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A Case of Identity: Sherlock Holmes
The Popular Character and Series Production in Hollywood 1939-1946

by
Gary Kennedy

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
School of Journalism and Communications

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
April 20, 1995

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and Series Production in Hollywood 1939-1946

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Abstract

This thesis studies the figure of Sherlock Holmes as it was used in the 14 feature films made by both Twentieth-Century Fox and Universal in the years 1939-1946. By introducing a British cultural figure into a Hollywood series production, the films worked to create the illusion of a shared transatlantic Anglo-American culture. The image of a shared culture helped to tie Americans more strongly to the war effort which was no longer conceived as merely helping out the British but as defending “our” common Allied heritage. Secondly, the insertion of an urbane British character into a series of Hollywood films, signalled a transformation of Hollywood’s image of ideal masculinity.

Finally, the domestication of a British character for popular film consumption in the 1940s tells us something about the role and function of all popular fictional characters. By looking at the ways in which a popular character is re-shaped in popular film, we can also understand how the study of a single medium benefits from its insertion within the context of other media which may be using the same character, setting or atmosphere. Through an examination of the reciprocal impact between media, as demonstrated by a single character’s manifestation in multiple texts and institutions, the end result is a richer understanding of culture.
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- Introduction -

Ship me off to Piccadilly, to a London Bobby's beat.
Where a hansom-cab would take me to the shrine in Baker Street.
For the bells of London call me, and it is there I would be.
Sitting in with Doctor Watson on a night-long story spree.
O ye sons of Baker Street,
As we sit at Sherlock's feet,
Be sure the land that knew him shall not ever know defeat,
For the men of England's fleet

Once again their foes will beat,
Nor shall Axis Armies ever tread the stones of Baker Street.

Excerpt from, “The Road to Baker Street” by Harvey Officer, 1942. (Lellenberg, 1991, 95)

This thesis studies the figure of Sherlock Holmes as it was used in the 14 feature films made by both 20th Century-Fox and Universal studios in the years 1939-1946. It examines (a) the way in which a popular figure can be used for ideological ends, (b) the way in which a popular figure can be used to study historical transformations of idealized representations of masculinity, and (c) the way in which a popular figure can migrate across media. As a consequence of these historical and intertextual migrations, the figure of Sherlock Holmes has undergone numerous changes. The most prominent modification during this period was the shift to contemporary settings in many of the series films released by Universal between 1942 and 1946. (1) For example, these films which starred Basil Rathbone as Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Dr. Watson, included both Nazis as well as Dr. Moriarty amongst the antagonists.

The Hound of the Baskervilles, produced by 20th Century-Fox in 1939, was the first of 14 films to star Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce as the popular fictional detective team. Their very successful debut was followed the same year by The Adventures of Sherlock
Holmes, which was also the last of the Fox releases. In comparison to the later films by Universal, which picked up the Holmes series, the two Fox productions were marked by high production values and maintained the original historical integrity of the short stories and novels.

Along with the 12 productions which followed at Universal between 1942 and 1946, the characters out-paced their screen success by appearing at the same time in 275 radio productions for both NBC Radio (1939-1943) and the Mutual Broadcasting System (1943-1946). Although my analysis will not focus on the radio dramas in any detail, they played an important role in popularizing the production and reception of the film series. As Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott argue, these extra-filmic identities function to “organize and reorganize the social and ideological relations to popular reading” (Bennett and Woollacott, 1990, 427).

For the purposes of this thesis, the recontextualization of Holmes into a contemporary setting signals several cultural transformations worth investigating. By introducing a British cultural figure into American film genres, the films worked to create the illusion of a shared transatlantic Anglo-American culture. The image of a shared culture helped to tie Americans more strongly to the war effort which was no longer conceived as merely helping out the British but as defending “our” common heritage. Secondly, the insertion of an urbane British character into a series of Hollywood films also signalled a transformation of Hollywood’s image of ideal masculinity.

Subsequently, like other contemporary urbane American detective figures, such as William Powell’s Thin Man (1934) and Boris Karloff’s Mr. Wong, Detective (1938), Holmes/Rathbone’s effete aestheticism helped define an idealized wartime male
adventuring/detective. Finally, the domestication of a British character for popular film consumption in the 1940s tells us something about the role and function of all popular fictional characters. By looking at the ways in which a popular character is re-shaped in popular film, we can also understand how the study of a single medium benefits from its insertion within the context of other media which may be using the same character, setting or atmosphere. Through an examination of the reciprocal impact between media, as demonstrated by a single character’s manifestation in multiple texts and institutions, the end result is a richer understanding of culture.

In Chapter I, I review the literature that has dealt with the Holmes/Rathbone series to date. Following an evaluation of the individual limitations and contributions of three different methodologies, this thesis aims to elaborate upon the potential of more recent critical theory on the phenomenon of the popular character which addresses the more specific question of the relationship between audiences and historical reading formations. Tracing Holmes’ development as a popular character, the ways in which a persona can be used to organize our understanding of transitions in cultural production become clearer. It is my contention that through an examination of Bennett and Woollacott’s work on the figure of James Bond, the absences which may be identified in other work on the Holmes series can be amended. Such a methodological reconsideration will contribute to our understanding of the popular character’s role in reorganizing the relation between popular texts and audiences. Furthermore, this reexamination provides the theoretical terrain through which to begin to broaden our understanding of the Holmes series’ contribution to the formation of wartime national/international and reading formations. (Bennett and Woollacott, 1987)
In Chapter II, I outline three issues essential to an understanding of the ways in which the Holmes/Rathbone series organized cultural and ideological relations during the Second World War. First, the chapter examines the way in which Conan Doyle increasingly came to situate Holmes within a larger, international context, culminating in Holmes' “service” to Britain during World War I. This period constitutes a significant moment in the character’s career, as it embeds Holmes within Anglo-American wartime discourses on nation and gender. Second, it examines the Hollywood history of Holmes as a film property. In particular, it will concentrate on both the 20th Century-Fox and Universal studios, outlining the stylistic and thematic differences of the films produced by them. Third, it will relate the stylistic and thematic differences observable in the films to the studio structures of 20th Century-Fox and Universal in the 30s and 40s.

In Chapter III, I explore the historical and ideological forces which served to situate Holmes as a figure actively promoting Anglo-American wartime ideology. In order to reconstruct the wartime discursive reading formations attendant upon the Holmes/Rathbone series, I will examine the interrelationship between culture and the state, more specifically between the film industry and the specific contexts of wartime cultural production. I will show how fictional texts work, in part, to organize the conception held by audiences of the nation as part of an imagined community. In particular, I will examine the Holmes series' wartime role in the context of such inter/national re-imagining which figuratively locates England in America and America in England.

Throughout this chapter, Holmes' transition into an Anglo-American wartime cultural figure is to be understood within the context of a series character whose moment of cultural re-emergence was contemporaneous with, and supportive of, the goals of a film studio in the
midst of a conversion to wartime film production. The latter part of this chapter will focus on the first three Universal Holmes films *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror* (1942), *Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon* (1942), and *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* (1943). An analysis of these three Holmes films will highlight the activist role that the figure of Holmes played in the promotion of a wartime Anglo-American ideology, and of the mutual democratic values of both England and the United States.

Chapter IV, “Sherlock Holmes and Basil Rathbone: The Star/Detective and Wartime Masculinity,” examines the way in which the recontextualization of the figure of Sherlock Holmes intersects with the casting and performance of the series’ star Basil Rathbone. This casting becomes especially significant in light of one of the recurring narrative conventions throughout the Sherlock Holmes films: Holmes’ use of masquerade and disguise.

As the films of the Holmes series constitute male-centred narratives supportive of the Allied war effort, this chapter will review recent critical work which explores masculinity as an historically specific cultural effect constructed through masquerade and disguise. The first part of this chapter will interrogate how masquerade and disguise as aspects of masculine performance in the United States of the 1940s constitute “specific links to power, conflict and, struggle” (Holmlund, 1993, 214). Such work can contribute to our understanding of the way in which Holmes/Rathbone emerged as an idealized masculine wartime persona.

The second section will provide an historical overview of Basil Rathbone’s film career in Hollywood until his final screen appearance as Holmes in 1946. Rathbone was a successful British actor working within the Hollywood star system. His casting in the role of Holmes allowed two significant wartime international reading formations to converge. By highlighting (a) Rathbone’s status as a critically acclaimed dramatic performer and (b) his
proficiency in assuming numerous linguistic and national character types, we can examine the mixture of Rathbone’s status as a star and his particular incarnation of Holmes as a wartime male detective hero.

The final section of this chapter focuses on the repeated use of masquerade and disguise in the Holmes series. It demonstrates that the foregrounding of Rathbone’s authority as a prominent dramatic performer, whose adeptness at masquerade and mimickry of numerous national identities, is utilized throughout the Holmes series. Masquerade functioned to recast the masculinity of Holmes, thanks to the ability of Rathbone, in a way more appropriate to wartime Anglo-American culture. Masquerade, however, also works to grant Anglo-American culture an innate superiority over other cultures and to justify the war effort. For example, Holmes possesses an unchallenged ability at detection and observation such that his statements and claims also possess an unchallenged epistemological certainty. This ability allows him to expose and render knowable foreign elements within the culture. Hence, in *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* (1943), Holmes exposes a domestic Axis spy ring. Likewise, Holmes’ ability to execute the disguise of numerous linguistic and national character types gives him an uncanny ability to pierce the culture of the other and thereby protect Anglo-American culture from infiltration. Hence, in *The Spider Woman* (1944), Holmes poses as an Indian officer. Holmes’ gifted insight, combined with his gift of masquerade, further highlights the series’ promotional Anglo-American ideology, by attempting to render the interior and exterior ambiguities of the shifting international wartime identities (i.e., Axis and Allied) knowable.
The impression that Holmes was a real person of flesh and blood may have been intensified by his frequent appearance on the stage...I do not think that I ever realized what a living actual personality Holmes had become to the more guileless readers, until I heard of the very pleasing story of the char-a-banc of French schoolboys who, when asked what they wanted to see first in London, replied unanimously that they wanted to see Mr. Sherlock Holmes' lodgings in Baker Street. Many have asked me which house it is, but that is a point which for excellent reasons I will not decide (Shreffler, 1984, 11, 14).

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 1924.

As this quotation demonstrates, right from his inception Holmes was used for reasons unrelated to Doyle’s intentions, and many of these reasons possessed an international dimension. As Doyle’s account suggests, the movement of the Holmes figure between media from the printed page to the theatrical stage, brought about a significant alteration in the public perception of the character’s fictional status. However, despite Doyle’s attribution of this transformation to the “guileless” nature of the reading public, such a dramatic change in the reception of a popular character may unwittingly provide some insight into the nature of the changes caused by a character’s movement between media.

Through an examination of Edgar Rice Burrough’s character Tarzan, Walt Morton has demonstrated how the trans-media transformation of the character altered the public’s reception of the figure, as the “star iconic figure (Tarzan) can be presented in specific ways that cater to the pleasures of the specific medium of consumption” (Morton, 1993, 107). From the original Burroughs novels to the character’s first film appearance in 1918, Tarzan’s movement as an icon between the linguistic and the visually semiotic codes of representation
changed the meaning of the character’s popular reception. (1) Tracing Tarzan’s movement as a mute “apeman” as found in the novels to that of the near-nude star vehicle of the 1930s popular film series, Morton writes that “in place of the written word, attention is focused on the erotic spectacle of the body.” (Morton, 1993, 109). Similarly, for the figure of Holmes, and as Doyle’s opening comments suggest, early stage and subsequent filmed adaptations arguably brought about such a shift in the perception of the character’s fictional ontology. The recontextualization of the Holmes icon, from the literary to the visual only served to heighten his corporeal status as “real”. (2)

Doyle’s anecdote not only addresses the impact of Holmes’ trans-media movement but it also acknowledges the growing international appeal of the Holmes stories. Significantly, the increasing exposure of the Holmes figure to a larger international reading audience reconstituted the character into a convenient point of contact through which an outsider/tourist’s exploration of contemporary London begins. Obviously unaware of the equally fictional status of Holmes’ residence, the young French schoolboys imagine the 221B Baker St. address to be a point of origin to experience the “real” London. (3)

The power of the figure to elicit such a response and to move between the fictional and the real, lies partly in the character’s movement amongst media. Embracing a multiplicity of forms of address (linguistic and visual) and exploiting the unique formal communicative properties of each medium, the phenomenon of Holmes is not to be understood as being derived solely from the authority of Doyle’s evocative writing. With the growth of the mass media at the turn of the century, which contributed to Holmes’ international appeal, Doyle was unable to secure the fictional status of his creation. Indeed this highlights the extra-
textual forces which "organize and reorganize the social and ideological relations to popular reading" (Bennett and Woolacott, 1990, 427). Murch reiterates that:

There are in literature certain characters who have come to poses a separate and unmistakable identity, whose names and personal qualities are familiar to thousands who may not have read any of the works in which they appear. Among these characters must be included Sherlock Holmes, who has acquired in the minds of countless readers of all nationalities the status of an actual human being, accepted by many in the early years of the twentieth century as a living contemporary... (Murch, 1958, 167)

That Holmes should be regarded as an international phenomenon and a living contemporary speaks to the availability of the figure to shifting historical and cultural formations which could maintain a captive audience. In order to better understand the conditions which work to connect texts and audiences within new cultural and historical contexts, Tony Bennett puts forth the concept of reading formations. He defines these as:

a set of discursive and inter-textual determinations which organise and animate the practice of reading, connecting texts and readers in specific relations to one another in constituting readers as reading subjects of particular types and texts as objects-to-be-read in particular ways...The concept of the reading formation...is an attempt to think context as a set of discursive and inter-textual determinations, operating on material and institutional supports, which bear upon the text not just externally, from the outside in, but internally, shaping it - in the historically concrete forms in which it is available as a text-to-be-read - from the inside out (Bennett, 1987, 70, 73).

Tracing Holmes' development as a popular character, our understanding of transitions in cultural production becomes clearer. The Holmes character undergoes multiple recontextualizations, and each manifestation is both imbedded in and leaves traces of shifting social perspectives. For my purposes here a survey of the available literature on the Holmes/Rathbone series is necessary.
In reviewing the literature that has dealt with the Holmes/Rathbone series, we can identify three general categories in which knowledge of the series has been organized: (a) historical surveys; (b) authorship and generic transformation; and in relation to (c) genre and industrial practice. By assessing the individual limitations and contributions of these three distinct methodologies, this thesis aims to elaborate upon the potential of more recent work on the phenomenon of the popular character to be utilized for the purposes of addressing the more specific question of the relationship between audiences and historical reading formations. By far the most prominent and diverse of the three general categories is the conventional historical survey. Generally aimed at a fan audience, these works are illustrated historical overviews that rely on the use of production data, reviews, biographical and anecdotal accounts of the performers who have appeared in the numerous Holmes productions since he first appeared on screen in 1903 (Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978; Pohle and Hart, 1977). Organized around the configuration of the Holmes character and the star persona, both *The Films of Sherlock Holmes* and *Sherlock Holmes on the Screen* chronologically detail the history of the character's portrayal on the screen and the actors who played Holmes and Watson.

