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Abstract: This essay will examine certain female characters from the short stories of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892) and *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* (1927). It will analyse how these female figures transgress the prototype of the Victorian woman based on the status quo of married women, clinging to domestic life and without the opportunity for academic training. Using the different short stories, the focus will be on characters such as Irene Adler, Violet Hunter or Kitty Winter to analyse how, through their description or actions, these female figures transgress the Victorian woman model through qualitative content and discourse analysis. In order to illustrate how Doyle portrays the female characters in terms of physical terms, gender roles, and degree of intervention, I will examine the focalizer and the implications of these women as a narrator. Additionally, the distinction between round and flat characters proposed by E.M. Forster will be utilized to bring out the feminine transgressions related to their Victorian context. Although Watson serves as the narrator after Holmes, their narrative and physical interaction serves the purpose of portraying these three female characters as intelligent, strong, educated, and round characters who defy gender-social Victorian conventions in their own stories.

Keywords: *Sherlock Holmes*, Doyle, Victorian literature, gender roles, female characters, transgression

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Transgression in Sherlock Holmes's Female Characters: from the 'Angel in the House' to the New (Criminal) Woman

0. Introduction

Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) was a writer in the Victorian era mostly famous for his *Sherlock Holmes* stories. I will focus on three main stories from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes*, published in 1892 and 1927 respectively. The specific Sherlock Holmes's stories and their characters to be studied here, that is, "A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891), "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches" (1892) and "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client" (1924), are situated in Victorian London.

This long period, going from 1837 to 1901, was marked by the reign of Queen Victoria, who was regarded as a role model for British society. During this Victorian era, the role of women was established under the notions of marriage, motherhood and restricted to the domestic sphere. The so-called Victorian culture is a term usually referred to a set of values defined by the cult of domesticity, which dominated 19th century US and UK societies. By the time the Industrial Revolution was advancing in Britain, gender ideology was clearly divided into the private sphere of the family, marriage, domesticity and motherhood to the woman, and the public sphere of politics and business to the man. In other words, "home and the female were inevitably intimately associated" at this time (Calder 9). Likewise, Victorian women's way of living was marked by the innate moral goodness expected of them, and it was reflected in the notions of family and marriage. Women were being prepared for their lives of "domestic angels" from their childhood and their education reflected it under the private sphere.

This essay will analyse the transgression of these notions in some of the female characters from the short stories of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, by Arthur Conan Doyle. For this purpose, the essay will be structured into two parts. Firstly, it is necessary to have a historical and holistic overview of the context of the Victorian period from which the ideals of womanhood were taken in order to understand. Secondly, it is imperative to explain how this transgression is translated into the female figures of these Sherlock Holmes's short stories, Irene Adler, Violet Hunter and Kitty Winter. Thus, it will be discussed how distant these female characters are from the model of the Victorian woman. Consequently, I will first focus on the social history of the period as far as it concerns the model of the Victorian woman, this being the setting of Sherlock Holmes's Doyle's stories.

Cesare Lombroso was one of the key pioneering studies that established criminology as a deviation in terms of gender-related issues. Theories of why women commit crime have been developed using social, genetic, financial, and psychological explanations from the Victorian era, as well as theories explaining why they commit less crime than males. In this way, Lombroso established a relationship between sociocultural norms and gender-related behaviours to explain and link both male and female criminal behaviour to a biological propensity. Lombroso explores the aetiology of female crime in his work *The Female Offender* (1898). In his work, he provides a biological explanation of crime based on gender, race and

sexual physical characteristics. He claimed that the view of a "good woman" must be chaste and pure, and indeed related to the "feminine", and usually not prone to criminal activity. Moreover, Frank P. Williams III and Marilyn D. McShane declared in relation to Lombroso that "related characteristics of women are their passivity and conservatism" (329). Thus, Lombroso admits that women's traditional sex roles in the family bind them to a more sedentary life, that is, still associating and stereotyping women in the private sphere of the house. (Lombroso 109) whose duties are devoted to the creation and raising of a family. He sustains that the incentive to crime is some injury inflicted on the woman's maternal or domestic affections (Lombroso 253). Late-Victorian crime stories correlate the female criminal with the 'New Woman', a term used by the writer Henry James in his novels to describe the new self-motivated, active and independent woman who was raised due to the changing women's roles in society that took place towards the end of the nineteenth century. The New Woman social type, which Doyle's female character later explored Irene Adler embodies, is related to the emergence of new jobs for women. This was due to economic changes resulting from the Second Industrial Revolution. To give an instance, the New Women and independent femininity also correlates feminist objections to patriarchal authority with working-class resentment toward the wealthy ruling class". (Miller 122). The New Woman was unquestionably a fin-de-siècle phenomenon. She was a part of the conglomeration of cultural novelties that emerged in the 1880s and 1890s at the same time as the new socialist systems, the emergence of new imperialism, the new fiction, and the new journalism. However, the term 'the New Woman' has recently been used to refer to literary protofeminists and authors like Henry James among others. This made the New Woman an indisputably "modern" character who devoted herself to transformation and to the ideals of the envisioned future as a result of her "newness." (Ledger 1). The New Woman's unusual resonance with the issues of the late 20th-century women's movement, including chances for women in employment and education, the conflicting needs of motherhood and wage-earning job, as well as sexual morality and "freedom" led to their perception as sexually subversive or rebellious (Ledger 6). Coming back to the work of Lombroso concerning the genre study in relation to criminality, this new female social type began to be represented in crime narrative offering insight into the development of both modern crime narratives to represent "a specifically public form of femininity for a culture that was redefining and redistricting "public" and "private" amid modern social change" (Miller 3). This new narrative figure is known as the New Woman Criminal. The New Woman Criminal "is not a realistic representation of a subject in her society, but an imaginative creation within a wildly expanding popular culture of crime narrative" (Miller 4). This changing paradigm will be essential for the understanding of some female characters like Irene Adler, Violet Hunter or Kitty Winter in Sherlock's stories.

