984-1994). This series encapsulates many of the major themes in adaptation studies, for example the perception of fidelity, heritage credentials and popularity of 'classic' literature. I will consider how budgets, production constraints, scheduling, and changes in the television landscape and audience response impacted on the series over the decade it was on air.

During the early 1980s heritage television was very popular with audiences; companies like Granada Television discovered the benefits of producing big budget programmes (such as *Brideshead Revisited* (1981)), which were shot like feature films and sold all over the world. I will discuss the commissioning of *Sherlock Holmes* as a continuation of Granada's heritage tradition, an association which was reinforced by initial production decisions made regarding the style of the series. Episodes will be used as case studies in order to illustrate the main points being made in each chapter. For example, 'A Scandal in Bohemia' set the template for future episodes and the justification of changes in dramatizing 'The Greek Interpreter' would lead to more significant amendments in later series.

The series was broadcast over 10 years, during which time industrial factors, such as changes to broadcast policy, budget cuts and scheduling, influenced the direction of the series and compromised the original production aims of fidelity and authenticity. Episodes of the series will be used as case studies in order to illustrate the main points being made in each chapter. For example *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was compromised by budget cuts and *The Eligible Bachelor* by a change in direction for the style of the series.

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1 Introduction

In this thesis, I am going to examine the Granada *Sherlock Holmes* (1984-1994) series, specifically considering the logistics of adaptation production and the impact of production decisions. I have chosen to focus on Sherlock Holmes because the stories and adaptations have received little attention from academics. As Roberta Pearson comments, Holmes 'has been relegated to the margins of media studies by the external and internal forces that structure the field's research'.[1]

In an article for *Literature/Film Quarterly*, Brian McFarlane sums up a common attitude to adaptation with his title – "It Wasn't Like That in the Book".[2] The primary focus of criticism levied at adaptations is that they are not as good as the original text, without consideration not only for the process of adapting into a different medium, but also the behind-the-scenes processes. This thesis will discuss the biography of production, how and why decisions were made and the affect they had on the Granada produced Holmes series.

In order to fully understand the production culture on the series I will also discuss the institutional context, from the initial pitching of the idea through the ten years it was on screen. The Holmes character has been popular in film and on television since their inception; Alan Barnes supposed that 'it would be possible … to observe almost every historical, cultural and technological development in the moving image

[1] Roberta Pearson, "'I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere'?: The Holmes Franchise at the Centre and the Margins." in *Media, Margins and Popular Culture,* ed. Heather Savigny et al., (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), 188.
[2] Brian McFarlane, "It wasn't like that in the book", *Literature/Film Quarterly,* 28 (3), (2000): 163.

purely through the changing representation of Sherlock Holmes'.[3] The myth and the legend of Holmes has become more than the original character and each generation takes different aspects of this for their interpretation. As Brian McFarlane states, the 'conditions within the film [and television] industry and the prevailing cultural and social climate… are two major determinants'[4] for adaptation. By the early 1980s Granada had a reputation for the quality and prestige of its output and for the Holmes series it was the heritage and adaptation aspects that were emphasised, as they were popular on television at that time, as were detective programmes. There was also a promotion of 'Victorian values' in the political culture of the time, which Neil McCaw argues this series reinforces.[5]

As Benjamin Poole points out, 'each new adaptation is scrutinised and analysed for its fidelity to, or commentary on, the Canonical stories'[6] with Holmes fans in particular rating an adaptation based on this perception of fidelity. But, as Richard Hewett explains, in the case of Sherlock Holmes this 'ignores the possibility of 'genetic' adaptation, in which the accumulated intertextual influences of manifold versions of the same text can influence both the form taken by any new adaptation and the readings which may be placed upon it'.[7] Matt Hills describes this as 'heretical fidelity', where 'creative decisions may be 'heretical' to Sherlockians, but … those self-same decisions can also display fidelity to Conan Doyle by highlighting the

[3] Alan Barnes, *Sherlock Holmes on screen: the complete film and TV history* (3rd ed., rev. and updated. edn.; London: Titan Books, 2011), 7
[4] Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film: an Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Clarendon Press, 1996), 21
[5] Neil McCaw, "The politics of adaptation", in *Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle: multi-media afterlives*, ed Sabine Vanacker & Catherine Wynne (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)
[6] Benjamin Poore, "Sherlock Holmes and the Leap of Faith: The Forces of Fandom and Convergence in Adaptations of the Holmes and Watson Stories", *Adaptation,* 6 (2), (2013): 168
[7] Richard Hewett, "Canon Doyle?: Getting Holmes Right (and Getting the Rights) for Television", *Adaptation,* 8 (2), (2015): 1

limitations, and textual inauthenticites, of previous adaptations'.[8] I shall return to this later in the Chapter when I discuss how previous interpretations of the character influence subsequent adaptations. But not only is the perception of fidelity and where it comes from interesting, this thesis will also examine how it can be achieved.

Thomas Leitch advises that adaptations studies should instead ask the question, 'why does this particular adaptation aim to be faithful?'[9] The original motif behind Granada's adaptation of the Holmes stories was this 'cult of fidelity',[10] but the difficulty with Holmes is that the character is more than the original stories. As Julian Symons has noted, 'the enduring power of the Sherlock Holmes myth is astonishing',[11] a character who, Neil McCaw observes, 'commands an almost unrivalled popular-culture presence'.[12] Holmes is not just the character created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the continuous use of his image in the media means that 'each version of Holmes is inflected with elements of those that have preceded it more than the originating tales themselves … Thus, the original stories were from the outset over laden by subsequent interpretations and adaptations'.[13] The Holmes character has become a franchise made up of over one hundred years of layering of images and therefore, as Andre Bazin said, 'the original works are no longer anything more than an accidental and almost superfluous manifestation'.[14] As well as a fictional character, Sherlock Holmes is also a brand, and any new interpretation

[8] Matt Hills, "*Sherlock*'s Epistemological Economy and the Value of 'Fan' Knowledge" in *Sherlock and transmedia fandom: essays on the BBC series*, ed. Louisa E Stein & Kristina Busse (McFarland, 2012), 36
[9] Thomas Leitch, *Film adaptation and its discontents: from Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ* (Baltimore, Md.; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 127
[10] Ibid., 127
[11] Julian Symons, *Bloody murder: from the detective story to the crime novel: a history* ([4th ed.] edn.; London: Pan, 1994), 77
[12] Neil McCaw, *Adapting detective fiction: crime, Englishness and the TV detectives* (London: Continuum, 2011), 19
[13] Ibid.
[14] André Bazin, *What is Cinema? vol. 1*, (Trans. Hugh Gray, Berkeley: U of California, 1967), 52

would have to fulfil the audience expectation, based on the intertextuality of previous interpretations.

1.1 Previous Interpretations

A major part of playing the character of Sherlock Holmes doesn't come solely from the text, but also from conforming to the public's perception of the character. Any actor playing the part would be required to be easily identified as the great detective by those who had read the stories as well as the wider audience who probably only recognise the famous silhouette. As Alan Barnes explains, 'even the slightest of visual prompts lead to the Great Detective: deerstalker, Meerschaum pipe, violin, hansom cab, Watson, housekeeper, Hound'.[15] This meant that audiences would have what Amanda Field described as 'preconceptions of how Holmes should look and behave, and would judge this new interpretation as to whether it represented their 'real' Holmes'.[16]

Detective films had been popular from the early days of cinema, with Holmes appearing on screen fairly consistently from 1900; bearing in mind that Doyle was continuing to write and publish stories until 1927. In the UK there had been a brief series with Holmes played by Alan Wheatley in 1951, after the interior of 221B had been recreated as part of the BBC's contribution to the Festival of Britain.[17] The Festival was a showcase for Britain's 'contribution to science, technology, industrial

[15] Barnes, *Sherlock Holmes on screen,* 7
[16] Amanda Field, *England's Secret Weapon: The Wartime Films of Sherlock Holmes* (Andrews UK Limited, 2012), 2
[17] Barnes, *Sherlock Holmes on screen,* 222. This also led to 'The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone', an episode in the revived *For the Children* series (1937-39, 1946-51) in 1951.

design, architecture and the arts',[18] and as one of its most famous literary creations Holmes was chosen to represent the best of Britain. Unlike the majority of the early film and television productions the BBC went to great lengths to satisfy the Doyle Estate's demands for fidelity, even setting the series in period.[19] Very little survives from these early adaptations, but it would appear that fidelity and authenticity were not central concerns for the majority, the character of Holmes often being used as easy shorthand or a symbol in the days of short silent films, like *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* (1900).[20] The main point of reference for viewers at that time would not have been the Doyle stories but the hugely successful stage play by William Gillette, which debuted in 1899 in New York and in London in 1901.

1.1.1 Sidney Paget

The first person to capture the public's imagination regarding the look of Holmes was Sidney Paget, illustrator for the short stories in *The Strand* magazine. Although Paget was not the first to illustrate Holmes, the circulation of his drawings in the *Strand* magazine did ensure that it was his image of the detective that became associated with the character and came to define what he looked like. Conan Doyle was very vague in his descriptions of the physical characteristics of Holmes, allowing the artist an element of creative licence when drawing him. For example, the first description we get of him is from Dr Watson in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887);

[18] The Festival of Britain (Official Book of the Festival of Britain 1951). HMSO, 1951.
[19] Hewett, "Canon Doyle?: Getting Holmes Right (and Getting the Rights) for Television", 2015.
[20] Especially overseas productions, the Conan Doyle Estate being much more fastidious regarding the BBC productions.

> In height he was rather over six feet, and so excessively lean that he seemed to be considerably taller. His eyes were sharp and piercing, save during those intervals of torpor to which I have alluded; and his thin, hawk-like nose gave his whole expression an air of alertness and decision. His chin, too, had the prominence and squareness which mark the man of determination[21]

Conan Doyle himself credited Paget with helping to establish and make the character recognisable, 'Sidney Paget … illustrated those stories so well that he made a type which the whole English-reading race came to recognise'.[22]

In his 350 drawings of the character it was Paget who introduced much of the iconography now associated with Holmes. In stories where Holmes is in the country,[23] Paget drew him wearing a deerstalker hat, perhaps to symbolise Holmes as a hunter after his prey.[24] This was so successful that the hat itself has come to represent a detective in the public's imagination and is used to symbolise the Holmes character, especially when seen in silhouette. Once Holmes started to appear on screen these illustrations came to inform casting choices, with Basil Rathbone especially bearing a striking resemblance to the Paget illustrations.

When the Jeremy Brett series went into production the Paget illustrations became as much a part of the background research and point of reference as the stories themselves. Both Brett and producer Michael Cox agreed to return their Holmes to

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[21] Arthur Conan Doyle, "A Study in Scarlet", *The Complete Sherlock Holmes Collection*, (Bedford Parks Books, New York, 2010), p10.
[22] Janet Pascal, *Arthur Conan Doyle: Beyond Baker Street* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 73
[23] For example in 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery' and 'The Adventure of Silver Blaze'
[24] Andrzej Dinieko, "Sidney Paget, the artist who illustrated the Sherlock Holmes stories", 28 November 2013, accessed: 20 May 2014,
Available at: http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/pagets/introduction.html

the image portrayed in the early *Strand* magazines, and aimed to reproduce these visual reminders.[25] The corresponding Paget illustrations from each story were recreated as part of the tableau, with Jeremy Brett attempting to recreate the illustrated Holmes as possible;[26]

> There are also, of course, certain key scenes in the stories which Paget illustrated brilliantly… and I wanted to hit those moments just as Paget had hit them… I wanted to show it like it was![27]

This recreation of the Holmes from *The Strand* was to add to the overall air of fidelity and affirm their direct association to the Doyle texts. However, this also illustrates the change in attitude in later series. Paget didn't illustrate the later *Stand* stories, so Granada commissioned Keith Aldred (Granada graphic artist) to create new illustrations, to try 'to give the illustrations the Sherlock period feel'.[28] This is an example of the 'heretical fidelity', with producers choosing where to remain faithful and when to change for their own purpose. As they had chosen the Paget illustration as their image, they decided to recreate them rather than use the actual illustrations included in the stories. In addition, by using the Paget illustrations as an example of their fidelity credentials, they were instead demonstrating this 'selective fidelity' where they pick and choose what is considered 'canon'.

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[25] Peter Haining, *The Television Sherlock Holmes* (3rd rev ed. edn.; London: Virgin, 1994), 102
[26] David Stuart Davies, *Bending the willow: Jeremy Brett as Sherlock Holmes* (Rev. ed. edn.; Ashcroft, B.C.: Calabash Press, 2002)
[27] Haining, *The Television Sherlock Holmes*, 107
[28] *The Master Blackmailer* Granada press pack (1992)

1.1.2 Basil Rathbone

Before Jeremy Brett, the actor most associated with the role of Holmes was Basil Rathbone, who had played the detective in a series of films in the 1930s and 1940s. Basil Rathbone as Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Watson were an immediate hit, with Rathbone's physical resemblance to Paget's illustrations of Holmes helping to connect him in the public's mind with the great detective. The films were also well received by the critics, who noted that although the stories were not 'faithful' adaptations of the Conan Doyle stories[29] they had the 'spirit' of the stories and Holmes himself 'was recognisable in every aspect: brilliant, eccentric, arrogant and enigmatic, with a strong personal sense of justice'.[30]

The films bore little resemblance to the original Conan Doyle stories, often retaining only one element.[31] However, during the course of the series these elements taken from the original stories became less prominent in the films and eventually the storylines were credited as original and not based on the Conan Doyle canon as so little was appearing on screen. The Rathbone series of films are evidence that being faithful to the original Holmes stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle isn't essential in order to be popular with general audiences.

Rathbone was to be the first to be called the 'definitive' Holmes',[32] and became so identifiable with the character, thanks in part to the exposure these films gave him.

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[29] with *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1939) instead being loosely based on Gillette's play
[30] Field, *England's Secret Weapon,* 99
[31] For example, the Musgrave Ritual in *Sherlock Holmes Faces Death* (1943) or *The Spider Woman* (1944), which uses elements from several stories
[32] Field, *England's Secret Weapon,* 15

The films were regularly shown on television in the UK and US, and were an important precursor for the Brett series in that they would be the opposite of what the Granada series aimed to represent and what they wanted to differentiate themselves from.

1.1.3 Douglas Wilmer

It would be wrong to think that the Granada adaptations were the first attempt at a faithful recreation of Holmes. For the 1951 Alan Wheatley series the BBC were only allowed the rights to the stories by the Conan Doyle Estate on the understanding that the series would be a faithful adaptation, and in their statement the BBC laid stress on the accuracy of their portrayal[33]. As television ownership was limited in 1951, the Douglas Wilmer *Sherlock Holmes* series (BBC, 1965) was the first major depiction of Holmes for mainstream British television audiences and, to accentuate that this was a serious interpretation, the series was crucially set in the correct period. This was stipulated by Adrian Conan Doyle with regard to the BBC's treatment of the material:

> In any dramatisations given in accordance with this agreement the BBC undertakes to preserve as far as possible the time period of the stories as in their original form and also as far as possible the original characterisations created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle[34]

[33] Hewett, "Canon Doyle?: Getting Holmes Right (and Getting the Rights) for Television,"196
[34] Ibid, 197

While no set date is given in the series, it is conscientiously a period piece, providing a stark contrast to the 'swinging sixties' which it was made in. The monochrome of the series certainly helps to convey the Gothic themes of the stories; to a modern audience black and white already infers a sense of period, and was described as looking like a 'Paget illustration come to life'.[35] Wilmer also states that Jeremy Brett 'was kind enough to express his admiration for my portrayal of Holmes',[36] and this return to the original stories would be key to the original Granada production.

1.1.4 Pastiche/Parody

After the Rathbone series, there weren't any more attempts to modernise Holmes and in subsequent adaptations, for example the fog and horse drawn carriages became as much a part of the interpretation as the original stories. The majority continued the trend of using the characters and some elements from the stories but using new ideas and situations for Holmes. They were usually comedies and played for laughs, often spoofing the characters, for example *The Adventure of Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother* (Gene Wilder, 1975) and *The Strange Case of the End of Civilization as We Know It* (ITV, 1977).

This Holmes had become a caricature, moving further and further away from the original stories. As Peter Lewis observed in the *Daily Mail* about *Silver Blaze* (ITV, 1977) starring Christopher Plummer, 'when you come to look at him what *is* Holmes? He is a collection of props. He is a deerstalker hat and an Inverness cape and that

[35] David Morrill, "A Definitive Holmes indeed", *Baker Street Journal Winter 2010, Vol 6 No 4*, (Fordham University Press, New York), 63

[36] Douglas Wilmer, Stage Whispers, Porter Press International, 2008, Chapter 22 "Sherlock Holmes at the BBC", 161

curling pipe'.[37] The character of Holmes, with his deerstalker, pipe and magnifying glass became shorthand for detective. It was a common point of reference which the audience could pick up on without the need for further explanation or introduction, and it was an instantly recognisable character. It was this version of Holmes that Michael Cox and Jeremy Brett were keen to avoid and, if possible, eradicate from the legend of the character of Holmes, and return him to *The Strand* character.

New audiences and younger generations keep discovering Sherlock Holmes through the regular adaptations on film and television. Several of these have captured the audience's imagination enough to be declared 'definitive', although the fact that so many have been declared as 'the' one it would suggest that the character is open to multiple interpretations. Fidelity to the original Conan Doyle stories, whether actual or perceived, is not essential in a popular portrayal of Holmes, instead an actor is required to have a certain look and the production have 'the spirit' of the stories. As Amada Field explains, there is the need to preserve 'something that is, perhaps, ever more important than literary fidelity: a representation that accords with the Holmes of the imagination'.[38] As previously discussed, popular adaptations embed images and ideas in the audience's mind, and successful elements would be expected to be included in subsequent adaptations - the deerstalker hat, the Meerschaum pipe, and the 'elementary, my dear Watson'. While Granada attempted to move away from the more caricature aspects that had crept into the perception of Holmes, they still kept the hat and cape from the Paget illustrations.

[37] Haining, *The Television Sherlock Holmes,* 78
[38] Field, *England's Secret Weapon,* 4

As an actor, it would not be possible for Jeremy Brett to come to the role of Holmes without an awareness of some of the productions, and they would make a mark on his performance whether he acknowledged them or made a conscious effort not to. Brett was a fan of Wilmer's darker portrayal and was a great friend of Robert Stephens, who appeared in *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (Billy Wilder, 1970). But he would not be able to avoid comparison with Rathbone, who at the time was 'the' Holmes. While he does his best to avoid caricature, Brett's performance was a very definite choice, a very Victorian performance, in keeping with the period of the stories.

Thomas Leitch discusses Holmes' ongoing popularity and regeneration and overviews all Holmes adaptations from the impact of the final product rather that the determinants that produced each version. Every actor who comes to the role of Holmes brings with him the baggage of previous incarnations,[39] whether by accepting or rejecting them. By rejecting the Universal pictures and the culture of parody and pastiche that had built up around the character, the Granada adaptations engage in the 'cult of fidelity'. As I shall discuss in Chapter 3, even this fidelity is selective, as Leitch explains the series 'constantly seeks to improve Doyle's stories by making them more realistic, suspenseful, heartfelt, or mysterious'.[40] One of the difficulties of promoting your series as a 'faithful' adaptation is that Conan Doyle's stories were never written with dramatisation in mind, and as such many would not work on screen without major alteration. This is a problem that previous adaptations had encountered and would affect the later Brett series, where stories would have to be heavily modified in order to make dramatic television. However,

[39] Leitch, *Film adaptation and its discontents*
[40] Ibid., 227

as I shall discuss in Chapter 2, there were other industrial factors which impacted on this perception of fidelity on the Brett series.

1.2 Production and Fidelity

The Holmes series produced by Granada is 'lavishly produced'[41] and considered to be one of the most faithful adaptations of the stories.[42] Rather than simply examine the series from the perspective of how faithful the final product is to the original Doyle stories, I will discuss how production decisions impacted on the perceived fidelity.