Similar in both structure and content, these two historical surveys of the character's film career attribute the success of Holmes' transition from the printed page to the screen to Holmes' ubiquitous cultural presence, to Holmes' consistent mythic setting and tone of Victoriana. Holmes "came into this mundane plane itself from another world - the world of imagination" (Pohle and Hart, 1977, 13).

Essentially concerned with charting Holmes' numerous incarnations and receptions through a compilation of various critical reviews, the authors of these works do not claim
primacy of any specific set of institutional practices, authorial figures or performers in establishing the conventions of the Holmes phenomenon. Although clearly prioritizing Holmes’ relation to popular film, by weaving together the influences of Holmes’ multiple media manifestations, from literature, stage and film, (and to a lesser extent television), these two works are useful for their sheer breadth of their overview. By utilizing reading strategies characteristic of a fandom, i.e., a willingness to examine even the minutest detail and track down the slightest trivia, the authors produce works noteworthy for providing an essential history of early neglected or lost Holmes features and series productions.

Strikingly international in his appeal, early Holmes films include the Nordisk (Danish) series of two reel silent from 1908-1911, the German Series of 1910-1920, the Franco-British series of 1912, the Arthur Wontner series (1931-37), and the Ellie Norwood Series which featured 47 short entries made within two years between 1921 and 1923. As an essential pre-history to any discussion of the Rathbone/Holmes series, these works are singularly concerned with reproducing a chronological history of the character’s various cultural moments. Nonetheless, they demonstrate that the Holmes phenomenon cannot be adequately understood in terms of a singular set of national discourse(s), but rather, as the simultaneous international appeal of the earliest filmed adaptations attest, Holmes operates within a dynamic set of shifting signifiers mobilized within specific cultural and historical contexts which only function momentarily to address specific ideological and industrial-artistic practices.

The second category in which the Holmes film series has been discussed is within the context of authorial analysis and generic transformation. Alison Butler has observed in her critique of contemporary film history, that the history of the cinema is more than just nostalgia, as best exemplified by Pohle/Hart and Steinbrunner/Michaels historical surveys.
(Butler, 1992, 413). And it is with this concern as to the limitations of conventional film historiography that Paul Leggett recognizes how inadequately the Holmes series has been researched. In Leggett’s article “Sherlock Holmes: A Case for Further Research”, he correctly concludes that the figure of Holmes “appears to open a rich vein of film research” (Leggett, 1979, 27). Written partly in response to the publication of book-length works on the cinematic history of the screen hero (most notably the work of both Pohle and Hart and Steinbrunner and Michaels noted above), Leggett acknowledges that without these collective contributions “no further work could be done.” (Leggett, 1979, 25) Like many figures from popular literature before who have a “life of their own, independent of their original literary sources”, Leggett observes that Holmes is “perhaps the only fictional hero who spans the entire history of film. As such, he deserves a major place in film research.” (Leggett, 1979, 25)

In a brief survey of the literature on the Holmes films, Leggett organizes critical work into two categories. Leggett notes that until only recently, critics have often assumed the role of “purists”, critically attacking the “slightest changes such as modernising the stories or adapting the original plots... as some sort of heretical tampering.” (Leggett, 1979, 26) In response to such claims, he argues that even the purist “is forced to acknowledge that changes in the literary Holmes occur with the first Strand Magazine illustrations.” (Leggett, 1979, 26) From Holmes’ moment of inception, therefore, the illustrations of Sidney Paget which accompanied the original stories have been as influential in establishing his popular representation. The most striking features of Holmes’ image, the deerstalker hat, cape and curved pipe, are not found in Doyle’s earliest work but appear first in Paget’s interpretive etchings. This being the case, Leggett notes that Paget’s image is a “more corpulent and
handsome one than Doyle originally intended” and is the foundation for establishing the appearance and popularity of post-Doyle representations of the figure. Owing his visual representation primarily to the influence of the character’s simultaneous extra-textual presence, Leggett argues that “Holmes has really always been based more on the theatrical incarnations of the great detective than on the literary version.” (Leggett, 1979, 26) A multimedia figure from the moment of inception, Leggett argues that a “purists” critical appraisal of post-Doyle representation for a lack of literary faithfulness does not accurately represent the actual lived history of the character’s popular image.

Furthermore, although they are often discussed as belonging to the detective genre, Leggett argues that “the Holmes films are not necessarily best seen in this manner.” (Leggett, 1979, 25) As with the screen adaption of Earl Derr Biggers’ popular detective figure Charlie Chan, and despite attempts to remain faithful to their literary origins, both Holmes and Chan underwent alterations to make them “successful screen properties.” (Leggett, 1979, 26) Sharing more in common with the theatrical than literary origins, Legget argues that a purely generic analysis cannot account for the influence that the atmospheric settings and melodramatic, psychologized performances inspired by William Gillette’s early stage performance, have had on the character’s subsequent screen adaptions.

Dissatisfied with the existing body of film criticism, Leggett proposes that further areas of research take into account the influence and interaction between Universal’s characteristic studio style and that of the series’ most prolific director, Roy William Neill. Having directed ten of the Universal Holmes entries, Neill’s career spans over a decade of studio production. Inheriting the series after two of Twentieth Century-Fox’s class A
productions, Neill contributed to recontextualizing the B productions into stylized and tightly scripted films. (Leggett, 1979, 26)

Roy William Neill made the Holmes films move and yet bathed his pictures in teutonic shadows, thereby making genuine atmospheric thrillers of such entries as *The Scarlet Claw*, *The Pearl of Death* and *The House of Fear*. Neill's best work was really in the horror film (*The Black Room* and *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* are good examples) and his films really have more of an affinity to the gothic thriller than they do the detective genre. (Leggett, 1979, 26)

Although his career was cut short by an untimely death in 1946 just as his stylized film noir *Black Angel* was being released, Neill's work is actually emblematic of the Universal studio style. Such a reconsideration of Neill's influence, particularly in the context of the late forties, arguably provides the opportunity to reevaluate the impact that the Holmes series had on other genres of the period, such as film noir (Leggett, 1979, 27).

For my purposes here, the strengths of Leggett's article lie in his observations surrounding the inadequacies of preexisting scholarship examining the Holmes series. Instead of seeing Holmes as the product of a singular author's creative integrity and thereby rejecting the move to elevate and essentialise Doyle's original characterization, Leggett correctly observes that an understanding of Holmes' impact on popular culture depends upon recognition of the fact that Holmes was in fact a multi-media, transgeneric phenomenon. As Holmes' screen persona is markedly dissimilar to Doyle's original description, by examining the transgeneric influences present in the Universal series, as filtered through the authorial influences of the series' most prolific director, a greater understanding of the styles emerges.

However, Leggett's recommendations are inadequate in addressing anything beyond reordering our knowledge of the Holmes series as being the autonomous product of the relations between artistic-industrial practice. This is best demonstrated by Leggett's passing
disdain for the intrusion of the series’ contemporary historical moment. Leggett observes that Neill’s first Holmes feature, *Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon* (1942) is excellent “despite the films World War Two setting and limited budget.” (Leggett, 1979, 26) By focusing solely upon the series’ relationship between genre, author and industrial practice, Leggett structurally denies the possibility of understanding larger historical contexts. Leggett’s model for further research appears to rest solely upon an elaboration of the aesthetic contributions of the relations between author and industrial practice at the expense of confronting the interaction of historical and ideological forces at work to shape the series’ production and reception.

The final category in which the Holmes film series has been discussed is in terms of the relationship between genre and Hollywood studio production. In her article “Sherlock Holmes: Genre and Industrial Practice,” Mary Beth Haralovich begins by acknowledging the limitations of traditional genre study in addressing the connection between genre and conditions of production. (Haralovich, 1979, 53) Commonly concerned with establishing “a paradigm of characteristics of plot, character, and setting by which genres can be identified”, genre critics have attempted to account for the longevity and existence of various genres by addressing the ways in which conventions and formulaic plot construction “balance the desire of audiences for the familiar, fulfilling expectations, ritual with a desire for variation, originality, a new twist.” (Haralovich, 1979, 53) In order to revitalise genre study, Haralovich attempts to broaden the range of determinants to include an understanding of how “genre films offer an industry which is seeking to balance the desire for an easily produced standardized product with one that is differentiated enough to excel in a highly competitive market.” (Haralovich, 1979, 53)
Haralovich observes that an analysis of film genres must account for "production constraints as well as those features of narrative analysis which are common to traditional genre criticism." (Haralovich, 1979, 53) By locating genre analysis within an industrial context which highlights production constraints, Haralovich argues that aside from the actual formal meaning of the text or the pleasures which various genres may yield, genre is to be understood primarily in terms of its economic, and subsequently, ideological functioning. The function of genres in standardizing film production and consumption gives them "a special status in the structure of Hollywood film industry; they provide a consistent income which allows for the perpetuation of the studio system." (Haralovich, 1979, 53)

For Haralovich, therefore, the Holmes series serves as a model to demonstrate how Hollywood production utilizes genre to maximize audience appeal and to explicate "the role such films serve in the industry and hence the appropriateness of considering the context of industry production in accounting for genre conventions." (Haralovich, 1979, 54) Shaped primarily by the conventions of the detective genre, the Holmes series offers a prototype of generic conventions easily recognizable to audiences. Existing in literary form prior to being transformed into film, the recurring characters and settings address a pre-existing audience familiar with the specific variations of the genre's conventions present in Doyle's work. To account for the textual transformations specific to the two Twentieth Century-Fox films and the Universal series, Haralovich notes that the producers "remain true to the conventions established by Doyle". (Haralovich, 1979, 54) However, the most significant alterations of the Holmes conventions became apparent with the release of Universal's 1942 entry in the Holmes series, *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror*. By setting the narrative action in contemporary Britain, the Universal series makes a significant break with the conventions of
Victoriana present in the first two Fox films, thereby serving to “naturalize a setting previously anachronistic to Holmes.” (Haralovich, 1979, 54) The significance of such a shift, Haralovich argues, “was important for the reduction of Doyle’s original conventions to conventions which transcend historical context.” (Haralovich, 1979, 54) By removing the Victorian setting, the Universal films revealed something more essential than mood or setting, that is, the specific convention of the detective genre and the unique character of Holmes. Secondly, Harlarovich attributes this shift to purely economic reasons. This is in sharp contrast to Leggett’s argument because he sees the films emerging from the interplay of the director’s intention, studio practice and the sedimented history of the Holmes character. However, in so doing, Haralovich also proves incapable of understanding the historical functionality of the films within their specific historical context. In this respect, Haralovich’s argument coincides with Leggett’s. With the removal of the Victorian setting, the “necessary and sufficient conditions which defined the Holmes detective genre now excluded Victoriana but preserved the basic conventions of a Holmes narrative.” (Haralovich, 1979, 54) With the sufficient textual alterations in place, Universal had established a reliable series of films ready to “function successfully within the Hollywood studio system as B products.” (Haralovich, 1979, 54)

Beginning the series as class A productions at Twentieth Century-Fox, of the 14 films in the Holmes series the latter 12 films produced at Universal were distinguished by their class B status. Haralovich observes that “genre films and series were a good investment for B studios because the plots are formulaic and therefore do not require expensive screenwriting.” (Haralovich, 1979, 55) As such, Haralovich concludes her analysis by stating that:
In the broader context of the Hollywood studio system, the Sherlock Holmes series was also a necessity of the industry. The films existed - as B films - partially to perpetuate the film industry in its need to supply playing time on double bills. The Holmes films, as a specific type of detective genre, lend themselves to this special status within the production apparatus of Hollywood during the studio years. (Haralovich, 1979, 57)

This work is to date the most significant scholarly work on the Holmes series and its relation to the industrial organization of genre, which functions by attracting and securing audiences by organizing production, distribution and exhibition. However, the insistence on the economic factors as the primary explanatory device, Haralovich reduces our knowledge of cultural production to the studio system as being the sole determinant of textual meaning. Not only does she reduce film production to economic conditions, Haralovich also conflates different types of film practice, by equating genre production with series production. Defined as, "a group of motion pictures which feature a core group of characters and, usually, similar narrative situations," (DeCroix, 1991, 165), a series film can belong to any genre. Therefore, series and genre are not identical.

"The portrayal of the central roles in a series by the same actors further assures audience expectations." This contention does not withstand a closer reading of the series or a broader contextualization of the series’ multiple moments of production and reception (Haralovich, 1979, 54). A failure to account for shifts in the character’s representation over the course of the series’ production between 1939-1946, a period characterized by dramatically shifting socio-historical conditions, cannot be adequately explained. As I will demonstrate, an analysis of the relations between both the intratextual and extratextual contradictions present in the series’ subsequent entries, as well as the casting of Rathbone’s
star personae as Holmes, drastically alters any claims as to the relationship between generic constraint and industrial production and the possible ideological function(s) that the Holmes series may address. The security of Haralovich's claim as to the static nature of audience expectation and reception, highlights the inadequacy present in her reconceptualization of genre's relation to industrial production. It cannot account for the unique historical properties of the series film and the possibility for shifting historical moments and multiple points of reception (e.g., geographic). Simply broadening the context(s) of an analysis of the Holmes series to include multiple moments of institutional and trans-media interaction, undermines the ability of a singular institutional history to account for a momentary or recurring generic practice. For example, any investigation which acknowledges Holmes' historical and contemporaneous circulation at any given moment of production and reception, cannot rest solely upon the claims of a singular institutional history in accounting for the character's continued cultural presence.

It is my contention that through an examination of recent cultural theory examining the popular character, in particular Bennett and Woollacott's work on James Bond, that the absences I have identified present in the previous work on the Holmes series the can be corrected (4) I will argue that through such reconsideration, a broader methodological and historical understanding of the popular character's role in reorganizing the relation between popular text and audiences, will provide the theoretical terrain through which to begin to broaden our understanding of the Holmes series' contribution to the formation of wartime national/international and reading formations (Bennett and Woollacott, 1987).