After this socio-historical context and to better explore the analysis of the female character's characterization, Edward Morgan Forster (4) classifies characters in two different types. On the one hand he describes flat characters such as those who have no hidden complexity. In this sense, they have no depth, acting as a function of only a few fixed character traits. In other ways stated, it can be said that flat characters adhere to a personality from beginning to end as long as they are not affected by the environment (Forster 55). On the other hand, in Porter Abbot's "The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative," he states that Foster

defines round characters as those who have "varying degrees of depth and complexity" (126). In other words, those with complex and contradictory personalities who show variability in the plot. Moreover, he associates a round character when "capable of surprising, contradicting or changing in a convincing way" (Forster 55). Consequently, in order to analyse them, I will classify the type of characters following the aforementioned E.M. Forster's distinction between round and flat characters, and focus especially on how female ones transgress their Victorian condition considering the historical and sociocultural norms. For this, I will explore the use of the focalizer and the effects of these women as a narrator to show how Doyle presents the female characters in physical terms and their roles and degree of intervention in the short stories. For this analysis, qualitative content and discourse analysis will be used to investigate the extent to which these female characters transgress their gender-social norms within the Victorian context in which these stories take place.

1. Literature Review

In the Victorian Era, the conception of the ideal of marriage was the one of Victoria and her husband Albert. For middle-class women, she came to represent the model of marital stability and domesticity as the ideal of womanhood in Victorian Britain. In other terms, there was established a social responsibility in which a childless single woman was held in contempt, in which the domestic sphere was a cultural expression of the female world.

Domestic jobs undertaken in the home were non conflicting with marriage and children but were seen incompatible with the demands of the labour market. Therefore, these constrained women to the private sphere of the house, in which being a wife and mother was supposed to be one of the highest achievements of every woman. "The woman who was neither wife nor mother, through choice or through misfortune, was seen as less feminine than her domesticated counterpart" (Calder 128). Except for working-class women, females were not expected to go out to work and it was their husbands" responsibility to provide for them financially. By being married, a woman gained her own household, so it was through her home duties the way in which virtue was manifested in the service of others.

As a single woman, the private sphere and domesticity were under parental protection, and once married it was translated into the husband's protection. "For a woman marriage meant the acquisition of an 'establishment', her own place, financed by her husband, … a place where she had at least some freedom of choice and activity, which she might not have had at all in the parental home" (Calder 9). In other words, women gained rights through marriage. To rephrase it, the male spouse came to represent the authoritative figure and owner of all the earnings, properties, and indeed the representative entity of the couple or the marriage. According to Rosemary Hennessy and Rajeswari Mohan, Victorian England was a society that dictated that property equated to power, women started to point their ambitions more towards gaining their own power and voice than to the expected desire of domestic duties and childbearing (Hennessy and Mohan 394-397). The emergence of The Married Women's Property Act (1870) led to a progressive change in the allowance of the married women to own and control property in their own rights (Geddes and Tennyson 175), that is, to acquire

her own rights over her property and earnings. When a Victorian man and women married, property and rights were placed to the entity of the male figure. In spite of the fact that a woman was married or not, their rights and privileges concerning property were limited. Thus women still experienced gender inequalities economically in comparison to men's rights. It was not until 1870 when this protective law protection stated that the property which a wife earned through her own work or inherited would be regarded as her separate property. In other words, before then, and as this short story reinforces, women were not allowed to inherit personal money or property, supposing a great advancement for Victorian women. Nineteenth century Victorian England enacted educational inequality both between social classes and genres. Despite the national education system established through the Education Acts of 1870 and 1876, girls attending public schools received essentially the same skills related to the domestic role and sphere (Burstyn 18). In other terms, they were structured around laundry, home management, needlework, among other works oriented towards how to behave as contenders in the marriage market, and as social hostesses (Burstyn 23). It was still the determination of educating women to keep them in their role around the domestic middle-class wife and mother. On top of that, through the 19th century in England, "middle and upper-class women won new educational and occupational opportunities and new economic and social rights" (Miller 7). Alternatively, gentlemen were educated at home by a governess with the aim that upon reaching a certain adult age, they could have access to the different prestigious English universities. There were boarding schools for women, but they were not allowed to go to University. Although women's education was entirely at home, both men and women were instructed and educated towards different branches or purposes. Similarly, men's education was weighted towards their social and political sphere, being instructed in science, classic language and literature, mathematics, or modern philosophy and law. Consequently, educational law already was embedded in the classification of the cultural expression of the domestic sphere attached to the female world. All these aforementioned socio-historical political aspects that defined Victorian women were also translated into literature, and similarly, will be essential to understand late-Victorian fiction in Doyle's context of his short stories' plots and the transgression of their female characters within this historical context of the Victorian Era (Miller 53).

