HETERONORMATIVITY AS DEPICTED IN BBC'S *SHERLOCK*: A QUEER ANALYSIS

A THESIS

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer genuinely declares that the thesis entitled "Heteronormativity as Depicted in BBC's *Sherlock*: A Queer Analysis" is composed and completed by the writer herself without taking any results from other researchers from any degree in any university. The writer ensures that she did not quote any material from others' researches or publications except for the references as mentioned.

Semarang, 15 April 2022

Vanessa Febe Purnomo

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

"Never be cruel, never be cowardly. Remember, hate is always foolish and love is always wise. Always try to be nice, but never fail to be kind."

— Twelfth Doctor

"In incepto finis est. In the beginning is the end."

— eleventy7

"Education never ends, Watson. It is a series of lessons, with the greatest for the last."

— Arthur Conan Doyle

APPROVAL

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The writer understands that this thesis is far from being perfect despite it was written to the best of the writer's ability. Constructive criticisms and suggestions are more than welcomed in order for this thesis to be better than before. The writer also expects this thesis to be beneficial to those in the realm of queer studies or literature.

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini ditulis untuk mengkaji serial TV *Sherlock*. Penelitian ini membahas bagaimana heteronormativitas ditayangkan dan disangkal oleh pemain utamanya, Sherlock Holmes dan John Watson. Tujuan dari penelitian ini berfokus pada aspek intrisik dan ekstrinsik dari serial tersebut. Penulis menggunakan teori dari Barsam & Monahan (2016) dan Bordwell & Thompson (2017) untuk menganalisa unsur-unsur intrisik yang meliputi pembahasan narasi dan sinematografi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode *library research* dan penulis mengaplikasikan teori heteronormativitas pada data yang sudah terkumpul. Hasil dari penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Sherlock* menampilkan heteronormativitas melalui perilaku karakternya berserta dengan pengenalan karakter tambahan. Di sisi lain, *Sherlock* juga melawan heteronormativitas dengan memberi petunjuk bahwa karakter-karakternya menolak untuk mematuhi norma seksual standar. Serial TV ini melakukan *queerbaiting* untuk menarik penonton *queer* dengan memberi mereka harapakan bahwa karakter utama dari serial tersebut dapat merepresentasikan *queer* sekaligus mundur untuk menghindari reaksi buruk karena mempromosikan dan menayangkan aktivitas queer.

Keyword: Heteronormativitas, *Sherlock,* studi queer, queerbaiting

ABSTRACT

This study is written to analyze the TV series, *Sherlock*. The study addresses how heteronormativity is depicted and defied on screen by the main characters, Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. The objective of the study focuses on both intrinsic as well as the extrinsic elements of the show. The writer uses the theories from Barsam & Monahan (2016) and Bordwell & Thompson (2017) to analyze the intrinsic elements that include the discussion of the narrative and cinematographic aspects. This research uses the library research method and the writer applies the heteronormativity theory to the collected data. The result of the research shows that *Sherlock* displays heteronormativity through its characters' behavior and the introduction of additional characters. Meanwhile, *Sherlock* also defies heteronormativity by showing hints that its characters refuse to conform into the standard sexual norm. The show does queerbaiting to attract queer viewers by giving them hope that the main characters represent queerness as well as backtracking to avoid backlash for promoting queer activities on screen.

Keyword: Heteronormativity, *Sherlock*, queer studies, queerbaiting

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1.Background of the Study

BBC's TV series *Sherlock* is indisputably one of the many well-known versions of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes adaptations. With a touch of modernization of the 21st century, the famous detective from 221B Baker Street, Sherlock Holmes, and his loyal friend, John Watson, solve crimes after crimes together with the aid of the internet and technology. Over the years, the famed series produced and written by Steven Moffat and Mark Gattis has been heavily criticized by its audience and critics for indirectly dropping queer subtexts in the form of jests and banters.

Stating how only a few queer subtexts got implanted in the show might be an enormous understatement. *Sherlock* regularly exhibits the smoldering homosexual tension between the main protagonists with morose close-ups of Sherlock and John staring at each other's eyes at close proximity. Granted, the possible cause of homoeroticism is produced by the predominant and recurring jokes about the sexual orientation of its main characters and their relationship status. These "gay jokes" are often thrown in as a medium to show that the other characters assume that

Sherlock and John are romantically involved. The response to these jokes usually comes from John himself, for which he vehemently denies any accusations of being homosexual. The recurrence of John's objections constructed a more hetero-suited lane by restating John's continuous denial that would be more suitable to its intended heterosexual audience. This phenomenon is often described as heteronormativity which is the adamant and widely-accepted sexual norm that state how heterosexuality is typically one's resolute and assumed sexual orientation. However, the illegibility in Sherlock's sexuality and the lack of rebuttals in terms of a queer relationship inscribe a hint of queerness present on screen. *Sherlock* portray this contradiction by constantly creating sexual or romantic tensions only for John's reinstations of heterosexuality to appear.

By conducting this research, the writer is intrigued in finding how heteronormativity is reflected in *Sherlock*. The writer will evaluate the show to determine the heteronormativity and its application to the characters' behaviors, and not only that, she will also explore how the show defies the said concept. Since there are contradictions of implementing and resisting heteronormativity occurring in *Sherlock*, the writer is also intrigued in investigating how the show is able to portray both at the same time.

1.2. Research Problems

1. How is heteronormativity depicted in *Sherlock*?

2. How does *Sherlock* defy heteronormativity?

3. Why does *Sherlock* depict heteronormativity while also simultaneously defy it?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the heteronormativity as reflected in *Sherlock*.

2. To analyze the way *Sherlock* defies heteronormativity.

3. To analyze the way *Sherlock* represents heteronormativity and its opposition to heteronormativity.

1.4. Previous Studies

Over the years, the name Sherlock Holmes is generally not unusual to be associated with studies and analyses revolving around sexuality or gender performativity. Indeed, Sherlock Holmes, either Doyle's original version or BBC's adaptation, has been the object of numerous researches in the field of gender studies. Many of the most notable studies written about BBC's *Sherlock* is of the topic of its main characters' sexual orientations or the possibilities of a queer relationship between the sleuth and his dear doctor. Judith Fathallah refers to these "queer moments" as disruptions to the supposedly hegemonic masculine performance in *Sherlock* (2014:2). She argues that the show delivers disruptions of normative masculinity using Moriarty, whose stance can be seen as queer, then palpably diminish those queer disruptions by frequently stating the characters' normativity.

If one does talk about *Sherlock*, then one must not overlook its noteworthy queer readings. Simpson reviews the main characters of the BBC's adaptation: Sherlock, John, and Moriarty through the queer viewpoint (queering) and pronounces them as "three sides of the same individual" who struggle with the acceptance of their sexual orientation (2016:26-27). Simpson then concludes that each of them can be seen as representing various forms of homosexuality as seen in media. On the other hand, Greer offers arguments on how the show's queerness primarily formed (mis)recognitions of our main protagonists' sexual orientations (2014:66). To combat these queer recognitions, Greer continues, *Sherlock* believes the act of conservative defense of binary thinking that distinguished gay and straight would terminate the queer possibilities between Sherlock and John (2014:66).