As one of contemporary cultures most successful post-war popular heroes, the figure of James Bond continues to sustain a consistent cultural appeal. Making his initial appearance
in Ian Fleming’s 1953 novel *Casino Royale*, Bond has been translated into a long running series of internationally successful novels and films. (5) With a mass media cultural presence spanning over forty years, the character, along with shifting historical moments of cultural production and reception, has undergone a numerous radical transformations. In order to account for such transformations, Bennett and Woollacott’s analysis, attempts to go beyond the Bond novels and films to take account of the broader range of texts and coded objects through which the figure of Bond has been put into circulation as a popular hero. (Bennett and Woollacott, 1987, 1)

Arguing that the popular hero constitutes a particular type of cultural phenomenon, Bennett and Woollacott suggest that Bond’s popularity offers the opportunity to reconsider how our knowledge of popular cultural texts “reorganize the social and ideological relations of popular reading.” (Bennett and Woollacott, 1990, 427) One such significant transformation particular to the conventions of the Bond films is evident in relation to the “ideological currency of the Bond and ‘the Bond Girl’ between the early 1960s and the 1970s.” (Bennett and Woollacott, 1990, 426) Characteristic of such a shift between the two decades, a greater emphasis was focused upon “the construction of new and relatively more independent forms gender identity and sexuality.” (Bennett and Woollacott, 1990, 426) Through an analysis of the shifting extratextual discourses in interviews with actress Claudia Auger the “Bond girl” in the 1965 film *Thunderball*, it becomes apparent that her change in attitude towards the status of her career as a “Bond girl” alters significantly. From that of an “emancipated woman of the early 1960s” to that of an “essentially feminine” subordinate married woman of the 1970s, such a transition is “symptomatic of the ideological currency of Bond and “the Bond girl” between
the early 1960s and 1970s". (Bennett and Woollacott, 1990, 426) Such major transformations can thus be seen as being:

activated for consumption via a different construction of "the Bond girl", their relations to ideologies of gender and sexuality were, at least tendentially, reordered in being brought into line with the specific network of ideological concerns which the figures of Bond and "the Bond girl" served to condense and articulate in the late 1970s. (Bennett and Woollacott, 1990, 426-427)

Thus, such observations deny the potential for theorizing the popular character as a static signifier with a fixed and unitary meaning. As a mobile set of signifiers, an analysis of the divergent character representations allow Bennett and Woollacott to indicate the respect in which the figure of Bond has changed between various moments, the different sets of ideological and cultural concerns that figure has served to coordinate and the ways in which the ideological and cultural components of which it has been comprised have been mixed at different moments in time. (Bennett and Woollacott, 1987, 44)

Through an incorporation of a multiplicity of intertextual sources and influences, Bennett and Woollacott aim to elaborate upon relations between texts and audiences:

By considering the ways in which what we have called "textual shifters" have located the Bond films and novels in different spheres of ideological action—or within different spheres of ideological action, but placed in different points in time or within different reading formations—it will be possible to show that the question of the "ideological effects" of the Bond films and novels cannot be resolved abstractly. (Bennett and Woollacott, 1990, 428)

As their work aims to demonstrate, cultural meaning and production take place within a very broad field of contesting and often contradictory ideological sets of meanings:

Popular fictional texts do not have fixed ideological meanings or effects but function rather as pieces of play within different regions of ideological contestation, capable of being moved around differently within them' (Bennett and Woollacott, 1990, 428).
Acknowledging the character’s other media manifestations, which may occur earlier than or contemporaneously with the film manifestation, helps to recognize that a broader historical and intertextual view allows us to broaden the context in which we understand how cultural and narrative forms are ordered, prioritized, and given meaning at any given historical juncture. For the role of critical practice is not to uncover the essential or ontological meanings hidden in the texts themselves but to operate as a “system of bids and counter-bids that a text is kept alive in history, yet as always other than just itself since, in the process, its relations to history are constantly rewritten.” (Bennett and Woollacott, 1990, 428)
Towards a Wartime Anglo-American Culture

Leadership in the British Secret Service is a distinction which Holmes has earned by his achievements in the past. For all of his cases were not confined to recovering missing race horses, establishing identities, or frustrating cleverly planned bank-robberies. There were adventures of international flavour, in which world-wide interests were at stake... Sherlock Holmes is of today and we feel sure that he has long since answered the call to the colours and is serving in that high capacity for which he is so admirably fitted. (Green, 1986, 138)

December 1914.

This chapter will outline three issues essential to an understanding of the ways in which the Holmes/Rathbone series organized cultural and ideological relations during the Second World War. First, it will embark upon an historical examination of the way in which Doyle came to place Holmes within a larger, international context of action, culminating in Holmes' "service" to Britain during World War I. It will demonstrate how this period remains a significant moment in the character's career, one which embeds Holmes within Anglo-American wartime discourses on nation and gender. Secondly, this chapter will discuss the Hollywood history of Holmes as a film property. In particular, it will concentrate on both the 20th Century-Fox and Universal studios, outlining the stylistic and thematic differences of the films produced by both studios. And finally, it will relate the stylistic and thematic differences observable in the films to the studio structures of 20th Century-Fox and Universal in the 30s and 40s.
The Internationalization of Sherlock Holmes

Emerging out of the English popular press in 1887, Holmes first appeared in Arthur Conan Doyle’s *A Study in Scarlet* serialized by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle between 1887 and 1888. This was followed shortly after by the novel *A Sign of Four* in 1889. Like those of Dickens and William Thackery before, the collections of serialized novels gave the British reading public the opportunity to follow a particular character over extensive periods of time(1).

Conan Doyle’s creation of the Holmes persona coincided with the late Victorian era’s “cult of heroic male action so central in British life at the height of the British Empire.” (Porter, 1981, 155) Combined with the popular representation of the mysterious and adventurous hero, Doyle made his detective a gentleman. Doyle’s urbanization of the professional stature of a consulting detective, provided the ideal mythic qualities to capture the attention of the late-Victorian urban reading public:

The appeal exerted by Holmes is inherent in his urban life-style and the swagger with which he exhibits the workings of his intellect. His attraction is not only that of power through reason but also leisure and privilege, of upper-middle class bachelor life, of heroic adventure punctuated by pipe smoking in gentleman’s chambers, meditation, and opera. Holmes never has to stop to earn his living or appear at an office the way a clerk does. He is the polished chivalrous hero of a culture whose ideal in all human endeavour is the well-heeled amateur... Holmes is public school gone scientific, a higher public servant who, initially at least, revealed a streak of romantic melancholy... a cult of stylishness characteristic of an upper-middle-class culture. (Porter, 1981,156)

Thus, as the stylized heroic urban intellect of the Victorian era, the Holmes persona, like his creator, was a man of his era. Himself a physician in South Africa during the Boer
War, Doyle’s patriotic defense of the colonial conflict is articulated in his historical works *The Great Boer War* and *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Conduct*, for which he was knighted in 1902. Adventurer, sportsman, and family man, Doyle embodied and cultivated the personification of masculine Victorian ideals (Porter, 1981, 157-158). (2) However, it was important for Doyle to adapt the stories to what he perceived as a shifting audience. No longer exclusively British, Doyles’ Holmes narratives and characterization began to incorporate more European and American influences. However, he did so in a way which reconfirmed Holmes’ Britishness.

The continuation of the Holmes character in 1903, which had been interrupted by Doyle’s service in South Africa from 1893 to 1902, can be partially interpreted as a more concerted effort to situate Holmes’s character in the service of the Nation, with his adventures set within the context of colonial and political intrigue. In particular this is evident in both the short story, “The Bruce Partington Plans” (1908) and the novel length *The Valley of Fear* (1914/1915). In both cases, the narrative’s conflict widens the national and international scope of action to include European and American settings onto which order must be imposed. With the WW I publication of the novel length *The Valley of Fear* (serialized in *The Strand* between September 1914 and May 1915), Doyle’s narrative provides a cultural exploration of American Industrial/frontier possibilities depicting a more “adventurous” masculine ideal just in time for war. (3)

In order to account for such an alteration in Doyle’s representation of Holmes and his settings, usually thought to be concerned exclusively with Victorian England, a brief account of Doyle’s career in the years between the two main moments of Holmesian publications (1893-1903) provides insight into the shift in socio-historical contexts within which Doyle
laboured. By the time of his first visit to the United States in October of 1894, Doyle had
completed twenty-three shorts stories and two novels featuring Holmes. With Holmes' highly
publicized death in 1893, Doyle toured as a prominent public literary figure in North America
(4) As was the case with other British literary figures of the period, such as Oscar Wilde ten
years earlier, the American public's consumption of the Holmes stories and public support of
the Doyle lecture tour underline the early formation of an international commercial culture.

Signalling Holmes' return to the pages of the Strand in October of 1903 with the
publication of The Adventure of the Empty House, the ten years separating Doyle's Holmes
chronicles saw a significant modernization of Doyle's world view. Having had first hand
experience meeting Holmes's audience in America in 1894, Doyle served, wrote and was
knighted for his service to England during the Boer war. Upon his continuation of the
Holmes stories, Doyle saw it necessary to make the setting and characterizations more
contemporary by placing them within a grander scope of England as a nation and as an
Empire. (5)

Evidence of such a change in narrative scope lies in "His Last Bow". Appearing in
The Strand magazine and Collier's Weekly in September of 1917, this short story, subtitled
"The War Service of Sherlock Holmes", features Holmes working undercover for the British
Secret Service. Set during the evening of August 2, 1914, two days before the outbreak of
the First World War, Holmes poses as Altamont, an Irish American spy selling British naval
secrets to German spies. (6) Holmes recounts how he came out of retirement to work
undercover in the United States making connections with German operatives in Chicago and
through an Irish Secret Society in Buffalo. Aided by Holmes' mastery at disguising his
accent, mannerisms, and appearance, he is taken into the confidence of Van Bork, a German
spy-master collecting information on Britain’s military preparations for war. Successfully deceiving the German operatives and exposing their elaborate Anglo-American spy network, Holmes acknowledges how detective skills, once used to infiltrate the criminal underground of London, now must meet the task of defeating a new enemy. In a brief closing soliloquy Holmes warns that

There is an east wind coming... such a wind as never blew on England yet. It will be cold and bitter, Watson, and a good many of us may wither before its blast. But it’s God’s own wind none the less, and a cleaner, better, stronger land will lie in the sunshine when the storm has cleared. (Doyle, 1981, 980)

Echoing British foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey’s rhetorical use of light imagery (in which he states that with the declaration of war in 1914 that “the lights were going out all over Europe” (Kagan, 1987, 885)), Doyle allows Holmes to articulate the nation’s call to arms. The same sort of patriotic speech reappears at the end of 1942’s *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror*. In both cases, whether by Doyle or a Hollywood studio, Holmes’ enlistment in the service of the nation is viewed as unproblematically noble and romantic. As he comes out of retirement, and out of the solitude of bee keeping on the south coast, Holmes’ service is clearly to be read as an acknowledgement of the noble sacrifice that Britain has made during the war. Depicted as a chivalric struggle between upper class gentlemen, Holmes’ military service is romanticized and sanitized of its inevitable violence. Upon Van Bork’s capture, Holmes momentarily acknowledges the shared class allegiances which transcend their national differences and bind him to Van Bork. Holmes states:

> But you have one quality which is very rare in a German, Mr. Van Bork; you are a sportsman and you will bear me no ill will when you realize that you, who have outwitted so many other people, have at last been outwitted yourself. After all, you have done your best for your country, and I have done my best for mine, and what could be more natural? Besides,” he added, not
unkindly, as he laid his hand upon the shoulder of the prostrate man, "it is better than to fall before some more ignoble foe. (Doyle, 1988, 979-980)

Furthermore, by constructing Holmes' spy alias in the guise of Altamont, an Irish American, Doyle suggests that Britain's entry into the war was not solely due to European ("eastern") concerns. Indeed, until Altamont is revealed as Holmes, his status as an enemy agent underscores the fact that British authority was being openly challenged and redefined by competing internal (Ireland) and external (Germany/US) interests. As the momentary site through which all of these competing threats are located, Altamont's Irish American allegiance to Germany threatens Britain's national security. Unlike Holmes' more prominent earlier antagonists, such as Professor Moriarty and Colonel Sebastian Moran, Altamont's international identity draws attention to the anxiety associated with Britain's declining symbolic and strategic status as an empire. Characterized by mass European lower class migration to the United States beginning at the turn of the century, the United States was increasingly imagined as a space from which potentially resistant ideologies might emerge (Swann, 1987, 18). As the story's explicit link between Irish and German collaboration demonstrates, the United States remains free of the Empire's control, outside Britain's direct sphere of influence. Thus, Altamont functions as a site through which the British hegemony is momentarily challenged. However, as Altamont's real identity is revealed to be that of Holmes, Doyle reinscribes symbolic and strategic order to British rule, subsequently reaffirming Holmes as the fictional embodiment of the nation's wartime masculine ideal.

As I have demonstrated, Doyle's use of Holmes during the First World War embedded the figure within historically shifting sets of Anglo-American reading formations. As a result of the United States' entrance into the First World War in 1917, a significant transformation
in the relations between Britain and the United States occurred. In the formal peace process which followed the end of the war, the United States firmly established its economic, military, and cultural presence within a new international order. Under the leadership of the United States, Woodrow Wilson played a central role in the founding of the League of Nations, an organization whose founding members also included Britain, France, Italy, and Japan. Intended as a body of sovereign states, the member states agreed to pursue common practices and goals, legitimated by a presiding international court. Member states that did not abide by the rulings would be punished through a system of proposed economic and military sanctions (Kagan, 1987, 902). Consequently, as a result of the United States’ emerging international political and economic influence, the League of Nations’ transatlantic cultural ties assisted the United States in gaining access to a developing world market for their domestic cultural industries (Cook, 1985, 43; Swann, 1987, 1). Taking advantage of these new trade conditions, the film industry actively began to target an international market:

During the First World War, the United States conquered the world’s market for motion pictures. Recent migrants to the United States like Adolph Zukor and William Fox learnt how to produce films which appealed to the American and European audiences more than European films... In Britain in the late 1920s, as in many European countries, Hollywood films regularly accounted for more than 90% of British screentime. (Swann, 1987, 19)

Thus, the increasing American presence in Doyle’s narratives coincides with the expanding economic and cultural role that began with America’s entry into the First World War. As “His Last Bow” demonstrates, Doyle situates Holmes historically as a site through which shifting cultural, economic and ideological Anglo-American relations became negotiated. (7) Between the two World Wars, however, Holmes’ ubiquitous presence remained intact. Sustaining his presence as a prominent cultural figure until his death in 1930, Doyle continued
to publish Holmes stories until 1927. However, Doyle’s passing did not put an end to Holmes’ presence. Most significantly, Holmes’ image was sustained by the character’s transmedia migration into numerous international film and series productions. Such early Holmes films include the Nordisk (Danish) series of two reel silents from 1908-1911; the German Series of 1910-1920; the Franco-British series of 1912, the Arthur Wontner series (1931-37), and the Ellie Norwood Series which featured 47 short entries made between 1921 and 1923.