Before dealing with female characters in the selected short stories, I will describe female transgression as the form in which non-conforming female characters pose a challenge to the prevailing culture of gender. That is, transgressions that break the 'social' codes of conduct, embodying being single (or a spinster). In short, transgressions that break the 'legal' and 'moral' codes of feminine conduct. Thus, transgression means redefining gender roles in which women were associated with the private sphere under the role of the 'angel of the house', centring women in the realm of her home. Thus, how transgression is experienced in one of each of the female characters will be explored.

2. Irene Adler in "A Scandal in Bohemia": The New Criminal Woman

In this short story, Holmes and Watson, the homodiegetic narrator, try to take back a photograph from an American opera singer, Irene Adler, with whom the King of Bohemia, their

client, admits he had a previous formal relationship. This photograph, which they later deduce should be kept in Irene's dwelling, shows them both are together, and may be used for blackmail on the day of the King's wedding with a member of another royal family. Consequently, any evidence of his previous formal relationship with Irene Adler would lead to a bad image and public scandal. Sherlock and Watson attempt to keep the King's honour against the possible revenge by Irene Adler's use of the photograph.

Predominantly, Doyle makes use of few and particular physical descriptions of female characters through Sherlock. However, when used, they are mostly to devalue foreign women while favouring English women and the English ideal. On the other hand, women in Sherlock's stories are presented as still inferior to the male characters. Irene becomes an exception to this statement. The first aspect that calls our attention is Irene Adler's description at the beginning of the story by Watson as the character-narrator, making a direct presentation of her physical and physiological characterization. Watson defines Irene specifically feminine expressing that:

> To Sherlock Holmes she is always the woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex… And yet there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory. (Doyle 161)

Doyle, from the first lines of her description, confronts Irene Adler with the conventional Western conceptions of truth in relation to public space, visibility, and transparency. She is good-looking and attractive, and similarly, she does not seem to conform to the "criminal type" model, except for her threat concerning her blackmail to the King of Bohemia. Under no circumstance her appearance is related to her behaviour in any of the other ways expected. Moreover, through an internal narrator, Irene's physical descriptions are given. Her external appearance, emphasised by her display of femininity, conceals an inward rejection of the norms of feminine behaviour. To better understand this point, Hannah Aspinall asserts that "the female body has long been idealised, objectified and fetichised and this can be seen particularly in Victorian culture. Social rules and guidelines on how the female body should look, and how it should be dressed, objectified the body and encoded femininity within these rules". This idea establishes a connection with Miller's words, which sustains that Victorian detective narratives "invite readers to admire female criminals because of their ability to evade punishment, often by manipulating beauty, glamour, disguise, cross-dressing, or other visible, imagistic means. These female criminals are remarkably protean characters, employing bodily transformation to resist social controls." (5). This can be considered not only in Watson's description but in the King of Bohemia's direct physiological and physical description focusing on facial features:

> (Irene) threatens to send them the photograph, ... I know that she will do it. You do not know her, but she has a soul of steel. She has the face of the most beautiful of women, and the mind of the most resolute of men. *(*Doyle 166)

At one point in the story they have already deduced that the photograph should be found in Irene's house. Watson and Sherlock, previously disguised in the figure of another male character to avoid being identified, are near Adler's home when they see her carriage coming. A quarrel suddenly breaks out between the men in the street, so when Irene steps out, she feels in the centre of this conflict. Holmes launches into the fight to protect Adler. Finally, Sherlock falls wounded, although pretends that he is in worse condition to deceive Adler to getting into her house. She asks if Holmes has been hurt and, concluding that Sherlock cannot be left in those conditions, Adler intervenes again offering to take him to her own home. It is not up to this point where for the first time Irene, through direct speech, achieves narrative voice and an active role in the story:

> Irene Adler, … had hurried up the steps; but she stood at the top with her superb figure outlined against the lights of the hall, looking back into the street. "Is the poor gentleman much hurt?" she asked… "Surely. Bring him into the sitting-room. There is a comfortable sofa. This way, please!" (Doyle 172)