The British Film Institute's outline for the Jeremy Brett series encapsulates the reputation the production enjoys; 'Granada's adaptations remain among the most important, innovative and, at times, brilliant re-workings of Sherlock Holmes ever produced'.[43] For the first time this was Holmes as a quality television production, treated equally to the works of Dickens, Austen, the Brontes, etc. The Brett series is rare in that it lasted such a long time; previously the sixteen episode *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes* (BBC, 1968) starring Peter Cushing had been the longest running on British television. Because of this they had the opportunity to film the majority of the stories, allowing us the opportunity to compare and contrast the episodes to previous adaptations. But also, the only chance to see some of the stories filmed, for example, 'The Crooked Man', 'The Norwood Builder' and 'The Resident Patient' shown in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1984).

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[41] Scott Monty, "I hear of Sherlock everywhere: Celebrating 50 years of Douglas Wilmer as Sherlock Holmes", 20 February 2015, accessed: 28 February 2015, Available at: http://www.ihearofsherlock.com/2015/02/celebrating-50-years-of-douglas-wilmer.html#.VSaZcPnF_Ak

[42] William Reynolds, *It's a Print!: Detective Fiction from Page to Screen* (Popular Press, 1994)

[43] "BFI Screenonline: Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, the (1984-85)", accessed: 25 April 2014. Available at: http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/888944/

When the series was commissioned in the early 1980s Granada Television was enjoying the success of lavish big budget adaptations such as *Brideshead Revisited* (ITV, 1981) and at the beginning the Holmes series was given the same quality treatment. This is reflected in the 'doing it right' mantra of the early production team, this was Holmes done seriously and that level of care is especially evident during *The Adventures*. The Government White Paper on Broadcasting in the 90s agreed with the Peacock Committee that television should be 'more competitive',[44] leading to an emphasis on running the franchises more like a traditional business. For the Holmes series, this is indicated in the move from producing adaptations which were largely faithful to the Conan Doyle original to a more budget friendly programme that, at times, bordered on pastiche. During this time television also moved from one-hour to two-hour programmes being favoured as the industry responded to new popular trends in viewership, which would also affect the Holmes series.

The Granada Holmes television adaptations are rather unusual, as Andrew Higson describes the heritage genre is 'very much at the culturally respectable, quality end of the market … Their audience is primarily middle-class'.[45] Claire Monk would agree and suggests that heritage television is aimed at the middle class female viewer, but this was not the readership of the original stories. The Holmes short stories were originally published in *The Strand* magazine, which was aimed at the working and

[44] Great Britain Home Office, *Broadcasting in the 90's: competition, choice and quality, the Government's plans for broadcasting legislation* (Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of the Her Majesty, HMSO, 1988)
[45] Andrew Higson, "Re-presenting the national past: nostalgia and pastiche in the heritage film' in *British cinema and Thatcherism : fires were started*, ed. Lester Friedman (London: UCL Press 1993), 93

lower middle class readers, and, as the magazine had a high male readership, they are very much a boy's own adventure. By emphasising the programme's period setting and its heritage television credentials the production were aligning the stories more with the classic novels of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century rather than populist reading.

In Chapter 3 I shall discuss the 'cult of fidelity' that the early production team promoted, the idea that they alone were adapting the true spirit of the Holmes stories, and the inconsistencies that emerge when they deviated from the original intention. As Thomas Leitch states, the 'true aspiration of the Granada adaptations is the same as that of all adaptations of any canonical fictional franchise. They do not want to be faithful to any particular members of the franchise. They do not even want to be faithful to the franchise in general. What they want is to become canonical members of the franchise themselves, as definitive as the progenitor texts they take as their point of departure'.[46] The series is projecting a very specific brand, by emphasising the 'faithful' and 'authentic' elements of the series and aligning itself with the original *Strand* stories. In addition, a collection of the thirteen short stories which inspired the first series was published as a tie-in to the series under the title *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. This would agree with Leitch's statement that all adaptations want to become part of the canon, as well as his theory that 'the primary motive for fidelity in the most widely known adaptations is financial not aesthetic. Because a well-known literary property has considerable power to … sell'.[47]

[46] Leitch, *Film adaptation and its discontents*, 230
[47] Ibid., 128

In academic analyses of adaptations, the focus is regularly on if it is faithful to the original and does not consider the institutional context and background in producing the programme. This leads to the question of fidelity versus dramatisation. The majority of viewers would not have read the original stories and would not have known if the episodes were faithful or not, but would know if they had enjoyed watching the television programme. The first task of the production team was to create a gripping, dramatic programme from the source material. As Imelda Whelehan suggests, 'any critical consideration of an adaptation's reception might benefit from recognising some of the practical realities in producing a commercially successful film'.[48] Bert Coules describes the process of adapting a canon,

> However great a story or novel may be, if it's translated exactly into play form … it's going to be fatally diminished, what flows fast and grippingly on the page can plod along in another medium…it's possible to fashion a drama that has every last ounce of the story's impact and emotional punch, even though in many respects that drama is totally different from the original.[49]

A problem of adapting these stories is that on their own they do not necessarily make good television, for example in the case of 'The Greek Interpreter' the decision was made rather than use Doyle's anti climatic ending a new chase sequence would be included to make it more dramatic. But by starting down this road of 'improving' the source material, it inevitably led to more drastic changes in later series.

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[48] Imelda Whelehan, "Adaptations" in *Adaptations : from text to screen, screen to text*, ed. Deborah Cartmell & Imelda Whelehan, (London: Routledge, 1999), 4

[49] Bert Coules, "Making a Drama out of a Canon" in *Baker Street Journal* 2002 vol 52 no 3, New York (Fordham University Press), 9-10

1.2.1 Methods Used

In investigating the Brett series of adaptations, I have used three main categories of research; however, only secondary documents regarding to the production have been used. I have not been able to access primary production documents from Granada, as these are not available to researchers, but there is enough other useful primary and secondary data to thoroughly discuss the production of the series.

This production research includes anthologies of Holmes adaptations, for example *Sherlock Holmes on Screen* and *Starring Sherlock Holmes* as well as biographies of the Granada production, for example *The Television Sherlock Holmes* and *A Study in Celluloid* and biographies if key personnel, for example *Bending the Willow*. These have allowed me to examine the production in the wider sphere of Holmes adaptations, but also the specific account of the Holmes production in its different stages.

The thesis focuses on textual analysis of the two different production eras of the Holmes series, first under the guidance of Michael Cox and then June Wyndham-Davies, and how the decisions made impacted on the series. I have chosen to do an in-depth examination of key episodes from the series. 'A Scandal in Bohemia' was the first episode screened and therefore sets the tone for the subsequent episodes and illustrates the intention of the original production team. 'The Greek Interpreter' was the first episode which made a considerable change to the original story to make it more dramatic for television, this will become usual in later series. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1988) is an example of a compromise episode, particularly the budget cuts impacting on the final programme. *The Eligible Bachelor* (1993) is an

example of how the Holmes series lost its way and had moved away from the original intention of a faithful adaptation.

Any examination of Sherlock Holmes adaptations requires studying the relationship with the original stories. The Granada production marketed the series as faithful, and went so far as to produce a handbook with references to the original stories to act as a guide for crew and collaborators. While early episodes made minor changes to the original stories for dramatic purposes, later series relied heavily on padding and modifications, which signalled a major shift in the attitude of the production.

1.2.2 Structure

To thoroughly discuss the Granada production, this thesis is in three sections.

Chapter 2 - Institutional Context. I shall discuss the television landscape of the 1980s and 1990s, and how the changing nature of television production affected the Holmes series. The structure of the ITV channel is important as it was run as a series of regional franchises, each of which made programmes which were then transmitted either locally or nationally on the network. The Brett series was produced by the Manchester based Granada franchise which, in the mid-1980s, had a reputation for creating some of the most critically acclaimed series on television at that time. The early 1990s saw a major change in the way the ITV network was run and the franchise bids and its aftermath would have an impact on the Brett series.

Chapter 3 - Michael Cox era. The setting up of the series was overseen by producer Michael Cox, who had first pitched the idea to Granada television as the ultimate

faithful adaptation of the stories. To achieve this the production team steeped themselves in the canon, and produced a handbook to ensure that the original stories were always referenced in the production. I shall be discussing how the production benefitted from Granada's faith in a film rather than studio based production, and use examples from *The Adventures* to illustrate how the style was established for all subsequent series.

Chapter 4 - June Wyndham-Davies era. After *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1984-1985), Michael Cox stepped down as Producer and was replaced by June Wyndham-Davies. The change in Producer also coincided with a change in attitude to the original material; a major issue was that the most filmable of the Holmes stories had already been done and what was left was not suited to television without 'reworking'. In addition, the production team had to deal with scheduling and budget issues, resulting in last minute rewrites and substitutions which would not have been accepted on the earlier series. A major influence on later series was the health of Jeremy Brett, for a series which relied so heavily on the star persona of Brett and his performance as Holmes this would repeatedly impact the quality of the programmes broadcast. I shall use examples of later episodes to show how external issues could compromise the final product.

To fully explore the different production eras of the series I will first examine the institutional context of television in the period.

2 Institutional Context

In this section I shall explore the institutional context behind Granada's Holmes series and why this was important to its production and how it impacted on the final product.

The early 1980s was a peak period on British television, with heritage and adaptation programmes like Granada's *Brideshead Revisited* proving international hits. Sarah Street defined the heritage genre as 'associated with costume/historical drama; identified with high production values and a quest for period authenticity.'[1] These high-quality, authentic, lavish productions were an example of television taking itself seriously. The big-budget, epic productions rivalled the cinema for quality in the way that they were filmed, especially at a time when the British film industry was having a difficult time and some very British films were instead being part-financed by American studios. British politics during this time was dominated by the Conservatives and conservatism. Margaret Thatcher's government was elected in 1979 by 'the silent majority' in response to the political and social upheaval of the late 1970s. This government encouraged a return to old fashioned morals, promoting the Victorian and Edwardian eras as the embodiment of when society was at its best. But this was an especially chosen and sanitised history, idealising this period to promote nostalgia for a time that never really existed; '[H]eritage is not history … it is a modern day use of elements of the past'.[2]

[1] Sarah Street, *Costume and Cinema: Dress Codes in Popular Film*, Wallflower Press, 2001, 106
[2] Eckart Voigts-Virchow, "Heritage on screen" in *The Cambridge companion to literature on screen*, ed Deborah Cartmell & Imelda Whelehan (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), 124

A sub-genre of these period adaptation programmes was the revival of popular detective fiction. Starting with Agatha Christie's works, the decade also included adaptations on the works of other 'golden age' of detective writers such as Dorothy L. Sayers[3]. As this new Holmes series was being produced by Granada they had the authority and confidence to return to the source material and to continue their remit of high quality faithful adaptations of classic works.

2.1 ITV

Earlier attempts to commercialise British broadcasting had been rejected but the Television Act passed in 1954 allowed for the creation of a new commercial television station to challenge the monopoly of the BBC.[4] ITV was originally 'set up as an extension of the public service concept … The ITA required the contractors to inform, educate and entertain – to produce programmes of balance, quality and variety'.[5] But in order to compete with the already established BBC, ITV included American imports and entertainment shows such as *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* (ITV, 1955-1969) in order to win over viewers. Viewing figures became an important part of the scheduling process as the two networks began to compete. ITV had initial success with shows that appealed to as wide a demographic of the audience as possible, what would now be termed 'popular entertainment'. In the 1962 Pilkington Report this populist approach was criticised by many in the

[3] Dorothy Leigh Sayers (1893 –1957), one of the Queens of Golden Age of Detective Fiction and creator of gentleman detective Lord Peter Wimsey.
[4] Catherine Johnson and Robert Turnock, eds. *ITV cultures : independent television over fifty years*, (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005).
[5] Andrew Crisell, *An introductory history of British broadcasting* (Psychology Press, 2002), 90

establishment[6] and the franchises would be encouraged to produce programmes of a high quality and content.

Unlike the BBC, the ITV channel was made up of regional franchises, meaning that programmes were not always syndicated across all regions at the same time, each franchise having control over content in its region. One of the original franchises was awarded to Granada Television, for the region of the North West of England. The contract was original for weekdays only (with ABC serving the area at the weekends), and Granada taking over the whole week in 1968. By 1984 the majority of mainstream productions were transmitted at the same time across the UK, with only minor regional changes to the schedule. This would mean that programmes like *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* would have the best opportunity to reach the widest audience.

Due to its unique organisation, the franchises which made up the ITV network require constant renewal, ensuring that each provider maintain a high quality of popular programming, as well more informative content. This bidding process would have an important impact on the franchise holders from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, and this would influence their output during this time.

2.2 Granada

> Granada Television was the most precocious of the independent television companies … It was also the most innovative, self-opinionated, insufferably arrogant … swashbuckling and successful[7]

[6] Pilkington Committee (1962), "Report of the Committee on Broadcasting", *UK Parliament, London, June*.

Granada was to have an enormous impact on the ITV schedules in 1960 when *Coronation Street* (1960-) premiered. Despite its subject matter of northern working class people, the show soon attracted a nationwide following and is still ITV's most popular show, over fifty-five years later.[8] The show exemplifies Granada's status as a pioneer of British television. Coronation Street was erected at Granada's studios in Manchester, which also later housed the Baker Street exterior constructed for *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. As David Plowright, the head of Granada, put it, 'the two most famous streets in England could run side by side in Manchester'.[9]

The Pilkington Report into British broadcasting (published in 1962) encouraged ITV to rethink its production and schedules to include more serious programming. Although Granada had always strived to rival the BBC for the quality of its output, this new legislation would eventually lead to Granada's famous prestige, home-grown programming. The Television Act 1964 implemented the findings of the Report and according to Denis Forman (part of the Granada team at the time) '"Brownie points" became as important as ratings'.[10]

In the 1970s the Government lifted the restrictions on broadcasting hours (1972), and changed the basis of exchequer levy from advertising revenue to profits (1974),[11] which meant an increase in the production of commercial television, and bigger production budgets. As a franchise, Granada earned large income as it produced

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[7] John Finch, Michael Cox and Marjorie Giles, *Granada Television : the first generation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), ix
[8] "BFI Screenonline: Coronation Street (1960-)", accessed 25 April 2014, http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/460796/index.html
[9] Davies, *Bending the willow*, 32
[10] As cited in Michele Hilmes and Jason Jacobs, *The Television History Book* (London: bfi Pub., 2003), 79
[11] "Ofcom: Overview of UK Television Market", 24 June 2010, accessed 20 May 2014, http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/itc/uk_television_sector/overview/key_dates.asp.html

some of the most popular programmes on television (like *Coronation Street*) and it could now manage these profits into larger budgets for 'worthwhile' programmes, like *Brideshead Revisited*, which began production in 1979. Granada was also in a unique position amongst the providers as it controlled ITV's most successful programme, and therefore was in a position where renewal would have been almost guaranteed for fear of losing their biggest critical and commercial success. This freedom allowed Granada to make bold decisions, like the commissioning of highly expensive drama in the 1980s. But this tenacity soon paid off and they were rewarded with international best sellers, again emphasising their position as 'the best commercial television company in the world'.[12]

However, even Granada could not compete with the Conservative Government's intention to make the franchise bidding a more intense competitive business and the Broadcasting Act 1990 recommended that they be awarded to the highest bidder. Granada was thrown a lifeline in that in exceptional circumstances the franchise would not be awarded to the highest bidder but to the provider where 'the quality of the service proposed by such an application is exceptionally high'.[13] Under these circumstances Granada was almost guaranteed to keep their franchise, but at a cost. Many of Granada's key creative staff were replaced by a new management team 'seeking to create more competitive programmes for less money'.[14] The days of big budgets and lavish programmes were gone; profits and keeping overheads down were to be taken into account.

[12] As quoted in Derek Granger, "Obituary – David Plowright", *The Independent,* 28 August 2006, accessed 20 January 2017, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/david-plowright-413771.html
[13] Home Office, *Broadcasting in the 90's*
[14] Finch et al, *Granada Television : the first generation,* 22

Although *Sherlock Holmes* never had the lavish budget of *Brideshead* it was still an expensive programme to make. The reduction in budgets and problems with getting the series renewed and scheduled in the 1990s would have an impact and later series became less focused on quality and faithful recreation and became more about telling the stories as economically as possible.

2.3 Heritage Television

The *Sherlock Holmes* series followed a national obsession with quality adaptations of period novels, known as 'heritage television'. Granada was at the forefront of this revolution with programmes like *Brideshead Revisited* and *The Jewel in the Crown* (ITV, 1984) being held up at the epitome of British television.[15] Although reaching its peak in the 1980s with these high budget serials, adaptations had been popular on television for years, with early producers relying on the safe, reliable subject matter of classic literature for its drama, with Shakespeare, Austen and Dickens adaptations appearing regularly, especially on the BBC.

Adaptations had been on British television since its inception, as they provided programme makers with a readymade plot and script and had a built-in audience. While well-known works by Shakespeare, Austen, Dickens, etc. would be shown there were also popular anthologies of one-off drama, such as *Armchair Theatre* (ITV, 1956-1974) and *Play for Today* (BBC, 1970-1984). There had also been a surge in period dramas, with *The Forsythe Saga* (BBC, 1967), *Elizabeth R* (BBC, 1971) and *Upstairs, Downstairs* (ITV, 1971-75) proving to be hits at home but also continuing the trend for British series being popular internationally, especially in the US. The

[15] Claire Monk, "The British 'heritage film'and its critics", *Critical Survey* 1995), 116-24

popularity of the period detective series in the 1980s was associated with the wider genre of costume drama, and 'the revival of detection on television has been subsumed with a nostalgic interest in period and costume'.[16] However, not all popular detective series were adaptations or period pieces, as the BBC's longest running drama during the decade was *Bergerac* (BBC, 1981-1991).

The 1980s was a peak period in British television, with the creative ability, new technology and large budgets to allow for some ground-breaking programmes to be made. One of the key themes of the period was this idea of nostalgia for the past and a harking back to a time (generally late Victorian/Edwardian) that was quintessentially English. This was a very marketable idea internationally, with the American audiences especially enjoying this quaint and often peaceful view of England and Englishness. But, as commented by Andrew Higson, this was not representative of Britain as it was in the 1980s or even as it had been earlier in the century. These programmes and films 'articulate a nostalgic and conservative celebration of the values and lifestyles of the privileged classes'.[17] This conservative (and Conservative) view of the world was very popular in the early 1980s especially, with the large middle classes dictating the majority of the policy in government and encouraging commercialism on a scale never seen before.

The peak period for these films and programmes would have been at a time of social unrest for the UK. With the country divided over the miners' strike and under a renewed threat of nuclear war, these programmes would have commemorated the past and provided an escape to a time that appeared less complicated. But, as

[16] George W. Brandt, *British television drama in the 1980s* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 100
[17] Andrew Higson, *English heritage, English cinema: costume drama since 1980* (John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 12

Andrew Higson points out, they 'used … one version of the national past as their prime selling point' and in doing so, reinvent 'an England that no longer existed … as something fondly remembered and desirable'.[18]

Granada especially tapped into this mood of nostalgia and illusion of a sunny past with programmes like *Brideshead Revisited* but it was also an attempt to legitimise television in a way that hadn't been done before. A level of care and attention was introduced, authenticity became a key factor in productions and was now used as a major selling point to signify the quality of the productions. For *Brideshead* Granada desired not only to capture the atmosphere of the original novel, but also to do the adaptation justice through high production values to convey a high level of authenticity and quality. The popularity of these 'authentic' and 'faithful' adaptations would inform Michael Cox when he came to produce *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

Brideshead Revisited provided a watershed moment, not just in the scale of adaptation but also the way it was presented. Shot on 16mm film it gave the programme the quality and feeling of a feature film, the 'glossiness' of the production added to this idea of period adaptation being 'quality' television, the series was expensive and it looked it. Granada's £4.5 million budget was already the largest ever spent on a British television series, but breaks in filming and over running meant that the final cost has been estimated as nearer to £10 million.[19] The use of single-camera, exterior location filming meant that more time could be used for slow, establishing shots, making the location another character in the story. The

[18] Ibid., 91

[19]Anna Tims, "How we made ... Anthony Andrews and Charles Sturridge on Brideshead Revisited", *The Guardian*, 18 June 2012, accessed 20 January 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2012/jun/18/how-we-made-brideshead-revisited

production had been stressful and problematic throughout and several times it was suggested that Granada might have bitten off more than it could chew. But the result was a landmark in British television, determined to think more in terms of cinema than the usual television drama, it was conceived as a prestigious blockbuster.