These queer readings will not ensue if the show itself is not rife with implications of a gay romance. In the first chapter of Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century, Lavigne addresses how *Sherlock* is "particularly open to such [queer] readings despite the surface denials" as the show is entirely ridden with underlying queer subtexts (2012:20). Ishvara infers that *Sherlock* uses homosexual subtexts to attract queer audiences (2016:20). She believes the show is practicing queerbaiting by giving those viewers hope that the characters will end up together canonically; Thus, boosting the recognition of the queer possibilities amongst the fandom. The presence of these possibilities is seen by Parviainen as a failed attempt to shift the intended Victorian homosocial dynamics of its original work to the more

modernized setting, resulting in numerous indications of a homosexual relationship (2020:22).

Originally, Doyle did not intend to depict Sherlock as the hero of romance literature. Graham & Carlen notes that the detective has been sexualized over the years, straying far from the canon Sherlock to the point that he becomes a romance figure for its viewers' desire (2012:24). This phenomenon is prominently visible even in the BBC's adaptation. Basu observes *Sherlock*'s modernization from its original setting and the normative Victorian values it retains (2012:197). One of which is Doyle's traditionalism in approaching sexual orientation, which never has been explicitly spoken. Nevertheless, in this modern world where sexuality is openly discussed, Basu claims, Sherlock conforms to the original text's Victorian values (2012:207). For which she believes that "queerness is gestured at, but never actually present on screen" (2012:207). Although it is indicated, the existence of queerness itself does not cease.

Debates on the main characters' sexual orientation have long arisen amongst *Sherlock*'s massive fandom, even between scholars themselves. Lalong & Muslikhin identify Sherlock's obscure sexual orientation as an asexual who has no desire to procreate (2018:61). Whereas some could argue that Sherlock can be perceived as having homosexual traits, Valentine states how Sherlock's sexual identity is "entirely illegible" for its audience to speculate at, although the illegibility has become a sign of recognition for *Sherlock*'s queer audiences

(2016:10). Valentine also claims that Sherlock refuses to conform with the "hegemonic, heteronormative paradigm" of conservative standards that force him to inscribe what his sexual orientation is (2016:10).

Not many studies have been conducted regarding the matter of heteronormativity integrated into *Sherlock*. However, most studies that have been written are concentrated on the queer possibilities and the ambiguity of Sherlock and John's sexual identity. The writer intends to conduct the research from a new perspective by highlighting the heteronormative aspects that most researchers have constantly mentioned but never been thoroughly scrutinized.

1.5. Scope of the Study

The writer will limit the research to study the heteronormativity as depicted through the characters' behaviors, dialogues, and reactions. The said characters that the writer will conduct an analysis on will be mainly limited to Sherlock Holmes and John Watson; However, in case of an outer force, other side characters will be mentioned if they add any relevance to the study. In addition, the writer will also examine how these characters defy heteronormativity. Considering the contradictions that the characters manifest, the writer will explore how *Sherlock* reflects the concepts simultaneously. Nevertheless, a queer reading will be applied to help the writer imagine a queer space of the text.

1.6. Writing Organization

This research consists of four significant chapters, and each chapter will be organized furthermore into sub-chapters as described:

a. CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION. In this chapter, the writer states the background of the study, research problems, objectives of the study, previous studies, the scope of the study, and the organization of the research.

b. CHAPTER II: THEORY AND METHOD. This chapter explains the theory that the writer uses to analyze the object of the study and the methods used to conduct the research.

c. CHAPTER III: RESULT AND DISCUSSION. This chapter discusses the heteronormativity and how it is also defied as portrayed in the show for the purpose of answering the research problems as stated above.

d. CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION. In this chapter, the writer draws the conclusion from the result of the discussion in the preceding chapter.

REFERENCES

CHAPTER II

THEORY AND METHOD

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1.　　Narrative Aspects

Barsam and Monahan describe narrative as a type of film in which it is utilized to convey a line of story that usually comes in the form of fictions, or fictionalized stories (2016:68). Without narrative, there would be no movies as narrative, or story, is essential to every movie. They break down narrative into three components, in which those are narration, narrator and characters (2016:122). On other hand, narrative can also be structured into three acts of a schematic: setup, conflict and obstacles, and resolution (2016:134). In conducting research focusing on a TV series, the writer will assess the show's narrative elements. The elements that the writer aims to focus on are character and conflict.

2.1.1.1. Character

Whatever it takes the forms of, a story would not function as it should have without the existence of characters. Characters are defined by Barsam & Monahan to be a person (or personification of an abstract concept or object) with a specific

goal to pursue in a story (2016:126). Characters carry on the storyline of the movie, and the plot typically revolves around them. Bordwell & Thompson declare that characters possess unique traits, either personality, habits, or quirks, that define and distinguish them as prominent figures (2017:73).

Characters are categorized into major and minor by Barsam & Monahan based on their significance in the development of the plot (2010:135). The most important characters fall into the major characters category and are even branded as protagonists or antagonists. Major characters are, Barsam & Monahan continue, the supporting tool for creating important events to continue the storyline (2010:135). Nevertheless, as the most valuable part of the story, they also experience those critical events. On the contrary, minor characters hardly appear in the movie, and their presence is deemed not as necessary as the major characters. However, they exist to support or "flesh out the motivations" of major characters.

2.1.1.2. Conflict

No story would be complete without the inclusion of conflicts that challenge the characters to the bone to add points of intrigue to its audience. Johnson & Arp in *Structure, Sound and Sense* define conflict as "a clash of actions, ideas, desires, or wills" that occurred to the characters in which they have to go against other people or face an external force (2018:98). This narrative element is principal for the growth of the plot apart from inducing excitement in its audience. Meyer

categorizes conflict into external and internal conflict (1990:45). Internal conflict arises when the character is in a mental dilemma with himself, particularly when deciding a critical decision. On the other hand, external conflict happens when the character is pitted against another character in a verbal or physical confrontation or an outer force, namely nature, society, or fate.

2.1.2. Cinematography

Bordwell & Thompson state that cinematography is closely related to photography (2017:159). However, the difference between a still photograph and a movie lies in the technique used to set those still photographs into a motion that creates a story-telling video. Brown believes that cinematography takes various forms of nonverbal communication and "rendering them in visual terms" (2016:2).

2.1.2.1. Camera Distance

The positioning of the camera in order to capture the essence of the scene is called camera distance. The image framing tells how far the camera is from the subject, and Bordwell & Thompson use the scale of human bodies captured in the shot to determine types of shots in a movie (2017:189).

2.1.2.1.1.   Extreme Long Shot

This shot is used to film panoramas or landscapes with the camera placed from a great distance and typically include an obscure human figure or none at all (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:189). Extreme long shots provide general background information that emphasizes the relations between the human figure shown and the surrounding around him (Picture 3.1).

2.1.2.1.2.   Long Shot

The background dominates the frame in a long shot, and the human figure's entire body is clearly visible (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:189). The human is the prominent feature of the shot, and the background is merely a filling (Picture 3.2).

2.1.2.1.3.   Medium Long Shot

This shot captures the human figure from knees up and a bit of background to produce an equal view of both features (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017:189). This shot is one of the most commonly used shots between directors because it allows them to place one or more characters to engage and film them from various angles. (Picture 3.3).