The traits she conveys fit within the prototype of the Victorian woman associated with the role of domesticity and docility, being already emphasised by her physical attributes through Watson's and King of Bohemia's descriptions. In other terms, Doyle constructs the character of Irene made for the male desiring gaze. On the other hand, he uses Adler's actions and physical description, through her short direct speech, to contradict her role of a woman with the prototype of the "criminal woman". Adler is shown to the other characters in the story for the first time as a helpful, pure, careful woman full of beauty through her physical features. However, considering the revenge that Adler can take out having the photograph, both for Watson and for the reader a contradiction is established in her character as a woman, shown in the following intervention by Watson:

> I never felt more heartily ashamed of myself in my life than when I saw the beautiful creature against whom I was conspiring, or the grace and kindliness with which she waited upon the injured man. (Doyle 172)

Sherlock' s plan to see where Irene had the photograph especially hidden consisted not only of Sherlock's disguise but also to have them invited to Irene's home by her and the intervention of Watson. Once both Watson and Sherlock get inside, the second had instructed Watson after a signal to toss a small rocket into the floor at the shout of 'Fire' to verify what was the first thing Irene caught from the house before leaving, expected to be the photograph. Before the plan was in place, Watson describes Sherlock's disguise skills, asserting that "accustomed as I (Watson) was to my friend's amazing powers in the use of disguises, I had to look three times before I was certain that it was indeed he" (Doyle 167).

Throughout the whole story, we have Watson as an internal focalizer in relation to the story except in the previous scarce dialogue where Irene makes a direct speech. Towards the end of the story, Irene writes Sherlock a letter. Apart from Irene's short direct speech, her letter is another narrative instance that Doyle uses to make Irene Adler as the now the internal focalizer to manipulate both the reader and Holmes and Watson's expectations. It is not until

Sherlock finds her letter at the end of the story where Irene confesses that she disguises herself, in this case as a male character, being this the reason why Homes is not able to identify her neither physically nor linguistically. In other words, Irene herself establishes a relationship of equality or even superiority in terms of disguising skills in comparison to Sherlock's when Irene details in her letter that

> Yet, with all this, you made me reveal what you wanted to know (where the photograph was). ... But, you know, I have been trained as an actress myself. Male costume is nothing new to me. I often take advantage of the freedom which it gives. (Doyle 174)

Not only is it used to give Irene authority as an internal focalizer with her embedded narration, even if only in her letter, but it precisely contradicts the previous assertion by Watson in which he praises Sherlock's male ability to disguise. After the events at Irene's house, Sherlock and Watson come back home when someone tells him *"Good-night, Mister Sherlock Holmes"* (Doyle 173). Holmes is unable to identify the voice though being familiar, remarking to Watson, "Now, I wonder who the deuce that could have been" (Doyle 173). Thus, Adler's letter represents a change in the point of view, now within Adler's. The reader now reconsiders the events from Adler's perspective in her letter. This use of focalization helps to define Adler as a round character able to surprise Holmes. The resolution of this short story develops into Adler being an example of Holmes's visual limitations. She represents a disarming menace in terms of her transgender performance. When she walks past Homes disguised as a man, she is not only unrecognisable for Holmes physically but also linguistically as he does not recognise her voice. Likewise, Irene brings into play the criminal female body in visual terms, creating a crisis in the female identity and image which challenges Holmes's system of visual detection. Miller states in Frances Gray's words that Irene "offers an endless destabilisation and disruption of what seems fixed" (Miller 41), challenging Holmes's visual authority.

According to Forster's distinction of characters, Irene presents a great evolution in terms of her actions as well as a great complexity to the point that she represents an intellectual triumph against Sherlock Holmes. Irene Adler manages to identify Sherlock cross-dressed as the wounded man she had allowed into her home insomuch as she testifies this belief in the letter Irene writes. For this reason, she leaves with the photograph, stating that it will not be used against the King of Bohemia. She successfully manages to subvert the King of Bohemia and Holmes's powerlessness by doing what little is in their power in terms of gender, being thus an active and capable female character. Though she keeps the photograph to herself, she is still an honourable woman as in the letter she states that she won't use the photograph against the King, who admits "I know that her word is inviolate. The photograph is now as safe as if it were in the fire". (Doyle 175). Furthermore, she is not only relevant as a character within the story, but in relation to the gender working and social conditions of Victorian England. Women were restricted to the domestic sphere, however, she is the only female character who worked as an artist, in her case, as an opera singer. This aspect makes a difference in Adler in contrast to other Sherlock Holmes's female characters. Most of Sherlock Holmes's women are represented with similar works under this social condition marked by the Victorian Era under the figure of the angel in the house, limiting women to housewife skills.

Contrastingly, Doyle portrays Adler as a potentially threatening but loyal woman who outwits and eludes Holmes in this case as well as convincingly surprises Holmes and the reader.

3. Violet Hunter in "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches": The New Educated Woman

With regards to the aforementioned educational and marital conditions, in Victorian England, a woman's position was considered to be dependent on the social and economic position of her father or her husband. Similarly, under Victorian ideology, marriage was one of the highest achievements for women to bring themselves to completion. In failing this function, women would find economic and social difficulties. Furthermore, the position of governess was regarded as respectable for women, seeming to have been appropriate because, while it was a remunerated job, it was done within the home within the context of the movement for women's education and women's rights. This context comes explicitly, being relevant to understanding the transgression in which Violet Hunter is portrayed in Doyle's "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches."