This was followed by the even more lavish *The Jewel in the Crown* which harked back to a nostalgic time of Empire and the British in India and proved to be another international success.[20] Unlike with *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* Granada didn't go into partnership with an American network to offset the costs of these shows, deciding instead to recoup their money by selling the overseas rights to broadcast. This gamble meant that not only would Granada keep the full profits but also the full creative control.

2.4 Detective Series

The *Sherlock Holmes* series also followed a 1980s trend for detective series by popular authors. Like Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie was a pioneer of popular detective fiction. As with the BBC's dealings with the Conan Doyle Estate over rights for adaptation, there had also been problems with Christie giving permissions, and, like Sherlock Holmes, there had been a significant gap in adaptations shown on television. Christie herself was extremely reticent about allowing adaptations during her lifetime, due to her earlier unhappy experiences and dislike of having her original

[20] Charlotte Brunsdon, "Problems with quality", *Screen,* 31 (1), (1990), 67-90

works deviated from.[21] After her death in 1976 the rights to her works passed to the Agatha Christie Estate, who proved to be more amenable to the idea of adaptation.

Why Didn't They Ask Evans? (1980) was produced by London Weekend Television as a celebration of Agatha Christie's work, and to acknowledge what would have been the year of her ninetieth birthday. This was to be the first British television adaptation of her works for over thirty years and taking their lead from the highly popular and lavish *Murder on the Orient Express* (1974), the production included a high level of attention to detail to convey a feeling of authenticity and quality. What was originally intended as three one-hour shows instead was transmitted as one two-and-a-half-hour programme and shown as a celebration of Christie's work.[22]

Running almost parallel to the *Sherlock Holmes* series in terms of time span was the BBC's *Miss Marple* (BBC, 1984-1992), providing a useful contrast to how the different organisations dealt with the adaptation of period detective stories. For example, *Miss Marple* was shown on a Sunday evening, a more traditional 'quality' television slot in the schedules. In addition, as there are fewer Miss Marple stories than Holmes, they weren't shown as a traditional series and more as one-off television movies. Christie's novels suited the longer format and Sunday evening television slot due to their leisurely pacing and multiple characters and storylines. This also meant that the BBC's adaptations could keep a lot closer to the original text, with little need for additional padding or deviations from the original text, which later Holmes stories especially required. In contrast, LWT's *Poirot* (ITV, 1989-2013) followed the same pattern as the Granada Holmes series, starting with the short stories in one-hour long programmes before moving on to filming the novels. The series also gained a

[21] Mark Aldridge, *Agatha Christie on Screen* (Springer, 2016).
[22] Ibid.

reputation for authenticity and quality, conscientiously producing a serious and faithful adaptation of Christie's works.

The real rival for Holmes as far as Granada was concerned was Carlton's *Inspector Morse* (ITV, 1987-2000), not only an extremely successful and popular series, but also a ground breaker in terms of television drama. Rather than one-hour individual episodes, or shown as a multi-part series, these programmes were standalone episodes running at two hours. The series was an instant hit and enjoyed a regular audience of 15 million viewers, and a worldwide audience of 75 million.[23] As *Morse* was proving to be so popular, this lead to the Holmes series being switched to two-hour feature-length programmes in 1987 with *The Sign of Four*. It was promoted as a celebration of the centenary of the first Holmes story being published but was also an opportunity for Granada to see if their show could work in this new format.[24]

Although *Morse* is not a period adaptation it still fits in to the heritage genre of the period; a large amount of screen time was taken up with the classical architecture and a classical musical score added to the 'quality' feel. In addition, the production would use Oxford in a similar way to *Brideshead* had used Castle Howard, emphasising the picturesque scenery and making it a selling point of the series rather than just a backdrop for the action. In light of this, the production of drama series changed, favouring a longer programme but continuing in the traditional prime time quality television slot of mid-week scheduling.

[23] Brandt, *British television drama in the 1980s*
[24] Davies, *Bending the willow*

2.5 Holmes as Heritage Television

The *Sherlock Holmes* series continues this idea of heritage, especially as it's coming from Granada, which was delivering the highest quality drama at the time. Although not adapted from a 'classic' novel it still came from a popular literary source and so should it be considered part of this 'heritage' television genre? In her article, 'Problems with Quality', whilst discussing *Brideshead* and *Jewel in the Crown*, Charlotte Brunsdon defines heritage television as being defined by four categories:[25]

1. Literary source – 'The power of the legitimating force of the …. novel'.[26] Adaptations gain prestige from this relationship, it has a preconceived perception of quality television, especially those based on 'classic' novels. Although not a 'classical' author like Dickens or Austen, the series is based on a work of popular fiction. The great detective already had a well-established and loyal fan base with Sherlock Holmes societies based all around the world. Plus, the history of the multiple previous adaptations adding to the history of the character (Sherlock Holmes having been seen in more adaptations than even Hamlet). As John Ellis comments, that British television 'specialised in adapting the culturally accredited nineteenth-century novel for the twentieth-century world television market'.[27] By treating the originating source, in this case the stories from *The Strand*, the same as classic novels, Granada is legitimising the Holmes canon as classic literature.

[25] Brunsdon, "Problems with quality"
[26] Ibid., 85
[27] John Ellis, "The Literary Adaptation", *Screen,* 23 (1) (1982), 3-5.

2. The Best of British Acting – 'The presence of name theatrical actresses and actors'.[28]

Again, Brunsdon argues that this adds to the feel of high quality and prestige to the piece. When Granada gave the green light for the Holmes series they wanted an established star to play Holmes, someone with an international reputation to help to sell the series overseas (particularly to the US). Jeremy Brett had been a stalwart of the National Theatre under Olivier and had been in numerous high profile theatre productions both in Britain and the US (including a stint as Watson in a Los Angeles revival of the play *The Crucifer of Blood*, with Charlton Heston as Holmes). He was probably best known for playing Freddy Eynsford-Hill in *My Fair Lady* (1964), but definitely had the classical training required to bring gravitas to the role.

3. Money – '… these series cost a lot, and, as importantly, looked as if they cost a lot'.[29]

High production values to make the series look expensive, again add to the feel of quality. The key to all these heritage series was not necessarily the budget but how much of it showed on screen. The Holmes series wasn't provided with the budget of the higher profile serials but still managed to convey the money on the screen in spite of this. Instead of stately homes like Castle Howard, a replica of Baker Street was built on the Granada back lot:- 'it was just a façade of the street hanging on a very stout girder structure, and Cox was told that if the … series did not last long, the facade could easily be ripped off and replaced by some other exterior set'.[30] This meant that they could give the illusion of a large amount spent on a replica set, without actually having the budget to do so. The level of attention to detail in

[28] Brunsdon, "Problems with quality," 1990, 85
[29] Ibid.
[30] David Stuart Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes: a century of the master detective on screen* (Rev. ed. edn.; London: Titan, 2007), 122

making the series as authentic as possible also added to this feeling of quality. The *Baker Street File* was put together by producer Michael Cox to make sure that everyone involved was steeped in Sherlockian lore and every aspect of the production.

4. Heritage export – '… these series produced a certain image of England and Englishness … in which national identity is expressed through class and imperial identity'.[31]

This is especially important for exporting to the American television market, as David Rogers argues this fascination for the American audience is of a specific type of Englishness which is 'both us and not us; a "them" that's not completely a "them"'[32]. The sense of Englishness the series conveyed most was in portraying its ultimate hero in popular literature, Holmes was seen as embodying a specific type of Victorian/Edwardian period and morals. In addition, Baker Street was probably the most famous street in England thanks to his exploits and is still a major tourist attraction (surely the definition of heritage export?). This association is encouraged by the presence of a blue plaque outside The Sherlock Holmes Museum, which was renumbered by Westminster City Council to 221B in 1990.

Brunsdon's breakdown includes all the fundamental markers of a heritage television programme, but perhaps because of this is too generic. Even though she bases her argument on the high-end productions it can also be applied across sub-genres like detective fiction, thereby defining them as 'uncontroversial signifiers of quality'. This

[31] Brunsdon, "Problems with quality," 86
[32] David Rogers, "Postscript: Englishness in Transition" in *The Revision of Englishness*, ed. David Rogers & John McLeod (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2004), 169

was the initial aim of the Granada production, to highlight the quality credentials of the series by emphasising the heritage and adaptation qualities of the production.

2.6 Holmes Copyright

1980 marked an important milestone for potential adaptations of the Holmes canon in the UK – the Conan Doyle stories entered the public domain, as it had been fifty years since the author's death. There had not been a mainstream British television series for over a decade, in part probably due to the BBC's difficult negotiations with Adrian Conan Doyle especially. Richard Hewett describes the corporation's discussions with the estate and the limitations imposed with 'severe restrictions not only on *what* could be adapted, but *how*'.[33] In the UK especially the estate took a very interested role in what was produced, and as executive power passed between members of the family the attitude was often contradictory. For example, Adrian Conan Doyle gave the BBC permission to use the character in 1951, only then to learn once the series was in pre-production that it was only Denis who had the relevant authority.

No longer would any production company have to undergo lengthy contract negotiations with the estate, or appease anyone regarding their handling of the character. While US copyrights would continue to be an issue, there was now an opportunity to return Holmes to television screens in the UK. However, this was not before Granada became embroiled with a legal battle with a rival company regarding who owned the characters.

[33] Hewett, "Canon Doyle?: Getting Holmes Right (and Getting the Rights) for Television"

2.7 Rival Holmes series

As detective series were very much in vogue during the period it is not surprising that *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* was not the first attempt to return Sherlock Holmes to television screens in the 1980s. Producer Sy Weintraub paid the Conan Doyle Estate for the rights to the characters and set up a production company (Mapleton Films) to make a series of films specifically aimed at the lucrative US market. *The Sign of Four* (1983) and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1983), starring Ian Richardson as Holmes, were both eventually released after a long legal battle with Granada. What Weintraub had not appreciated was the expiration of copyright on the characters in the UK in 1980. Once Granada announced its intention to film a rival series to be shown in the UK and US, Weintraub and the Conan Doyle Estate started legal proceedings. They argued that although the early stories were out of copyright the characters were still protected by those stories still under copyright, especially in the US.[34] The legal wrangling took two years before Granada settled out of court and Sy Weintraub retired from making any more if in his planned Holmes series. According to Ian Richardson, the compensation from Granada was more than enough to cover the costs of the film and Weintraub's Holmes ceased production.[35] There is no anecdotal evidence to suggest that the cost of the court case and settling with Weintraub affected the original production budget provided by Granada. This would confirm that the budget itself was not an issue for the initial series, perhaps because the programme was already coming in cheaper than both *Brideshead* and *Jewel*. Granada was continuing its reputation for quality for a lower price than previously, a precedent which would affect the subsequent Holmes series.

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[34] Haining, *The television Sherlock Holmes*

[35] *Ian Richardson: The Sign of Four*, The Sherlock Holmes Society of London, accessed 10 November 2015, http://www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/conan-doyle/television/ian-richardson/

Aside from Richardson the films had a good cast of well-known British actors and they make the most of their limited television budget to produce a filmic quality. Like many adaptations, they make changes to the original text to make it more dramatic or filmable but they are not major changes. The films were eventually seen in the US in 1983 and released on video in the UK 1984 and were not the hit that Weintraub would have expected. It is interesting that it was decided to film the novels rather than the short stories, perhaps in a nod to the American market to show these as made for television movies rather than a more traditional series. However, by having an American producer and being aimed at an American audience, they lacked a certain British eccentricity. They tend to follow the more stereotypical route of a bumbling Watson, with a reliance on fog, deerstalker and pipe, and lacked the feel of authenticity of the Granada series.

This delay due to the court case brought an end to the Richardson Holmes series, but only strengthened Granada's resolve in their production.[36] The two years gave the production team more time to decide on their approach, complete the sets, commission scripts and for everyone involved to become immersed in the world of Sherlock Holmes. This in turn set the standard for quality and authenticity which the series would forever be remembered for. In addition, the success of the Granada series both in the UK and US meant that Richardson's rival Holmes was often overlooked by the general public and overshadowed in Holmes lore.

[36] Davies, *Bending the willow*

2.8 Granada's *Sherlock Holmes*

With the Conservative government promoting Victorian family values and in an era immersed in adaptations of Victorian and Edwardian literature it fits that the most popular literary hero of the time be adapted for television. Holmes was the epitome of a time 'of apparent order and stability, which soothes contemporary anxieties about the national present'.[37] The time had come for a respectful adaptation of Conan Doyle's detective, leaving behind the deerstalker and pipe and doing something 'self-consciously canonical and definitive, and to, in a way, rescue Holmes from people who had jiggered with him in the past. Because this is the era of quality television … and those immaculate, faithful, expensive literary adaptations that proved the seriousness of television and this is what you get with the Granada *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*'.[38]

Granada would have felt that they had a good chance of a hit with a Sherlock Holmes series. Holmes had continued to be popular with the original Conan Doyle stories being in continuous print, plus all those people who had come to the detective via the films of Basil Rathbone. Holmes was a well-known figure in popular culture, instantly recognisable to those who hadn't even read the stories. Letters were still arriving for him at 221B Baker Street from people all over the world, indicating a potential wide audience and commercial potential for a television series. The character of Holmes had always appealed across the generations and class divides, originally being serialised in *The Strand* magazine rather than in a hardback novel. Not only would you attract the audience who liked period pieces and looking at the

[37] McCaw, *Adapting detective fiction,* 12
[38] Dr Matthew Sweet, *Timeshift, series 13 episode 7, How to be Sherlock Holmes: The Many Faces of a Master Detective*. 2014. BBC4. 12 January, 22.00.

scenery and attention to detail, but also to those who liked detective shows and action packed programmes.

Surprisingly, since series based on the works of Conan Doyle are associated with the idea of quality television, over its ten-year run the Granada series was rarely scheduled in the now traditional quality television slot of peak time Sunday evenings. The first series was shown on Tuesday evenings in the Spring 1984 schedule, and only the second series in 1985 attained the coveted Sunday evening in the Autumn schedules. From *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1986) onwards the series reverted to a mid-week timeslot, and the last minute scheduling of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* explaining why it was eventually televised on Monday nights, with the show being commissioned to fill a gap in the schedule rather than the other way round.[39]

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes brought together main popular television themes of the 1980s, period setting, adaptation of popular fiction, quality production. At this time, Granada's high profile drama output was on productions that suggested quality, authenticity and fidelity. The high budgets allowed for an attention to detail and a level of grandeur to make its expensive television shows an event and held up as a prime example of sophisticated and tasteful television. British television had moved away from videotape in the 1960s but it wasn't until the 1980s that location work and single camera filming was fully explored as an important aspect of the production. Although *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* would not have the budget of some of the more lavish productions, it still came from the same standard of doing something to a high level, which in turn would help to establish the concept of fidelity and authenticity that is associated with the series.

[39] Davies, *Bending the willow*

During the ten-years it was on the air ITV, Granada and the production itself went through many changes and the aims of the show also shifted because of this (which I shall return to in the next Chapter). The original goal of the series, to do something authentic and faithful to the Conan Doyle *Strand* stories, was very much part of the ethos of television taking itself seriously and the level of quality rivalling cinema production.

3 Michael Cox era 1984-1986

3.1 Introduction

Jeremy Brett's interpretation of Holmes is one of the most popular amongst fans and he is often quoted as the 'definitive Holmes'.[1] The earlier Granada episodes in particular have earned a reputation for their quality and their fidelity, and in this section I am going to continue to explore where the concept of that comes from. In her article 'Holmes is Where the Heart Is' Elizabeth Trembley echoed this idea that the episodes were 'unique in their fidelity to Doyle's original texts… Even when departing from Doyle, [Cox] consistently added to or changed the stories in ways implicit in the original text'.[2] However, this essay was written in 1991 before the final films, which did depart from the originals, were aired on American television. Yet this corresponds with the overall reputation the series as a whole still commands, mainly derived from the early Michael Cox produced episodes.

The original decision not to film the novels led to the production team deciding to dramatise the stories Conan Doyle wrote for *The Strand* magazine. In the beginning, the fifty-minute format was successful, as there was little need for either padding or condensing in order to shoehorn the action into the required length. The choice of stories also helped. When deciding on the thirteen to be filmed under the banner *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, Michael Cox and John Hawkesworth chose what they felt to be the strongest for the purposes of adaptation. These were taken from across the canon and were a definite showcase of the best of Conan Doyle. In 1927, Conan Doyle himself had chosen his personal top nineteen stories and nine of them

[1] Barnes, *Sherlock Holmes on screen,* 21
[2] Elizabeth Trembley, "Holmes is where the heart is" in Reynolds, *It's a Print!,* 12

appear over the two series of *The Adventures*.[3] The choice of stories is also interesting because they include several that had not previously been produced on British television – 'The Crooked Man', 'The Norwood Builder', 'The Resident Patient' and 'The Final Problem'.

To conclude the chapter, I will discuss the impact production decisions had on the series by looking at specific examples, namely 'A Scandal in Bohemia' and 'The Greek Interpreter'.

3.2 Production decisions

During the initial setting-up of the Granada Production, the Conan Doyle's Holmes canon was held up as the key text, something to be strictly adhered to, and, as Neil McCaw describes, revered as 'among world literature's most firmly rooted points'.[4] McCaw discusses the series and the 'almost dogmatic sense of 'the canon' as an indicator of cultural value underpinned the initial development … The notion of a limited set of texts to be revered and maintained was fundamental'.[5] Yet in adapting a piece of literature it is inevitable that changes will be made to the original text in order for it to work in a different medium. As Michael Cox recognises, 'the big bee in my bonnet is that you can't simply take the stories off the page… You have got to make as good a job of a television script as Conan Doyle made of a short story'.[6]

[3] Arthur Conan Doyle, "How I Made my List", *The Strand Magazine*, 1927, accessed 30 January 2015, http://www.sherlock-holmes.co.uk/library/doyle.html
[4] McCaw, *Adapting detective fiction*, 23
[5] Ibid., 22
[6] Haining, *The Television Sherlock Holmes*, 102

Previous adaptations had often veered towards pastiche, and often parody, and were so many steps away from the original text that what had come to be identifiable with the character of Sherlock Holmes, owed little to Doyle. Thomas Leitch describes the character of Holmes as a 'hybrid adaptation that departs from the original at any number of points, often choosing instead to remain faithful to unauthorised versions',[7] with productions often using previous adaptations as their point of reference rather than the original text. For example, in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1939), the first in the Rathbone series, an extra scene is added of a séance, which is not in the book. Some consequent adaptations keep the séance scene in their versions, often to add atmosphere and drama, which means that they are reworking the previous film and not the original book.[8]

The intention of the Jeremy Brett series was to strip away all the extra additions and return to Doyle's text. It wasn't 'corny old Sherlock Holmes again… not ill-written and ill-conceived pastiche or parody, but a rich amalgam of the Conan Doyle genius and animated Sidney Paget world':[9] this time it was to be the exciting genuine article.[10] Fidelity to Doyle was always at the forefront of Cox's and Brett's minds. As Thomas Leitch comments, 'that very fidelity, neutral as it might have seemed, indicated a program for turning Holmes to new uses through new kinds of play with the franchise'.[11] There is a conscious effort to move away from previous adaptations of the canon, to do something different to the immensely popular Rathbone films, to return to the original stories and to produce 'something self-consciously canonical

[7] Leitch, *Film adaptation and its discontents,* 208
[8] For example, 2002 Masterpiece version starring Richard Roxburgh as Holmes
[9] Davies, *Bending the willow*, 23
[10] Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*
[11] Leitch, *Film adaptation and its discontents,* 225

and definitive'.[12] Despite this, conscious decisions were made in the beginning to alter some of the work for television.

One of the first decisions made by the production team in their dramatisation was whether to iron out the discrepancies in the stories. Conan Doyle was writing these stories over a thirty-year period and mistakes crept in and the chronology got skewed. As Cox explains, Conan Doyle 'was often writing very fast for magazine deadlines and was not always consistent in his treatment of detail. He often contradicted himself, or altered quite basic points of characterisation from story to story'.[13] Therefore, although the series was intended to be a straight and faithful adaptation, the writings were not to be regarded as totally sacrosanct.