**Sherlock Holmes as a Hollywood Property**

In Hollywood, the British actor Clive Brook starred in the sound era’s first Holmes production, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1930, Paramount). Shot in New York City at Paramount’s Astoria Studios, Steinbrunner and Michaels note that this early Paramount production predates the contemporized American settings that would appear in the later Universal films twelve years later (Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978, 24). Shot partly on location among the piers and ships in Long Island, Brook’s Holmes is transplanted from the Edwardian London streets and into the city streets of contemporary New York. Against the backdrop of the Manhattan skyline, Holmes confronts Professor Moriarty and Colonel Moran, the canon’s traditional protagonists. The public’s acceptance of the new talking Holmes was confirmed by Brooks’ appearance in another Paramount feature, *Paramount on Parade* (1930), and in Fox’s *Sherlock Holmes* (1932). A feature length series of sketches highlighting the studio’s acting, directing and musical talents, *Paramount on Parade* casts Brooks as Holmes in a brief sketch starring two of Paramount’s other prominent series detective characters, Warner Oland as Fu Manchu and William Powell as Philo Vance. Two years later,
and at another studio, Brooks starred as Holmes in Fox’s adaption of a William Gillette stage play of the same name. Although this was to be the last time Brooks portrayed the detective, his performance is best remember as one which portrayed a dashing and romantic Holmes. Following Gillette’s break with Doyle’s traditional “asexual” representation of the figure, he becomes romantically involved, exchanging marriage vows in the film’s final scene (Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978, 41). Other Holmes productions of note during the 30s include, The Speckled Band (1931, British and Dominion Studios), The Hound of the Baskervilles (1931, Gaumont), A Study in Scarlet (1933, World-Wide Picture/Fox). However, as Steinbrunner and Michaels point out, for the six years between 1933 and 1939 Hollywood “steered curiously clear of the canon.” (Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978, 58)

Produced by 20th Century-Fox in 1939, The Hound of the Baskervilles became the first of fourteen films to star Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce as Holmes and Watson. Released on March 31, 1939, The Hound of the Baskervilles opened to favourable reviews, and became one of the studio’s biggest films of the year (Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978, 70-71). However, as Haralovich notes, in its first weeks it was not especially profitable. Accordingly, Variety attributed the slow box office to the lack of “better name strength than it’s got” (as quoted in, Haralovich, 1979, 56). Indeed, Rathbone and Bruce “did not have the box office draw of, for instance William Powell who played Nick Charles in a more successful A detective series, The Thin Man.” (Haralovich, 1979, 56) Critical reviews were generally favourable, praising the film’s evocative settings and Rathbone’s startling resemblance to Holmes. The New York Times reviewer Frank Nugent observed:

the film succeeds rather well in reproducing Sir Arthur’s macabre detective story along forthright cinema lines. The technicians have whipped up a moor at least twice as desolate as any ghost story moor has need be, the mist swirls
steadily, the savage howl of the Baskerville hound is heard at all the melodramatically appropriate intervals... it is fairly good fun and it is like old times seeing Sherlock again. (as quoted in, Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978, 70-72)

A Variety reviewer added, “Rathbone gives a most effective characterization as Sherlock Holmes, which will be relished by mystery lovers.” (as quoted in, Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978, 72) However, in Britain, Hollywood’s treatment of the British gothic mystery was not greeted as favourably. Writing in The Spectator, Graham Greene said:

The cinema has never done justice to Sherlock Holmes... atmosphere of unmechanized Edwardian flurry is well caught... The genuine Holmes London, too, is nearly touched in through the cab windows... Dartmoor is a rather gothic landscape... What is wrong, surely is Mr. Rathbone’s reading of the Great Character: the good humour... and the general air of brisk good health... the deductions are reduced to a bare minimum and the plot is swollen... what we really need in a Holmes picture is far more dialogue and far less action (as quoted in, Pohle and Hart, 1977, 174)

Unlike The Hound of the Baskervilles strict resemblance to Doyle’s original novel, the sequel by the same studio (20th Century-Fox), The Adventure of Sherlock Holmes (1939), was not based upon an original Doyle literary source. Instead, the studio choose to adapt William Gillette’s popular play, Sherlock Holmes. Ultimately an unfaithful adaptation of the original Gillette stage play, altering the original’s romantic subplot, its opening box office sales met with only “moderate success in its first runs at Variety’s representative cities.” (Haralovich, 1979, 56) (8) Billed as “The Struggle of Super-Minds in the Crime of the Century”, The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes remains faithful to the Holmesian conventions reproducing the British period setting and antagonists most associated with Holmes (Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978, 76). In comparison to the later films by Universal, the two Fox productions were marked by high production values and maintained the original historical integrity of the
short stories and novels. Steinbrunner and Michaels note that although the sequel *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* was an overall critical and financial success, 20th Century-Fox, they argue, discontinued the Holmes' vehicles because

the studio was less than keenly enthusiastic about its distribution: in double-bill situations the film was slotted in the secondary position, most often under a Tyrone Power romance. The holocaust in the Europe of 1940 made the gaslit doings of Victorian villains seem entirely too pale. So the studio exiled Holmes and his deerstalker from the cobbled streets of the legendary Fox backlot. (Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978, 82)

However, soon after the sequel's August 1939 release, Rathbone and Bruce signed a seven year contract to adapt their screen personae into a long-running radio series beginning in October of 1939. Along with the twelve productions which followed at Universal between 1942 and 1946, the characters out-paced their screen success by also appearing in two hundred and seventy-five radio productions for both NBC Radio from 1939-1943, and later for the Mutual Broadcasting System during the years 1943-1946. Beginning only in the late 30s with Fred Dannay and Manfred Lee's successful detective series "Ellery Queen", the possibility of securing a career in long-term nationally broadcast radio drama had a great impact in promoting the public's association of Rathbone and Bruce as Holmes and Watson. Furthermore, the characters' success in sustaining a long-term radio audience, gave "an obvious checkbook indication" as to the characters/stars' popularity and ability to sustain simultaneous film and radio series productions (Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1979, 85).

Entering into a five year contract with MGM in December of 1941, Rathbone agreed and was permitted to continue his portrayal as Holmes at Universal beginning in April of 1942 (Pohle and Hart, 1978, 168). Buying the rights from the Doyle estate at the cost of $300,000
for the permission to use the characters and original Doyle stories. Universal began
production of a new Holmes series.

Released in September 1942, *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror* was the first
of twelve Universal features starring Holmes series and one of three entries to directly address
wartime themes and villains. According to Steinbrunner and Michaels, the idea to continue
the Rathbone/Holmes series was put forth by Jules Stein of the Music Corporation of
America, a talent agency which represented Rathbone. As the stars’ “dated” Victorian era
already been fully exploited in the earlier 20th Century-Fox productions, Stein proposed:

a series of Sherlock Holmes films to be done for Universal Studios in which
the detective... was to be brought right up to the present, tackling the
problems of the day. The very conditions in Europe (war, bombings, modern
espionage) which had made the turn-of-the century Holmes of the misty Fox
films seem so hopelessly dated and out of place were to provide the cases for
the new, 1940s Holmes! (Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978, 85)

Nonetheless, as part of the larger cultural and economic conversion to wartime goals, Stein’s
proposal is characteristic of a larger shift in the film industry’s perceived informational and
propaganda wartime service (Shain, 1976, 47). In order to ease the transition from Holmes’
associations with Edwardian England to that of contemporary Anglo-America, a preface to
the first three Holmes films in the Universal series was provided in the opening credits:

Sherlock Holmes, the immortal character of fiction created by Sir Arthur
Conan Doyle, is ageless, invincible and unchanging. Solving significant
problems of the day he remains -as ever- the supreme master of deductive
reasoning.

Abandoning his traditional deerstalker cap and Victorian clothes, Holmes sports a modern
haircut, suit and bowler hat. Called into the service of the highest echelons of the British
state, Holmes’ mystery is characteristically modern. Terrorized by a series of German
propaganda broadcasts which predict acts of Nazi sabotage in Britain, the “Intelligence Inner Council” call upon Holmes to identify the origin of the German broadcasts and capture the suspected German infiltrators hiding in Britain. The next two entries, *Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon*, released in January 1943, and *Sherlock Holmes in Washington*, released in April 1943, share *The Voice of Terror*’s overtly propagandistic tone.

Interestingly, with the release of the series’ next entry in September 1943, *Sherlock Holmes Faces Death*, a recognizable attempt to downplay the film’s contemporary context is made. Although set in contemporary England, Holmes’ wartime service which preoccupied the first three films has been replaced by a conventional mystery narrative. As Steinbrunner and Michaels point out, the critical reception of Universal’s fourth film downplaying of the war was favourable:

> The next film in the Universal series was the first film in the studio’s updating concept not to entrap Holmes in the problems of World War II, its spies, bombsights or secret plans. The film does give passing reference to the global struggle, but as the *New York Herald Tribune* reviewer noted with a sigh of relief, “at least this one has practically nothing to do with the Nazis.” (10/8/43) Instead, *Sherlock Holmes Faces Death* is the first Universal saga to make full use of a Sir Arthur Conan Doyle story. (Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978, 106)

Such a reaction provides insight into the shift in the public’s reception of Hollywood’s coverage of wartime themes. As Shain is quick to point out, by 1942 the film industry “was not convinced the public would buy very many war films.” (Shain, 1976, 48) The downplaying of the films’ contemporary context can in part be interpreted as the film industry’s acknowledgement that the “lack of recreational outlets during 1942-1945 was quite symbolic of the country’s [grim] mood during that time.” (Shain, 1976, 56) Universal’s return to the more conventional traditions of the detective and mystery genre is demonstrated
by the studio’s decision to adapt some of Doyle’s more popular Holmes stories throughout much of the remaining entries in the series. Based loosely upon Doyle’s work, “The Musgrave Ritual” is the basis for *Sherlock Holmes Faces Death* (1943); elements of “The Sign of Four” are used in *The Spider Woman* (1944); “The Six Napoleons” for *The Pearl of Death* (1944); and “The Five Orange Pips” for *The House of Fear* (1945). Beginning with the January 1944 release of *The Spider Woman*, Universal had decided to drop the Holmes name from the titles. As a result of the combined effect of the characters’ radio series and the release of a Holmes feature every few months, “the impact of the Sherlockian name had lessened.” (Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978, 115)

With the release of *Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon* in 1942, the remaining 10 entries in the Universal series were directed by Roy William Neill. A contract director with Universal studios since the mid-30s, Neill was best known as a horror film director, directing such notable horror films as *The Black Room* (1935, Columbia) starring Boris Karloff, and *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* (1943). Increasingly, as the Holmes series began to dissociate its drama from the historical events of the day, the entries became more eclectic, playing up Holmes’ gothic associations and injecting elements of horror and suspense. This is best exemplified by the series’ May 1944 release of *The Scarlet Claw* which is completely set in Canada, where Holmes travels to a rural Quebec village as he dabbles in the mysteries of the occult while trying to solve a series of mysterious murders. Michael Druxman writes:

*The Scarlet Claw* was, unquestionably, the best picture in the Sherlock Holmes series. The suspenseful screenplay by Roy William Neill and Edward L. Hartmann was almost a horror story and Neill’s imaginative direction... The production had many unforgettable moments: a dead woman’s hand clutching a bell rope; the luminous “monster” stalking Holmes in the marsh; the murder...
of the judge, with the killer being disguised as a woman. Each scene helped to create a film that kept audiences guessing until the conclusion. (as quoted in, Pohle and Hart, 1977, 182)

Neill developed the trans-generic narrative and stylistic influences with the series’ next entry *The Pearl of Death* released in August of 1944. Tracking the stolen Borges Pearl, Holmes confronts a jewel thief and homicidal killer, the Creeper, played by Rondo Hatton. Resembling many of Universal’s other stock horror figures, such as the Werewolf, Frankenstein, and the Mummy, the Creeper’s grotesque features and terrorizing murders demonstrate the series’ increasing stylistic and thematic blend of the horror and detective genres.

Although the Holmes series’ early attempts to contemporize the character were later downplayed, as was the placing of the character in overtly propagandistic discursive formations, Holmes nonetheless remained an international figure. The next two films in the series, and the last to be produced and released during the final months of the Second World War, were *The House of Fear* (March 1945) and *The Woman in Green*. With the release of a Holmes film at the rate of one every three months the series became the steadiest production unit at Universal (Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978, 147). Critics began to note a steady decline in the quality of the productions, as a result of the busy production schedule. Bosley Crowther writing in *The Times* (3/17/45) stated that “Sherlock Holmes has certainly gone to the bow-wows in Hollywood.” (Steinbrunner and Michaels, 1978, 147) Whereas the preceding two features were both set in the United Kingdom, the next feature, *Pursuit to Algiers* (October 1945), was set primarily on an ocean liner in which Holmes and Watson accompany King Nikolas to Algiers. The February 1946 entry *Terror by Night*, although set on a train voyage between London and Edinburgh, also contains elements of Britain’s
international/Commonwealth associations. In it, Holmes is hired to protect the "Star of Rhodesia", a priceless diamond, vestige of Britain's colonial legacy, rumoured to possess a deadly curse. Nonetheless, the death of Neill in late 1946 and the expiration of Rathbone's radio contract for the Mutual Broadcasting System in June of that same year, meant that *Dressed to Kill*, was to be Rathbone and Bruce's final screen appearance as Holmes and Watson. Indeed, faced with financial difficulties which had begun in the mid-40s, Universal was forced to cancel its B production unit, which had been responsible for the Holmes films, in November of 1946.

Following from an extended overview of the Holmes/Rathbone series' history from 1939 to 1946, it becomes clear that the significant narrative and thematic differences between the 20th Century-Fox and Universal productions can in part be accounted for by elaborating upon the placement of the films within the respective studios' contexts of production, distribution and exhibition.

**Studio Structures and Studio Styles**

Founded in 1914, Fox Film Corporation owner William Fox consolidated his control over the company in the late 1920s through a series of ambitious industrial strategies. By 1927, Fox's investment in new sound technologies and chains of film theatres was combined with his controlling interests in the Fox production studios as well as his interests in "MGM, Loew's (...) one third of First National and other assorted holdings." (Cook, 1985, 18) Released from his duties at the Fox Film Corporation in 1930, William Fox's holdings were placed into receivership. In 1935, the ex-head of Warners production, Daryl F. Zanuck,
merged his independent studio, 20th Century Pictures, with the Fox Film Corporation. The new studio was renamed 20th Century-Fox (Cook, 1985, 18).

By the mid-30s, a stable of such successful depression era stars as Shirley Temple and Will Rogers helped 20th Century-Fox become profitable throughout the decade. As Hollywood’s most popular star from 1934 to 1938 (Schatz, 1988, 261), Temple’s success and star persona have been interpreted as characteristic of the studio’s conservative depression era ideology (Eckert, 1991). Indeed, Eckert further interprets the studio’s manufacturing and promotion of Temple’s sentimental image as characteristic of its compliance with social and political inequities of the period:

Shirley’s relation to the depression history... goes far beyond this dialectical play between her biographies and the real childhoods of many depression children, however... When one takes into account Fox’s financial difficulties in 1934, its resurgence with Shirley Temple as its merger with 20th Century under the guidance of Rockefeller banking interests that dominated Hoover and Roosevelt banking interests, one feels that the least that should be anticipated is a lackeying to the same interests that dominated Hoover and Roosevelt. (Eckert, 1991, 66)

Similarly, the studio’s other major star, Will Rogers, was featured in a number of popular films which distinctly characterize the studio’s conservative political philosophy in the mid-30s. In such films as David Harum (1934), a stabilized Southern America is depicted, where social relations and class divisions, although acknowledged, appear naturalized, free of the social and economic conflict present in depression era America. Characterizing Rogers’ star vehicles Mordden writes:

Everyone is solvent middle class, poor white, or black. Everyone knows everyone else; all are related, old friends, or lifelong enemies. The town in David Harum (1934) is actually called Homeville. If Rogers’s forte was the gentle honesty of his humour, his great appeal lay in his representation of the old ways, the world much of America took for granted before there was a
World War or immigration "troubles" or women's rights Rogers isn't ageless he is of a vanished age (Moroden, 1988, 268-269)

However, by 1939, with the death of Will Rogers and Temple's declining popularity, a significant change in the studio's production strategy signalled a new period in the studio's history. With box office sales at an all time high, the 1938/19 financial year placed 20th Century Fox as the third most profitable Hollywood studio (Cook, 1985, 18). As a result, studio executives took this as an opportunity to produce more "A" pictures. In part, 20th Century Fox's ability to increase its production of big budget A pictures was contingent upon its vertically integrated economic organization.

