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## **THE PECULIARITIES OF CREATING THE SHERLOCK HOLMES CHARACTER**

Sherlock Holmes, a fictional character created by the British writer Arthur Conan Doyle, is not less popular nowadays than he was in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when for the first time appeared in the story *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), and who ever since has been considered “the first consulting detective in the world and the most captivating and enduring character in the detective story” [6]. This late Victorian literature hero, ‘the icon of British identity’, as he is widely called, continues to attract the attention of critics and researchers all over the world.

The focus of the current thesis is to enlighten some aspects of the Sherlock Holmes character creating and to elucidate the reasons of his everlasting popularity. The problem has been studied by such researches as Philip K. Wilson, John Sutherland, James O’Brien, Joshua Hammer and others.

It is a generally accepted fact that Sherlock Holmes's prototype was Dr. Joseph Bell, who had been Doyle's professor at the Medical School at the University of Edinburgh. The way Sherlock gathered evidence based on his deductive reasoning is similar to the way Dr. Bell diagnosed his patients' diseases [6]. This is how Conan Doyle described Dr Bell: A "thin wiry, dark" man, "with a high-nosed acute face, penetrating grey eyes, and angular shoulders." Dr. Bell "would sit in his receiving room with a face like a Red Indian, and diagnose the people as they came in, before they even opened their mouths. He would tell them details of their past life; and hardly would he ever make a mistake" [4]. This description to a certain degree resembles the way Conan Doyle describes Holmes in his books. So, J. Sutherland suggests, that *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* were dedicated to the Doyle's source of inspiration, i.e. Dr. Joseph Bell. Moreover, he notifies that his knowledge of medicine is reflected in the stories and adds much to the image of the character [4].

Another event that influenced Doyle in creation of the character was the dinner with Joseph Marshall Stoddart, managing editor of Lippincott's Monthly, and his fellows among whom there was an Irish playwright and author Oscar Wilde. Doyle was much impressed by the manner Wild expressed and illustrated his thoughts, by his sense of humour; as a result, the writers inspired each other for the next books. Thus, Doyle created another story about Sherlock Holmes' adventures *The Sign of Four*. Critics claim that Oscar Wilde's influence on the character is quite noticeable here: the character becomes deeper and darker, and in the opening scene Holmes is depicted as addicted to cocaine [2].

One more person who played a significant role in the character building was American writer Edgar Allan Poe. He was the first to create a fiction detective C. Auguste Dupin that gave Conan Doyle the basis for his own detective stories [6]. In some cases we can even observe Poe's impact on Doyle's writing manner; for example, in *The Adventure of the Dancing Men* the writer used the same method of solving ciphers as Poe did it previously in *The Gold Bug* [3].

Comparing Sherlock Holmes to all other detective characters we notice that for his investigations he uses reasoning. Besides that, he became an innovator in many things connected with investigation. For instance, he was the first to pay much attention to fingerprints. As a matter of fact, at that time even Scotland Yard did not use them as evidence, but Doyle's character did.

Next, he was a pioneer in analyzing typewritten documents. In addition to that he could examine handwriting and define the gender of a person and even state if two people were related according to their handwritings. Lastly, studying footprints he could easily describe a person who had left them, that was very useful for his investigating [3].

The Sherlock Holmes stories are told by the first-person narrator, and the ways Conan Doyle describes his protagonist vary. The very first description, that we come across in *The Study in Scarlet*, is presented by Sherlock's fellow Stamford, who is trying to warn Dr. Watson about his future roommate. That is what he says about him: "He is a little queer in his ideas – an enthusiast in some branches of science"; "I believe he is well up in anatomy, and he is a first-class chemist; but, as far as I know, he has never taken out any systematic medical classes. His studies are very desultory and eccentric, but he has amassed a lot of out-of-the way knowledge which would astonish his professors"; "he is not a man that it is easy to draw out, though he can be communicative enough when the fancy seizes him"; "Holmes is a little too scientific for my tastes – it approaches to cold-bloodedness. I could imagine his giving a friend a little pinch of the latest vegetable alkaloid, not out of malevolence, you understand, but simply out of a spirit of inquiry in order to have an accurate idea of the effects. To do him justice, I think that he would take it himself with the same readiness"; "He appears to have a passion for definite and exact knowledge" [1].

The next and more detailed description is given by Watson, and it reflects his first impression about Sherlock Holmes: "Holmes was certainly not a difficult man to live with. He was quiet in his ways, and his habits were regular. It was rare for him to be up after ten at night, and he had invariably breakfasted and gone out before I rose in the morning. Sometimes he spent his day at the chemical laboratory, sometimes in the dissecting-rooms, and occasionally in long walks, which appeared to take him into the lowest portions of the City. Nothing could exceed his energy when the working fit was upon him; but now and again a reaction would seize him, and for days on end he would lie upon the sofa in the sitting-room, hardly uttering a word or moving a muscle from morning to night. On these occasions I have noticed such a dreamy, vacant expression in his eyes, that I might have suspected him of being addicted to the use of some narcotic, had not the temperance and cleanliness of his whole life forbidden such a notion". As for his physical portrait, Watson says: "His very person and appearance were such as to strike the attention of the most casual observer. 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. His hands were invariably blotted with ink and stained with chemicals, yet he was possessed of extraordinary delicacy of touch, as I frequently had occasion to observe when I watched him manipulating his fragile philosophical instruments” [1]. Indeed, the text is rich in adjectives, comparisons, and overwhelmed with details; all that allows readers to plunge into the events and atmosphere feeling a part of a story.

The character is also determined by the epoch in which it was created. It was late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when poverty and overpopulation in England caused lots of crimes. There was no electricity, no aircrafts, sciences were underdeveloped, the investigation equipment and techniques were just emerging, and however Sherlock Holmes succeeded in whatever difficult circumstances were.

In conclusion, we can affirm that a lot of factors influenced on the appearance and development of the Sherlock Holmes character, the greatest detective of all times, and there is no doubt that new researches on the problem will continue to emerge.

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