Most notable examples of discrepancies include the location of Watson's war wound, his wife calling him 'James' instead of 'John' and the retrospectively adding of stories during the period when Holmes was supposedly dead.[14] In order for the television series not to contradict itself some of these inconsistencies were either removed or changed. Michael Cox stressed that these choices were made carefully in order not to disrupt the feeling of authenticity for which they were striving:

> We found you just cannot take every fact in the adventures for gospel … because Conan Doyle wrote so fast and so fluently … and not surprisingly occasionally contradicted himself. As a result we had to supply some missing

[12] Dr Matthew Sweet, *Timeshift,* 2014.

[13] Michael Cox, *The Baker Street file: a guide to the appearance and habits of Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson specially prepared for the Granada television series The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (Ashcroft, 1997), 15

[14] 'The Man with the Twisted Lip' and 'Wisteria Lodge' respectively

> links… But we did NOT use this as an excuse to change the stories in any way[15]

However, simply by choosing which to change and which to leave the series showed some inconsistencies; for example, they keep a fictional snake in 'The Speckled Band' and incorrect racing rules in 'Silver Blaze'. To save time and for dramatic reasons, Watson in the series does not get married and then leave Baker Street to live elsewhere. The emphasis was going to be on the central Holmes/Watson friendship, which is at the heart of the stories, Cox explained 'we're not doing the marriage … the great strength of all the stories is that the relationship between Holmes and Watson is simply one of the greatest friendships in literature'.[16]

As this was a series (as opposed to a serial) the episodes needed to be standalone and able to be seen out of order, so any overriding story arch would not work. This avoids trying to fit all the stories in to one coherent timeline, a difficult task which is known as 'The Great Game' to Holmes fans. This also means that they do not have to deal with the question of how many times Watson was married, another inconsistency in the Conan Doyle stories. In addition, stories which did not involve Watson significantly were not considered, for example 'The Five Orange Pips'.

From a practical point of view, the stories had to be suitable for adaptation, for example, 'A Case of Identity' is a strong story but it would be impossible to work on television without revealing to the audience that the father is masquerading as a potential suitor for his daughter. Plus, Michael Cox was determined that 'The Final

[15] Haining, *The Television Sherlock Holmes,* 109
[16] Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 142

Problem' would be filmed in Switzerland, which meant that the other stories in the run could not be too expensive, which is why 'The Man with the Twisted Lip' and 'Silver Blaze' did not appear until *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. Yet there is also contradiction in the method of choosing stories, for example Michael Cox and John Hawkesworth wanted to avoid repetition yet both 'The Solitary Cyclist' and 'The Copper Beeches', which both centred around a governess in distress, were included in the first run.

In keeping with the majority of adaptations Watson is not used as the narrator for the majority of the stories, but without this 'voice' his character can become side-lined. In the Granada series there was a conscious effort to 'set the record straight' regarding Watson and move away from the bumbling sidekick stereotype he had become and to show the 'reasonable man, quite a dashing fellow with moderate intelligence and a definite sense of humour'.[17] As Watson was no longer the narrator, his part was increased to keep him as a prominent figure by allocating him extra dialogue, originally attributed to other characters, to increase his screen presence. This also allowed for some of Holmes' longer monologues to be broken up and made into a more dramatic two-way dialogue.

The fidelity to the original text was heavily promoted all the way through the series, lending weight to the concept that this was a canonical Holmes. In the titles for the series each episode was billed 'as written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle' and then the adaptor received second billing, for example 'dramatised by John Hawkesworth'. As Thomas Leitch commented on the obsession of some adaptations to align themselves with the original text, 'the more strongly films [and television] wish to

[17] Haining, *The Television Sherlock Holmes,* 111

identify themselves as adaptations, the more likely they are to list the authors of their source text in their titles … or above their titles'.[18] This extended to the titles of the series themselves, starting with *The Adventures* (1984) and continuing to *The Memoirs* (1994), each taking their title from the original compilation of stories. However, the episodes for the television series are not the short stories from each compendium, instead they have been taken from across the canon. For example, the television series *The Adventures* includes 'The Solitary Cyclist', 'The Dancing Men' and 'The Norwood Builder', taken from *The Return*; and 'The Naval Treaty', 'The Crooked Man', 'The Greek Interpreter', 'The Resident Patient' and 'The Final Problem', taken from *The Memoirs*. In this case, fidelity had to play second fiddle to dramatisation. It is important to note that Cox did not expect the series to last ten years, the focus was on producing the best thirteen-episode adaptation possible, and hope that it was popular enough to get a second series commissioned.[19] Therefore, no thought was given to the quality of what was left for later series, the main consideration was to adapt the best episodes that they could afford.

The production decisions made for *The Adventures* would set the tone of the remaining series, and also provide the reputation that the production as a whole enjoys. The intention in the beginning from the whole team was that the series 'would be an authentic venture, true to the spirit and intention of … Arthur Conan Doyle'.[20] This was successfully achieved, with critics like Philip French in *The Sunday Times* lauding it as 'the finest and fullest literary adaptation …well, since *The Jewel in the Crown*'.[21]

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[18] Thomas Leitch, 'Adaptation, the Genre', *Adaptation,* 1 (2) (2008b), 113
[19] Michael Cox, *A study in celluloid: a producer's account of Jeremy Brett as Sherlock Holmes* (Cambridge: Rupert Books, 1999)
[20] Davies, *Bending the willow*, 35
[21] As cited in Davies, *Bending the willow*, 42

3.3 Budget

By 1984, Granada had a reputation for the quality of their output and high production values, which continues with this series; the overall look is sumptuous and belies the relatively low budget. The delay in filming caused by the Sy Weintraub court case allowed time for the Baker Street set to be constructed, an impressive structure that added to the overall feeling of quality of the series. It also added to the overall impression of an idealised Victorian/Edwardian world that the producers were keen to recreate from the original stories. Producer Michael Cox had originally planned for 'a kind of Victorian London complex which would comprise of four streets, which could be turned into all sorts of locations'.[22] This would have been far too expensive and a compromise was reached that only Baker Street itself would be built.

When Michael Cox originally proposed the series, he had expected this version of Holmes to be produced the same way as previous adaptations, but David Plowright (after the success of big budget series like *Brideshead Revisited*) informed him that it would be done on film. The Holmes adaptations produced by the BBC in the 1960s had been shot on video using a multi-camera studio model rather than the more expensive film production. The Conan Doyle Estate had tried to persuade the BBC that shooting on film would make the series more attractive for overseas sales, but this had been rejected.[23] As John Ellis discusses, television production values in the 1980s were overall much higher, leading to the output looking 'really expensive' with a 'marked rise in … the amounts expended on the look, feel and atmosphere of a

[22] Ibid., 31
[23] Richard Hewett, "Essentially English: Sherlock Holmes at the BBC", *Journal of British Cinema and Television,* 13 (1) (2016), 1-18

drama'.[24] Thus, the Granada series was both in-keeping with drama production at the time, as well as matching the wishes of the Conan Doyle estate.

3.4 Film production

Recent advances in the way television was filmed meant that this was to be the first Holmes adaptation on British television to be given the big budget treatment. By recording it on film it could be sold to an overseas market and, as discussed, it added an extra air of quality to the production. Richard Hewett[25] examines the earlier BBC productions, and their failure to have the impact of the later Granada series, largely due to the fact that they were not shot on film. The 1951 short-lived series starring Alan Wheatley had been shown live, more in the style of a play rather than what we now recognise as television; what John Caughie describes as having 'the artistic values … of the theatrical event'.[26] In the early days of expensive videotape, it was common practice not to keep copies of programmes which were not considered to be culturally significant, and the early Holmes series have been a victim of this.[27]

As was usual practice at the time, the 1965 black and white Douglas Wilmer series was shot on videotape using a multi-camera set up with previously recorded exterior shots fed in. The actors would be given one-hour to film the fifty minute show, and retakes were not encouraged.[28] Douglas McNaughton discusses the 'telerecording' method used at this time, which continued to be recorded 'as live', which was

[24] John Ellis, "Importance, significance, cost and value: is an ITV canon possible?" in Johnson & Tunock eds. *ITV cultures : independent television over fifty years*, 48
[25] Hewett, "Essentially English: Sherlock Holmes at the BBC"
[26] John Caughie, "Before the golden age: early television drama", *Popular Television in Britain,* (1991), 25.
[27] Dick Fiddy, *Missing, Believed Wiped: Searching for the Lost Treasures of British Television* (British Film Institute, 2001).
[28] Michael Richardson, *Bowler hats and kinky boots : the unofficial and unauthorised guide to The Avengers* (Telos Publishing Ltd, 2014).

'deemed low quality and was largely unsuitable for sale to the lucrative US market'.[29] But the BBC did have export in mind and the series was recorded onto 35mm for export and, with a view to the US market, an all-film production was suggested as an American co-production.[30] But, as the BBC rejected the idea of a collaboration with the US, the series was still filmed in black and white for the home market, despite the US having begun the move to colour transmissions. ABC[31] had managed to sell *The Avengers* (1961-1969) as 'the last monochrome-produced television show sold to an American network'[32] on the understanding that subsequent series would be produced in colour. The Holmes series was stuck in a catch-22, without colour episodes it could not be sold to the US and without US investment it could not be produced in colour. After Wilmer refused to return to the role of Holmes in 1968 the BBC employed Peter Cushing for the subsequent series, which were filmed in colour but first shown in black and white in the UK.[33] But the series was still largely confined to the studio rather than filming on location and was not taken up by a US network.

As the Granada series had been pre-sold to the US it had the budget to produce the series on film, and thereby avoid some of the mistakes of the BBC's early series as there was now more of an expectation from audiences for the higher quality of film productions. The series was shown as part of PBS's *Mystery!* anthology series, leading to success for the production in the US, and acclaim for Brett as the first actor since Rathbone to become identified as Holmes.

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[29] Douglas McNaughton, "Video Film Recording: A New Production Paradigm For 1960s BBC Drama", *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television,* 34 (3) (2014), 390
[30] Hewett, "Essentially English: Sherlock Holmes at the BBC"
[31] Associated British Corporation, broadcast in the Midlands and North as part of ITV until 1968
[32] Richardson, *Bowler hats and kinky boots,* 167
[33] Hewett, "Essentially English: Sherlock Holmes at the BBC"

Despite being a 'film' series, the production has more in common with earlier BBC studio productions as opposed to the prestige output such as *Brideshead*. Richard Hewett offers guidelines as to what he defines as 'Studio Realism' (as opposed to 'Location Realism') to explain the differences between acting for these different types of production.[34] Using this as a guide we can see the correlation between the Granada production and the earlier BBC series. For example,

1. Actors are working primarily in a constructed space:

   The Granada series still relied on the construction of standing sets at the studios in Manchester where a large proportion of the filming would take place, including the Baker Street exterior and 221B living area. This was unlike the more prestige productions which had been wholly film affairs, with all scenes filmed on location for interior as well as exterior scenes.

2. Performances are prepared in advance:

   The Brett series followed the tradition of spending time rehearsing the performance before committing it to film. This was still quite common in the 1980s, going through everything in a rehearsal hall before moving to the studio set for filming.

5. Use of voice and body … still feature a greater degree of projection than would be employed in real life:

[34] Richard Hewett, "Acting for Auntie: from studio realism to location realism in BBC television drama, 1953-2008", (PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2012)

Brett's rather theatrical central performance as Holmes is very mannered, Paul Annett[35] describes how Brett had the tendency 'to go over the top so easily'.[36]

6. Physical movement is often designed to provide visual interest within the set, rather than deriving from character objectives:
   At this early stage Brett's Holmes is very lithe and energetic, for example his jumping over a chair and the boxing scene, both in 'The Solitary Cyclist'.

At the inception of the series one of the proviso from Granada had been the getting the right actor to play Holmes. As Michael Cox explains, this required 'suitably charismatic casting. For me, that meant a classical actor with a marvellous voice and the appearance of a Sidney Paget illustration … For Granada, it meant an actor who would be acceptable in the US market'.[37] By choosing Brett as the star, Cox made a conscious effort to use an actor with a wide experience in both the theatre and film. His stage background allows him to work the two-handed scenes set in Baker Street and contribute to the overall theatricality of the role. His experience on film is evident in the location shooting and the way he can under- as well as over-play for the camera.

[35] Director of 'A Scandal in Bohemia', 'The Solitary Cyclist' and 'The Copper Beeches'
[36] As cited in Davies, *Bending the willow* , 45
[37] Michael Cox and R. Dixon Smith, *Remembering Jeremy Brett* (Cambridge: Rupert Books, 1997), 7

3.5 Scheduling

As I have previously discussed, the choice of stories for the first series was crucial. The production team chose some of the strongest of the short stories, on the condition that they were not too expensive, relatively easy to adapt intact and did not exclude the Watson character. Neil McCaw suggests that there may have been an additional reason why these stories were chosen, and that by avoiding the more violent stories like 'The Five Orange Pips' the emphasis of the series was more on the 'game' element and 'says much about the TV 'product' manufactured by Granada'.[38] One other explanation for the more violent episodes not being chosen is the time that the programmes were due to be transmitted; at 9pm, on the watershed. The watershed had been introduced in the 1964 Television Act and after 9pm there had to 'be a gradual transition towards more adult material and sudden changes in tone should be avoided'.[39] Therefore, although this series was aimed at the more adult audience the production team still had to take into account 'the nature of the content, for example whether it's frightening, distressing, gory, sexually explicit, contains strong language'.[40]

The first part of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (consisting of seven episodes) was initially transmitted on consecutive Tuesday nights, 24 April to 5 June 1984. The choice of Tuesday night was not as peculiar as it might first appear now. Granada's highly successful *Brideshead Revisited* had been broadcast on a Tuesday night in 1981 and *The Jewel in the Crown* had finished its Tuesday night run a few weeks

[38] McCaw, *Adapting detective fiction*, 26
[39] Brian Simpson, *Children and Television*, (Continuum International Publishing, London, 2004), 91
[40] "Ofcom Broadcasting Code", *Channel 4 Producer's Handbook,* Web. http://www.channel4.com/producers-handbook/ofcom-broadcasting-code/protecting-under-18s-and-harm-and-offence/scheduling-and-the-watershed (Accessed: 14 August 2015).

before the Holmes series premiered.[41] This would signify that Granada and the production team had decided to promote this series as part of the growing heritage genre. Andrew Higson, and others, have argued that this genre was a promotion of an idyllic 'Englishness' in an effort to appeal to international audiences. American viewers 'enjoyed the experience of being voyeurs not only of an alien lifestyle in the past but in a foreign land … inhabited by people who actually speak English'.[42] The necessity of selling to the overseas market 'became ever more important within the increasingly market-driven context of British television broadcasting, in which the desire for economic (rather than artistic, aesthetic) success grew'.[43]

In this chapter I am focusing on the first thirteen episodes, produced by Michael Cox, under the banner of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Cox had been instrumental in getting the green light from Granada to make the series and his 'ambition was to make a thoroughly authentic and wholly faithful adaptation of the best cases of Sherlock Holmes'.[44] In order to demonstrate the impact of these early production decisions I have chosen to do an in-depth examination of key episodes from the series.

3.6 *The Adventures* (1984-1985); produced by Michael Cox

The original intention had been to begin with a two-hour *The Sign of Four*[45] to introduce audiences to the new Holmes and Watson, but a rival production starring

[41] Apart from the opening episodes, which were shown on a Monday
[42] Sue Parrill, *Jane Austen on film and television: a critical study of the adaptations*, (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 2002), 6
[43] McCaw, *Adapting detective fiction*, 22
[44] Haining, *The Television Sherlock Holmes,* 100
[45] R Dixon Smith, *Jeremy Brett and David Burke: An Adventure in Canonical Fidelity*, (University of Minnesota Libraries, 1986)

Ian Richardson meant that they changed tack to focus on the short stories. This worked in their favour as the short stories are the more famous and better lend themselves to adaptation. During the hiatus, due to the court case with Sy Weintraub over the rights to the characters, the Granada production team took the extra time to become immersed in their core text, reading and re-reading the stories for clues to add an extra layer for authenticity and to ensure that they were always referring back to the original for inspiration. It also allowed time for the installation of the Baker Street facade and the almost perfect recreation of Holmes' rooms as they had appeared in *The Strand.* The set itself even had a lived in feel about it, reinforcing this view this Holmes and Watson relationship was established. In his guide to the series, Peter Haining describes the impression the set evoked;

> It has an authentic feel about it, the atmosphere slightly dusty and tinged by the smell of gas lighting. The carpets and chairs are slightly worn… and the place is not over-furnished. There, too, are the familiar slipper, the bullet-mark initials on the wall, the violin and the pipes which have been firmly entrenched in the imagination of every Sherlockian since he or she first discovered the sacred canon of adventures[46]

By the time they were ready to enter production, the team were 'steeped in Sherlockian lore'.[47] In order to preserve the feeling of authenticity, it was essential that this knowledge was passed to the whole team. Michael Cox and other senior members of the team went through the canon to find any useful piece of information and compiled it in a manual. This was eventually published as *The Baker*

[46] Ibid., 152
[47] Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 122

Street File: A Guide to the Appearance and Habits of Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson and contained nearly 1,200 listings. As the manual itself proclaims, it is the 'total immersion in the world of Holmes and Watson produced the accreditation of detail which adds to our enjoyment of period drama'.[48] In addition, John Hawkesworth suggested that writers should consult primary sources, such as newspapers, to include accurate period flavour to their scripts; another example of non-canonical texts being introduced in the name of dramatisation.

As we have seen, necessary production decisions were made to aid the dramatisation of the stories and allow them to transfer to the screen, but any amendments had to be within the 'spirit' of the books.[49] As Leitch noted, 'even as the series remains faithful to the exterior details of Holmes's world, it constantly seeks to improve Doyle's stories by making them more realistic, suspenseful, heartfelt, or mysterious'.[50] Some smaller amendments were made based on logistical decisions – for example, the meeting between two of the protagonists in 'The Crooked Man' was moved to a Salvation Army Hall to add atmosphere and take advantage of the filming process to add colour to the scene. Jeremy Brett was initially against the change as it deviated from the original, which he felt was more intimate, but he was overruled and the more dramatic setting was used. Michael Cox himself felt that the adaptation of 'The Crooked Man' had been not been a success as it was not one of Doyle's stronger stories to begin with, which anticipated some of the problems of later series.

[48] Cox, *The Baker Street file*, 12
[49] Cox, *A study in celluloid*
[50] Leitch, *Film adaptation and its discontents*, 227

Like many producers before him, Cox also felt the need to bring in Moriarty, who was given more involvement in the plot rather than just appearing in 'The Final Problem'. The character of Moriarty, as Holmes' nemesis, is well known and a fan favourite but appears very little in the canon. He suddenly appears as 'the Napoleon of crime'[51] in what was supposed to be the final Holmes story, but has since become entrenched in Holmes folklore. In the Granada series he is credited with masterminding the Red-Headed League and with an attempt to steal the Mona Lisa. These work well dramatically, setting up a rivalry that will inevitably lead to the final confrontation between him and Holmes but again is adding something which was not there in the original Doyle.

Another example would be the introduction of a pre-titles sequence to set the scene and engage the audience. The majority of the stories begin with the client consulting Holmes at Baker Street and telling him their story. To make this more interesting for the viewer we instead see the incidents at the beginning, and dramatically they are an improvement. In television, it is essential to capture and hold the attention of the viewer so that they will continue to watch the programme and not channel hop, so it is important that the first few minutes are suitably interesting and dramatic. The Baker Street scenes were also given more variety, moving them from the rooms shared by Holmes and Watson to locations like the barber shop in 'The Resident Patient'.