As a Big Five studio — along with Warner Brothers, RKO, Paramount and MGM — 20th Century Fox exercised control over its own "distribution companies and chains of film theatres as well as the means of production of films" (Cook, 1985, 10). Although not quite as economically powerful as the Big Five, the Little Three — Universal, Columbia, and United Artists — were not vertically integrated but consisted of production companies which gained access to distribution and exhibition through economic arrangements with the Big Five (Cook, 1985, 10). As evidenced by the restructuring which brought about 20th Century-Fox in 1935, the film industry in the 30s witnessed a period of financial and institutional reorganization. With capital dispersed so as to secure the studios' control over production, distribution, and exhibition, the majors' most lucrative financial assets "were chiefly in the form of real estate" by the mid 1940s, about two-thirds of the majors' total capital was invested in film theatres" (Cook, 1985, 10). As a result of the film industry's economic structure, therefore, a particular studio's style is shaped by the varying degrees of tension
between the creative and economic forces at each studio at any given time, struggling to define the thematic and aesthetic character of each studio release:

In this situation, the balance of power in determining the nature of the product lay largely on the side of the “front office” - the industry’s businessmen, rather than its creative personnel. The demand was for films that would secure financial return from exhibition. A “good picture” in these terms was one which had access to first-run theatres, and hence combined production values with a certain degree of predicable. The emphasis was clearly not on the side of experimentation in film form and content. (Cook, 1985, 10)

Characteristic of the Big Five’s necessity for a high margin of box office returns, Zanuck’s shift in production strategy beginning in 1938/39 translated into a reliance upon popular literary adaptations. One such example was the studio’s purchase of the rights to John Steinbeck’s novel The Grapes of Wrath to be directed by John Ford. The controversial 1939 production’s depression era setting marked a break with the studio’s avoidance of the social and economic conditions of the day (Cook, 1988, 18). Although not a box-office success, The Grapes of Wrath won two Oscars earning critical and popular acclaim which had evaded the studio during the 1930s (Cook, 1985, 19). However, far from offering a clear indictment of capitalism, Mordden argues that The Grapes of Wrath is characteristic of Ford’s early work at 20th Century-Fox:

The Grapes of Wrath comes as less of a study in economic oppression than as a family melodrama in the old Fox tradition... It is a cliche of movie history that Ford made a great variety of films, far more rustic family studies, contemporary comedies, urban melodramas, and contemporary wartime adventures than the westerns for which he is best known... But almost all of Ford’s work in the first decade of sound emphasizes country themes (or contemporary tales) rather than westerns. Ford’s work for Fox really reflects the lot’s down home sentimentality and its occasional attempts to update and urbanize... 20th Century-Fox was organized around a nineteenth-century worldview, an aesthetic largely unmindful of Paramount’s sybarite and Warners’ loners and rebels. (Mordden, 1988, 281-282)
It is within this context, therefore, that the institutional/industrial discursive formations which informed the production and reception of the Holmes/Rathbone productions, as products of fully vertically integrated studio, can be better understood. In this respect, the studio’s shift towards A productions based on popular literature, the studio’s preference to represent a 19th century world view and aesthetic and, more significantly for my purposes, the studio’s larger tendency to deflect representation away from the social and economic conditions of the day, create a context which help explain Zanuck’s decision to adapt the Holmes character to the screen in 1939.

As I have outlined earlier, Universal’s thematic and stylistic adaptation of Holmes was significantly different from either the 20th Century-Fox A productions or any earlier filmed representations. For reasons I will elaborate, an examination of Universal’s placement within the film industry and its studio style, will shed some light upon the way in which the Holmes/Rathbone films have historically been received.

Unlike the vertically integrated Big Five studios, Universal did not control its own exhibition outlets (i.e., theatre chain). As a member of the Little Three, Universal was not vertically integrated but gained access to exhibition through a quid pro quo agreement with the Big Five (Haralovich, 1979, 55). In order to compete financially, the Little Three commonly produced films on lower budgets and rented out their features to the Big Five theatres to play on the bottom of the film bills for a flat fee. As there was a greater degree of financial instability for the Little Three, they constantly sought to guarantee for themselves the same type of continuous income which seemed to come so easily to the Big Five.
Emerging out of this economic necessity to sustain a flow of capital, studios began to organize production around the model of an assembly line:

The main features of this form of organization of production are highly developed divisions of labour and hierarchies of authority and control, and the detailed breakdown of tasks: the industrial model for this form of organisation is, of course, the mass production of commodities. Since the studio system was geared towards the production of a constant flow of films to supply to theatres there was an impetus towards organizing film production along the lines of mass production. (Cook, 1985, 10)

Following from the “‘ms industry’s employment of labour division and the standardization of film production, genre films provided smaller studios access to exhibition by providing programmers to fill out to top half of film bills in the Big Five owned theatre chains. With the shift towards the double feature during the Depression, “the approximately fifty films per year volume of production of each of the Big Five was not sufficient for them to supply weekly program changes.” (Haralovich, 1979, 55) While most of the Big Five productions were larger budgeted class A films, a significant portion of the Little Three films belong to the class B productions:

The distinction arises from the maxim that the quality of a film is equal to the cost of its production. 20th Century-Fox, the producer of the first two Sherlock Holmes films, had an annual budget of approximately $23 million to $25 million while Universal, producer of the remainder of the Holmes series, had a yearly budget of $11.6 million. (Haralovich, 1979, 55)

However, as Janet Staiger has pointed out, when “‘Universal ownership changed in 1936, the policy shifted towards A production.” (Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, 1985, 327) In 1937 studio producer Robert Presnell, as a means of securing block booking, “discussed problems of budgeting a lower-cost A film: since he could not afford higher salaried actors, he often used new personalities.” (Borwell, Staiger, and Thompson, 1985, 327)
Carl Laemmle, the founder of Universal, had begun investing in nickelodeons and early film production in 1906 and, by 1915, owned a studio production centre outside of Los Angeles (Pendo, 1975, 155). Established by Laemmle in the 1920s, the Universal Pictures Corporation became a prosperous studio and quickly made the transition to sound production (Cook, 1985, 23; Pendo, 1975, 155). In 1929, the combined stock market crash and the capital intensive transition to sound forced Laemmle to reorganize his production strategy. Having been put in charge of the studio by his father, Carl Laemmle Jr., as studio boss and production of chief personally oversaw Universal’s first horror production Dracula (1931) which was the studio’s most successful film of 1931. Universal’s new strategy was a success.

He (Laemmle Jr.) held Universal’s losses to $1.7 million in 1932 and $1 million in 1933, during a two year period that saw Warners lose $20 million and three other majors fall into receivership. (Schatz, 1988, 228)

Directed by Todd Browning, Dracula’s expressionistic visual style, short production schedule and minimal dialogue, became the model around which the studio organized production as it entered into a period of financial setbacks (Cook, 1985, 23). Faced with the 1929 collapse of the stock market and an industry wide labour strike which slowed production, Universal’s financial status was endangered (Cook, 1985, 23). To combat the financial insecurities faced by a Little Three during this period, Universal slowed the production of prestigious A features and increasingly began to standardize its production by relying on lower budgeted B genre films and lower cost A productions (Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, 1985, 327). Pendo notes that between 1931 and 1941 the horror film became synonymous with Universal’s studio style:

Of all the American companies Universal Studios was the leading maker and distributor of horror films from ‘31 to ‘41. During this period no studio made
as many successful and classic horror films, and some years it had a virtual monopoly. Their films were the prototypes and later films borrowed heavily from Universal. (Pendo, 1975, 155)

Universal further modified its genre production by offering exhibitors a reliable horror film series centred around a recurring series character. By the mid-30s numerous recurring horror series characters such as Frankenstein, the Invisible Man, the Wolfman, Dracula and the Mummy provided Universal with quickly produced and profitable sixty-minute B productions:

The horror film was crucial to Universal's survival, with pictures like Dracula, Frankenstein, The Mummy, The Old Dark House, and The Invisible Man doing solid business and setting the parameters for the studio's signature genre. The quality and consistency of the films were due largely to the Laemmle-assembled and -supervised production unit, whose key above the line personnel were stars Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi, director James Whale, writer John Balderston, and cameraman-turned-director Karl Freund. (Schatz, 1988, 228)

During the 1940s Universal had become a highly profitable studio. However, by 1948 the five major studios signed a consent decree which eliminated the blind selling of films to exhibitors sight unseen as well as reducing the block booking of films to groups of five. These practices had given the majors greater control over securing screen time for their products. The consent decree essentially eliminated the control which the Big Five had been able to exercise over exhibition and ended their status as vertically integrated enterprises. Henceforth, independent exhibitors were no longer obliged to take large blocks of films without having seen the final products beforehand (Schatz, 1988, 340). As a result of this antitrust action, which eliminated the advantage of obtaining large scale exhibition for their films, the majors virtually eliminated B productions. Their strategy was to reduce the total number of productions in order to guarantee a higher return on bigger budgeted A productions (Schatz, 1988, 340). However, the minors like Universal discovered that their B products, along with
lower cost A productions, could compete for access to the independent exhibitors and rural audiences, resulting in an increase in the number of exhibition outlets from which to profit. The demand for B productions increased throughout the war as well and, as evidence of the increased potential for a higher return on B productions, the forties saw the emergence of two new competitors as Monogram and Republic both increased their B productions (Schatz, 1988, 340-341).

With the release of Universal's comedy feature Buck Privates in December of 1941, Abbott and Costello proved to be Universal's most profitable stars as well as 1942's most popular screen performers. (9) As evidence of the studio's increased efficiency during the war years, the Abbott and Costello "buddy" formula vehicles like Buck Privates, Hold That Ghost (1941), and In the Navy (1941), provided low cost B productions that gained access to profitable first run theatres. Capitalizing on the high return from its B units, Universal turned its attention to "pre-packaged A-class projects that could be produced and released through Universal." (Schatz, 1988, 347) As a result of Universal's decision both to increase the production of first run Class A productions as well as to incorporate more wartime themes in its films, in November of 1941 the studio started production on two wartime espionage thrillers. Coinciding with the release of the first war-related Holmes entry Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror in 1942, Eagle Squadron and Saboteur were produced and released the same year. Similar in theme to the war-related Holmes features, these two popularly received films dealt with issues of German espionage in the United States (Saboteur) and Anglo-American relations between American and British soldiers who fought together in the RAF (Eagle Squadron)
For Universal, the war offered a boom in production. As Schatz argues, Universal’s box office success can be attributed to the studio’s proficiency in offering a “formula bound consistency to its products.” (Schatz, 1988, 353) Nowhere is this merger of studio style more evident, as Schatz argues, than in the Holmes/Rathbone series of the period:

Universal transplanted the nineteenth-century detective into a contemporary wartime milieu, thus cutting production costs (no costumes or period sets were required) and exploiting the popularity of the military espionage films... attending less to the geopolitical intrigue than to the rapport between the two principles. Rathbone and Bruce were an effective co-starring team, and under Neill’s direction they struck an ideal balance between melodrama and understated humour. The series’ lifespan was directly related to the war, though its real strength was the Holmes-Watson rapport, which put the series in a class by itself among Universal’s steady stream of low-grade espionage thrillers. (Schatz, 1988, 353)

As B productions the Universal Holmes series presents a distillation of the studio’s comedy, espionage, and horror screen formulas. It is within this context of Universal’s conditions of production, therefore, as a Little Three studio during the 1940s, that the Universal Holmes series’ thematic and stylistic conventions emerge. It is as a condensation of many wartime themes of espionage, the stylistic and narrative conventions of the horror films, and the tropes of the successful “buddy” formula that the construction of the Holmes/Watson screen personae in the Universal Holmes series can best be understood. Furthermore, and for the purposes of this thesis, such a contextualization helps to illuminate the institutional/industrial discursive formations which informed the production and reception of the Holmes/Rathbone series during the Second World War.
This chapter will explore the historical and ideological forces which served to situate Holmes as a figure actively promoting Anglo-American wartime ideology. In order to reconstruct the wartime discursive reading formations attendant upon the Holmes/Rathbone series, I will elaborate upon the interrelationship between culture and the state, more specifically between the film industry and the specific contexts of wartime cultural production. I will show how fictional texts work, in part, to organize the conception held by popular cultural audiences of the nation as part of an imagined community. In particular, I will examine the Holmes series' wartime role in the context of such inter/national re-imagining which figuratively locates England in America and America in England.

Throughout this chapter, Holmes' transition into an Anglo-American wartime cultural figure is to be understood within the context of a series character whose moment of cultural re-emergence was contemporaneous with and supportive of the goals of a film studio in the midst of a conversion to wartime film production. The latter part of this chapter will focus on the first three Universal Holmes films: *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror* (1942), *Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon* (1942), and *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* (1943). An analysis of these three war-related films will highlight the activist role that the Holmes films played in the promotion of a wartime Anglo-American ideology, as though mutual democratic values were shared by England and the United States.
The Nation and the Novelistic.

The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time, is a precise analogue of the idea of a nation, which is also conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history. An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000,000 odd-fellow Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady anonymous, simultaneous activity. (Anderson, 1990, 72)

Anderson argues that the novelistic (e.g. fiction) and the national (e.g. patriotism) are linked in the imaginations of citizens. The novel, the newspaper, the cinema, and television daily circulate narratives which detail the texture of everyday life. Even at their most fantastic, nations frequently seek to imbue their narratives with the feel of verisimilitude. To the extent, then, that narratives provide a sense of reality, they perform the task of linking the public's perception of time and space to the ordering regularities of society's dominant legitimating institutions.

By constructing a series of narrative actions as occurring simultaneously within the space of a novel or, in the case of the popular character, through a limitless series of narratives, mass produced fiction serves as an imaginative link between anonymous individual perception and collective synchronous experience. This link was first achieved by the novel.

Anderson summarizes: "fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations." (Anderson, 1990, 79) Like the novelistic of Anderson's "imagined communities," the figure of the popular character, as illustrated by the constant recontextualization of Holmes, has operated as a partial link between the competing national imaginations, to unify competing imaginary national characteristics. As the previous chapter demonstrated, Doyle's
successful transition to a wider Anglo-American reading audience shifted the novelistic scope of the Holmes stories to include observations and narrative situations which referred to the United States. Holmes’ entrance into a wider cultural arena caused the character as well as the original texts to begin to resonate with other authors and fictional characters of the period. Thus, by the time that Holmes makes it to the screen in 20th Century-Fox’s Hound of The Baskervilles (1939), the character can no longer be solely understood as the one which emanated from the pages and Victorian imagination of Conan Doyle. Indeed, the 1930s were marked by a high degree of cultural and narrative output, not to mention fundamental socio-economic transformation. As such, Holmes’ movement from the written page to film demonstrates that any attempt to reconstruct the wartime historical and ideological forces which circulate through the Holmes/Rathbone series necessitates an elaboration upon the interrelationship between the film industry (culture) and the specific contexts of wartime cultural production (state).