2.1.2.1.4.   Medium Shot

Medium shots generally display the human figure from the waist up to present the character's gesture and expression more detail than the shots mentioned above (Picture 3.4)

2.1.2.1.5.   Medium Close-up

This shot shows the human figure from the chest up to deliver a closer look at the posture and minor expression changes (Picture 3.5).

2.1.2.1.6.   Close up

Close-up shots focus on a particular subject, either on the human figure's body feature or an object, for the purpose of emphasizing the facial expression, details of emotions, or state of mind (Picture 3.6).

2.1.2.1.7.   Extreme Close up

Extreme close-ups frame a portion of a face or an object to record a highly detailed feature (Picture 3.7).

Picture 2.1
(Barsam & Monahan, 2016)

Picture 2.2
(Barsam & Monahan, 2016)

Picture 2.3
(Barsam & Monahan, 2016)

Picture 2.4
(Barsam & Monahan, 2016)

Picture 2.5
(Barsam & Monahan, 2016)

Picture 2.6
(Barsam & Monahan, 2016)

Picture 2.7
(Barsam & Monahan, 2016)

2.1.2.2. Sound

In filmmaking, the presence of sound is as crucial as any other cinematography element. Sound gives knowledge and guidance to accompany the visual in the movie that might help the audience shape interpretations and analyses on what is presented on the screen (Barsam & Monahan, 2016:365). Barsam & Monahan divide sound into four categories: vocal sounds (dialogue and narration), environmental sounds, music, and silence (2016:374). For this research, the writer will focus on the dialogues recorded from the object of the study.

2.1.2.2.1. Dialogue

Dialogue is an act of performing verbal communication done by the characters to express motivations or feelings. According to Barsam & Monahan, dialogue help with the growth of situations, conflict, and character development while also telling a story (2016:374).

2.1.3. Extrinsic Aspects
2.1.3.1. Heterosexuality

The conservative biological determinism believes that it is in the dichotomous nature of sex to identify people based on human physiology and decide their assigned sexes at birth, whether male or female. What follows this concept are two

complex societal conundrums: gender and heterosexuality. Crawley, Foley, and Shehan describe gender as a society-made construct that identifies humans based on one's inclination of sex characteristics (2008:32). While on the other hand, heterosexuality is a notion about the attraction of members from the opposite sex. Based on the aforementioned definition, heterosexuality could be the attraction of people who fall into the contradictory category of sexes.

The term heterosexuality was coined in 1868 by Karl Maria Kertbeny in his letter as a response to another sexologist, Karl Heinrich Ulrich's theory that state how humans experience sexual desire focusing on the other sex. Kertbeny created the term heterosexual to refer to sexual acts of men and women alongside with three different terms: monosexual, heterogenit and homosexual (Katz, 1995:52). In *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, Jonathan Katz says that the normalization of heterosexuality commenced when the psychiatrist Krafft-Ebbing introduced "sexual inversion" or "contrary sexual feeling" that associate heterosexuality with nonprocreative perversion (1995:55). In the late nineteenth century, other psychiatrists started to mark what falls into "abnormal sexuality" and "normal sexuality" that eventually altered the core meaning of heterosexuality to eroticism.

Freud was the one who popularized the term heterosexuality to the general public. Freud states how heterosexuality could be accomplished as a resolution if an individual has surpassed his oedipal complex and move on (Katz, 1995:78). Katz also says how Freud and other psychiatrists label homosexuals to be abnormal and

heterosexuals to be more superior as a reason to "rationalize their private nonreproductive heteropleasure practices" (1995:81). Alongside the reason mentioned earlier, the overly repeated incantation of normality that Freud associated with heterosexuality help the spread, fixation, and stabilization of the term heterosexuality in the twentieth century.

As time goes on, heterosexuality seemingly still carries the normality that Freud implanted. Pilcher & Whelehan claim heterosexuality is related more to a sense of normalcy rather than being reckoned as a sexual preference (2004:68). In *Fear of a Queer Planet*, Warner states how heterosexuality has established a "het culture" that regarded itself as the fundamental component in forming the existence of society by being the foundation of human association, social relations, and reproduction (1993:xxi). Thus, with the various factors supporting and validating hetero culture, heterosexuality develops into the standard format of sexuality, mainly when heterosexuality is coined in a world where the socially and economically ideal adulthood is marriage and the nuclear family (Blank, 2012:165).

2.1.3.2. Heteronormativity

The normalization of heterosexuality as the prevalent sexual orientation commenced with the revelation of the vast number of people who labeled themselves as heterosexuals and the emergence of numerous social institutions that reinforced heterosexuality (Manning, 2009:414). The idea of deeming

heterosexuality as the preferred sexuality arises as the spread of hetero normalization expands. That was when the term heteronormativity came into the picture. Heteronormativity was first coined to describe how heterosexual attractions or relationships have been firmly established as the accustomed sexual norm (Barker, 2014:858).

Michael Warner first popularized heteronormativity in the introduction of *Fear of a Queer Planet.* He proposes how heteronormative mindsets that regulate customary sexual identity, gender identity, and sexual relations have rooted deep within the society (1993: xxi). The basis of the concept of heteronormativity lies in Gayle Rubin's theory of sex hierarchy, better known as the sex/gender system, and Adrianne Rich's theory of compulsory heterosexuality that she published in her essay titled *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*.

Rubin describes the sex/gender system as "the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied" (Rubin, 1975:159). She states that humans have biological needs, like the need to eat, seek protection, or procreate. The needs to procreate that she called 'biological sexuality' are normalized in the list of basic human activities that must be fulfilled equally alongside other needs. Rubin takes the example of hunger as another biological need that must be satisfied as much as the need to procreate. What we deem as the appropriate food to eat is

culturally decided and established by society. Corresponding to the needs of procreation, what we count as sex is also culturally determined and initiated.

Rubin further explains that "the biological raw material of sexuality and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner…" (1975:165). She believes that the concept of assigning sex by birth or biological sex, gender identity, and sexuality is the resulting products of social and culture constructionism (Rubin, 1975:179, 199). Rubin's sex/gender system reveals the corresponding historical link between the paradigm of gender and compulsory heterosexuality that imposes the foundation of male domination of women (Ward & Schneider, 2009:433). Rubin perceives how the sex/gender system influences the patriarchal paradigm that imposes heterosexuality. She also notices how sex operates on a "hierarchy of acceptability," and heterosexuality is fixated inside the "charmed circle" that is regarded as normal and natural, the opposite of where homosexuality is located, on the "outer limits" deemed as abnormal and unnatural (1984:281).

According to Rich, compulsory heterosexuality is the surmise that heterosexuality is presumed to be one's default sexual orientation (1980:633). She suggests that heterosexuality is the usual sexual "preference" or "choice" of most women, the assumed desire to be attracted to men. Rich perceives compulsory heterosexuality from the viewpoint of a lesbian feminist and defines the term compulsory heterosexuality as a political institution of systemic oppression towards

women who identify as lesbians (1980:637). The existence of lesbians was continually threatened by patriarchy and male dominance that women had no choice but to oblige to the heterosexual scheme.