Despite not receiving high ratings, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* was deemed a success, promoted by Granada as 'one of the most faithful adaptations'.[52] It was also

[51] Conan Doyle, Arthur. "The Adventure of the Final Problem" in *The Complete Sherlock Holmes Collection"* (Bedford Parks Books, New York, 2010)
[52] *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes,* Granada Press pack

praised among the critics, with *The Daily Telegraph* declaring 'the whole adaptation was precisely faithful to the original'.[53]

3.7 'A Scandal in Bohemia' (1984)

In the first short story written for *The Strand* magazine, Holmes is engaged by the King of Bohemia to retrieve an incriminating photograph held by his former lover, Irene Adler. Previous attempts by the King's men have failed and he comes to Holmes somewhat as a last resort. Holmes undertakes initial reconnaissance and gathers information whilst disguised as a groom hand. Whilst tailing her, still in disguise, he unwittingly acts as a witness to her marriage. He then dons the disguise of a clergy man and stages a fight outside Irene Adler's home in order to gain admittance. After tricking Irene into thinking there is a fire, Holmes deduces her secret hiding place and returns the next day to retrieve the photo. In the meantime, realising she has been tricked, and by whom, Irene Adler and her new husband have departed, taking the photograph with them. Holmes is impressed by her ingenuity and asks for a photo of her as a souvenir of how she had manoeuvred him.

I have chosen to examine 'A Scandal in Bohemia' in detail because, although not the first to be filmed, it was the first screened. Michael Cox felt that it was such an important and iconic story that his Holmes and Watson should feel 'reasonably comfortable in their roles, especially Brett, before he embarked on the filming of 'Scandal'.'[54] It sets the style for the series as a whole and is the template for future episodes. In addition, it was the opening story for *The Strand* which again emphasises a link between the canon and this series.

[53] Ibid.
[54] Davies, *Bending the willow*, 31

3.7.1 Production decisions

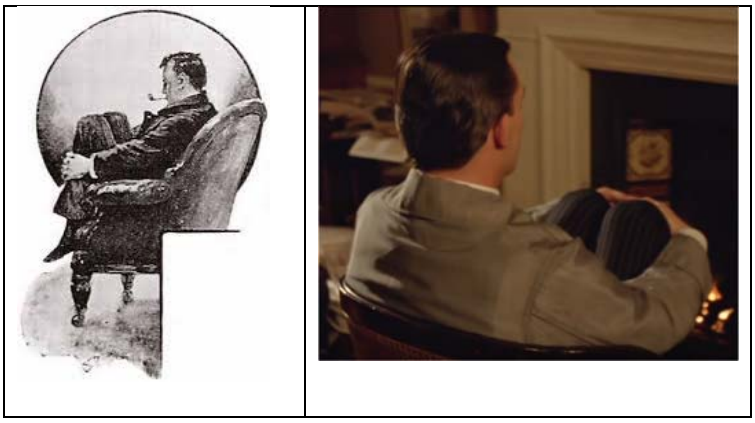
As this is the first episode in a new Holmes/Watson series, these versions of the characters need to be introduced to the audience. The difficulty here is that they are not starting with *A Study in Scarlet*, and the audience does not see the characters meet; they have a long-established relationship before we get to them. Nevertheless, this Holmes and Watson still need to be introduced to the audience. An element of introduction contributes to the beginning of the episode, by including the device of Watson's narration, which is rarely used throughout the rest of the series.

Continuing the theme of mainly keeping to Doyle's text, the episode includes a section originally from *The Sign of Four* novel, regarding Watson admonishing Holmes over his drug taking. This is indicative of the original intention of returning to Doyle and using his text, but using it in a different place for dramatic purposes. As this is an introductory episode, it appears that they are hitting as many marks as possible as a nod to audience expectations. On our first viewing, the exterior of Baker Street is shrouded in fog and there is a hansom cab driving along the road. As one critic wrote, it 'faithfully recreates the Victorian milieu'.[55] The episode ends with Holmes playing the violin, the only things missing are the deerstalker and cape, as Brett himself observed, '…what with the drugs thing at the beginning and the disguises – then if I play the violin at the end, the critics are going to say that I'm trying to do all the Holmes things at once'.[56]

[55] Neil McCaw, "The politics of adaptation" in *Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle: multi-media afterlives*, 37
[56] Cited in Davies, *Bending the willow* , 41

Because the decision was made not to include Watson's wife, the beginning of the story is also changed to remove all mentions of her. Unfortunately, because of this we lose one of Holmes' best deduction scenes as he accurately speculates on Watson's home life and domestic arrangements. This is a shame as Conan Doyle only did these deductions in the early stories; they are much loved by fans and are such a memorable part of the iconography of the character. Another conscious decision was to remove some of the errors present in the original text. For example, in the original story Holmes' landlady is erroneously called Mrs Turner, for continuity reasons this is changed in the episode itself to Mrs Hudson.

The link to Paget is also stressed from the beginning, including being replicated for the advert bumpers and the closing titles. When we first see Brett as Holmes he is in classic Paget pose of sitting with his knees up, although this is taken from his illustrations of 'The Red-Headed League'.



In the stories, we are told that Holmes is a master of disguise and we get two examples of that in this episode. Brett is clearly enjoying himself and, again, there is a strong nod to Paget with excellent work done by the costume and make up

departments.[57] Exploring Holmes' time in disguise in more detail contributes to the dramatising of the original story, instead of being told what happened, we get to see it for ourselves.



[58]

3.7.2 Film production

As this was the first episode broadcast we can view it as a template, giving the audience an idea of the style they can expect for the remainder of the series.

We begin not in Baker Street but with an opening teaser of a burglary at Adler's residence, which is not shown in Doyle (only referred to later by the King). This is rather in keeping with the overall style of the Granada series, and is a frequently used television ploy to grab the audience's attention and keep them watching. Elizabeth Trembley commends Cox's ability to convey the 'intangible spirit of the

[57] Fig 1 Paget, *The Red-Headed League*, Holmes Archive, accessed 3 June 2016, http://holmesarchive.com/adventures/the-red-headed-league
Fig 2 Jeremy Brett in *A Scandal in Bohemia*
[58] Ibid.

original' in a different medium. Therefore, 'what was formerly conveyed in dialogue and description must now appear in visual imagery and spoken words'.[59]

Trembley also stresses the importance of using Watson's first person narration (which would only be used twice more in the series). Watson's importance as a character in the stories is his role as author, reporting the action to the readers; we only hear what he tells us.[60] By using his narration to begin the episode the producers are signifying the centrality of the character in this adaptation and emphasising the Holmes/Watson relationship. The camera is also used throughout to convey Watson's point of view, including in our first view of Brett as Holmes, and the audience will continue to see Holmes from Watson's point of view throughout the rest of the scene.

Although the voice over would only be used intermittently throughout the series, we continually return to Watson as narrator of the stories – information is conveyed to the audience by him or is seen from his point of view. The audience is only privy to the same information as Watson, as Edward Hardwicke commented, 'Dr Watson is really always the audience. I think that he presents what the viewers … want – that's their viewpoint'.[61]

Because of this a large proportion is told in flashback as Watson hears it for the first time. In this episode, the relationship between the King and Irene is also explored in more detail as we see snapshots of their affair. What we see is from the imagination of episode writer John Hawkesworth rather than Doyle but it adds to the episode

[59] As cited in Reynolds, *It's a Print!,* 13
[60] With the exception of 'The Lion's Mane', which is told by Holmes himself
[61] As cited in Reynolds, *It's a Print!,* 18

and does not detract, visualising the story for television and breaking up an otherwise long scene at Baker Street.

As previously stated, early writers were encouraged to add historical details to give their scripts depth. An example included in this episode is Holmes discussing an upcoming Tchaikovsky concert he wishes to attend. Script advisor John Hawkesworth 'insisted that writers should consult a few back numbers of *The Times* before introducing non-canonical flourishes in to their scripts'.[62]

The written stories were often open-ended, and in this series the producers have added additional scenes to bring the stories to an emotional close. As with the beginning scene, the audience is privy to something that Watson is not – in this case, Irene throwing away the incriminating photograph. Elizabeth Trembley describes this as adding scenes 'to enhance the transfer of the narratives' spirit to the new filmic medium'.[63] I will discuss this in more detail in the next example, 'The Greek Interpreter'.

3.8 'The Greek Interpreter' (1985)

Mycroft Holmes sets his younger sibling a challenge – to explain the strange story of Mr Melas, who had been employed to act as translator for a business transaction. However, when arriving at the venue for the meeting, he becomes aware that he has unwittingly become embroiled in a kidnapping. A Greek man, Kratides, is being held against his will and tortured to force him to sign over his sister Sophy's fortune.

[62] Cox, *The Baker Street file*, 12
[63] Reynolds, *It's a Print!,* 21

After escaping and consulting the Holmes brothers Mr Melas finds himself in grave danger; they are in time to save him but not to prevent the villains from escaping or the death of Kratides.

'The Greek Interpreter' was broadcast as episode nine, forming part of the second half of *The Adventures* series. By this point, the production team was prospering and had established their series as a faithful adaptation of the Holmes canon. This is the first episode to make noticeable departures from the original text and to value drama over fidelity. The success of the episode would act as justification for later series to make rewrites that are more substantial as the quality of the original material declined. 'The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter' has one of the stronger plots in the canon and overall the televised version continues to keep faithfully to the original. The primary difference between this episode and the original story is the denouement. In the original, after solving the puzzle and discovering the perpetrators have escaped, the story comes to an abrupt end; Michael Cox describes Conan Doyle's tendency for 'writing very fast for magazine deadlines'.[64] In the original stories the emphasis is always on the puzzle and not the outcome, but the series chooses to add definite conclusions, which is more in-keeping with the tradition of television. Cartmell and Whelehan support the amending of original texts for the screen as 'any film that prioritises transposition over interpretation is unlikely to recognise the pitfalls and, will, moreover, spectacularly fail'.[65]

[64] Cox, *The Baker Street file*, 15
[65] Deborah Cartmell & Imelda Whelehan. "Harry Potter and the Fidelity Debate" in *Books in motion: adaptation, intertextuality, authorship* ed. Mireia Aragay, (Rodopi, 2005), 48

3.8.1 Production decisions

As previously discussed there are only three times in the series when Watson's voice over narration is used; in the first episode by way of introduction, at the end to present Moriarty, and in this episode with Mycroft. As this is not included in the rest of the series, the addition of narration appears to be used for significant moments, signposting some of the more famous elements of the stories – the woman, the Professor and, as it is used here, for Mycroft. Although appearing in only four Conan Doyle stories (and here for the first time in the twenty fourth), he is nonetheless one of the more recognisable constituents of the stories, thanks in part to his prominence in earlier Holmes adaptations and pastiches.

The reason we are given in the story for Mycroft calling in his brother and not investigating himself is that he refuses to leave the Diogenes Club but, in the episode, he is part of the train adventure. This is very active for someone we have been told is sedentary and we have further humour seeing the large Mycroft running for the train. Mycroft is shown as very devious, eating with the main villain before picking his pocket to remove the gun he has there. Again, this is adding an extra dimension to a character, which we are not told a lot about in the original story. Charles Gray's impact as Mycroft would allow him to return in later episodes, as a last-minute substitution, standing in first for Hargreaves in 'The Golden Pince-Nez' and then Brett in 'The Mazarin Stone'.

The production team made the decision to expand the original ending to include the villains being caught. To heighten the drama a chase sequence was included with Holmes, Watson and Mycroft finally catching them on a train as they try to escape.

This allows for a very definite conclusion, where the bad guys are caught and punished and is much more in-keeping with the tradition of detective stories on television. This chase sequence runs for approximately fifteen minutes, roughly one third of the entire episode length, and adds a level of excitement and drama not seen before in the series. It is very effective dramatically and it does not jar with the style of the series so far. It also allows for a satisfactory ending, seeing the perpetrators being brought to justice rather than just being told that they have been killed later, presumably in an act of revenge. There is also added humour provided by some extra Holmes deductions of occupants on the train, 'Left-handed printer from Deptford. His elder brother drinks too much and is pained by his liver… She's a machinist from Bradford going on holiday to find romance'.[66]

While the ending of the episode owes little to Conan Doyle, it does pay homage to Hitchcock films, especially in the use of the train setting, including *The 39 Steps* (1935), *The Lady Vanishes* (1938) and *Strangers on a Train* (1951); the first two in particular have characters who climb around the outside of the train to avoid their pursuers. With the theme of the chase, this episode seems to subvert itself from 'detective fiction' towards the suspense/thriller genre, by adding an extra layer of tension and a more definite climax. It is a very clever use of dramatisation to make a good written a story a good episode of television, as Brian Davis commented, '[W]henever thriller scriptwriters run out of fresh ideas or novel twists, they can, and usually do, fall back on the genre's most popular shock device, the chase'.[67]

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[66] *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, series 2 episode 3, The Greek Interpreter*. ITV. 1 September 1985.

[67] As cited in Charles Derry, *The suspense thriller: films in the shadow of Alfred Hitchcock* (Jefferson, N. C.; London: McFarland, 1988), 9

The sequence also borrows heavily from the early American Film Noir genre, for example, with the newly added themes of the amoral and ambiguous female character, and multiple betrayals.[68] Michael Cox has stated that of one his favourite films was *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941), which is perhaps why the character of Kemp, played by George Costigan, is portrayed very much in the Peter Lorre mould of villains. In the story he is described as 'a small, mean-looking, middle-aged man with rounded shoulders' and 'he spoke in a nervous, jerky fashion, and with little giggling laughs in between, but somehow he impressed me with fear more than the other'.[69] From this, they have drawn a clear parallel to Lorre's Joel Cairo from the 1941 film and used that as the inspiration for the characterisation.

These are not subtle references to the suspense and thriller genres, with only 15 minutes to convey this to the audience the production team rely on well-known indicators, which the audience would understand and notice quickly. For a team, which is making a point to move away from pastiche in Homes fiction, they are almost veering in to a Hitchcock imitation for the purpose of dramatisation. This new ending is definitely thrilling in a story where not a lot happens, and it paves the way for later series, which relied on drama and style to cover up weaknesses in the plot. Holmes walking away at the end into the steam from the train is pure Victorian Gothic melodrama.

Even with the adding of extra dramatic elements, like the new chase ending, the first two-thirds of the episode still contains all the essentials from the short story, and

[68] Mark T Conard, *The philosophy of film noir* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky; London: Eurospan [distributor], 2006).
[69] Conan Doyle, Arthur. "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter" in *The Complete Sherlock Holmes Collection"* (Bedford Parks Books, New York, 2010)

therefore was still recognisable from the original. However, the success of this would justify the 'improving' and 'expanding' of later episodes, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

3.8.2 Budget

One point Michael Cox had to consider when choosing the thirteen stories for *The Adventures* was the cost of filming. He was determined to travel to Switzerland for 'The Final Problem' and therefore money had to be saved elsewhere to pay for it. As Cox explains, 'the producer of a series can balance his budget by economising on a couple of films in order to pay for a particularly expensive one… But there was a limit to the areas of the budget which he could control'.[70] The unique costs for each programme were budgeted 'somewhere between £300,000 and £350,000'[71] and it was the producer's responsibility to ensure most of this could be seen on screen.

The cost of location shooting on film, as opposed to shooting on the 221B set, was also more expensive, 'not just because of the cost of stock and processing, but because the higher the ratio, the more time is spent in the editing room, sorting out the rushes, the rough assembly and the final cut'.[72] This may explain why the series was not shot exclusively on location and each episode included plenty of shooting on the standing sets, such as the living room of 221B. 'The Greek Interpreter' included filming at locations around Cheshire for Myrtles' house and the Diogenes Club, sticking to sites close to their Manchester base to limit costs. But the final chase sequence was partly shot on the heritage Bluebell Railway in East Sussex, a rare

[70] Cox, *A study in celluloid,* 60
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., 61

journey South for the production and we have to assume it was due to the lack of suitable locations closer to Manchester.

3.9 Conclusion

Neil McCaw argues that *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* 'so clearly rejected the ethos of pastiche' that the fidelity was 'seen as an indicator cultural value …there was a perceived *duty* to be loyal to the originating sources'.[73] By openly declaring the intention of this series 'to set the record straight' on Holmes, the production team were setting out to make something, as Matthew Sweet declares, 'self-consciously definitive and canonical'. Neil McCaw likens *The Adventures* to the 'cult of authenticity'';[74] the attention to detail is almost fetishistic, including the production of a guidebook to their version of authenticity. This was Michael Cox's personal selection of what was considered faithful, what was important enough to keep and, by omission, what would be disregarded. For example, the canon was taken as the *The Strand*, not just the stories but the Paget illustrations as well. As PD James explains, 'these stories were illustrated … we know what Sherlock looks like',[75] and by referencing these Cox maintains the concept, if not the actuality, of fidelity and authenticity.

The commitment to 'doing it right' was underscored by the impression that the series was given the big budget treatment. As John Ellis states, by this time there was an expectation that prestige productions would be made on film,[76] and thereby inferring that something made on film must be prestige. Granada had a reputation

[73] McCaw, "The politics of adaptation", 38
[74] McCaw, *Adapting detective fiction*, 24
[75] *Timeshift,* 2014.
[76] Ellis, "The Literary Adaptation"

for quality and high production values and the recreation of Baker Street and the exterior shots with lots of extras and hansom cabs would reinforce this idea. But, unlike previous series like *Brideshead Revisited* and *The Jewel in the Crown*, the impression of big budget was being achieved for a moderate outlay. While the series was shot using the single camera technique of esteemed productions, costs were kept down by using standing studio sets for interior and exterior filming. For example, while the Baker Street set looked imposing it was only a facade erected in Manchester, as its construction was cheaper than filming on location. But the series presented an illusion of high quality, Nancy Banks-Smith described *The Adventures* as being 'so polished that, if you rub your hand over it, you would leave greasy finger marks, so don't'.[77]

The impression of prestige heritage drama continued with the scheduling and the timeslot that *The Adventures* was broadcast in. When the Douglas Wilmer series was broadcast in 1965 14.6 million homes had a television, rising to 16.4 million for the Cushing series in 1968. By March 1984 20.4 million homes had a television capable of receiving the ITV network.[78] By broadcasting *The Adventures* at 9pm on a Tuesday, Granada was associating the series with the heritage television genre, such as *The Jewel in the Crown,* but also the previous BBC series from the 1960s. The original run of the Douglas Wilmer episodes had been broadcast pre-watershed on a Saturday but did not achieve high ratings until it was repeated (again in a pre-watershed timeslot) on a Monday. Following this the Peter Cushing series was originally shown Monday nights, in the same first post-watershed timeslot as the later Brett Granada series.

[77] As cited in Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 124
[78] "TV Ownership", *BARB,* accessed 10 November 2015, http://www.barb.co.uk/resources/tv-ownership/

The reputation for quality, fidelity and authenticity that the Brett adaptation Holmes retains is derived from the care and attention to detail that was put into this series. The series was promoted as returning to the Conan Doyle canon, however, as previously discussed, alterations were made in the name of being true 'to the spirit', if not the actuality, of the original. In the next chapter I will discuss the later series, and how the industrial conditions and production decisions changed the direction of the series.

4 June Wyndham Davies era

In this chapter I will discuss what happened when Michael Cox stepped down as producer, from *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1986-88) onwards. By selecting the most filmable stories for the first two series the production team soon realised that what was left would require modification in order to make them work for television. As well as the change in production style the change in the way television was produced generally which impacted on the series. The ITV franchise bids of 1990 would lead to a major restructuring of Granada, including the loss of key staff, and the way that costing for series was apportioned. I will also discuss how the popularity of traditional heritage television began to wane, with the change towards longer episodes and a more modern interpretation of the genre with programmes like *Morse*. There were multiple factors which would affect the style for the series, which had been set with *The Adventures*, not all of which were within the control of the production team or Granada. Cast illness, availability and changes all impacted on the final product and the original intention to produce the most faithful version of the stories.