A Nation at War: Culture and the Construction of Wartime National Ideals

The United States and Britain declared war on Japan on December 8, 1941, the day after its attack on Pearl Harbour. Three days after that, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States (Kagan, 1987, 986). Although the power of the United States would prove enormous by war’s end, both the American military and industry were largely unprepared for war in 1941 (Kagan, 1987, 986). Plagued by an inexperienced, relatively small, and poorly equipped military, America’s transformation into an industrial and military power capable of sustaining a lengthy world war proved a formidable task for the Roosevelt administration.
Furthermore, although the Japanese attack ultimately solidified Congress’ resolve to declare war and although peace time conscription had been enacted in 1940, the debate over American isolation continued to fragment the nation’s war sentiment. Even as late as October 1941, polls indicated that the majority of Americans favoured non-intervention in European affairs:

From the results of polls taken by the American Institute of Public Opinion between March 1939 and October 1941, it is apparent that Congress would have been forced to impeach President Roosevelt had he used his power as Commander and Chief of the Armed Forces to engage in offensive warfare against the Axis powers without a declaration of war without Congress. (Simone, 1985, 33)

Asked whether or not they would support US Navy and Army involvement in Germany or Italy, Americans responses were measured five times between March 1939 and October 1941:

Two months before Pearl Harbour (in October 1941), 79 percent said that if given the opportunity they would vote to stay out of the war. Between March 1939, which was six months before the German invasion of Poland, and October 1941- in other words, after Britain and France had entered the war and Germany had invaded the Soviet Union and conquered almost all of Western Europe- there was no significant alteration in the public’s desire not to become involved again. (Simone, 1985, 33)

Nonetheless, despite the American public’s reservations about an active military role in Europe, Hollywood produced, between 1939 and 1941, approximately 50 films that were anti-Nazi in theme. (Simone, 1985, 56)(1) Given the support of such studio heads as Harry M. Warner, President of Warner Brothers Pictures, and Daryl F. Zanuck, Vice President of 20th Century-Fox, Hollywood’s interventionist stance was subjected to the critical scrutiny
of a Senate subcommittee investigating propaganda in September 1941 (Simone, 1985, 56). Resolution 152 initiated the subcommittee investigation into propaganda and films, under the chairmanship of vocal isolationist Senator Burton K. Wheeler. Appearing before the subcommittee, other prominent isolationists such as Senator Gerald P. Nye and Senator Clark, attacked Hollywood's "propagandistic" intervention in the volatile public debate. Senator Clark argued that by producing an openly anti-Nazi film, Hollywood had gone so far as to "incite the desire of those who saw it, or some of those who saw it, to go to war" (in Simone, 1985, 56-7). Four Hollywood executives made subcommittee appearances to defend the studios' position: Harry M. Warner (Warner Brothers), Nicholas Schenck (Loew's), Daryl F. Zanuck (20th Century-Fox), and Barney Balaban (Paramount Pictures) (Simone, 1985, 57). In defense of the Industry's freedom of speech, Warner stated:

I believe Nazi-ism is a world revolution whose ultimate objective is to destroy our democracy, wipe out all religion, and enslave our people - just as Germany has destroyed and enslaved Pr 'and, Belgium, Holland, France, and all the other countries. I am ready to give myself and all my personal resources to aid in the defeat of the Nazi menace to the American people. (in Simone, 1985, 57)

Warner would add later that "the freedom which this country fought England to obtain, we may have to fight with England to retain." (in Simone, 1985, 57) Grounding their anti-Nazi interventionism on an evocation of the shared Anglo-American values of democracy and anti-totalitarianism, the film industry's early activism in the debate would continue throughout the duration of the Second World War. Although Hollywood had already begun to produce films with anti-Nazi themes before the outbreak of World War II, the conversion
of American industries, and in particular film production, to wartime objectives, necessitated considerably more than a pledge of allegiance to Anglo-American democratic values.

In order to facilitate a costly transition to a wartime economy, the Roosevelt administration announced that a radical transformation in all aspects of American life was necessary. Such a radical transformation, Roosevelt argued, extended beyond the participation of the military and would necessitate the co-operation of every citizen. In particular Roosevelt assigned Hollywood the task of informing the public on several specific issues. These included

the issues and the American way of life; the enemy; the United Nations and neutral countries; the American production front; the American home or civilian front; and the American fighting forces. (Shain, 1976, 47)

As Shain further points out, Hollywood’s willingness to support the war effort matched that of other industries (Shain, 1976, 32). In order to assist in the cooperation between the film industry and the government, the Office of War Information was created in June of 1942.

Patriotism partly motivated Hollywood but there were other inducements. The war created a more or less captive audience and a timely film subject, and the government through the Office of War Information and the War Production Board possessed powerful, if indirect, control over the industry. (Shain, 1976, 32)

The War Production Board “set priorities on raw materials in order to maintain high production and keep the armed services supplied.” (Shain, 1976, 52) Invested with almost complete control over the nation’s economic and industrial resources, the War Production
Board's priority was to oversee the conversion from peacetime industrial production to war use.

As a mediating body between the film industry and the War Production Board, the Motion Picture Bureau advised Hollywood on its conversion to wartime production.

(The bureau) interpreted the government's needs and policies to the motion-picture makers, supplied them with the special information required for the production of certain war films, and at the request of the studios (...) analyzed short subjects and feature scripts for their potential effect on the war effort. The functions of the office [were] purely advisory. In accordance with the wishes of both the industry and the administration, final responsibility for the films made in Hollywood during the war (...) rested with the motion picture industry. (Shain, 1976, 50, 51)

Besides assisting the film industry, the Bureau also solicited the cooperation of other government agencies and oversaw the production, distribution and exhibition of government war films in commercial theatres. (Shain, 1976, 51)

During the period between 1942 and 1945, approximately one-third or roughly 500 of all 1700 Hollywood feature films were generically classified as war films (Jones and McClure, 1973, 16). As Jones and McClure indicate, war films of the period provide a valuable area of study as the genre addressed popular film-going audiences in a series of historically specific ways.

First, they quenched the tremendous public thirst for information about the war; secondly, they improved the morale of home front audiences by depicting their husbands and sons in action. This fact can explain why, early in the war, the government offered to co-operate with Hollywood in the production of war films. Various government agencies including the War Department, Navy Department and Office of War Information gave the studios technical advise as well as more tangible forms of help. (Jones and McClure, 1973,15)
Servicing the nation primarily by providing entertainment to boost morale, Hollywood voluntarily contributed its services to the war effort.

War movies revealed not only a rather desperate affirmation of the war but an excellent view of the societal tensions of the day. Because it was fought far from American shores, World War II resolved itself into the military effort abroad and the war effort at home. And movies had an importance that was twofold: to give unity of purpose for the war itself, and to give strength of purpose to the people on the home front. Films that dealt with the war tried (...) to define the objectives of the war and the way in which these objectives were to be achieved. They also sought to show somehow why it was necessary to make such sacrifices. (Jones and McClure, 1973, 15)

Besides actual film production, the film industry’s contribution also included personal appearances by Hollywood stars, such as at USO and Red Cross functions, and providing theatre time for public service announcements and the promotion of war bond sales (Blum, 1976, 24) In return for their war contributions, the studios received assistance by gaining access to personnel, military locations, and technical advice, all of which provided a financial incentive for studios to undertake war-related subject matter. However, as president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), Will E. Hays regarded the informational/educational role of Hollywood as secondary to its function as provider of popular entertainment. Hays stated

(h)ere is work which the motion pictures have shown they can do (...) by taking their fictional materials from past or current history, by making the heroism of their characters reflect the highest values which Americans respect, by focusing the climaxes of their plots upon actions or events which command our admiration. (Shain, 1976, 49)
Consequently, although the film industry continued to view feature film production as being best suited for recreation, this was not the case for short film production. Ideally for the film industry, the short film was the better suited of the two types for propaganda purposes. As Shain shows, from an economic standpoint, "this division of labour between feature and short films proved to be of some benefit to the industry" (Shain, 1976, 49). With wartime rationing in effect, the supply of raw film stock was in short supply. As such, the studios sustained their short film production throughout the course of the war with expensive stock financed and supplied by the War Activities Committee in co-operation with the Office of War Information (Shain, 1976, 49, 50). For the studios, the shortage of raw film stock had several direct effects. Deemed by the War Productions Board as a non-essential service, non-war related feature films were given the lowest priority. Productions which were given first priority included newsreels, Army and Navy pictures, and feature-length war pictures (Shain, 1976, 54). As a result of the War Production Board's priority list for raw film stock, there was an overall decline in studio feature film production throughout much of the war. In 1943 particularly, production declined 18.7%, and a further 12.5% in 1945 (Shain, 1976, 54).

However, film stock was not the only essential material for film production to be in short supply. As a non-essential industry, film production costs for new material for set construction were limited by the War Production Board to $5000 per film (Shain, 1976, 52). This was because the war had forced approximately 4 million workers to leave their homes to work in war plants, and building materials for new housing were in great demand (Blum, 1976, 102). Materials essential for set construction such as paint, nails, wallpaper, and lumber along with gasoline placed constraints on Hollywood production.
The theme of a "collective sacrifice," as set forth by the War Productions Board, became the foundation for the federal government's construction of wartime propaganda. This was necessary because to the American homefront, unlike to citizens of Allied powers such as Britain and the Soviet Union, the enemy remained largely imaginary. America was not besieged by air raids or any immediate threat of invasion. Indeed, although the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour had given interventionists the impetus needed to enter the fray, America remained free of any immediate physical danger for the rest of the war. As America lay miles away from the battlefield, much of the propaganda of the period attempted to "domesticate" the global scope of the conflict by equating the struggle of the nation with life in a small town. An example of an "our town" propaganda advertisement appeared in *The Wall Street Journal* in April, 1943 (Blum, 1976, 15). A public service announcement from the National Distillers Products Corporation, the ad depicts an "old timer" accompanied by the following caption:

Our town (...) is in the war zone (...) and fights that way! No sir, the name of our town isn't Stalingrad and it isn't London or Chunking (...) Our town is Middletown U.S.A (...) On the map we're a good many thousands of miles away from the nearest Axis battlefield. But the fact is, we consider we're in the war zone. Yes sir, just as surely as if we were right up front where the bullets fly (...) or the murderous little ape-men lurk in the jungle. The men of the draft age have gone (...) Yes sir, they've said good-bye to their jobs (...) good-bye to their homes and loved ones - to the "sweet land of liberty" they sang when they were kids - and never dreamed they'd have to leave our town to defend. (as quoted in, Blum, 1976, 15)

As a homogenizing representation of American life, the "our town" depiction of the American homefront is clearly intended to redraw the borders of the battlefield. Despite the ad's obvious hyperbole, "Middletown USA" reorganizes the nation's ideological and
geographic “centre” to coincide with the beliefs and homefront struggles of America’s allies. Aside from the explicit racist overtones found in the depiction of the “lurking” Japanese soldiers, implicit in the ad’s construction of racial and national difference, is the assumption that the sense of common sacrifice and the appreciation of “liberty” are shared by America’s British, Chinese and Russian, allies. (2) As such, Hollywood’s conversion to wartime domestic cultural production fulfilled its patriotic duty set forth by the Roosevelt administration.

Wartime Hollywood and Britain

With cultural and economic ties to continental Europe severed, the United States increased its military and cultural exchange with Britain. Even before the United States had officially declared war on the Axis powers, Churchill had secured throughout 1940 and 1941 trade agreements with American industry. Through such agreements “America sent military supplies, traded badly needed warships for lease on British naval bases, and even convoyed ships across the Atlantic to help the British service.” (Kagan, 1987, 979) In August of 1941, even before the United States had declared war, Britain and the United States formalized their military ties. Meeting on a ship off the coast of Newfoundland, Churchill and Roosevelt signed the Atlantic Charter which later, by January of 1942, included the Soviet Union in an official military alliance whose principal intent was to express opposition to German expansionism throughout Europe (Kagan, 1987, 995).

The above notwithstanding, by June of 1940, France had fallen and Britain was left vulnerable to German attack. Britain’s European isolation was further compounded by the
start of the German air war in August 1940. Strategic strikes against airfields and fighter planes soon escalated into raids on civilian populations in September 1940 in retaliation for British air raids on German cities (Kagan, 1987, 979). Under such difficult conditions, British cultural production became centrally concerned with addressing wartime realities. Having temporarily closed all film production facilities in September 1939, the British government requisitioned them to be used as storehouses for surplus food stocks and military equipment. British film production therefore underwent a serious setback.

For a brief period there was a very real danger that British feature film production might be abandoned altogether: shortages, rationing, which affected every part of filmmaking from set construction to costumes and make-up, the lack of studio space, the enforced absence of up to two-thirds of the technicians, who had been “called up”, and the voluntary absence of those select few who had hotfooted it to Hollywood as soon as hostilities were announced, threatened to destroy the industry or, even worse, expose it to Hollywood takeover (Macnab, 1993, 36)

Britain’s re-prioritizing of wartime industrial production, which resulted in the decline of British feature film production, served to further marginalize British films in a market historically saturated with Hollywood product. (Significantly, the Hollywood Holmes films were also able to establish themselves within the peculiar situation of British film. Hollywood, going back as early as the 1920s, had always dominated British box-office and screen time, as British audiences invariably showed a marked preference for its product over British films. Nonetheless, the historical disadvantages of British film in its own market was compounded by wartime conditions.

In Britain in the 1920s, as in so many European countries, Hollywood films regularly accounted for more than 90% of British screen time. They were self-evidently very popular with the lay public. Provincial cinema audiences in
England were more familiar with the urban landscape and rural wilderness of the United States than they were with the south of England. (Swann, 1987, 19)

As a reaction to the inequities faced by British film production, the British government enacted quota legislation to protect the British film industry. However, the attempts of both the 1927 and the revised 1936 Cinematograph Film Acts to target renters and exhibitors failed to curtail Hollywood’s screen presence in Britain.

Given the choice, audiences overseas have invariably preferred American films over those produced in their own country. Their position has generally been that American films are of “higher quality” than those produced in their own country (...) The principal problem of this (quota) policy was that it encouraged British producers, but it paid no regard to the wishes of the British cinema audience. (Swann, 1987, 1, 39)

Furthermore, Hollywood was quick to exploit loopholes in the quota legislation. One such strategy is exemplified by MGM’s move to set up a British studio in Borehamwood, “making films for Anglo-American audiences with American stars and creative staff, British technicians and facilities and ‘transatlantic’ subjects” (Cook, 1985, 43). As productions aimed at both North American and British audiences, the Holmes/Rathbone series emerges in part out of this struggle between competing national film industries. Hollywood’s appropriation of a popular figure emblematic of British culture served to locate the figure of Holmes within larger socio-historical and institutional discursive formations centrally concerned with redefining the balance of Anglo-American relations. As such, Holmes’ pervasive cultural presence served to provide the imaginative link between the United States and Britain, collectivizing the struggle against Axis totalitarianism and forging a new understanding of shared Anglo-American democratic and cultural traditions.
Holmes and the Nation: The Underground American

On further study I am inclined to revise my former estimate that Holmes was a foundling. Actually he was born an American and was brought up by his father or a foster father in the underground world, thus learning all the tricks of the trade in the highly developed American art of crime. At an early age he felt the urge to do something for mankind. He was too well known in top circles in this country and, therefore, chose to operate in England. His attributes were primarily American, not English. I feel that further study of this postulant will bring good results to history.