Rich believes that the concept of compulsory heterosexuality is already generally pertained to and applied long-term in most society that sustains heterosexuality. Since the essay was originally written from a feminist perspective, the concept essentially could be applied to any other group in the LGBTQ+ community. With the prolonged and consistent chant that espoused institutionalized and normative heterosexuality, the presumption of identifying as a heterosexual is not only assumed but enforced by society. The enforcement of compulsory heterosexuality has led to the suppression of queer people into thinking and recognizing themselves as a hetero, simply because other options that stray from heterosexuality could be seen as deviant (Rich, 1980:652). By declaring themselves as heterosexual, those people achieve a sense of normalcy that makes them feel accepted in society.

The elementary roots for heteronormativity could be discerned if we exert the fundamental essence of the two initial concepts. Following Rich's compulsory heterosexuality, the idea of institutionalizing heterosexuality as the normative model for sexuality has been enforced that we automatically assume an individual identifies as a hetero until proven otherwise. Heteronormativity as a sexual norm allows the normalization of heterosexuality as the sole recognition and default

setting in sexuality and presumes that heterosexuality is the dominant identity. Heteronormativity also condemns and denigrates those who deviate from this morally preferable option, regarding the non-conformists of heterosexual norms as abnormal, deviants, or peculiars. With the nimble pace of the proliferation of heterosexuality, a view that spurns those who swerve from this socially desirable option was created as a side effect of the aforementioned normalization.

One of the resistances to these heteronormative acts is to not conform into the framework itself and to focus on reducing prejudiced views regarding gender and sexual identities (Toorn, Pliskin & Morgenroth, 2020:163). Sexual stereotypes regarding LGBT are one of the supporting factors where people with a heteronormative viewpoint would more often than not perceive society with one-sided prejudice. Madon (1997:672-673) in her study about gay male stereotypes mentions gay males have distinct personality traits and physical appearance. Gay men are often identified with being feminine, affectionate, emotional, soft-spoken, well-groomed and artsy. Stereotypes regarding certain groups of people is perceived as a supporting feature in a bigoted mind frame towards LGBT.

Toorn, Pliskin & Morgenroth declare that to combat heteronormativity, an intervention is needed to resist both overt and subtle biased outlooks as well as the principal mechanism of said bigotry (2020:163). This discriminatory stance against LGBT is validated as well with gendered implementations on various factors in customs and cultures, one of which is gendered acts. One of many applications of

gendered acts is to assign certain gender identities on names. Pilcher (2017:813) state that identities, in terms of gender, involved one's name. She believes that forenames are very common in determining an individual's sex and gender, even at their birth (2017:814). Gendered implementations are one of the underlying roots in which heteronormativity is institutionalized, and to fight them is to refuse to conform into the path of heteronormative drivel.

Representations in the films are as equally as important as in the general media. LGBT characters in media have always been severely portrayed in a negative light in the past few decades (Raley & Lucas, 2006:23). Even though it has been improving ever since, Cook states how even in the modern world, the queer representations for the LGBT community are still "influenced by old, harmful tropes." (2018:39). These representations in the cinema are crucial to influence how society perceive and create the concrete image of the LGBT community. Seif in his thesis titled *The Media Representation of Fictional Gay and Lesbian Characters on Television* agrees that the queer representations in the media mainly persist heteronormative ideas (2017:42). He believes that heteronormativity is still present despite the progress and improvement in rectifying the portrayal of the LGBT community. This rectification is made worse with the trend of 'queerbaiting' where a piece of media slightly gives queer subtexts to its characters, and later denying that it doesn't exist. Nordin defines queerbaiting to be "teasing and denying, robbing people of representation and space, an expression of homophobia and

exploitation…" (2015:63). The concept of queerbaiting destroys the progress in remedying queer representations as it only promotes more negative images and descriptions, especially boosting heteronormative ideas to its viewers.

2.2. Research Method

2.2.1. Method of Data Collection

In a research, data is the raw material taken from a source in which will be used by the writer to give evidence and support the arguments that she presents. The data collected must be relevant to the research problems. Sugiyono classifies data sources into primary and secondary sources (2016:225). The primary source is where the writer takes information from the object of the study related to the research problems. On the other hand, the secondary source is additional pre-existing data that other researchers have collected.

The primary data will be taken from the TV series BBC's *Sherlock,* consisting of 4 seasons with 13 episodes. The writer will use the streaming service Netflix as a medium to access the show. The secondary data will be obtained from various previous written media: books, journal articles, and studies related to the object of the research and the theories that the writer deemed significant. In compiling the

data, the writer will use the method of documentation where the data is obtained directly from the source in the form of dialogues and pictures.

2.2.2.   Method of Analysis

After the required data is collected, the writer will analyze the data. Data analysis is the process where the data is described and categorized into different parts to facilitate "the interpretation of the phenomenon under study" (Wiersma, 1991:85).

Since *Sherlock* consists of 13 episodes, with each episode airing about an hour and a half, the data that the writer chooses will contain dialogues that hint at how heteronormativity is practiced and also defied. Displaying data in qualitative research could be done in brief explanations, diagrams, graphs, et cetera. Miles and Huberman in Sugiyono state that narrative text is the most common way to display data in qualitative research (2016:249).

2.2.3.   Method of Approach

In completing this thesis, the writer uses a queer approach to analyze *Sherlock*. The term 'queer' is defined by Spargo to be "whatever is odds with the normal, or dominant understanding of proper gender and sexual identifications…" (2016:2). Browne and Nash in their introduction for *Queer Methods and Methodologies* state

how queer theory challenges the regulating social system of sexual identities as well as the binary thinking that perpetuates heterosexual and homosexual where one is considered natural and one is discerned as abominable (2016:5).

Spargo describes how a queer perspective of a text is not only anti-normative, but also used to focus on the societal matter concerning LGBTI (2016:1). Queer researches are non-conforming to the binary frameworks and aim to critique what Browne and Nash labelled as 'stabilities' in our social lives. Meaning that queer researches seek a potential breach in these normative, well-ingrained social normalcy. Studies using this method generally highlight and concentrate more on disclosing the heteronormative conceptualizations of gender and sexuality within a piece of literature of a given period of time, while most of the time, it also could be utilized to observe representations of sexual identity in literature (Spargo, 2016:2). In this thesis, the writer will center the study on how heteronormativity as a primary social issue is reflected in *Sherlock* through its characters by perceiving the show through a queer perspective.

CHAPTER III

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3. Discusssion

3.1. Narrative Aspects

3.1.1. Characters

3.1.1.1. Sherlock Holmes

As stated before by Barsam & Monahan, major characters hold a significant necessity in the continuity of a story. Being named for the series, Sherlock Holmes is one of the major characters in this TV show. As seen in the medium close-up of picture 3.1 and the medium shot of picture 3.2, he is depicted to be a lean, tall and handsome man in the midst of his 30s. He is famously known for his intelligence and sharp deductions as he works as a 'consultant detective' where he uses his deducting and sleuthing abilities to help solve crimes, sometimes even partnering with Scotland Yard.