Violet Hunter, is a client who has "been a governess for five years," (Doyle 318). She writes Sherlock a letter in order to know his advice concerning a job offer by Mr. Rucastle to work as a governess for a six-years old child with quite little commands. Since the conditions and the high salary make her feel suspicious of the offer, she finally contacts Holmes. These strange conditions include to wear a specific dress that Violet will be given and get her hair cut off short. Under Sherlock's advice, Violet Hunter decides to take the job, having that role of witness at the Rucastle's home to later keep Sherlock and Watson informed of her daily routine and of the peculiar events during her short stay. Once there, Violet gets to know that, according to Rucastle's words, his daughter Alice Rucastle's "reason why she had left them was that she had an unreasoning aversion to her stepmother" (Doyle 324). On top of that, during Violet's stay in the house there is a locked door she is not allowed to enter, which raises her curiosity.

After a short stay and being Violet acknowledged with these facts, she is allowed to reunite secretly outside with Sherlock and Watson, and she recalls her experience there and all the strange events. Unbeknownst to Violet, Sherlock suggests from the knowledge of these events that the reason behind Jephro Rucastle's hiring Violet was to personify his daughter as she is no longer in the house. In other words, that the reason why Rucastle's daughter left was false and that both Violet and Alice may have a physical resemblance. Sherlock suspects this is the reason why Violet was hired. Indeed, when thanks to Violet Sherlock and Watson take the opportunity to penetrate the with Violet in the house to discover the mystery of the locked room, it is discovered that Mr Rucastle had her daughter Alice locked up in the house by the time Alice was about to get married. Mr Rucastle was afraid that "when there was a chance of a husband coming forward, who would ask for all that the law would give him, then her father (Mr Rucastle) thought it time to put a stop on it" (Doyle 331). Mr Rucastle "wanted her (Alice) to sign a paper, so that whether she married or not, he could use her money" (Doyle 331), being the reason for her incarceration since she refused to.

Unlike "A Scandal in Bohemia", Violet is the one who experiences in her own person all the events in the Copper Beeches. Consequently, though we have Watson as the internal

narrator of the story, his narration is restricted to Violet's, who acts as an embedded narrator who indeed is present in almost all of the short story while explaining the facts. In other words, as the first narrator, Watson depends on Hunter's direct access to her narration; he has limited knowledge of events that depends on Violet's perspective. On the other hand, in "Scandal in Bohemia" Watson receives full internal focus except for Irene's letter. In "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches" Watson receives external focalization by telling the story from the outside, from Violet's perspective. Doyle conveys in Violet the figure of the educated woman, she knows "a little French, a little German, music, and drawing" (Doyle 319). Working as a governess, women were expected to instruct in those fields in which they had been educated. Thus, she represents a progression in the educational movement for the Victorian women of the time, especially for the representation of the educated woman in literature. Moreover, this is supported by her independence stated at the very beginning by Watson "She was plainly ... and with the brisk manner of a woman who has had her own way to make in the world". Moreover, she confesses to Holmes that, as she has not much money left, Hunter wants Sherlock's advice about the new offer as a governess. She has "no parents or relations of any sort from whom I could ask advice" (Doyle 318). Mildred Jeanne Peterson also thus stated that "if a woman of birth and education found herself in financial distress, and had no relatives who could support her ..., she was justified in seeking the only employment that would not cause her to lose her status. She could find work as a governess" (10).

Taking into account her exceptional education background, Holmes feels complete admiration for Violet according to Watson's words "I could see that Holmes was favourably impressed by the manner of his new client" (Doyle 318). Consequently, she is not only positively described narratologically speaking, but by being the embodiment of the educated woman, she meets her expectations by the end of this short story thanks to her education and her work as mistress being "now the head of a private school at Walsall, where ... she has met with considerable success" (Doyle 332). In short, the Victorian educated woman had a better chance to improve their life and achieve a better social status. As a result, Violet not only transgresses the ideal of the Victorian woman in terms of education. It must equally be considered her social status as the unmarried woman and its consequences in terms of property. In other words, both Alice and Violet Hunter are unmarried women, but Alice directly suffers the consequences of the woman's no right to property and the heritance of such property, managed by his father.