4.1 *The Return* (1986-88), *The Case-Book* (1991-1993) and *The Memoirs* (1994)

After the success of *The Adventures*, Michael Cox stepped down as producer and handed over the day-to-day work to June Wyndham Davies, with Cox remaining on for the time being as executive producer. While Cox had been a Holmes fan and was instrumental in bringing the series to the screen and setting the style, June Wyndham Davies was a more traditional television producer. Unlike Cox she was not

based in Manchester, where filming took place, she remained in London and therefore didn't have the hands-on approach of Cox. Cox described their different approaches;

> It is also true to say that she and I approached the series from different angles. I was the Holmes enthusiast, concerned to retain the underlying spirit of the original stories, whereas June was more interested in the highly polished surface. I doubt if this is an assignment she would have chosen for herself[1]

It became increasingly difficult to maintain the reputation of the series, and keep the balance of quality and fidelity that the previous series had been praised for. This was not distinct to the Holmes production team but across television as a whole, Murroni and Irvine observe that;

> The quality of British television programmes became an issue following the radical changes in regulation, structure and working conditions which have taken place in the industry from the early 1980s to mid-1990s. Pressures to cut costs in programme making took place alongside the industry changes. Many commentators have queried whether competitive pressures in the form of lower budgets for programmes and the bidding down of hourly wage rates have reduced the quality of programmes[2].

[1] Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 136
[2] Shirley Dex & Roger Sewell, "Considerations of Quality in British Television Production: A Bayesian Statistical Analysis" *Research Papers in Management Studies* (University of Cambridge), 3

It is very difficult to find a direct correlation between the amount of money spent on a series and the overall quality of the finished product. As a generalisation, the more something costs the better quality it is, or is perceived to be, but this is difficult to demonstrate in terms of television output. We should also consider the mandate of television to educate the audience and whether the cultural impact of a programme has any value, leading back to Charlotte Brunsdon's argument as to what can be regarded as a quality adaptation. As Collins, Graham and Locksley point out, budget cuts do not necessarily mean a reduction in quality;

> The problem remains, however, to identify these savings which are not detrimental to quality, and to construct a system which provides incentives both to identify and implement such savings, while at the same time maintaining quality[3]

In addition to the imposed budget restrictions, by the time that they reached *The Case-Book* (1991), the main issue was that they had run out of the most filmable stories. Earlier series had picked the best of Conan Doyle's *Strand* stories, and what was left would require reworking in order to make them good television. As David Stuart Davies summarised, 'with a much-reduced budget, an ailing leading actor and the best stories already filmed, the only path open to them led downwards'.[4] The production had already turned twenty-six of the stories into television, but all they had left were the weaker stories. However, the selection included in *The Case-Book* is often surprising; 'The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax' requiring extensive (and expensive) location work despite a restricted budget for the series, 'The

[3] Richard Collins, Nicholas Garnham and Gareth Locksley, 'The economics of television', *The UK Case, London*, (1988), 24
[4] Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 145

Creeping Man' is an unsubstantial story which requires major reworking and 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery' included a flashback to Australia. A review in the *Yorkshire Post* summed it up, 'while the centre holds in this quality series, the edges are now beginning to fray a little'.[5]

4.2 Production decisions

The Adventures had proved a hit with critics, who especially noted the quality of the series, and the care and attention that had gone into it. In *The Guardian* Nancy Banks-Smith called the series 'luxurious, even luscious ... It is the best butter'.[6] But once this reputation had been established, Granada appeared to become less concerned about retaining it and especially for the later series, the show was finding it harder to observe the standards it had previously achieved. This is not specific to this series but indicative of the television industry as a whole, a reputation for quality becomes more important that the actual quality. If we take a Bayesian perspective, a 'consumer who is uncertain about the quality of an information source will infer that the source is of higher quality when its reports conform to the consumer's prior expectations'.[7] Therefore, the quality of the earlier series, as well as that of the Granada brand itself, would infer a status of quality across the series as a whole.

With its reputation established, part way through the second half of *The Return* the series moved into feature length, two-hour episodes. According the official Granada press pack for the inaugural feature-length episode, *The Sign of Four* was

[5] Ibid., 154
[6] Cited in Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 124
[7] Matthewn Gentzkow and Jesse Shapiro, 'Media Bias and Reputation'. *Journal of Political Economy* 114.2 (2006): 280

commissioned to acknowledge the centenary of Holmes' first appearance. If this was the sole reason then it's curious why they didn't chose the original Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet*. Both novels have their problems when it comes to adapting to the screen – they both include lengthy flashback sequences which halt the action. Thanks, in part, to a strong supporting performance by John Thaw, the episode was well received and the experiment was repeated for the feature length *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and three subsequent stories.

After *The Return*, it was decided to focus on the two-hour format, and *The Master Blackmailer* (1992) required a lot of additional material to fill the timeslot and expanded on Milverton's blackmailing activities. While not faithful to Conan Doyle's original story, it could be argued that the opening out of the story is still in-keeping with the original production directive of showing what was previously only mentioned. The main weakness is the addition of Holmes' relationship with Milverton's maid. While in the story we are simply told that he has become engaged to her in order to gather information, the television show decides to explore the relationship in detail, as well as a controversial kissing scene, which received much publicity in the press. But on the whole *The Master Blackmailer* was deemed a success, with *The Daily Telegraph* summing it up as 'a fairly enjoyable two hours, but there was a definite feeling of things being stretched'.[8]

However, subsequent episodes *The Last Vampyre* (1993) and *The Eligible Bachelor* (1993) marked a low in the series; the stories bear little resemblance to the original, as seen in the change of titles. The series had finally lost sight of the original intention of fidelity and conveying the Holmes of the original stories. *Bachelor* also

[8] Cited in Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 161

led Dame Jean Conan Doyle to criticise the production, further damaging its claim to fidelity.[9] The failure of *Vampyre* and *Bachelor* led to Granada dropping plans to continue with the longer format,[10] and there was a distinct possibility that the series would be cancelled altogether as Holmes was no longer proving popular with the critics, the public or the new management of Granada. *Bachelor* was also the first occasion when Jeremy Brett's manic depression openly influenced the quality of the finished product and his physical illness would impact on the production of the final series.

The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes (1994) would be back to the one-hour format that the show had previously flourished in. But the series was only commissioned at the last minute, and June Wyndham Davies felt that rather trying to stretch the lesser quality Conan Doyle stories, even to one-hour shows, maybe the time had come to go straight to pastiche and commission brand new stories? The last two feature-length episodes had been bordering on pastiche, which had been the complaint of both Sherlockians and the critics, but it would avoid the criticism for radically altering the original. But the idea was rejected by Jeremy Brett, who had recovered from his latest manic spell and his 'I hate Sherlock' phase. He was hurt by the bad reviews and criticism from the fans and the Conan Doyle Estate, and if he was going to play Holmes again it had to be based on the Conan Doyle stories. The signs of quick writing and rewriting are everywhere in this series, which pays little attention to the original Doyle or the style of the earlier shows. In an attempt to cover the cracks and maintain their reputation as quality drama the episodes are heavily stylised and often rely on melodrama. For example, instead of dying from a chill the victim in

[9] Ibid., 171
[10] Ibid., 172

'The Three Gables' dies form injuries received from Mrs Klein's hired boxers, who also beat Watson while he stands guard on the house. This is a level of violence not found in Doyle's work as a whole, let alone in the original text, and gives the whole episode a feeling of drama for drama's sake.

After previously padding three short stories into feature length episodes, *The Memoirs* does the opposite by mashing together 'The Three Garidebs' and 'The Mazarin Stone'. It could be argued that the production team had learnt their lesson about padding, but the resulting episode doesn't work, and feels like what it is – two different stories carelessly run together at the end. 'The Three Garidebs' had been rejected earlier in the run due to its similarity with 'The Red-Headed League', so it is curious why they chose to film it now. Due to Brett's indisposition, the episode was hastily rewritten to include Mycroft as the senior detective, with the younger Holmes appearing at the beginning and finish to bookend the episode. One of the major themes of the early series had been the Holmes/Watson relationship, and yet the series had moved so far away from this that they miss the opportunity to put one of the most tender moments from the canon on screen. When Watson is shot in 'The Three Garidebs' short story Holmes rushes over to him with a cry of 'My Watson' and attacks the villain, Winter, in his distraught state. It is a moment which is much loved by Holmes fans and it conveys exactly the message that the production team had earlier valued so highly. Any episode without Brett would have been difficult but this cannot be used as an excuse because the choice of stories had already been made before the last-minute substitution for Mycroft. Even with the inclusion of Brett as Holmes this would have been a weak episode, illustrating very clearly the rushed nature of the series and an attitude of 'that will have to do', far away from the meticulous nature of previous series.

The series, while not a return to form, is an improvement on *Vampyre* and *Bachelor*. The clever use of shots used to convey Russia in 'The Golden Pince-Nez' manages to disguise the low budget, and the production overall manages an adequate level of style whilst on a shoestring. 'The Dying Detective' superimposes a back story to give a motive, hiding the fact that the actual Doyle text is only in the last act of the film. But this is no different to adding context to Milverton's blackmailing in *The Master Blackmailer* and not the worst offender of padding in the series by a long way. It was, however, an unfortunate choice of story given the state of Brett's health at the time. 'The Adventure of the Red-Circle' is probably the strongest story of the series, and as such avoids a major reworking, but does, for some reason, include a new character and having Emilia present at the fight between Gorgiano and Gennaro rather than arriving afterwards. The series ends on a somewhat downbeat note, perhaps indicative of Brett's illness affecting the mood of the series as a whole.

4.3 Budget

In the second series of *The Adventures* 'The Final Problem' was filmed in Switzerland to give an authentic feel to the confrontation between Holmes and Moriarty. In *The Return*, extra shots were filmed in Wales as the budget couldn't stretch to going abroad again. Yet, when the time came to film the feature length *The Sign of Four* (1987), this was done as a lavish production and filmed on expensive 35mm. The first foray into two-hour Holmes works very well, partly due to the impressive production and generous budget, a style of programme that Granada had specialised in earlier in the decade.

But, as writer Jeremy Paul commented, 'each new series had to tough it out against the money'.[11] Budget cuts were to compromise later series, for example *The Hound of the Baskervilles* required major rewrites to accommodate these cuts. The standing sets (Baker Street, inside 221B) were still there, but it was becoming harder to make the production as a whole feel sumptuous and quality. As screenwriter Trevor Bowen commented, 'there is nothing more ludicrous than a television company groping through one of its periodic fits of parsimony. They've got this marvellous product with a huge following ... and they mess it up by not allowing us to do it properly'.[12]

This cost cutting continued in the following full series and *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (1991-93) was described by Michael Cox as 'Shoestring Holmes'.[13] Which is why it is interesting that they chose to include 'The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax', a story set in Switzerland. As overseas filming was now out of the question, a location in the UK was sought to double for Lausanne, preferably near the Manchester base. When the Lake District was chosen, the decision was made that rather than pretend it was Switzerland, just to rewrite the story to take place there. Unlike the previous change of location in *The Hound*, this one was acknowledged by the script and, as one major change was allowed, other smaller ones were also included.

While the economic constraints on the production could be used as an excuse to make amendments to the stories, other external factors were beginning to impact the final product. Cox's original vision had now changed so much that even he was

[11] Finch et al, *Granada Television : the first generation,* 65
[12] Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 144
[13] Ibid., 152

revising it, when describing the changes to 'The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax', he argued that the result 'is quite different from the original story although the version meets Doyle's at several key points and is, I hope, true to the spirit if not the letter'.[14] Being true to the 'spirit' has been the justification of every version of Holmes and often used as an excuse to take liberties with the original.

But this was not unique to the Holmes production, or even Granada, but across the whole of the ITV companies. Turner and Lourenco discuss that after the 1990 Broadcasting Act and franchise renegotiations, productions were outsourced and reemployed as freelance, the uncertainty of these commissions lead to enormous pressures to cut production costs through having to bid for franchises and budgets.[15] As it is generally cheaper to buy in a ready-made production than fund one, it is also a method of cost cutting. In addition, an extra layer of competition was introduced, not just between BBC, ITV and the new Channel 4, but between in-house and independent producers, which threatened to conflict with the traditional Reithian[16] approach of television production. A production quota meant that 25% of all programming had to be contracted out but, as Turner and Lourenco describe, the BBC circumnavigated this by engaging companies run by former BBC executives. A disadvantage for the Granada group was that the majority of these independent companies were based in London, while Granada prided itself on its Manchester base.

[14] Ibid., 154
[15] Simon Turner and Ana Lourenço, "Competition and public service broadcasting: stimulating creativity or servicing capital?", in *Socio-Economic Review*, (2011)
[16] First BBC General Manager, who set up the company with a mandate to 'inform, educate and entertain'

By 1990, television series were expected to pay for themselves and budgets were estimated based on predicted sales figures and income. Although the Granada Holmes series had never received high ratings in the UK it was a popular export to other countries, including the lucrative US market. In order to survive in the new free market economy that television was adopting, the production team were obliged to make the episodes as cheaply as possible in order to turn a profit. In addition, in 1988 the Granada Studios Tour opened, allowing the public to view the backlot and mock sets from Granada's various productions, including Coronation Street and Baker Street. The tour was open every day expect Monday, limiting the production team to only one day a week that they could use their own set. If filming had to be scheduled on other days then they were obliged to pay Granada £100,000 a day - for using their own set.[17] This was an added complication and expense that added pressure to an already failing series.

David Plowright, the man who had spearheaded Granada's lavish heritage drama production in the early 1980s, was gone and the new board was less interested in art for art's sake but in turning the company around and making it competitive in this new environment.[18] Granada had won the franchise bid partly based on its reputation and ability to produce quality worthy television, in-keeping with the educate part of its responsibilities. As previously discussed, the Holmes production could make a case for being included in this as it ticks many of the boxes required for a quality television series – adaptation, period setting, high-class cast, etc. The difference now appeared to be that the illusion of big budget quality was enough, June Wyndham Davies was under instructions to 'make feature films for television

[17] Cox, *A study in celluloid*
[18] Andrew Davidson, *Under the hammer: the inside story of the ITV 1991 franchise battle* (London: Heinemann, 1992).

with pretty pictures and to cut down on dialogue. There appeared to be no concerns regarding Sherlockian accuracy or fidelity'.[19]

4.4 Heritage Television

Adaptations of classic novels by the Bronte sisters, Jane Austen and Charles Dickens had been appearing since the early days of television, but the 1980s were a peak time across genres for big budget 'serious' adaptations. For example, the Royal Shakespeare Company's mammoth *Nicholas Nickleby* (1980), which was televised in 1982 on the new Channel 4, was one of the prestige productions around this time. John Caughie argues that these television adaptations in particular were making our cultural heritage accessible, 'it is the serial which seems to move into the institutional heartland of television drama... 'Prestige' serials and series, adaptations or originals, all with high production values, established themselves as the core of British television's narrative form'.[20]

Neil McCaw argues that this rise in the popularity of Victorian adaptations in particular was due in part to the rise of both conservatism and Conservatism in the country; the 'nineteenth century, therefore, was to be imitated, an idealised paradigm of harmonious, commerce-focused, respectful social interaction amidst a mythologizing quasi-hagiography of the Victorians themselves'.[21] McCaw would see the Holmes series as perpetuating this idealised nostalgia for the 'supposed moral, political and economic order of the Victorian era as a historical model'.[22] The original

[19] Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 160
[20] John Caughie, *Edge of darkness* (British Film Institute, 2007), 25-26
[21] McCaw, "The politics of adaptation, 37
[22] Ibid.

series especially was advertised as 'faithfully recreating the Victorian milieu',[23] but modern preconceptions, such as crime continue to be added, for example the lobotomising of Seldon in *The Hound*. But as the 'Thatcherite politics' of the decade changed, so did the focus on heritage culture.

The more 'traditional' heritage programmes continued to be popular, with *Pride and Prejudice* (BBC, 1995) becoming one of the most iconic programmes of the decade. During the mid- and late-1980s the heritage genre started to shift focus from films like *Chariots of Fire* and television shows like *Brideshead Revisited* to a 'new heritage' genre, a modern take on classic Englishness. Neil McCaw describes the *Inspector Morse* series as demonstrating this 'homesickness for a shared historical past, was a particular articulation of this tendency towards national self-fashioning'.[24] As previously discussed, the original Holmes series was shown in ITV's heritage television timeslot of 9pm on a Tuesday. By the time of the final series, that timeslot was taken over by one of the new popular drama series, *Peak Practice* (1993-2002), which, like Morse, represented a more modern version of the heritage genre. This can also be seen in films like *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) coming to define this Englishness as much as more traditional heritage films like the Merchant-Ivory *Howard's End* (1992) and *Remains of the Day* (1993). As Amy Sargeant explains, 'the boundaries of heritage activity are no longer confined to representations of the past and that the heritage industry increasingly offers its attractions as a 'lived' and everyday experience'.[25]

[23] Ibid.
[24] McCaw, *Adapting detective fiction*, 37
[25] Amy Sargeant, "Making and selling heritage culture: style and authenticity in historical fictions on film and television" in *British cinema past and present,* Ed Justine Ashby & Andrew Higson (Routledge, 2013), 305

4.5 Cast

Any long-running series faces a number of challenges during its production, which will affect the final product to varying degrees. A common problem is how to cope with a change in actors and after filming the second series of *The Adventures*, David Burke decided not to continue playing Watson. The production had chosen to centre on the Holmes/Watson relationship, therefore changing one of the leads could potentially affect the whole dynamic. In continuing their aim towards fidelity, the producers had put a lot of thought into the character of Watson and taking him away from the bumbling character he had become. Like the character of Holmes, Watson had changed throughout the years as adaptation upon adaptation moved him away from the original. It was Nigel Bruce, in his partnership with Basil Rathbone, who gave us a Watson who was slightly slow and bumbling, but nevertheless a loyal friend. Subsequent versions generally built on that successful prototype, confirming Leitch's theory that adaptations are only interested in reworking the previous popular adaptations, rather than the original text.[26]

While the Granada production was eager to bring Holmes back to what Doyle wrote, this was also the case with the character of Watson. David Burke 'was determined not to retreat into the giggles and shows of amazement which the earlier Watsons on screen had resorted to in order to make themselves evident.[27] His portrayal is of a kind and vigorous Watson, believable as Holmes' best friend and moral compass – the man he could rely on to reign him in when necessary. Burke's decision to quit gave the production the difficult task of introducing a new Watson and hope that the

[26] Leitch, *Film adaptation and its discontents*
[27] Haining, *The television Sherlock Holmes*

public would accept him. Edward Hardwicke came in to replace the departing Burke from *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* onwards, and made no attempt to imitate his predecessor. The only concession made was one of appearance – Hardwicke wore a wig, but this could be seen as more an attempt to make him look like the Watson from the Paget illustrations rather than Burke. Although there was a ten-year gap in Doyle writing the stories, in the Holmes world only three years lapse between his 'death' and returning to his friend. Therefore, Hardwicke's portrayal of 'an older, more serious man, saddened by the tragedy at the Reichenbach Falls and the three drab years which followed. It was entirely believable that this was the character which David Burke's Watson might have become'.[28]

The major problem for the production came with Holmes telling his version of events at the Reichenbach Falls, as they were unable to reuse footage from their original shoot with Burke, new inserts had to be filmed with Hardwicke as Watson. Instead of returning to Switzerland, where 'The Final Problem' had been filmed, extra shots were instead done in Wales to save time and money, and worked seamlessly in so the join is not noticeable. What should have been a major challenge instead proved to have no major impact on the series, with many viewers not even noticing the change of actor.

Another major challenge to the production was the health of its star. The death of Brett's wife Joan in 1985 started him towards a downward spiral from which he would never fully recover and 'the deterioration of Jeremy Brett's health plays a significant part in the remaining saga of Granada's Sherlock and the struggle that

[28] Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 136

Brett underwent in attempting to be Holmes and to remain sane'.[29] After filming 'The Six Napoleons', during the initial run of *The Return*, Brett was admitted to hospital, which led to a delay before filming *The Sign of Four*. This was repeated during pre-production for *The Case-Book,* when Michael Cox had to enter pre-production without knowing if his leading man would be ready to go before the cameras, he just had to cross his fingers and 'gambled on Jeremy's determination and commitment'.[30] Postponing filming would have been a costly exercise and would have threatened the future of the show, especially with an ailing star.

It was during this time that Brett had a major manic episode, this time going as far as to cut his hair. In interviews Brett claimed that he had done this as previously his longer hair had been slicked back and didn't allow him to play with it; 'before my hair was long, and it had to be combed back and plastered down to keep it in place. Now that it's short, I can play with my hair, run my fingers through it, ruffle it, which I just couldn't do before. It's just something else to help me play the character'.[31] But Edward Hardwicke implied that the real reason Brett attacked his own hair was to stop himself looking like Holmes[32]. Both Brett and the production team announced that Brett's hair had been cut so as to resemble the Paget illustrations more closely,[33] but they were just covering up for one of the actor's manic episodes, which were becoming more regular.