Franklin D. Roosevelt December 18, 1944
(Shreffler, 1985, 199)

Formed in 1934 in New York City, The Baker Street Irregulars (BSI) were the first formal organization dedicated to the study of Sherlock Holmes. Devoted to the promotion and serious study of the Conan Doyle Holmes stories, BSI members collectively partook in a formalized analysis of original texts known as the Grand Game. Formed partly as a reaction to “stolid academic criticism,” those who practiced the Grand Game work from the proposition that Holmes and Watson were real historical figures (Sheffler, 1987, 4). Sheffler writes in an introduction to a collection celebrating BSI writing:

for Sherlockians (...) there was the acceptance of Mr. Sherlock Holmes, Dr. John H. Watson and their adventures as real persons and events. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, when acknowledged at all, came to be known as Dr. Watson’s literary agent. Hence (...) (these) essays that attempt to reconstruct biographies of the Holm es dramatis personae and to unravel the curiosities and anomalies intrinsic to the fifty-six short stories and four novels of what Sherlockians call the Saga, the Scared Writings, or the Canon. (Sheffler, 1987, 4)

As the most prominent member of the BSI, Franklin D. Roosevelt, in a letter to the society’s membership, contributed his authoritative voice to a debate surrounding Holmes’ national origins. Published as one of a series of essays attempting to more “accurately” detail
the precise nature of Holmes' and Watson's "dramatis personae." Christopher Morley's 1934 essay "Was Sherlock Holmes an American?" is arguably the starting point for the published debate on Holmes' nationality (Shreffler, 1984). (3) Piecing together numerous references to the United States from Holmes' original "memoirs," to which there are many allusions scattered throughout fifteen short stories and novels, Morley examines the possibility that Holmes was born and raised an American before heading off to Cambridge and taking on his first case.

Regardless of the accuracy of Morley's argument, as the original Conan Doyle texts are vague and contradictory, the substance of Morley's and Roosevelt's reading will always remain tenuous. However, the fact that such an investment should be made into Holmes' national origins, and that these should be of concern to a wartime president, assists in defining the various reading strategies employed by competing (inter)national audiences during a specific historical and cultural moment. Clearly, as the debate amongst members of the BSI over Holmes' nationality demonstrates, the struggle to establish the dominant reading formation indicates that there is more at stake for practitioners of such debates than merely engaging in an elaborate taxonomy of the various types of pleasures derived from the Canon. The mobilization of competing reading strategies during a period characterized by extensive political and economic transformation amongst industrial powers, positions the figure of Holmes as a site through which shifting cultural and political conceptions of the nation come into view. Originally a figure embodying Victorian/Edwardian England and American frontier industrialism, Holmes is enlisted in the wartime Universal series as an agent fighting Axis spies to preserve the Allied Anglo-American alliance.
Sherlock Holmes - In Service to the New Allied Nation

As the first three films in the Universal Holmes series demonstrate, Holmes momentarily became the embodiment of Anglo-American wartime ideals. A rational cultural spokesman, Holmes' methods and motivations are depicted throughout the Universal series as being synonymous with the objectives of the Allied struggle against Axis totalitarianism and anti-democratic values. The September 1942 release of the Universal's first series entry, *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror*, marked a moment in which many other popular screen heroes, such as the Falcon, Ellery Queen, and Michael Shayne, also fought battles with Axis criminals and agents (Shain, 1976, 63). Emerging out of the past and into the present, Holmes stands as an anachronism simultaneously articulating the attributes of modernity and of Victorian antiquity. Whereas Holmes' and Watson's familiar 221B Baker St. residence and the fog shrouded streets of London remain evocative of the earlier narratives' more traditional Victorian settings, the Universal series contemporizes Holmes' by depicting the streets of London as darkened and littered with the debris of bombed-out buildings. (4) No longer a city cloaked in mystery, London became the centre of a nation in crisis.

While the film portrays a London under siege by Nazi air-raids, the American public's perception of the enemy remained more indirect, transferred to the confines of the imaginary. Despite much of the propaganda of the period which repositioned "Middletown USA" as an Allied battlefront, Americans were spared the constant threat of domestic terror bombing. Nonetheless, the films attempts to establish a link with "Middletown" through its portrayal of the values Britain share with America, especially as embodied in the person of Holmes himself. However, the consolidation of the public consensus in favour of the war effort
throughout 1942, may be partly attributed to the popular construction of the enemy as working to threaten American freedom and democratic values from within. The popular depiction of the threat posed by Nazi sabotage and espionage was sustained throughout the war years, focusing the public perception on the possibility that German intelligence actively attempted to undermine America’s internal security (Simone, 1985, 61). In a brief historical overview of the representations of Nazi sabotage and espionage in the popular wartime press, Simone notes that there were five principal goals of German intelligence:

(to) evaluate political trends in the U.S. relating to foreign policy; track scientific and technological developments, particularly regarding airplane production; assess the strength of America’s war potential; monitor maritime activities; and create economic insecurity through sabotage. (Simone, 1985, 63)

As Simone has observed, films featuring espionage themes like Hitchcock’s *Saboteur* (1942), and for my purposes here the first three Universal Holmes entries, “closely parallel actual events reported to the American public by the press.” (Simone, 1976, 62) Having fabricated acts of sabotage in 1939 on the Polish border, German sabotage prominently informed America’s perception of Nazi aggression (Simone, 1985, 63).

In particular, it may be argued that two prominent acts of German espionage in the United States informed the espionage narratives of Holmes’ Universal productions. The first significant act of espionage committed in the United States by the Abwehr, the German Secret Service, in 1938 significantly altered German airpower capabilities (Simone, 1985, 63). Targeting American industry during the 1930s, Ranken, an Abwehr agent, obtained blueprints for the Norden bombsight from an American aviation manufacturer. Coinciding with Germany’s intense military build up throughout the 30s, the acquisition of the Norden
bomb sight blue prints proved highly profitable, allowing the German Air Force to achieve combat readiness much earlier than expected (Simone, 1985, 63).

Similarly, in *Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon* (1942), Ranken’s publicized act of espionage serves to inform the threat posed by industrial espionage. In this feature, Holmes combats German agents headed by Professor Moriarty to protect Dr. Franz Tobel, a Swiss scientist who has perfected a state of the art bombsight he wishes to donate to the Allied powers. Securing Dr. Tobel and the plans to the bombsight in their 221B Baker St. residence, Holmes pursues Nazi agents throughout the streets of London as they race to kidnap Dr. Tobel and steal the strategic blueprints.

The second significant act of espionage which served to heighten the perception of the Nazi presence in America, came to the public’s attention in 1940. Alerted by an FBI double agent, the FBI intercepted sheet of paper which proved to reveal under a microscope a full-page type-written note alerting the FBI to Abwehr’s unique method of communication, known as microdot communication (Simone, 1985, 64). For the FBI, such an elaborate advance in communication technology confirmed suspicions that a network of up to 50 000 individuals was involved in German espionage (Simone, 1985, 63). Paralleling such advancements in microdot communications, *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* (1943) centres on Holmes’ attempt to recover a missing piece of microfilm hidden in a matchbook by a murdered British agent. Competing with an elaborate network of German agents and American co-conspirators, Holmes uncovers a spy ring operating out of a Washington antique store. With the co-operation of the local police and the FBI, Holmes receives assistance from the police laboratory. Characteristic of Holmes’ detective skills in these three films is his familiarity with modern technologies (bomb sights and radio broadcasting) and methods of
detection (laboratories, methods and encryption). As the narrative preoccupation with themes of espionage indicates, Holmes' competition with the films' German agents helped shape the public's awareness of the invisible domestic "battlefield," populated by elaborate networks of spies operating in the United States. In order to combat such an internal threat, Holmes' detective skills, using modern methods, rendered visible these hidden networks of international power relations, uncovering the spies who had infiltrated Allied social and political networks.

Besides providing much of the narrative basis for Holmes' wartime representations, perceived threats of espionage by Axis agents and co-conspirators informed the construction of the series' antagonist as well. Fittingly, as Holmes' wartime transformation brings him into the service of the British government and, later, of the Allies, his arch-enemy Moriarty is depicted as serving Nazi interests. The Axis agents and their Allied co-conspirators, like many antagonists in the war films of the period, are portrayed as amoral gangsters whose position in the community, as either wealthy patrons or common back street criminals, normalizes their appearance within the community. Outlining Nazi characterizations in popular film during the war, Jones and McClure observe that

[in] war films, the Americans who worked for the Axis powers did so for money. They were usually of two types: petty criminals and the intelligent upper class businessman. Like the gangsters and racketeer pictures of the 1930s they did not hesitate to slug or shoot if necessary but they did not exhibit the cold ruthlessness with which the German and especially the Japanese spies were endowed. The upper class businessman who sold out bore some resemblance to the ostensibly honest "front" who ran the gang in the gangster pictures. He is usually an executive, known throughout the town and well-liked. (Jones and McClure, 1973, 22)
In *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* (1943), such archetypical Nazi collaborators are exemplified by the film's prominent society figure Heinrich Henkel. Posing as a respectable Washington antique dealer, Henkel's store provides a front for an elaborate Washington spying. As a trail of clues leads Holmes to uncover the centre of the spy operation, the film depicts the threat of espionage as undermining not only American security understood in the macro sense but also the domestic space of America understood in the micro sense. Hence, accidentally intercepting the missing British microfilm, Nancy Partridge, the young bride to be, is pursued and ultimately interrogated by the Nazi collaborators. Disguised as servants and repairmen, Henkel's men infiltrate the young couple's engagement party luring Nancy into her future apartment where they kidnap her for questioning. As a site of struggle between Allied and Axis powers, their renovated apartment stands as a microcosm of the threats of Axis espionage. Domesticating the battlefront, the momentary disruption of the couple's marriage plans and the violent Axis intrusion into their future domestic space depicts the outside world moving inward, threatening the stability of the American homefront.

As order is secured, the couple reunited, and the microfilm returned to the American agents, Holmes sums up the film's political ideology. Driving along Pennsylvania Avenue during the closing scene Holmes and Watson have the following exchange:

Holmes: *This is a great country, Watson.*
Watson: *It certainly is my dear fellow.*
Holmes: *Look, up there. The Capitol, the heart of this democracy.*
Watson: *Democracy. The only hope for the future, eh Holmes?*
Holmes: *It is not to us to peer into the mysteries of the future. But in the days to come the British and American people will, for the good of their own safety and the good of all, walk together, in majesty, in justice and in peace.*
Watson: *That's magnificent Holmes. I quite agree with you.*
Holmes: *Not with me. But with Mr. Winston Churchill. I was quoting from a speech he made in that very building (pointing to the Capitol Building).*
As the film’s closing dialogue demonstrates, Holmes’ reference to Churchill’s acknowledgement of the shared Anglo-American ideology functions partly to efface the cultural, ideological, and historical differences between the two nations by evoking the shared Anglo-American wish for democracy.

Beyond the depiction of the Anglo-American struggle against Axis sabotage and aggression, Holmes’ and Watson’s interactions with American culture mobilize a series of reading formations which address ideological issues extending beyond immediate wartime strategic concerns. As Holmes’ references to America’s democratic lineage suggests, whereas Britain is situated as the site of origin for American notions of political freedom and democratic representation, America for Holmes and Watson in turn offers the promise of post-war prosperity. In *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* (1943), a running gag throughout the film depicts Watson as seemingly more concerned with the unique pleasures of American popular culture than with the outcome of the missing microfilm. Preoccupied by American baseball, chewing gum, sodas, and fascinated by American slang and colloquialisms, Watson’s conspicuous consumption throughout his visit to Washington stands in sharp contrast to the stark images of a besieged and bombed out London, not to mention a depression-era America. Watson’s celebration of American consumer culture constructs an alliance which extends beyond the shared concerns for democratic values and institutions and stands as an attempt to imagine and measure notions of post-war prosperity.

The contemplation of the end of deprivation after the war fostered dreams that achieved a partial fulfillment in the immediate consumption of such goods (...) The American way of living had returned, during the new prosperity of the war years, to patterns that Americans liked to believe had marked national life before the Depression, patterns they wanted to preserve and project into the postwar period. (Blum, 1976, 92, 104)
As the series began to downplay the contemporary wartime issues with the release of the next entry, *Sherlock Holmes Faces Death* (September 1943), more indirect references to the Anglo-American war effort begin to surface. Most significantly, in the May 1944 release of *The Scarlet Claw*, the Canadian setting provides the opportunity for the Holmes series to recapture the gothic atmosphere present in Doyle’s original stories as well as to broaden the series’ novelistic scope by including Canada within the imaginative landscape of the Anglo-American alliance. Set in the fictional Quebec village of La Morte Rouge, Holmes reflects upon the splendour of Canada in the film’s final scene, once again quoting Winston Churchill:

*Holmes: Canada, lynch pin of the English-speaking world. Whose relations of friendly intimacy with the United States, on the one hand, their unswerving fidelity to the British Commonwealth, on the other. Canada, the link that joins together the branches of the human family.*

Similar in theme and setting to *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1939), the superstitious rural Quebec villagers and their foggy marshes highlight the character’s gothic tradition in a setting far removed from the contemporary concerns so inescapable in wartime England. Although Canada’s contribution to the war effort receives no mention in the course of the film, by re-imagining Canada as the “lynch pin” of the Anglo-American alliance, this film serves to underscore the international scope of Holmes’ wartime geographic and imaginative movement.
Sherlock Holmes and Basil Rathbone: The Star/Detective and Wartime Masculinity

This chapter will examine the way in which the recontextualization of the figure of Sherlock Holmes intersects with the casting and performance of the series’ star Basil Rathbone. This casting becomes especially significant in light of one of the recurring narrative conventions throughout the Sherlock Holmes films: Holmes’ use of masquerade and disguise.

Since the films of the Holmes series constitute male-centred narratives supportive of the Allied war effort, this chapter will review recent critical work which explores masculinity as an historically specific cultural effect constructed through masquerade and disguise. The first part of this chapter will interrogate how masquerade and disguise as aspects of masculine performance in the United States of the 1940s constitute “specific links to power, conflict and, struggle” (Holmlund, 1993, 214). Such work can contribute to our understanding of the way in which Holmes/Rathbone emerged as an idealized masculine wartime persona.

The second section will provide an historical overview of Basil Rathbone’s film career in Hollywood until his final screen appearance as Holmes in 1946. Rathbone was a successful British actor working within the Hollywood star system. His casting in the role of Holmes allowed two significant wartime international reading formations to converge. By highlighting (a) Rathbone’s status as a critically-acclaimed dramatic performer and (b) his proficiency in assuming numerous linguistic and national character types, we can examine the mixture of Rathbone’s status as a star and his particular incarnation of Holmes as a wartime male detective hero.
The final section of this chapter will focus on the repeated use of masquerade and disguise in the Holmes series. It will demonstrate that the foregrounding of Rathbone’s authority as a prominent dramatic performer, whose adeptness at masquerade and mimickry of numerous national identities, is utilized throughout the Holmes series. Masquerade functioned to recast the masculinity of Holmes, thanks to the ability of Rathbone, in a way appropriate to wartime Anglo-American culture. Masquerade, however, also worked to naturalize Anglo-American culture’s superiority over other cultures and to justify the war effort. For example, Holmes possesses an unchallenged ability at detection and observation such that his statements and claims also possess an unchallenged epistemological certainty. This ability allows him to expose and render knowable foreign elements within the culture. Hence, in *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* (1943), Holmes exposes a domestic Axis spy ring. Likewise, Holmes’ ability to perfect the disguise of numerous linguistic and national character types gives him an uncanny ability to pierce the culture of the other and thereby protect Anglo-American culture from infiltration. Hence, in *The Spider Woman* (1944), Holmes poses as an Indian officer. Thus, Holmes’ exceptional abilities as a detective, combined with his talent for masquerade, further emphasize the series’ promotional Anglo-American ideology, by attempting to naturalize the interior and exterior uncertainty of shifting international wartime (eg. Axis/Allied) identities.