It can be seen how Doyle displays the influence of property laws that were passed in the second half of the nineteenth century by making indirect allusion to the concept of marriage that goes hand in hand with property for the Victorian Women, making thus reference to the aforementioned Married Women's Property Act (1870). It must be taken into consideration that Victorian society "did not expect girls to participate in schooling for the same purpose as boys, because they believed that women acquired their status through men, not through their own efforts" (Burstyn 19) and thus separate spheres located women in the home. Violet goes on to run her own school and finds support for her rights by employing Sherlock Holmes. On top of that, she not only survives the Copper Beeches, but is responsible for helping to free Alice. On the other hand, Alice Rucastle regains the rights to their financial property and

succeeds in getting happily married. Consequently, Violet Hunter transgresses the role of "the unmarried daughter (that) could be expected to pay willingly for the security of a home in terms of the service she could give" (Calder 143). Thus, as maintained by E.M. Forster's classification, Violet Hunter is considered to be a well-rounded independent character throughout, to the end of the story. To begin with, the simple fact of questioning the offer and asking Holmes for help to verify the veracity of the job leads the reader from the beginning to consider Violet as a character who is willing to change and evolve. In the story, Violet is often asked by Mr. Rucastle to sit in a specific chair with her back to the window. In this scene her skills of observation and witness are remarked upon when she wisely resolves to take a small mirror from her handkerchief for self-defence, allowing to see what happen behind her through it:

> I concealed a piece of the glass in my handkerchief. On the next occasion, … I put my handkerchief up to my eyes, and was able… to see all that there was behind me. I perceived that there was a man standing in the Southampton Road, a small bearded man in a grey suit, who seemed to be looking in my direction. (Doyle 325)

On top of that, throughout an arranged plan established by Holmes after Violet retells all the events to them, it is thanks to Violet Hunter's braveness that Holmes and Watson do gain access to the Copper Beeches that night when the Rucastles are expected to leave the house. In Sherlock's own words "You seem to me to have acted all through this matter like a very brave and sensible girl, Miss Hunter. Do you think that you could perform one more feat? I should not ask it of you if I did not think you a quite exceptional woman" (Doyle 329). Furthermore, it is Violet's curiosity and willingness to discover what Mr. Rucastle is hiding in that secret part of the house that puts into effect the short story's mystery, not fitting as a flat character. It is through her actions that Mr.Rucastle is prevented from committing his crimes again, being considered the hero of the story. As Sherlock justifies,

> It was not mere curiosity . . . It was more a feeling of duty, a feeling that some good might come from my penetrating to this place. At any rate, it was there, and I was keenly on the lookout for any chance to pass the forbidden door. (Doyle 327)

In brief, according to E. M. Forster, in contrast with Violet's initial situation as a client, Violet classified as a round-character is supported by becoming a successful headmistress of a private school. It is thanks to her actions and change in her character that by the end of the story, her evolution is seen when she is rewarded with financial independence and her own work as the head of a private school. Thus, she can be defined as a round character as she at the same time contradicts the social norms of gender of the time. According to Miller, "many British women had worked or held other public roles, but now such a life was extolled as a new choice or liberty for women who might otherwise have married or stayed home" (Doyle 7). Therefore, Violet Hunter rejects these domestic moral standards. To end with, Violet is not only empowered as a female character by embodying the independent successful educated unmarried woman, but also narratologically speaking as Watson's narrative depends on Violet's as the witness and focalizer of all the events in "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches."

4. Kitty Winter in "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client": The Fallen (Criminal) Woman.

The last woman who stands out in the canon of the Victorian woman is Kitty Winter. In her short story called "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client," Sherlock is asked to break the engagement between Baron Gruner, who is accused of killing his last wife, and Violet De Merville. Although Violet is already informed of her husband's sinister past as a murder, she is willing to marry him, trusting Baron Gruver unconditionally and without any intention to listen or to be affected by other's bad words about Baron Gruner. At the very beginning, Holmes's anonymous client Sir James makes Holmes acknowledge the issue around this case on behalf of General De Merville, Violet's father. When Holmes requests James for more information about the Baron in order to decide whether to accept the case or not, Sir James confesses that he knows that the Baron is fond of Chinese pottery and an excellent collector, and Holmes accepts the case and looks into the matter. Then, Sherlock is asked to avoid Violet from being the next person to be asked as she will not be willing to listen. Holmes decides to get some help in the form of Shinwell Johnson, a former criminal friend of Holmes who acts as an informer for Sherlock. He brings Kitty Winter to Holmes, the accurate help and witness as she was "his (Baron Gruner) last mistress" (Doyle 992). Consequently, she has gathered a lot of useful information about Baron Gruner.

Kitty informs Holmes that it is a matter of time that Violet will be murdered by Baron Gruner. Kitty confesses to Holmes that the Baron indeed only "collects women'' (Doyle 990). Kitty also lets Holme know about the existence of Baron Gruner's leather book in which he wrote down his conquests, being kept in the Baron's study. Once collected this information, Holmes asks for Kitty's help in order to both see Violet to make her break up her marriage, though in vain. Consequently, he orders Watson to disguise as a collector and connoisseur of Chinese pottery in order to sell the piece to Baron Gruner under a false identity. The Baron finally unmasks Watson, and by the time Gruner pulls out his revolver to attack him, he hears a sound of broken glass, and he runs to discover Holmes jumping out from the window. At this moment Kitty, who has been hiding just outside, "And then! It was done in an instant, and yet I clearly saw it. An arm– a woman's arm–shot out from among the leaves, … appears and throws a vial of vitriol (sulfuric acid) in Baron's face. ''It was that hell-cat, Kitty Winter!" he (The Baron) cried. "Oh, the she-devil" (Doyle 998).