During filming *The Memoirs* Brett collapsed on set and was rushed to hospital again, when he was eventually released June Wyndham Davies was informed that he was

[29] Davies, *Bending the willow*, 84
[30] Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 145
[31] As cited in Davies, *Bending the willow*, 97
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

only able to film on alternate days. Brett's overall health was suffering due to the medication he was on, he was bloated due to retaining water but didn't want to go to the doctor as it would mean that he couldn't be insured to film. He eventually managed to complete this final series, almost dragging himself through at times, and died shortly after it was televised.

4.6 Scheduling

Back in 1980 the original plan had been to do the novels but at the time there was not as much of a market for two-hour programmes, and the lack of success of the Richardson films appeared to confirm this. But by 1987 a two-hour Holmes was a lot more commercial, and as an experiment *The Sign of Four* was deemed a success. According to Granada the switch to the longer episodes was to go into more depth and allow them to 'breathe more'.[34] This may have been influenced by the popularity of Morse, produced by Central. The two-hour Morse episodes began in 1987 and quickly became a big hit. The thinking must have been that if Morse could regularly achieve ratings of 14 million, then so should Holmes. In the culture of franchise bidding, ratings became as important as cost cutting in order to stay competitive. Unfortunately, *Inspector Morse* was produced in a series of three two-hour shows based on tightly-plotted novels, not a series of short stories. For some reason the Holmes production team chose not to use the remaining Conan Doyle novels (*A Study in Scarlet* and *The Valley of Fear*), instead staying with the *Strand* short stories and expanding them.

[34] Ibid., 139

Granada returned to one-hour episodes for the remainder of *The Return*, including two very expensive episodes - 'The Devil's Foot' and 'Silver Blaze'. For 'The Devil's Foot' production relocated to Cornwall to film and 'Silver Blaze' went on location to Bangor racecourse, complete with a crowd of extras. These episodes went over their allotted budgets and necessitated the series being cut from the planned six episodes to four.[35] It is curious why these stories were both chosen to be filmed as part of the same series as they were always going to be expensive, especially as efforts were still being made at this time by the production team to keep up the quality of the series.

After the success of *The Sign of Four*, it was decided to film *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, an opportunity to film the definitive story with the definitive Holmes. However, the budget wasn't as full as previously and the overspend earlier in the series meant that economies had to be made. This is no longer changing Doyle to increase the tension or translate it into a different medium, this is making changes for logistical rather than aesthetic reasons. *The Hound* was later followed by the feature-length *Master Blackmailer*, after which June Wyndham Davies found it difficult to get a reply from the programme schedulers as to when the next series of Holmes would be required. This was because a new Central Scheduler was commissioning programmes to fit the schedules, as John Ellis puts it, to find 'the 'best slot' for already known programmes … overall numbers and the demographic will determine what the slot is worth in terms of programme budget … the schedule therefore drives the planning of output'.[36] Rather than the previous custom of making a programme and then delivering it to the scheduler who would then fit it in where there was a space.

[35] Cox, *A study in celluloid*
[36] Ellis, "Scheduling: The Last Creative Act in Television?", p.33

In order to pre-empt, June Wyndham Davies commissioned one-hour scripts and had three in the pipeline. Eventually the schedulers replied, saying that they wanted two more feature-length episodes, leaving Jeremy Paul (the writer) about three weeks to construct the first episode from one of the remaining short stories. This time there would be no opportunity to take care over the script to include as much original Doyle as possible, this would have to be written quickly and padded out to stretch to the time. With only a few weeks' notice, the next two episodes would mark a definite move from the original intention of dramatising the original texts. With only the shorter, less inventive texts left, it was necessary to pad to make them last the required two hours. Jeremy Paul chose to adapt 'The Sussex Vampire', a story with a weak premise and no mystery;

> The writers working on the various Jeremy Brett series discovered this problem pretty early on: they had crimes, they had a detective, they had clues, but they had an obvious suspect who then turned out to be guilty. No surprise there, and so no drama. In order to beef up the stories, they needed to introduce red herrings, suspects who have means, motive and opportunity but who, in the end, turn out to be innocent[37]

This move can be seen in the change of title, where previously the episodes had kept the original Doyle title, 'The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire' becomes *The Last Vampyre* (1993). This was due in part because filming took place in the Cotswolds the original title was deemed unsuitable. Brett called this 'pretend Doyle',[38] it owed

[37] Barnes, *Sherlock Holmes on screen,* 85
[38] Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 164

more to Hammer and the Victorian Gothic tradition rather than Doyle. The show was now moving directly towards pastiche, comparable with the Rathbone films rather than the earlier Brett series. Brett summed it up, ''[B]asically, it's not the canon anymore' … the product that he was so proud of, his Sherlock show, was being degraded and rubbished where once it had been praised'.[39]

4.7 *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1988)

> For a production team so proud of their fidelity to Doyle's original stories, to have got the most famous of them so disastrously wrong seems inexplicable – and it was a mis-step the Brett sequence never fully recovered from[40]

If Sherlock Holmes is one of the most portrayed characters from fiction then *The Hound of the Baskervilles* must be one of the most adapted texts, it is certainly the most famous of the stories. As such it is always going to be a flagship of the series, something that will be held up and compared to previous adaptations. In Brett's case it was an opportunity to do the 'definitive' story with the 'definitive' Holmes and it is understandable that the production did not come to the story until it was established in its run and credentials. Steven Moffat defines the three big things in Sherlock Holmes as 'the Hound, the Woman and the Professor'.[41] The latter two had been included in *The Adventures* but in 1984-5 there was no inclination to film a two-hour Holmes, and *The Hound* could not be squeezed into one-hour. Unfortunately, the final decision to film *The Hound* was a compromise, something that would infuse the final programme.

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[39] Davies, *Bending the willow*, 156
[40] Barnes, *Sherlock Holmes on screen,* 71
[41] *Sherlock Uncovered* (2012) *Sherlock Series 2* DVD. Hartswood Films.

This was filmed during a period when fidelity to Doyle original was becoming lost, almost as though the production team was unsure on their new view of the series, do they keep to the mantra of previous series or make changes in the name of drama? However, this can lead to the tone of the film becoming confused; for example, a move from Conan Doyle is increasing the role of Holmes in the action. For the majority of the novel, the action is carried solely by Dr Watson, with Holmes appearing at the end to provide the answers. As this is a Holmes television series, extra scenes were shot of Brett to increase his screen time. While additions like this had worked in earlier episodes, here it adds to the lack of tension and pacing throughout. Overall the alterations to the original eradicate a lot of the drama inherent in the plot, which the scriptwriter then attempts to supplement, but fails to recreate the atmosphere of the original novel.

4.7.1 Production decisions

In previous adaptations, most notably 20th Century Fox's 1939 film version, Dr Mortimer's explanation of the Baskerville curse is accompanied by a flashback sequence, which is much more visual and dramatic. This was something that had earlier been used to great effect in the Brett series, where the audience would be shown the action rather than just having it relayed to them, which is much more appropriate for the medium of television. Removing this, to avoid an additional costly period setting, this time seventeenth rather than late nineteenth/early twentieth century, is a clear indication of what is to come. It was justified as not wanting to remove attention from the important information being imparted. Although a brief moment in the book, it is one which can be used in many ways, the

Hammer adaptation in 1959 played up the sexual aspect, others have used it to emphasis the Gothic or horror elements; it sets the tone for the whole adaptation. Unfortunately, in this case it demonstrates the lack of atmosphere and drama in the episode as a whole. For example, Holmes reading the legend leads to an underplaying of the whole scene and so Dr Mortimer's famous line 'Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!'[42] is lost.

The Hound of the Baskervilles was not originally intended as a Holmes tale and because of this he is not in a large part of the story. In an adaptation full of drama this would not be a problem as the audience would be so engrossed they would not notice his absence. However, in this version he is needed and the problem is circumnavigated by inserting shots of Holmes investigating from a distance in libraries, etc. This solves the problem of not enough Holmes, but does slow down the action, leading to the whole pace being very tired and dull. One of the shots included has been taken from the earlier episode 'The Greek Interpreter'. Although Holmes is only shown from the back, it is quite clearly a leaner Jeremy Brett than the one who was filming *The Hound*. Again, this reusing of ideas, which were successful in earlier adaptation, leads to a feeling that the production team were not sure of their footing and were vainly attempting to recover past glories. It also leads to a continuity error as we see a mysterious figure watching Watson and intercepting the reports he sends back to London, this is later explained as Holmes having been at Dartmoor most of the time, albeit at a distance so as not to alert anyone. However, when we see Holmes reading the letters he is back in Baker Street.

[42] Conan Doyle, Arthur. "The Hound of the Baskervilles" in in *The Complete Sherlock Holmes Collection"* (Bedford Parks Books, New York, 2010), 507

4.7.2 Budget

While filming the second part of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, the producers had realised that they were not going to have enough money to film the six episodes expected. Instead, the idea was to save money by filming another feature-length episode, as one two-hour programme is cheaper than two one-hour shows. However, money was still tight and economies had to be made, which inevitably led to compromises being made, and several expensive scenes were cut or rewritten.

One of the early dramatic components in *The Hound* comes when Sir Henry receives an anonymous note, which lead Holmes and Watson to follow him and results in them frantically chasing a suspicious person as he escapes in a hansom cab. In a cost-cutting exercise, rather than recreate this expensive chase down Regent Street, which was estimated at one sixth of the overall budget, this is substituted for a chase down the hotel's stairwell.[43] Like 'The Greek Interpreter' this refers back to Hitchcock, for example *The Lodger* (1926) and *Vertigo* (1958), but is also reminiscent of the classic Ealing comedy *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951). This is an attempt to add some drama but while it is dizzying in its camera angles, it is not the tense moment of action it is in the book, and fails to convey any real sense of urgency or danger. Unfortunately, the script cuts the scene where they locate and interview the cab driver, who believed his fare to be Sherlock Holmes, an excellent amusing twist in the original tale. In addition, the outside shots of Baker Street, complete with extras and hansom cabs, have been reused from an earlier film, in an attempt to make it look more expensive without the costs of having to reshoot.

[43] Cox, *A study in celluloid*

Another example of the production missing the tension and drama from the original story comes with the surprising reappearance of Holmes, found hiding on the moors by Watson, especially in the original serialisation in *The Strand,*

> All was sweet and mellow and peaceful in the golden evening light, and yet as I looked at them my soul shared none of the peace of nature but quivered at the vagueness and the terror of that interview which every instant was bringing nearer. With tingling nerves, but a fixed purpose, I sat in the dark recess of the hut and waited with sombre patience for the coming of its tenant. And then at last I heard him[44]

This cliff-hanger ending would have made readers anxious for the next instalment. However, the Granada production pre-empts the reveal by showing us Holmes outside before he reveals himself to Watson. A shot of Watson in the cave, hearing a sound outside, followed by an advert break before the reveal would have been much more thrilling and in keeping with the tone of the story. This cannot be attributed to cost cutting but instead the production team having a lack of affinity with the original.

The location of Dartmoor acts as a character in the novel, providing the atmosphere that the plot relies upon. However, due to another cost-cutting exercise it was decided not to move production to the South West, but to use the local Yorkshire moors and this is evident in the scenes set in the local village, where buildings are clearly made of Yorkshire slate. In addition, the later fog bound scenes set on the

[44] Conan Doyle, Arthur. "The Hound of the Baskervilles", 573

moors at night appear to have been filmed on a sound stage back in Manchester. This is reminiscent of the 20th Century Fox version with Rathbone, although the fog covers up much it is still a less convincing set in colour. This would be for logistical as well as budgetary reasons, work in the studio is much easier to control as well as cheaper, and re-creating the fog in particular would have been a difficult and costly exercise.

Along with the setting of a foggy moor another difficulty all adaptations have is the hound itself. In the novel, it is revealed to be a dog but still a very terrifying sight, '[I]n mere size and strength it was a terrible creature which was lying stretched before us'.[45] Despite doing their best not to show the hound itself, by using clever camera cuts and tricks, eventually the dog itself is seen, far from being the terrifying sight described by Watson, it was clearly a Great Dane in a mask.

4.7.3 Heritage

The Gothic themes of the supernatural and superstition were very popular in late Victorian times when Conan Doyle wrote the story. Although filmed in 1988, this production has more in common with the early 1980s heritage productions than the 'new heritage' genre, which was becoming popular. Terry Scarborough discusses how 'Doyle and his contemporaries appropriated elements of the Gothic tale and other popular genres to suit a late-Victorian readership, Sherlock Holmes emerges today as a champion of popular narrative whose diversity is often based in Gothic conventions and tropes'.[46] The novel *The Hound* especially is full of Gothic themes,

[45] Ibid.
[46] Terry Scarborough, "'Open the Window, Then!'" in *Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle: multi-media afterlives*, 49

and Terry Scarborough goes on to discuss their appropriation in this production, and their effect upon contemporary viewers.

In this production, Brian Miller (the director) focuses on the Gothic elements of landscape and architecture, but in an attempt to add drama somehow loses the horror and mystery from the tale. Removing these conventions led to a lack of atmosphere that the episode could not recover from, no matter how many extra dramatic clichés they added. The episode was filmed in a transition period between still trying to keep the appearance of fidelity, and before they had to resort to padding. The result is an episode that is neither one nor the other; it does not have the confidence to make major changes for solely dramatic purposes and yet is no longer loyally following the original text.

Terry Scarborough argues that the use of windows throughout the adaptation is symbolic and 'the narrative function of windows and the concept of urban exploration … the contemporary viewer observes Victorian culture and thought from a masterly, panoptic perspective, which remains rooted in the Gothic'.[47] For example, he argues that windows are used to denote point of view in place of Watson's narration, with the viewer assuming 'Holmes' panoptic gaze, rather than experiencing Watson's retrospective narration'.[48]

As previously stated, the Granada production did not include a flashback scene during the setup of the Baskerville curse, Scarborough argues that this 'shifts the narrative perspective from an immediate and threatening reflection of Victorian

[47] Ibid.,
[48] Ibid., 50

social and imperial anxieties … to a contemporary, masterly gaze through which the viewer experiences late-Victorian London as a cultural artefact'.[49] This argument corresponds to the reason given by the production staff, in that they did not want a distracting flashback sequence.

The reception for this episode in the press was not positive, and the series would never again receive the excellent reviews it had been accustomed to upon until that point. As David Stuart Davies observed, '[I]t really was the missed opportunity of the whole series of Granada films: to make the definitive *The Hound of the Baskervilles* with the definitive Sherlock Holmes'.[50] As Brett himself commented, 'the story has been bled a little too much for my liking. I'm not sure you should bleed Doyle'.[51]

4.7.4 Cast

The Hound of the Baskervilles marks the start of Jeremy Brett's manic portrayal of Holmes becoming much more noticeable, which will eventually culminate in *The Eligible Bachelor*. In a contemporary review in *The Times*, Brett's 'outrageously mannered performance, alive with tics and grimaces'[52] was commented upon. Early on in the novel, Dr Mortimer hurts Holmes's ego when explaining why he has come to consult him over this matter,

[49] Ibid., 52
[50] Davies, *Bending the willow*, 114
[51] Ibid., 134
[52] As cited in Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 145

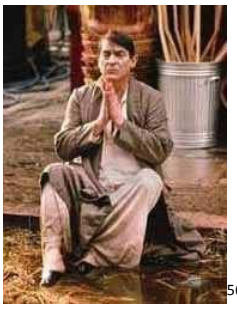
> 'Recognizing, as I do, that you are the second highest expert in Europe ——
> —'Indeed, sir! May I inquire who has the honour to be the first?' asked Holmes with some asperity[53]

This is symptomatic of Holmes' fragile ego and the view of himself thanks to Watson's constant admiration. This is not included in the adaptation, instead with Brett's Holmes proving to be quite flirtatious with the doctor, laughing with amusement at the doctor's admiration of the shape of his skull before exclaiming 'Behave and sit down!'[54] Despite moments where his previous Puck-ish behaviour is seen, there is an overall feeling of lethargy coming from Brett, who has survived several breakdowns in the few years running up to this episode. Unfortunately, the pace of the piece comes from Holmes, and when Brett is below par then the whole episode suffers, as will be seen in *The Eligible Bachelor*.

4.8 *The Eligible Bachelor* (1993)

> It has to be said that *The Eligible Bachelor* is, using whatever critical criteria one chooses, appalling television. Ponderously slow, insanely illogical, it engenders something like slow-motion disbelief in the viewer[55]

[53] Conan Doyle, Arthur. "The Hound of the Baskervilles", 500
[54] *The Hound of the Baskervilles* 1988. ITV. 31 August, 20.30.
[55] Barnes, *Sherlock Holmes on screen,* 47

[56]

Whereas in previous examples the differences between text and film had mostly been subtle switches in emphasis or dramatic effect, this is a complete reworking of the original short story. While the original is kept in it becomes almost a subplot to St Simon's villainy and Holmes' unravelling mental state. In the original story, Holmes is approached by Lord St Simon to find his bride, who disappeared shortly after their wedding. She is eventually located and has returned to her first husband, whom she had presumed dead. The adaptation introduces a new character for St Simon, in the short story he is privileged and arrogant but not a villain, he may be marrying for money rather than love but there is no sinister motive and he is more concerned to avoid losing face than finding his wife. The change in role for St Simon is reflected in the change of title, from 'Noble Bachelor' to *Eligible Bachelor*, also distancing it from the original text, something previously seen in *The Last Vampyre*. The adaptation borrows elements from 'The Illustrious Client', in that the villain is attacked by a former lover, and 'The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger', in that one of the characters first appears to Holmes wearing a heavy veil to hide her face.

The length of the original story, at around 8000 words, is shorter than 'A Scandal in Bohemia', which comfortably sat in the fifty-minute format. Hence, the decision to add elements of other Holmes stories, and the new overall arch of St Simon's villainy, to stretch the meagre storyline to a two-hour format.

[56] Jeremy Brett in *The Eligible Bachelor*

4.8.1 Production decisions

Following on the formula set by previous episodes, the audience is shown the events leading up to the client's consultation with Holmes. With this more convoluted plot there is a significant delay in getting to Baker Street, and we are left with a Sherlock Holmes episode where the main character doesn't appear for the first third of the running time. The majority of this time is taken up with the original story, proving that it would easily have sat in the standard fifty-minute format, which better suited the short stories.

In an echo of earlier adaptations, events contemporary to the period are added to give colour; there are references to Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts*[57] and Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. This was in keeping with the original Cox mandate of adding layers to the story, and shows the depth of research that the writers and production team were capable of. Unfortunately, this level of detail is lost in an episode where the majority of it is invented melodrama. While it bears only a passing resemblance to the original story, the film does instead pay respects to the Victorian popular literary traditions of Gothic, melodrama and sentimentality, which were not present in the original text. The adaptation references some of the more common formulas in the Gothic tradition, including the innocent heroine, dastardly villain, supernatural, madness and atmospheric locations like the mental institution. In attempting to pad out the episode by inserting Victorian stock characters and plots, the production team were fast moving into the realms of pastiche, and making

[57] Ibsen's *Ghosts* actually was first performed in the UK until 1914.

their Holmes look ridiculous, thereby destroying all the credibility of the earlier series.