Sherlock has a proclivity in discovering and solving 'interesting' crime cases that he considers as puzzles to rack up his brain, amongst his other hobbies that one might call peculiar. As a detective, he spends his day doing weird experiments with body parts, sometimes keeping them in his fridge. Sherlock Holmes is depicted as

a man of focus and brilliance and he has been repeatedly shown to know how to put his sharp intellect to use.

Picture 3.1

Sherlock's face features

(Season 2, Episode 1. 00:17:44)

Picture 3.2

Sherlock's body features

(Season 3, Episode 1. 00:17:28)

Picture 3.3

Sherlock playing the violin

(Season 4, Episode 3. 01:24:38)

Picture 3.4

Sherlock doing experiments

(Season 2, Episode 3. 00:37:19)

3.1.1.2. John Watson

Another one of the main characters is John Watson. Also known as the sidekick of Sherlock, John often comes and helps him in visiting crime scenes, sometimes even in solving the cases as well. In picture 3.17 that utilizes medium

long shot to show John and his activity, it can be perceived how John's role in 221B Baker Street is to document their 'adventures' and post them in his blog. He was mentioned to be a decent doctor during his serving time in the army. John has always been depicted to be courageous and assertive as seen in the medium shot of picture 3.6, for having been a soldier before he retires due to an injury.

John's brave tendencies are not only shown once or twice but it has become some sort of recurrence and it supports his inclinations to danger. He is shown to not be able to leave the life of a soldier hence he regularly accompanies Sherlock to his escapades. The doctor who never came home from the war is also seen to be kind and patient with Sherlock's shenanigans. John becomes the voice of rationale when Sherlock is out of spiral with himself. He can be discerned as someone who is sensible and holds a high moral standard as opposed to Sherlock who more often than not goes into relapse by using drugs.

Picture 3.5

John's face features

(Season 1, Episode 1. 00:38:03)

Picture 3.6

John doing a courageous act

(Season 1, Episode 3. 01:24:56)

Picture 3.7

John writing his blog

(Season 2, Episode 1. 00:05:53)

3.1.2. Conflict

3.1.2.1. Internal Conflict

As it is previously mentioned, conflicts can be categorized into internal and external conflict. One of the internal conflicts in this series is when Sherlock is faced by threats from his nemesis, Jim Moriarty. He is forced to commit suicide or his closest friends would be killed by snipers prepared by Jim.

Picture 3.8

Sherlock's expression

(Season 2, Episode 3. 01:13:24)

Picture 3.9

Sherlock during his call with John

(Season 2, Episode 3. 01:19:33)

After being confronted by Jim, Sherlock goes into a series of internal conflict, whether he has to jump off the building he was standing on or save his friends from their impending deaths. The extreme close up of picture 3.8 caught Sherlock to be in a distraught after he learns the bargain Jim has offered him. He seems contemplative and perplexed at the deal, while Jim looks devious with his sly smile. Sherlock has to think of a solution where everyone lives, even if he has to sacrifice himself.

In the meantime, in the medium close up of the picture 3.9, Sherlock is seen to be in a deep distress and misery. Before he falls off the building, Sherlock calls John who watches from the street and he seems to be in a torment Sherlock's distress is increased with how John would think Sherlock is dead after witnessing his suicide, even if the suicide itself is proved to be fake. The conflict in here is how he feels disturbed and upset at the request Jim asked him, even more with his best friend watching him jump off the building and hopelessly could not do anything about it.

3.1.2.2. External Conflict

External conflicts, on the other hand, can happen when a character is pitted against another character in a confrontation. In every story of Sherlock Holmes, one of the most well-known enemies of Sherlock is definitely Jim Moriarty. The aforementioned character is the exact opposite of Sherlock, as he calls himself

'consultant criminal.' In one of their confrontations, Jim is seen strutting into a pool where John is standing with jackets rigged with explosives, obviously Jim's doing after kidnapping him.

> JIM: Do you know what happens if you don't leave me alone, Sherlock? To you?
>
> SHERLOCK: Oh, let me guess. I get killed.
>
> JIM: Kill you? No, don't be obvious. I mean, I'm gonna kill you anyway someday. I don't wanna rush it, though. I'm saving it up for something special. No, no, no, no, no. If you don't stop prying, I'll burn you. I'll burn the heart out of you.
>
> (Season 1, Episode 3: *The Great Game*)

After conducting games involving people's lives with Sherlock earlier, Jim finally decides to show up to their first official meeting. Jim challenges Sherlock with threats that things might go even worse if he doesn't stop 'prying' into his business, meaning that if Sherlock doesn't stop solving the crimes he and his apprentices do, it would start to go downhill from there for Sherlock. Their conversation is made worse with snipers holding both John and Sherlock's heads, especially with the explosives on John's jacket. Still, the interactions between Sherlock and Jim can be seen as an external conflict where a character is in an opposition with another character. In this case, Sherlock and Jim are engaging in a verbal confrontation considering there is no physical brawl involved.

3.2. Extrinsic Aspects

3.2.1. Heteronormativity Portrayed in *Sherlock*

3.2.1.1. John Conforming to the Standard Sexual Norm

The people around him have always assumed how Sherlock and John are a couple, a thing that John always seem to strongly denies. Nevertheless, if anyone has watched *Sherlock*, they must have noticed the hard to ignore signs, smoke signals or billboards on John's strong repetitive rebuttals on his sexuality several times. If one sees the show through a queer perspective, then one would quickly see how he is either in denial with himself or in the closet. As it can be seen in the dialogue attached below, the frequency of his repudiations has always been reiterated throughout the show that his repudiations cannot be dismissed as it is seemed to be predominating the show and one could see him being in denial with his own sexuality.

> JOHN: Mrs. Hudson! How many times? Sherlock was not my boyfriend.
> MRS HUDSON: Live and let live! That's my motto.
> JOHN: Listen to me. I am not gay!
> (Season 3, Episode 1: *The Empty Hearse*)

From the way he insists on his sexuality, there is a hint of closeted queerness, especially when he so firmly gives his rebuttals in any chance he can.

As the show progresses, John who has always accompanied Sherlock on their adventures is told to be moving on after Sherlock's death, despite not knowing that

Sherlock is still alive. He is given a love interest: Mary, for whom he is in deep relationship with. In the picture 3.10 that uses the technique long shot, John is depicted to be marrying Mary. The introduction of Mary as a love interest for John is heteronormative in nature due to the fact that John has always been denying his sexuality not once or twice, but frequent enough that essentially his sexuality has become compromising.

Picture 3.10

John and Mary's wedding

(Season 3, Episode 2. 00:08:27)

Picture 3.11

John and his family

(Season 4, Episode 1. 00:08:06)

Through a queer google, it is apparent that John decided to repress his sexuality, his attraction to Sherlock specifically and blend in with what society deems as normal and morally preferable. As a man in his middle age, those things are to seek a woman, get married to her, and build a family. It is shown in the medium shot of picture 3.11 that John finally has a family of his own with Mary and their baby, Rose.

As it is mentioned before, heterosexuality is generally linked with marriage and family as an example of one's model adulthood. The writer sees him finally

settling in into the normalcy of being married and having a family as one aspect of the heteronormativity depicted on screen. This is a typical heteronormative thing to do in a society where those from the LGBT community are forced to conform into the model sexual norm that society demands as ideal and exemplary, a world where heterosexuality and its norms prevail; hence, John and his attempt to fit into the standard sexual norm is the perfect case of heteronormativity in *Sherlock*.