The very first description of Kitty Winter is done by Watson as the character-narrator, However, it is done in a really dissimilar way in comparison to the ones of Irene Adler and Violet Hunter:

> It seems that he (Holmes) had dived down into what was peculiarly his kingdom, and beside him on the settee was a brand which he had brought up in the shape of a slim, flame-like young woman with a pale, intense face, youthful, and yet so worn with sin and sorrow that one read the terrible years which had left their leprous mark upon her. (Doyle 989)

In Watson's description, Doyle does not put the emphasis on feminine physical attributes. Watson similarly remarks that "there was an intensity of hatred on her white, set face and her blazing eyes such as a woman seldom and man never can attain" (Doyle 990). On top of that, it is worth mention to contrast Kitty's first physical description with the one of Violet De Merville as fitting in the "angel of the house" label in terms of Holmes's words:

> (Violet) is beautiful, but with the ethereal other-world beauty ... . How a beastman (Baron Gruner) could have laid his vile paws upon such a being of the beyond I cannot imagine. You may have noticed how extremes call to each other, the spiritual to the animal, the cave-man to the angel. (Doyle 991)

Contrastingly, Doyle makes use of Kitty's physical description for the reader to grasp how Kitty's physical features are part of her terrible (though never explained) past experiences. Her desire for revenge or the origin of her ruination is never explicitly stated, as Kitty addresses Holmes "You needn't go into my past" by telling him "that is neither here nor there" (Doyle 990). There is no single interpretation as firstly, it should be considered that Kitty must "had enough position to be taken as a mistress" (Redmond 17). However, Kitty Winter wonders, addressing Holmes as follows: "How did (Violet) come to this? If I stood before her and told her how he used me" (Doyle 990). Furthermore, Kitty warns Violet that "I am one of a hundred that he has tempted and used and ruined and thrown into the refuse heap, as he will you also. Your refuse heap is more likely to be a grave, and maybe that's the best. I tell you, you foolish woman, if you marry this man he'll be the death of you." (Doyle 992). However, Kitty does not provide any further explanation.

Despite her predisposed previous social class to call herself Baron's last mistress, the previous quotations concerning her own experience make implicit and suggest that Kitty was a prostitute or sold into prostitution: "critics have speculated that Kitty Winter and the other women in Gruner's little book were sold into white slavery as prostitutes as "white slavery was common throughout Europe during much of the nineteenth century" (Cassandra 20). Moreover, this idea is similarly supported by Redmond as he previously sustained that the explanation is that Kitty Winter was not so much a mistress, though she may once have had that status; but as a victim she was sold into white slavery to be a prostitute (16). The white-slave traffic out of England had been immense through most of the nineteenth century (Hugh 18). In addition, it is due to her inferred past and the way it is related to the present plot of the story that makes Winter even a more powerful woman not only throughout the story but also when her final revenge against Baron Gruner's face in the form of sulfuric acid takes place. Thus, this makes Winter to be consolidated as a strong and mysterious personality around herself. It can be concluded that Kitty can fit in the figure of the "Fallen Women", described by Aspinall (2012) as "the ideological construct that acts as a direct opposite to the chaste and feminine 'angel in the house'; a term could cover any woman that did not fit the rigorous moral standards of domestic normality." In essence, any deviation from the "angel of the house," the model of perfect Victorian womanhood, implied that a woman was about "to fall." In other words, a woman's identity in the Victorian era was inseparably tied to her sexual status; either she was an unblemished "maiden," a wife, or a mother (which maintained her sexuality

appropriately in the domestic sphere), or she was denigrated by labels like "spinster" or "prostitute," both of which had negative connotations, the former with sexual decline and the latter with unconventional sexual misconduct.

Watson's intervention before Kitty's speech also reveals how Doyle uses Watson to contrast both women Kitty and Violet, reinforcing the fierceness character and violent energy of Kitty when Watson claims that "(he) was about to answer when the girl (Kitty) broke in like a whirlwind. If ever you saw flame and ice face to face, it was those two women" (Doyle 992). By using direct speech when it comes to Kitty's interventions towards Violet when she advises her to leave the compromise, Doyle allows Kitty to act in a way not "performed by means of another", as Janet Holmes and Maria Stubbe quotes in Searle's words (60). Moreover, according to Holmes and Stubbe, feminine speech tends to be indirect and male speech to be direct as part of "widely cited features of 'feminine´ and 'masculine' interactional style" (574). As a result, Doyle, narratologically speaking, privileges Kitty under a gender perspective by having Kitty making a direct intervention to Violet telling her experience. Direct speech also implies that the reader somehow feels more empathy towards her implicit terrible experience, taking her words, direct and abruptive tone and strong personality from a closer and personal point of view to hers.