4.8.2 Cast

As well as St Simon's past becoming the main plot rather than the bride's disappearance, another theme explored, is Holmes' mental state. During the filming of the episode Brett lauded the opportunity to delve deeper into the character and explore his demons,

> We are moving into a space we have never been in before. We now have Holmes picturing the future when he's actually on a case. It becomes really gripping. I don't know what Doyleans will think of it, but it is so very exciting[58]

This is another example of Brett's mental state impacting on the production as his demons were becoming intermingled with Holmes'. If not reined in Brett was liable to over act and become manic and self-indulgent, which unfortunately happens in the notorious 'nightie' scene where we witness Holmes running out into the rainy Baker Street in his night clothes. Not only had the production team lost their way, so had their Sherlock. Dedicated fans scorned these scenes as 'it demeaned the character of Holmes and was deemed 'nonsense' by Sherlockian enthusiasts'.[59] A problem with Holmes episodes at this time is that they were becoming gimmicky. In *The Master Blackmailer*, Holmes' romance with a maid (which is only mentioned in

[58] Cited in Barnes, *Sherlock Holmes on screen,* 170
[59] Cited in Davies, *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, 171

the original story) is shown in full detail, leading to national newspaper articles featuring their kiss. In this episode, we are presented Holmes' nightmare, including his premonitions in the case mixed with visions of the Reichenbach Falls and Moriarty. It serves no purpose to the plot and instead of adding to the dramatic impact, it instead is almost funny it is so bad; which sums up the episode as a whole.

While *The Eligible Bachelor* marks the low point of the Granada series, it also proved a significant moment in its production. While June Wyndham Davies began to contemplate straight pastiche to circumnavigate the problem of thin original material, Jeremy Brett was firm – it was Doyle or nothing. Thus, the final series, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1994) marked a slight return to form for the production. Despite being plagued with external difficulties, for example, being rushed into production, having to work around availability of actors, it still manages several episodes of a higher quality than had been seen for quite some time.

4.8.3 Scheduling

A major change that happened during the run of the Brett series was the switch from one to two-hour episodes, and back again. The television schedules had previously been dictated by what programmes had been on offer, the ITV franchises had produced the programmes and delivered them to ITV, who then decided when they would be broadcast.

In the early days of ITV especially there had been an element of negotiation around this, especially regarding prime time slots across the network, often resulting in programmes being shown at different times (and even different days) in the regions.

For example, the rivalry between ATV and ABC resulted in 'some complicated inter-company financial arrangements regarding the showing of each other's programmes'.[60] Which resulted in ABC 'obliged to screen ATV shows - otherwise, they would risk having their programming go unseen in London, the most important television market in the country'.[61]

As previously discussed, the Brett series had inherited the heritage television timeslot from *The Jewel in the Crown* for the first half of *The Adventures*, moving to Sundays for the second half. From *The Return* onwards the series would return to being transmitted in a weekday evening timeslot. As John Ellis explains, 'when the grid pattern of 30-minute slots became commonplace by the early 1980s, scheduling was a matter of 'fitting in' the programmes that were being provided by the programme makers'.[62] After the programmes had been made they would then be fit into a schedule for transmission, whilst also taking into consideration fixed points, such as the 9pm watershed and the ITV Ten O'Clock News. The aim was to schedule programmes in the timeslot in which they were most likely to be watched, but by the mid-1990s 'there are no safe areas in the schedule any more'.[63] The change in scheduling is reflected in the broadcasting of the Brett series, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* in particular being scheduled at the last minute to fit a gap. This can especially be seen in the fact that the last episode, 'The Cardboard Box' was transmitted at 10.40pm on 11th April 1994.

[60] Richardson, *Bowler hats and kinky boots*, 27
[61] Ibid., 27
[62] John Ellis, "Scheduling: the last creative act in television?", *Media, Culture & Society,* 22 (1) (2000), 26
[63] Ibid.

If we examine John Ellis' article using the Brett series as an example of the changing face of scheduling over this period. As well as the 'fixed points' for example the News, as discussed above, the scheduling grid contains:

> (a) inscribed assumptions about everyday life… as things settle down in the mid-evening, longer form programmes with more sustained storytelling are introduced[64]
>
> The Holmes series would definitely fall into the category of a later evening programme, when the early evening rush has settled down and the audience are ready to watch something without distractions. As discussed in the previous chapter, the show was usually transmitted around the 9pm watershed but before the 10pm and late evening 'experimentation' timeslots, indicating that this was prestige drama, which was potentially accessible to a large viewing audience.
>
> (b) the annual pattern of seasons, events and special occasions[65]
>
> The Holmes series were never 'event television' like, for example, the BBC's *Miss Marple* series was, being transmitted at key points in the year like Christmas. The only exception being *The Sign of Four*, which was transmitted as part of ITV's Christmas line up on 29th December 1987. The series did not have a dedicated day and timeslot throughout their run, indicating that they were placed where there was a gap in the schedule rather than commissioned to run regularly as part of a seasonal line up. This would agree with June Wyndham Davies' objection that, after *The Return,* there

[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 27

was not much consultation in the running times required, as the series would first move to two-hour and then back to one. In addition, later episodes were moved to make way for international football matches, which ITV had obtained the rights to.

(c) traditional slots, which are required by the regulators or are simply habitual[66]

As previously mentioned the original Holmes series was scheduled into ITV's heritage television timeslot, following on from the critically acclaimed *The Jewel in the Crown*. Audiences tuning in would have expected big budget, high quality prestige television. Longer episodes, like *The Eligible Bachelor*, were transmitted at the earlier 8pm timeslot due to the longer two-hour running time and programmes at this time would have to be aimed at a more family audience.

(d) assumptions about what the competition do and might do[67]

The final series was transmitted on a Monday night 9-10pm, apart from the last episode, which went out later at night. At this time it would not have been up against a drama programme on the other terrestrial channels. BBC1 would show *The Nine O'clock News* followed by *Panorama*, BBC2 usually showed a film and Channel 4 a documentary.

But the competition was not only the other channels, but also the other franchises, as well as *Morse*, towards the end of the Holmes run Carlton began production and

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

broadcast of their *Poirot* series. As previously discussed, Agatha Christie adaptations had been a regular occurrence in the ITV schedule since 1981, with an adaptation of *Why Didn't They Ask Evans?* followed by *The Agatha Christie Hour* and *Partners in Crime*. The popularity of the BBC's *Miss Marple* series led to the Christie Estate finally allowing the adaptation of the Poirot short stories, which was put into production during the second half of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* in 1988. The style of the early *Poirot* adaptations owes a lot to the Granada Holmes production, starting with the one-hour shorter stories and boasting a strong core ensemble cast and recognisable guest stars for one-off appearances. The early *Poirot* productions also had the same level of commitment and attention to recreating the period in which they were set, the large budget being evident on screen. Although clearly influenced by the Holmes series, in terms of critical and commercial success of *Poirot* surpassed it from the beginning. While Holmes' ratings only once topped 11 million, *Poirot* enjoyed early series ratings ranging from 9.65 to 12.88 million viewers and a BAFTA nomination for its leading man in 1991.[68]

4.9 Conclusion

For *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* the production decisions established the tone of the series, creating the format to follow and the tone of authentic faithfulness. Due to the changing way television was commissioned and produced, by the time that June Wyndham Davies took over the production many of the early aims had to be revised. In order to survive the programmes became less about fidelity and 'the spirit' of the original stories and more about ratings and profits. ITV had always

[68] Aldridge, *Agatha Christie on Screen*

relied on advertising revenue and overseas sales to pay for programmes, but now budgets would be determined by how much money they would generate in sales. While the Holmes series enjoyed large overseas sales because it was not a ratings success it would not earn a large amount in advertising. In order to earn a profit, the series would have to be made as cheaply as possible. At a time when Holmes' budget was being cut, some television programmes were still awarded a lavish budget. The success of the Holmes series overseas, and in the US market especially, meant that new series like *Poirot* could presell overseas to ensure a healthy £5 million budget for its first series.

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes had been commissioned at the height of heritage television, and while high-brow programmes like *Brideshead* were no longer being made by the late 1980s, the heritage genre was still popular. Granada had successfully renegotiated its franchise bid in 1990 by emphasising its high-quality credentials and the supply of public service programmes, such as adaptations of classic novels. But with the new profit targets it would no longer be possible to fulfil the programme promises made in its franchise application if it kept cutting jobs and production.[69] These budget cuts can be seen as impacting on the final product in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, an episode which gives the impression of a compromise throughout and suffers due to the restrictions placed upon it. The changes in the way that programmes were commissioned can be demonstrated in *The Eligible Bachelor*, a short story which is so stretched and padded that the original plotline is lost amongst the Gothic melodrama. The original aim for fidelity had been compromised so much that the series veered into pastiche territory.

[69] Davidson, *Under the hammer*

One of the key criteria in Granada originally commissioning the series was finding a suitable actor to play the part of Holmes. Granada required a well-known actor to aid overseas sales, the production team wanted someone who not only looked like the Holmes of the Paget illustrations but would also understand the character they wanted to portray. Jeremy Brett took the role of Holmes seriously and would keep 'an illustrated edition of *The Complete Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* … heavily annotated in his own handwriting'[70] with him to refer to. The programme was very much a starring vehicle and would all hinge on his performance, so when he suffered from his breakdowns the programme itself suffered. The episodes filmed when Jeremy was either in one of his manic or one of his depressive moods do not work and would often be uncomfortable as he uses the role to exorcise his own demons. As Terry Manners explains, 'Holmes was a shell in which he [Brett] began to live. The dark, cerebral detective sometimes took him over, and the actor and the part he played for ten years eventually became one'.[71]

While the later series do suffer from the change in direction and the institutional environment they were filmed in, this does not diminish the reputation that the programme overall still has. That reputation for quality and fidelity may no longer be justified, but the perception was still there. It was still promoted heavily in the *TV Times* and highlighted as one of the best programmes of the week.[72] Even though the production was moving further away from the original mantra of fidelity, the majority of viewers would not be concerned as their main point of reference would be the Rathbone films rather than the original stories. As previously discussed these

[70] Haining p.156
[71] Terry Manners, *The Man who Became Sherlock Holmes: The Tortured Mind of Jeremy Brett* (Virgin Pub, 2001).
[72] *TV Times*, listings magazine, 6-12 February 1993

films had continued to be popular, and regularly shown on television, because they were good entertainment. As George Bluestone suggests, that when talking about 'faithful and unfaithful adaptations what we are actually referring to is successful or unsuccessful'.[73] As long as the Brett series continued to entertain the mainstream audience then the perception of their fidelity, the legacy of the earlier series, would continue.

[73] George Bluestone, *Novels into film* (Univ of California Press, 1968), 114.

5 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined the Granada *Sherlock Holmes* (1984-1994) series, specifically considering the logistics of adaptation production, discussed the biography of production, how and why decisions were made and the affect they had on the series.

Sherlock Holmes adaptations are frequently neglected by academics when discussing adaptations of popular late nineteenth/early twentieth century stories, and yet interpretations of Holmes are amongst some of the most popular and varied, appearing regularly on film and television. The Granada series is considered as one of the most faithful adaptations, and I have discussed the concept of fidelity, the production decisions and external logistical factors which impacted on the series.

5.1 Institutional Context

The early 1980s were a boom time for heritage productions and Granada in particular had achieved a worldwide reputation for quality productions. *Brideshead Revisited* had been a huge success across the world, and 'it was possible – desirable, even – for the independent companies to indulge themselves in literary, languidly paced and lavishly mounted evocations of a mostly mythical English past, and yet still make a profit from overseas sales'.[1] The Holmes series was created as another nostalgic and heritage production, emphasising its authenticity and fidelity to the Conan Doyle stories which had been published in *The Strand*.

[1] Barnes, *Sherlock Holmes on screen,* 21

The quality of the series was also accentuated by the decision to make it on film, which was something that the Conan Doyle Estate had been pushing for since the 1960s adaptations. Not only would this give the adaptation the feeling of quality it merited but also would make it attractive for overseas sales. Unlike the earlier BBC productions, the Granada series was pre-sold to PBS to be screened as part of their Masterpiece Theatre *Mystery!* anthology series. The BBC had earlier avoided US involvement as they did not want to compromise the Englishness of the character, in contrast Granada made this a large selling point in their adaptation to make it attractive to an overseas market. With guaranteed overseas sales, the Granada production initially started with relatively high production values, which would pay, for example, for the reconstruction of Baker Street.

Michael Cox pitched the series to Granada as returning to the original Conan Doyle characters, which had been muddled through the layers of interpretation over the years. The majority of the television audience would not have read the original stories, and the Holmes they would have recognised came more from external influences, early modifications from Sidney Paget and William Gillette having the most profound effect. Granada embraced the Paget additions, including reconstructions of his illustrations in the series, and, of course, the deerstalker and Inverness cape. This is an example of how selective the production was in what they included as canon; Gillette, who had pioneered the successful Holmes adaptation and originated the curved pipe so identifiable with Holmes, was not included.

The actor most identifiable with Holmes was Basil Rathbone, who had appeared in a series of films for 20th Century and then Universal, as well as a popular radio show in the US. Once they moved to Universal Studios the films developed a successful

formula, which owed very little to the Conan Doyle stories. These films spawned generations of pastiches and their popularity cast a long shadow over the role of Holmes, but these only become clichés because they were so successful and much imitated. The Rathbone Twentieth Century Fox films were the first to make a conscious decision to place Holmes in a period setting. This may in part be due to the earlier films having been made so close to the original stories they would been considered contemporary rather than period[2]. The most well-known Rathbone films were those made at Universal, which had modernised the character and, to begin with, enlisted him into helping the Allies in World War Two. Conan Doyle himself had written a story where Holmes takes on a German spy during World War One, and across the film industry in the 1940s all formula B picture characters (Tarzan, Abbott and Costello, etc.) fought the Nazis. But it is Rathbone's portrayal of Holmes which proved such a hit, and despite the many actors who played the part in the intervening years, he was still the Holmes to beat in the public's imagination. These films continued to be popular and were shown on television in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s, therefore they would still be something a contemporary audience would be familiar with.[3]

5.2 Michael Cox era

The original Michael Cox led production was determined to be faithful to the original stories, and Thomas Leitch theorises that their aim was to be considered as the official adaptation, theirs the definitive Holmes, perhaps even supplementing Conan Doyle's. As Matthew Sweet comments, the production is 'self-consciously canonical

[2] Conan Doyle was writing Holmes stories (in period) into the 1920s.
[3] The BBC screen a limited run in 1977/78, followed by the full series of fourteen films in 1982, 1985 and 1987/88 (the last two running beside during the ITV Brett series).

and definitive';[4] it is Holmes taken very seriously. There is a definite choice in emphasising the fidelity of the production and because it is being produced by Granada, with its quality credentials, the heritage aspect is also emphasised. Using Charlotte Brunsdon's 'uncontroversial signifiers of quality'[5] we can argue that the Holmes production can be categorised as a quality heritage production alongside the adaptations of traditional classic novels. The popularity of programmes like Holmes, *Miss Marple* and *Poirot*, demonstrates that Golden Age detectives became included in the popularity of period and costume television of the heritage boom.

But with all adaptations compromises have to be made, not least because of the inconsistencies that are riddled in the original stories. However, the amendments are also inconsistent; some of the mistakes are removed but some remain, Watson's first person narration is removed from the majority of the stories but is used three times in *The Adventures*. As the stories are not taken in the order that they are written Watson's wife is excluded, and therefore the writers do not have to devise reasons to get him back to Baker Street. This selective fidelity emphasises that although 'the series remains faithful to the exterior details of Holmes's world, it constantly seeks to improve Doyle's stories by making them more realistic, suspenseful, heartfelt, or mysterious'.[6] This can be seen in 'The Greek Interpreter', where a dramatic chase sequence and definite ending are added to a story which finished abruptly.

[4] *Timeshift,* 2014.
[5] Brunsdon, "Problems with quality," 86
[6] Leitch, *Film adaptation and its discontents,* 227

In *Sherlock Holmes on Screen* David Stuart Davies argues that the best moments of the series are when 'they read between the lines of the text'.[7] The success of these moments where they open out the action, like the boxing scene in 'The Solitary Cyclist' and Holmes' disguise in 'A Scandal in Bohemia', would eventually lead to longer additions, for example in *The Master Blackmailer*. *The Adventures* proved to be popular with the critics, who appreciated this nostalgic quality of the series. But by consciously accentuating the period elements and avoiding the fog and hansom cab cliché, the series makes a definite choice in how it is to be perceived. It became what Andrew Higson calls a 'visually spectacular pastiche'[8] of the Victorian period.

5.3 June Wyndham Davies era

When Michael Cox gave up the producer's chair to June Wyndham Davies, the emphasis gradually became less on quality and fidelity and eventually major effort was required merely to survive. In the early 1990s the shift went towards original drama and heritage survived in a more modern interpretation. Programmes like *Morse* and *Peak Practice,* which are often described 'using the same cosy and domestic imagery of Englishness which the programmes themselves abound in'.[9] While the original production had emphasised the heritage and nostalgia of the stories, the 1990s became less about period, and the Holmes series would have been viewed as quaint and old fashioned.

[7] Barnes, *Sherlock Holmes on screen,* 22
[8] Higson, "Re-presenting the national past: nostalgia and pastiche in the heritage film", 91.
[9] Lyn Thomas, "In love with Inspector Morse: feminist subculture and quality television", *Feminist Review,* 51 (1) (1995), 3

The Adventures and *The Return* had chosen the best stories for adaptation, which meant that when they came to make later series they were left with those which did not lend themselves without significant alterations. By justifying the new ending to 'The Greek Interpreter' further compromises could be made to the later episodes to make them more filmable. But not all of these were decisions made by the production company but were the result of the changing television landscape. The concept of total costing was introduced where expensive programmes, like the Holmes series, were expected to recoup their costs through generated revenue. The impact of this can most be seen in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, where expensive scenes were avoided or reused from previous episodes and rewrites were included for logistical reasons rather than an attempt to dramatise or to 'improve'. The popularity of feature-length television rather than one-hour programmes led to *The Last Vampyre* and *The Eligible Bachelor* bordering on Holmes pastiche, exactly what the production had originally intended to leave behind. As it was never a ratings hit there was never any guarantee that the series would be re-commissioned, and the last minute go ahead for *The Memoirs* meant that the production team had to deal with another unforeseen problem – cast availability. 'The Golden Pince-Nez' and 'The Mazarin Stone', while not up to the standard of the earlier series, were further removed from the original story by substituting Mycroft for one of the leads.[10] As Thomas Leitch commented, the 'well-being and scheduling of stars are invisible imperatives more exigent than any attempt at textual fidelity'.[11]

A major factor in the overall success of the series was Jeremy Brett's portrayal of Holmes, which is a very mannered, almost Victorian, performance and inclined to be

[10] Watson and Holmes respectively
[11] Leitch, *Film adaptation and its discontents,* 228

over-the-top on occasion. Brett's Holmes was prone to mood swings and extremes of behaviour, partly due to Brett himself being a manic depressive, and are not especially faithful to the original but do make for compelling television. Like many before him, Brett created Holmes in his own image and often used the character to work through some deep issues of his own. By not just portraying Holmes as written but by approaching him as if he were a real person and attempting to understand his motivations, he has, in part, made Holmes his creation rather than Conan Doyle's. Because Brett became so enveloped in the role, the sacrifice of fidelity in the characterisation for dramatic effect would only work or not work depending on Brett's own mood. A tendency to over-act and allow his own demons through could hamper episodes if left unchecked. Scenes like the nightmare sequence in *The Eligible Bachelor* were self-indulgent and not only bore no resemblance to Conan Doyle's Holmes, and it was also out of character for his own interpretation.

5.4 Conclusion

Academic writings on Holmes adaptations have the tendency to focus on how faithful the adaptations are, and the justification from the canon of multiple interpretations. In this thesis, rather than focusing on how faithful the series is, I have investigated the perception of fidelity and the external factors which impacted on the final product. As, as Brian McFarlane notes, 'faithful adaptation can be intelligent and attractive, but is not necessarily to be preferred'.[12] The original aim of the Granada series was to present a faithful and authentic version of Holmes, to be viewed as an official part of the canon. But, as Thomas Leitch observes, the 'Granada

[12] McFarlane, *Novel to Film*, 11.

adaptations are determined to remain faithful to Doyle except at those points where they are determined to depart from him'.[13] From the beginning the series sought to improve on the works by making them more dramatic for television, highlighting the issue that a written piece of work does not translate directly to screen, as the rhythms, pacing and drama are all different. But while the early series attempted to remain 'true to the spirit' of Conan Doyle's stories, the later series were hampered by external issues which compromised the original aim. Despite this the series is still held in high regard and is considered the best period interpretation of the stories, because of this legacy there was not another mainstream television adaptation for sixteen years.

[13] Leitch, *Film adaptation and its discontents,* 230

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