3.2.1.2. Stereotypical Love Interest

Talking about love interests, the show does not forget to also present one for our main protagonist, the detective himself. In the first episode of season two, the show introduces the character Irene Adler. Irene is depicted in the show as someone who matches Sherlock's wit and intelligence for which she uses her sharp mind to keep top secrets in her phone containing state matters and confidential information of her clients. She's introduced as a dominatrix whose clients range from ordinary people to those from the Royal family. The show depicts her to be attracted to Sherlock sexually and romantically.

The introduction of Irene Adler is discerned by the writer to be heteronormative as well. This is due to the fact that her appearance in the show does not affect Sherlock or any other characters in the following episodes later. She is just a match for Sherlock so that the viewers could have someone to 'ship' Sherlock with. She is confirmed to be a lesbian, despite having been attracted to the sleuth.

IRENE: Are you jealous?

JOHN: We're not a couple.

IRENE: Yes, you are. There. "I'm not dead. Let's have dinner."

JOHN: Who the hell knows about Sherlock Holmes, but – for the record – if anyone out there still cares, I'm not actually gay.

IRENE: Well, I am. Look at us both.

(Season 2, Episode 1: *A Scandal in Belgravia*)

The conversation above shows how Irene, who confirmed her belief in sexual fluidity, or the idea that attraction is something that just happens, regardless of sexual orientation. Irene Adler is a dominatrix by trade; a confirmed lesbian dominatrix who has broken up a marriage by having affair with both of the participants and had sexual relations with a female member of the royal family. It is clear that Irene is genuinely attracted to women as she confirmed but takes a liking toward Sherlock; she's not experimenting as if she was a confused teenager playing around in the spectrum of sexuality. The last lines in the exchange highlight a point of intense empathy between her and John. Irene Adler is a self-proclaimed gay woman and John Watson is a straight man. They both should be attracted to women, but instead what they have is a profound bond with Sherlock.

The addition of Irene Adler to the show was quickly embedded in the burdening heteronormative norms; in which Sherlock saving Irene at the end of the episode is widely depicted as a kind of a romantic gesture. On the other hand, if one sees the sleuth through the other perspective, Sherlock himself has made numerous sacrifices for John. These sacrifices seem to mean nothing as people whose idea of

homonormative disruptions already imbedded and embraced deeply inside their mind suddenly have a harder time reading those gestures romantically.

Since heterosexuality has always been seen to be normal, Irene is the turning point in which Sherlock himself would be seen as a straight guy. The character Irene Adler gives Sherlock a sense of normalcy instead of the longing to his roommate. Heteronormativity believes that heterosexual attractions are the normal and standard ones, and having Irene in the series would straighten up any suggestions on queerness. The introduction of the character Irene Adler is more of like having the common stereotypic sexy, smart woman who matches the energy of the main lead so people would not frown at the show for promoting queer activities.

3.2.1.3. Aborted Love Confession

In one scene where Sherlock has to go to a suicide mission as a punishment after sacrificing himself to protect Mary's secrets, it is shown that Sherlock and John have to part ways and in doing so, the showrunners created a suggestive scene that depicts heteronormativity, especially if viewed through a queer perspective.

Picture 3.12   **Picture 3.13**

John and Sherlock departure   Sherlock's emotions

(Season 3, Episode 3. 01:25:26)   (Season 3, Episode 3. 01:25:43)

SHERLOCK: John, there's something… I should say. I've meant to say always and I never have. Since it's unlikely we'll ever meet again, I might as well say it now. (Sherlock hesitates for a pretty long time, then draws in a deep breath.)

SHERLOCK: Sherlock is actually a girl's name.

(Season 3, Episode 3: *His Last Vow*)

When it is perceived through a queer point of view, it is notably clear from the mood and tone of the scene, especially looking at Sherlock's emotions in the close up of his face in picture 3.13 where he seems thoughtful and sad, that it will slowly building up into a love confession scene. Even from the first few lines, it is hinted that Sherlock will finally confess his feelings towards John, especially considering the circumstances that they were in. In the end, Sherlock opted to spurt out a joke about his name instead of what he wanted to say.

This can be considered as heteronormative, as the love confession scene is obviously aborted when it is clearly implied how he wanted to disclose how he feels, mainly when it is Sherlock who's never been good at expressing emotions. The showrunners intentionally constructed this scene by building up a tension between the two and resorting to heteronormativity, deciding to avoid going into the direction of a love confession, as the viewers would not criticize the three words containing intense and deep emotions from one of two men who are deemed to be best mates. The heteronormativity displayed in this particular scene is how Sherlock

abruptly changes the mood and tone of the whole dialogue. Other than that, since heteronormativity perceives only heterosexual relationships, a love confession scene between these two would be absolutely unusual. If one changes the gender of the other one, then it would be clear that it can be rendered as a confession scene, yet since heteronormativity is present in this scene, the confession would never happen as two men would normally very rarely acknowledge their feelings bluntly.

3.2.2. *Sherlock* Defying Heteronormativity

3.2.2.1. Gendered Names

Starting right with the first episode, the audience is already faced with Sherlock's astonishing deduction skills upon meeting John for the first time. With a single glance, Sherlock has concluded about John's past military history, his brother's habits, and love life. Sherlock was spot-on right on deducing John's brother Harry who is a heavy drinker and was recently separated from his wife just by glancing at John's mobile phone. One thing to note is how Sherlock keeps making the same mistake thrice before being disputed by John.

> SHERLOCK: Did I get anything wrong?
>
> JOHN: Harry and me don't get on, we never have. Clara and Harry split up three months ago, they're getting a divorce. Harry is a drinker.
>
> SHERLOCK: Spot on then, I didn't expect to be right about everything.
>
> JOHN: Harry is short for Harriet.

SHERLOCK: Harry's your sister!

(Season 1, Episode 1: *A Study in Pink*)

Right on the first few minutes of the show, the showrunners have invalidated false traditional assumptions regarding gendered names. Harry is commonly used as a boy's name; thus, it is a common apprehension that one quickly assumes John's sibling is a brother rather than a sister. Now by proving the false traditional assumptions, one can see the first non-conforming heteronormative aspects in the show; gendered names. It is normal that the viewers quickly assume John's sibling with the name Harry is a man with a newly divorced wife when it is actually short for Harriet who is his lesbian sister, whom Sherlock initially misrecognizes as a straight man.

Part of the picture that Sherlock immediately forms of John – whom Sherlock thinks John is – is based on a misleading detail, an assumption that's wrong. Now by proving the false traditional assumptions, one can see how this specific use of gendered names defy heteronormativity. *Sherlock* depicts this by giving an idea that perhaps, a woman whose name might be ambiguous could be lovers with another woman. The detective's deductions are based on a heteronormative imagery yet, if it is viewed through a queer perspective, this particular dialogue defies heteronormativity by offering a notion that conservative beliefs on gender and sexuality are not always right.