Another aspect that calls attention to itself is the fact that Sherlock requires the assistance of others to help him resolve the case, in this case Kitty Winter. In Sherlock's words, he states that he "would consider in the meanwhile whether your suggestion of seeing this lady personally may not be arranged. I am exceedingly obliged to you for your cooperation" (Doyle 991). Doyle thus positions Sherlock nearly powerless. The short story represents an occasion in which his mental prowess and expertise diminish him at an intellectual level as Miss Winter comes into the story after Holmes has tried, and failed, to prevent the marriage between Baron Gruner and Violet de Merville. Not many characters in the canon are invited to come along with Holmes himself when taking direct action by her own against a villain, but Kitty Winter is given that privilege. In short, although Kitty Winter claims that he ruined her life, by the end of the story the fact is that Kitty herself is the woman who really ruins Baron Gruner in equal terms, by physical damage though. Baron Gruner could have made a "leprous mark upon her" (Doyle 989) as result of her terrible years, but Kitty manages to carry out her revenge leaving a permanent mark destroying his face.

According to Foster's definition of rounded character, Kitty Winter comes as a positive surprise when it comes to her personal development throughout the story. Her repressed anger, acknowledged through Watson's physical description of her, is finally resolved in terms of her final unexpected attack of vitriol towards Baron Gruner. Moreover, considering that critics agree on relating Kitty to the field of prostitution, Miss Winter comes to be more unusual in the canon of the Victorian women, making Kitty a more complex and transgressive woman character, who by the end of the story, she disfigures forever Gruner's life as he ruined Kitty's. Prostitution can be considered a transgression that breaks the normative codes of conduct for women. Doyle not only privileges Kitty in terms of her actions, bravery or eloquence during her conversation with Violet, but her interventions through the use of direct speech also benefits her in terms of narrative power over Watson as the character narrator. This direct

speech is mainly used between Kitty as the speaker and Violet, which only reinforces and highlights Kitty's resilience and active and independent intervention.

5. Conclusion

Taking the three short stories and the socio-historical context they are within, the character of Watson is the first-person narrator of Holmes stories. This narrative device is wisely employed to make the final revelation of the story's mystery more effective and sensational. Another purpose of this narratological decision is that it forces the reader to follow the story from Watson's masculine point of view. Although the female perspective or account is twice filtered first by Holmes and after by Watson as the narrator, it fulfils the function of representing these three female characters as smart, strong, educated and independent. These female characters show to be transgressive around female characters according to Forster's character classification.

This narratological technique is successfully employed by Doyle in the case of Kitty Winter. In "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client" Watson as the focalizer and character-narrator faces Baron Gruner. This narrative technique benefits Kitty in terms of stunning the reader with her vitriol-throwing attack on the Baron. Consequently, Kitty, an ill- reputed street woman, fits in the figure of the criminal women though in a more passionate crime type. In the case of "A scandal in Bohemia," the letter instead plays an important role. In this short story, Doyle privileges Irene Adler more from her actions and witness over Holmes than from narrative speech. By means of her letter addressed to Holmes, Irene successfully surprises both Holmes and the reader when she confesses that she tricked Holmes in his own game of disguise when they were about to succeed in getting the photograph from Irene's house. Furthermore, Irene not only fits in the figure of the New Criminal Women, but also as women outside the social order as she has an artistic life as an opera singer. These two characters, Irene Adler and Kitty Winter, show a transgression in the form of the New Female criminal. They both are unmarried and take revenge over masculine characters, Irene over Sherlock and Kitty over the Baron. Moreover, they show intelligence and bravery, being able to be independent without need for protection.

Besides, in the "The Case of the Copper Beeches," the story reverses conventional notions of domesticity as idyllic and safe. Violet Hunter represents the unmarried educated woman, who ends up being the head of a private school on her own. It must be taken into consideration the fact that women were dependent on the masculine figure of the father or the husband after marrying. However, the positive ending for this female character shows a transgression of the independent educated woman in the figure of Henry James' New Woman, indeed an active and economically independent woman who perpetrates the public sphere due to the social and political changes of the time and the emergence of new jobs for women. In short, these three female characters break with the social convention of the women fixed in the domestic sphere under the figure of the 'angel in the house' in the forms of marrying or staying at home. It must be taken into consideration that "A Scandal in Bohemia," the first short story, was published in 1891 while the last one, "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client" was published in 1924. Consequently, the socio-historical evolution of the condition of the

Victorian women, especially concerning marriage and property laws, are illustrated in Doyle's stories.

Finally, with regard to the narratological aspect, it is understandable why Doyle lets Watson tell the cases in the vast majority of the stories as massive benefits result from this use. Doyle, who created the renowned Holmes of Baker Street, created Watson as the first-person narrator of Holmes tales specifically to increase the impact and excitement of the revelation at the end of the story. He is not sufficiently clever to appreciate the nuanced nature of the detective's words or the reasons behind his acts, like the reader of his story. As a result, the reader in the text is the counterpart. That is, the reader is following everything from the sidekick's perspective, or rather, through Watson's eyes, and as such, the reader is unable to help but recognise and acclaim the detective's superiority.

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