Heteronormativity that is being defied in this scene is how the name Harry is usually reserved and discerned as a man, and the viewers would quickly assume that it is, indeed, a man. However, this particular scene broke heteronormativity in a way that most of the viewers do not notice. They are taken by surprise by how gendered implementations on forenames are one of the many heteronormative acts and assuming that Clara and Harry are a heterosexual couple while it is a lesbian one. Thus, the writer could say that *Sherlock* defies heteronormativity by inserting a lesbian couple, one that is so dear to the one of the main characters, and stunning the viewers with its hint of queerness.

3.2.2.2. Stereotypes and Outsiders' Perception of John and Sherlock

In the episode The Hounds of Baskerville, the audience gets to meet the couple who run the inn that Sherlock and John stay at when visiting a place for solving a case. At first, it is not obvious that these two men are a pair of couple until one of them out of nowhere asks John, quickly assuming the two men in front of them are also a couple as well.

Picture 3.14

Billy and Gary's features

(Season 2, Episode 2. 00:19:09)

BILLY: What with the monster and that ruddy prison, I don't know how we sleep nights. Do you, Gary?

GARY: Like a baby. (He says affectionately)

BILLY: That's not true. He's a snorer.

GARY: Hey, shh!

BILLY: Is yours a snorer?

JOHN: Got any crisps?

(Season 2, Episode 2: *The Hounds of Baskerville*)

Once again, the viewers are taken by surprise in the same way that John Watson is. The showrunners chose to show the audience characters who don't embody traditional stereotypes that society usually uses to code gay men in media. This emphasizes that not all gay men conform to these traditional stereotypes as it can be perceived in Bill and Gary in their medium shot in picture 3.14. Society perceives gay men to be more effeminate and noncompliant with the conservative views on masculinity.

One could see that there's a comparison between the inn owners and the detective-doctor duo. From the outside, both Sherlock and John's appearances do not express any hints of queerness. Both of them do not resemble any gay stereotypes as mentioned before, if more so, John's deniability of romantic or sexual involvement with Sherlock shows how his desire to conform to the standard, typical masculinity. Nevertheless, they defy heteronormativity if one sees these characters from a queer perspective. Characters that do not conform to a set of stereotypical constructions of homosexuality, such as Sherlock and John, could be seen as queer despite their usual looks.

This scene also allows its audience to view these men first through the set of heteronormative beliefs through which most of our society perceives pop culture. Most people would just assume that they are two friends who run a business together or co-workers who have no romantic attraction to one another. In the end, it defies our expectations with a nonchalant remark that instantly proves that these men are in fact, a pair of couple. It is also important to note that this couple instantly assumes that Sherlock and John are in an intimate bond.

Bill and Gary in these circumstances are outsiders, and the attached pictures above are their first interaction ever with Sherlock and John. They know nothing about Sherlock and John, and yet, they seemingly have their own opinions regarding these two. Their perception towards the show's main protagonists is based on their own usual lifestyle and point of view, for which they see Sherlock

and John to be the same as they are: a queer couple. The particular aforementioned dialogues could be perceived as a sign that other queer couples can spot the intense attraction between the two of the main leads. The couple automatically assumes that Sherlock and John are together, which contradicts what our heteronormative culture usually does to a pair of men like them.

Speaking of another outsiders, in the first case, John and Sherlock went out to a restaurant to spy on a running serial killer in a restaurant. The restaurant's owner who was saved by Sherlock once on a former off-screen case immediately approaches them and offers whatever they want free; Angelo, the owner quickly assumes that both of them come to the restaurant for a romantic date night.

> ANGELO: Sherlock. (Shaking Sherlock's hand). Anything on the menu, whatever you want, free. On the house, for you and for your date.
>
> SHERLOCK: Do you want to eat?
>
> JOHN: I'm not his date.
>
> (Season 1, Episode 1: *A Study in Pink*)

Angelo also has an immediate assumption regarding the matter of Sherlock and John's relationship. At the first glance, these two men who got into the restaurant are seen by Angelo to be on a date, and even going to the length of offering them free food. Angelo in this case is an outsider to the nature of the relationship of Sherlock and John, despite him already knowing Sherlock for years or that it is another way that the showrunners are trying to play with the notion of heteronormativity. In other words, both the inn owners and Angelo took the

common perception of "heterosexual until proven otherwise" and made it "homosexual until proven otherwise."

3.2.2.3. Sherlock's Indiscernible Sexuality

Still on the same scene, a few minutes later, John tries to stroke a conversation with Sherlock regarding his love affair or relationships, possibly poking his curiosity with Sherlock's sexuality as well.

> JOHN: You don't have a girlfriend, then?
>
> SHERLOCK: Girlfriend? No, not really my area.
>
> JOHN: Oh, right. Do you have a boyfriend? Which is fine, by the way.
>
> SHERLOCK: I know it's fine.
>
> JOHN: So, you've got a boyfriend?
>
> SHERLOCK: No.
>
> JOHN: Right. Okay. You're unattached. Like me.
>
> SHERLOCK: John, I think you should know that I consider myself married to my work, and while I'm flattered by your interest, I'm really not looking for any…
>
> JOHN: No. No, I'm not asking. No
>
> (Season 1, Episode 1: *A Study in Pink*)

A few moments passed after the awkward exchange and while Sherlock eyes John suspiciously, he comes to a realization that John was attempting his shot to court him by his statement that says he's also unattached. Whilst the fuss about one's being one's date or not, Sherlock keeps himself quiet throughout the scene with no real intentions on denying Angelo's homonormative assumption or

confirming it either. It can be seen how Sherlock seems to see his own sexuality to be completely unimportant. The conversation above shows how his sexuality is never clearly stated and entirely indiscernible for the viewers.

A brief reminder that Sherlock Holmes has a vast knowledge on body languages and the science of attractions hence he delicately and so politely attempts to divert what he perceives to be romantic interest and doing it so without referring his own sexual orientation or sexuality himself. While John comes to Sherlock's statement flustered and defensive by interrupting his sentence with a tiny glimpse of hint of anxiousness in the suggestion that he may be romantically interested toward his new possibly gay flat mate which he has assured that he is not homophobic, Sherlock's concern more likely leans on the future dynamics of their sprouting friendship instead of his own sexual identity.

Even though John's seemingly heterosexual identity is backed up by his statements or rebuttals, Sherlock's never is. He apparently is unconcerned and dismiss every effort made to identify his sexual identity. Sherlock always disregards all those queer hinted statements and suggestions, seemingly busy with his own thoughts or just simply apathetic about the situations. This particular trait is also shown multiple times when Angelo offers them food for his date as the writer has mentioned before. John has always been subtle about his sexual orientation, but very vocal about being heterosexual. John has dated a string of lovers, in which it never worked out in the end because his ex-lovers had to *compete* with Sherlock. His fear of

being labelled gay and traditional norms of masculinity is what prevent him from openly display his affection towards Sherlock. Whereas, Sherlock himself remains uncertain; the possibility of him being an aromantic or asexual is aloft. This means Sherlock whose sexuality and sexual orientation remain in the grey area of queerness. His own sexual identity is entirely indiscernible; it is hard to distinguish whether Sherlock's sexuality inclined more on gay or straight or asexual as it is never mentioned and deliberately dismissed. Thus, this illegibility can be seen to defy the customary sexual norm, where one will always be expected to identify as a cisgender and a heterosexual.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Sherlock and its showrunners have truly toyed with our perception of sexuality and gender confusion. All of their tricks are mostly wrapped up in subtext. However, it happens so often that it is impossible to ignore. *Sherlock* have embraced the notion of heteronormativity by introducing Sherlock and John's constant assumptions on sexuality matters around them and the inevitable rebuttals on sexual identity. John's denials in being a homosexual, to get himself a woman and a family is a conforming action toward heteronormativity. Moreover, Irene Adler's, a lesbian who seems to be attracted to Sherlock, is introduced to display that the detective could have a romantic interest; another unnecessary heteronormative act to avoid censure. *Sherlock* also presents a love confession that is deemed to be aborted at the last seconds. From a queer perspective, this shows how heteronormativity plays a big part in *Sherlock*.

Contradicting with the traditional values of heteronormativity, *Sherlock* also proved to be capable to defy heteronormativity. The showrunners introduced the audience of the paradigm of gendered names; how gendered implementations in various subjects of life affect the audiences' view in perceiving the show. Furthermore, through a queer lens, the main characters do not conform into the

traditional stereotypes that society usually applies to gay men. Other queer characters in the show, generally seen as outsiders from Sherlock and John's life, unquestionably view both Sherlock and John to also be queer as well. There's an equivalent resemblance that one can extract from the comparison. Outsiders' perceptions towards the nature of John and Sherlock's relationship are essential in a way that it challenges the typical impression of heterosexuality between two men. Heteronormativity often sees those who has the same gender to be romantically uninvolved and rather acknowledge them to be purely platonic. These perceptions show the defiance to heteronormativity by turning the hetero judgements over and contradicting the presumptions that an individual must be a heterosexual until it was proven otherwise. The matter of *Sherlock* defying heteronormativity doesn't stop there. In fact, the detective's sexuality remains to be in the grey area as it cannot be distinguished clearly where he's inclined to. This opens up to an infinite possibility of queerness and takes heterosexuality into question, mainly in a world where cisgender and heterosexual are dominant.

Sherlock with its heteronormativity presented with such blatant manner on-screen has demonstrated to defy heteronormativity as well. The showrunners intended to create this dichotomy to attract queer viewers, giving them that sliver chance of hope that their favorite characters will somehow be considered to be queer representations in the media. Nevertheless, they decided to swerve into a more heterosexual-suited lane instead, where Sherlock and John's relationship only

remained platonic to prevent any confrontations or deprecations from the viewers. The phenomenon is known to be queerbaiting, as the show would display subtle hints that point to homosexual attraction yet backtracking at the last moment. This is due to the fact that the majority of the viewers come from a heterosexual background, or grew up with the notion that even if slight sexual deviance was shown by the main characters, it would cause some form of condemnation toward the show or the showrunners themselves. Perhaps it is the subtlety in *Sherlock* which makes this show so extraordinary, because most of their audience doesn't even realize that they are being straight spoon-fed with heteronormativity as well as the resistance of the notion itself.

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APPENDICES

1. Summary of *Sherlock*

Sherlock is one of the adaptations of the original Sherlock Holmes stories written by Arthur Conan Doyle. The show is a TV series consisting of 4 seasons with 3 episodes each, plus one special episode and it was produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation. It tells the stories of how Sherlock and John will live if they were situated in modern time instead. Living up to his name, Sherlock is a consultant detective to the police force of Scotland Yard and he often helps the D.I. Greg Lestrade to solve crime cases that Lestrade isn't able to. Sherlock also takes private clients as well, albeit he is picky in selecting the cases he wants to solve, rather choosing the ones that intrigue him the most.

Sherlock is more often than not helped by the doctor John Watson in examining the cadavers if needed. John writes down the cases that they solved in blog posts, in lieu of its original Doyle's version where he publishes them in a magazine. Both Sherlock and John live in the flat that they rent together, located in 221B Baker Street with Mrs. Hudson as their landlady. The show also pictures Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock's brother, in giving him a hand on resolving the mysteries.

The cases that they are trying to solve range from serial murders, homicides to various other simple crimes. The main villain in the show is Jim Moriarty

and he proclaims himself as a consultant criminal in opposition to Sherlock. In most situations, Moriarty is the mastermind behind the crime cases that Sherlock and John encounter. *Sherlock* is a TV series that narrates how Sherlock and his doctor sidekick, John, slowly attempting to unravel the crime web that Moriarty has built.

2. Biography of the Directors

As a TV series, *Sherlock* has various different directors that directed either only one episode or a few episodes. This is due to the fact that TV series often get overlapping filming schedules that the crew have to work with different directors to fasten production time.

The first director to direct *Sherlock* is Paul McGuigan. He's a Scottish director and filmmaker who directed four episodes of the show (A Study in Pink, The Great Game, A Scandal in Belgravia and The Hounds of Baskerville). He is best known for his works in Lucky Number Slevin (2006), Wicker Park (2004), Victor Frankenstein (2015), and The Acid House (1998).

The second director to direct the show is Coky Giedroyc who's an English director, known for her work on Women Talking Dirty (1999), Save Me (2020) and How to Build a Girl (2019). She directed the Unaired Pilot of *Sherlock*.

The third director to had a hand in directing *Sherlock* is Euros Lyn. This Wales-born director is known for his work in Doctor Who (2005-2006; 2008-

2010), Torchwood (2009), and The Library Suicides (2016). He directed the episode The Blind Banker.

The fourth director to direct the show is Toby Haynes. The British director and producer directed the episode The Reichenbach Fall and he is best known for his work in Doctor Who (2010-2011), Black Mirror (2017), and Utopia (2020).

The fifth director to lend a hand in directing the show is Jeremy Lovering. He directed the first episode of season three, The Empty Hearse. He is known for his work in In Fear (2013), Hot Fuzz (2007), Last Night in Soho (2021) and The One (2021).

The sixth director to direct *Sherlock* is Colm McCarthy, a Scottish television director that directed the episode The Sign of Three. He is best known for Peaky Blinders (2014), The Girl with All the Gifts (2016), Black Mirror (2017) and Outcast (2010).

The seventh director is Nick Hurran, a British film and television director that directed two episodes of the show: His Last Vow and The Lying Detective. He is best known for his work in Girls' Night (1998), It's a Boy Girl Thing (2006) and Doctor Who (2011-2013).

The eight director is Douglas Mackinnon, a Scotland-born film and television director who has directed many episodes of tv shows. His best-known works are Good Omens (2019-2022), Doctor Who (2008-2015), and Line of Duty (2012-2014). He gave a hand in directing The Abominable Bride.

The ninth director to help direct *Sherlock* is Benjamin Caron, a British director. He directed the episode The Final Problem. Benjamin is best known for his work in Andor (2022) and The Crown (2016-2020).

The tenth and last director to direct *Sherlock* is Rachel Talalay. This British-American director and producer directed the episode The Six Thatchers. She is known in television directing and her best-known for her work in Doctor Who (2014-2017), Freddy's Dead (1991), The Flash (2016-2021), and Tank Girl (1995).