**The Character/Star: Masculinity and Performance**

Performing simultaneously and extensively in radio, film, and theatrical productions throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Basil Rathbone, like many Hollywood celebrities during this
period, is best understood as a *trans-media performer*. As briefly stated in Chapter I, we can turn to Morton’s study of the Edgar Rice Burroughs character Tarzan in order to illustrate the implications of a trans-media presence on the status of the character. Morton demonstrated how the trans-media transformation of Tarzan altered the public’s reception of the figure, since the “same iconic figure (Tarzan) can be presented in specific ways that cater to the pleasures of the specific medium of consumption” (Morton, 1993, 107). From the original Burroughs novels to the character’s first film appearance in 1918, Tarzan’s movement from the purely linguistic or literary to the visual and filmic changed the meaning of the character’s popular reception,

We expect the (...) representation of Tarzan to be motivated by and analogically derived from the Tarzan character created in the novel. But if we look at the marginal differences created in moving (...) from one medium to another, we see the specific devices a given medium favours in communication. (Morton, 1993, 106-107)

Tracing Tarzan’s movement as the “apeman” of the novels to the near-nude star of the 1930s popular film series, Morton notes that “in place of the written word, attention is focused on the erotic spectacle of the body.” (Morton, 1993, 109) The trans-media migration of Tarzan from novel to film therefore creates an opportunity for drawing attention to different aspects of the Tarzan story. Hence, the Tarzan films tend to eroticize the body of the star/character, an aspect of the character which was much less developed in the novels. Such a shift in emphasis naturally raises the question of why the eroticization of the male body became acceptable in American film of the 1930s and presumably several hypotheses could be advanced. However, although questions of this nature may be noticed, they fall beyond the purview of this thesis. It is the purpose of this thesis, however, to refer the transformation
of a character's status to the socially given uses of a particular medium and to the existence and recombination of specific reading formations.

Similarly, throughout the Holmes series, the insistence on the body made possible by Hollywood's use of film focuses upon Holmes' ability to master various social and cultural codes through the alteration of his dress, dialect, and physical appearance. Although Holmes' masquerading does not involve cross-dressing (i.e., dressing as a person of the opposite sex), Kuhn (1990) offers some helpful suggestions concerning cross-dressing in the cinema that may be applied to the persona of Holmes/Rathbone.

Kuhn states fairly obviously that the use of cross-dressing in the cinema can be an opportunity to interrogate "the culturally taken-for-granted dualities of male/female and masculine/feminine." (Kuhn, 1990, 169) Hence, through a study of cross-dressing in mainstream Hollywood cinema, Kuhn argues that it "problematize[s] the ideological construction of sexual difference as natural and absolute." (Kuhn, 1990, 173)

Negotiating the boundaries between gendered identities, representations of cross-dressing demonstrate the ways in which gendered identities and sexual difference are circumscribed by historically specific conditions of cultural production. Incorporating a wide range of social, cultural and biological discourses, gender identity and sexual difference is a historically-grounded ideological project.

Likewise, Holmes' masquerades, which are not instances of cross-dressing but of disguise -- he seeks not to make us believe that he a person of the opposite sex, merely that he is another person -- also demonstrate the ways in which cultural identities are historically constructed. Indeed, some of what Kuhn says about cross-dressing can be applied fairly directly to Holmesian disguise:
clothing has the potential to disguise, to alter, even to reconstruct, the wearer’s self. Clothing can dissemble - it may even costume, mask or masquerade. Put another way, clothing can embody performance. As a means to, even the substance of, a commutable persona, clothing as performance threatens to undercut the ideological fixity of the human subject. (Kuhn, 1990, 172)

Kuhn goes on to argue that cross-dressing usually occurs in genres and situations in which it can be naturalized. Hence, spectators are usually aware of the character’s “true” identity and the sexual disguise usually initiated by some narrative necessity:

performance constitutes a central theme, and characters assuming sexual disguise are often (in the story) performers by profession. In such a situation, sexual disguise is explained plausibly in terms of the character’s job and requirements. (Kuhn, 1990, 175)

Portrayed throughout the series as a celebrated public figure, the narrative conventions of the Holmes series necessitate that he wear a disguise. As the central figure who ultimately restores narrative order, Holmes is the agent through which the spectators’ relation to the text is focused. However, in the Holmes narratives, sexual difference is much less significant than the difference between the Allied/self and the Axis/other. Hence, although his disguise, like cross-dressing, is motivated by narrative necessity, unlike cross-dressing it is not motivated by a necessity of the characters sexuality. Holmes assumes disguises not in order to question or re-establish sexual difference but in order to question and re-establish cultural difference.

As an all-male unit, Holmes and Watson exhibit behaviour patterns which foregrounds the absence of significant female characters. This fact has tended to constitute Holmes and Watson as a de facto couple who not only share a common struggle against the forces of
otherness, but also accommodation and numerous interests. This is a situation negotiated by numerous “buddy” films whose focus is on the interplay between dominant male characters.

As in most buddy films, the male characters are likely to possess an ability or a skill which signifies their further possession of a stable self-identity. In case of Holmes, it is partly his ability to transcend social and cultural codes through the alteration of his dress, dialect, and physical appearance. Not only does this ability allow him to pierce the veil of otherness but it also singles him out as the one who is never duped by disguise, who sees into the heart of the other, and emerges unscathed as he was before the encounter. He therefore possesses a very stable self-identity.

Nonetheless, as Fuchs points out, the buddy film concretizes the representation of masculine hegemony by collapsing “intraracial differences by effecting an uncomfortable sameness, a transgression of boundaries between self and other, inside and outside, legitimate and illicit.” (Fuchs, 1993, 194) In the popular cop/buddy narratives, the protagonists are obviously central to the films’ movement from conflict to resolution. Within this trajectory, the protagonists’ performances are characterized by extraordinary virility, in which “racial, generational, political, and ethnic differences” are contested and ultimately contained. (Fuchs, 1993, 195) In short, the protagonists come to recognize each other as possessors of a common virility despite their numerous oppositions. The question then becomes one of avoiding identity with the virility of the other rather than the simple recognition of the virility of the other.

Holmes and Watson’s shared domesticity and employment do not exhibit the same degree of extreme virility as may be found in many other buddy films and therefore locates them somewhere on a continuum between homosexuality and homophobia (Fuchs, 1993,
 Positioned outside the reproductive desires of the traditional heterosexual couple, the potentially transgressive teaming of Holmes and Watson is ultimately appropriated to, and naturalized by, their service to the British and other Allied governments throughout the series. The films insistently point to Holmes’ use of scientific detection and disguise in order to identify and infiltrate the criminal underclass and racial other. The insistence upon a racial and criminal ‘other’ reclaims Holmes and Watson’s heterosexuality “so that this transgressiveness displaces the homosexual anxiety.” (Fuchs, 1993, 195)

Throughout the series, Holmes and Watson’s negotiation of the criminal underclass and racial other is explicitly presented as a State-sanctioned service to the British and American governments during the international crises of the 1940s. Nonetheless, despite the naturalization of the relationship between Holmes and Watson through service to the State, the persistent absence of women in their films merely tends to focus viewer attention upon the performances of both protagonists, thereby raising further questions surrounding their sexual orientation. As Ryall (1993) argues, action and adventure male narratives seek to present an uncomplicated view of masculinity by displacing or repressing the representation of the female other.

Definitions of masculinity emerge from narrative situations to which the hero is subjected, from contrasts with other male characters, and from the relationships formed with the various female characters encountered in the films. An additional and extremely important element in such definitions comes from the style and performance of the male leading players, from the looks, gestures, the physical playing (Ryall, 1993, 160)

Essential to my argument surrounding the ways in which masculine identity is represented, this chapter will now turn to an examination of Basil Rathbone’s acting career up until his final screen appearance as Holmes in 1946. Such an analysis will offer insight into
the historically specific ways masculine performance was momentarily configured in the 1940s.

Basil Rathbone: An International Trans-Media Performer

I was also deeply concerned with the problem of being “typed,” more completely typed than any other classic actor has been or will ever be again. My fifty-two roles in twenty-three plays of Shakespeare, my years in London and New York theatre, my scores of motion pictures, including my two Academy Award nominations, were slowly but surely sinking into oblivion: and there was nothing I could do about it, except to stop playing Mr. Holmes, which I could not do owing to the existence of a long term contract. (Rathbone, 1962, 180)

This man was incarnate theatre. He commanded respect because he knew his craft well. Barbara O’Neill, commenting on her co-star Rathbone in The Sun Never Sets (1939) (Druxman, 1975, 219)

A performer whose career began in British theatre in 1911, Rathbone’s status as a skilled British actor was central to the construction of his star image throughout the 1930s and 1940s. First appearing on screen in the 1921 silent British drama Innocence, Rathbone continued to appear on stage, screen, and radio throughout his career. Although Rathbone’s presence during this period was primarily established through his screen and radio performances, extensive stage background combined with his vocal support of American intervention in Europe contributed to Rathbone’s “extra-textual” status within the American popular culture of the 1940s.

Indeed, Rathbone’s screen identity and star persona during the 1930s and 1940s were constructed around two principle discursive formations. Like other transplanted British performers in Hollywood during this period (i.e., Laurence Olivier and Ronald Colman), and
as a successful Anglo-American performer, Rathbone’s identities both as the characters of his films and as a movie star in his own right drew their credibility from his training in the British theatre. As Barbara O’Neill’s observation that Rathbone “was theatre incarnate” demonstrates, his authority as a performer grew partly from the belief that he embodied British theatrical traditions. Such training granted Rathbone two things: (a) the possibility of working as a trans-media performer since he would be sought after by all media and (b) the virtual guarantee that Hollywood would cast him in a multiplicity of genres playing a wide variety of national character types since he would be seen as the most skilled actor available.

These attributes were further reinforced by Rathbone’s off-screen life as a patriotic British performer working in Hollywood during the war. Rathbone’s portrayal of characters representing many national, linguistic, and class origins, along with his active social involvement in the promotion of the Allied war effort served to mobilize reading formations which both informed Rathbone’s performances and the public’s reception of Holmes during the 1940s.

As many commentators, including Rathbone himself, have observed, it was his association with the character of Holmes for which he is best remembered, despite its effects upon his career.

Rathbone’s Holmes made him one of the most popular figures in American cinema, but at the same time nearly destroyed his career as an actor because his own superb portrayal of the world’s favourite detective obscured many other brilliant performances by this versatile, all-round character actor. (Pohle and Hart, 1977, 164)

In his autobiography In and Out of Character, Rathbone adds that:

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Had I made but the one Holmes picture, my first, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, I should not be as well known as I am today (...) the continuous repetition of story after story after story left me virtually repeating myself each time in a character I had already conceived and developed. The stories varied but I was always the same character merely repeating myself in different situations. My first picture was, as it were, a negative from which I merely continued to produce endless positives of the same photograph. (Rathbone, 1962, 181-182)(1)

Rathbone points out that, before being cast as Holmes in the *Hound of the Baskervilles* (1939), his career on screen had been remarkable for the diversity of roles performed in multiple genres spanning 18 years of work in 39 feature films prior to 1939. However, prior to his repeated film and radio performances as Holmes, Rathbone’s successful role as the villainous Mr. Murdstone in *David Copperfield* (1936) introduced Rathbone to the problems of being type-cast. Although not associated with any specific figure, the combination of Rathbone’s refined “European features” and his screen success in the Dickens adaptation “closed instead of opened doors to me.” (Rathbone in Pohle and Hart, 1977, 164)

Pohle and Hart observe:

His portrayal of Murdstone did get him a series of jobs, seldom as anything but a villain. Playing these “ heavies” only served to reinforce the image of a rogue, which impressed producers even more as a scoundrel, etc. The rut he was stuck in kept getting deeper and deeper. (Pohle and Hart, 1977, 164)

The roles which followed his successful appearance in *David Copperfield* (1936) often confined Rathbone to playing European, aristocratic antagonists. Subsequent characterizations such as Pontius Pilate in *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1935); Marquis St. Evermonde in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1935), Captain Levasseur in *Captain Blood* (1935), Count Anteoni in *The Garden of Allah* (1936), Gorotchenko in *Tovarich* (1937), and Ahmed
in *The Adventure of Marco Polo* (1938) only confirm such a claim. However, the association of Rathbone’s screen persona as the European aristocratic villain soon changed with his subsequent casting as Sherlock Holmes. As Pohle and Hart have recounted, 20th Century-Fox’s Zanuck cast Rathbone in the role of Holmes “noting more than just a passing resemblance between himself and the classic Sherlock Holmes portraits by Frederic Dorr Steele” (Pohle and Hart, 1977, 169).

For the purposes of this thesis, however, we should note that at least until 1938, Rathbone was repeatedly cast as the archetypal aristocratic, European antagonist, and it was his capacity to portray the cultural and racial ‘other’ for American audiences that is significant. Rathbone was the consummate British stage performer, whose voice and body became the site through which wartime representations of the racial and linguistic other and of the masculine body were conflated.

Moreover, Rathbone’s proficiency as a performer is evidenced by his appearance in numerous genres throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Such genres would include the detective film (*The Bishop Murder Case*, 1930), the comedy (*Tovarich*, 1937), the musical (*Rhythm on the River*, 1940), the swash-buckling adventure (*Captain Blood*, 1935), the war film (*The Dawn Patrol*, 1938), and the historical epic (*The Adventures of Marco Polo*, 1938).

Co-starring with Bing Crosby in the 1940 Paramount musical-comedy *Rhythm on the River*, Rathbone’s status as “English” and stature as an “actor” is further reflected in this comment by Crosby:

> [a]ll of us in the cast were very much impressed being in the company of such a distinguished actor (...) particularly an English actor (...) His crisp diction and the way he handled himself certainly affected us all. He was, however, a
man of tremendous good humour and we soon lost our awe of him.
(Druxman, 19, 236)

Crosby’s allusion to the professionalism implicit in Rathbone’s status as an English actor, is in part a reflection of how the internationalization of Hollywood’s labour pool in the 1930s and 40s influenced the aesthetic criteria upon which performance was evaluated. As Ray has argued, the political and economic stability of the United States between the years 1914-1945 allowed Hollywood to lure “many of international cinema’s most important figures.” (Ray, 1985, 27) Political and cultural conditions throughout Europe further contributed to Hollywood’s acquisition of international actors and technicians in the late 1930s. Included in the European exodus to Hollywood were both Basil Rathbone (England) and the series most prolific director, Roy William Neill (Ireland). The combination of Hollywood’s economic domination and increasingly international labour pool contributed to America’s development as the standard for international cinema.

By September 1939, as Britain entered the war, British actors living in Hollywood, including Rathbone, Ronald Colman, David Niven, Laurence Olivier, and Cary Grant, were given permission by the British embassy to continue their work in Hollywood (Freidrich, 1979, 28). However, to demonstrate their support for the British war effort, many stars utilized their celebrity personae for promotional capacities. Having served in the British army during World War I, Rathbone confesses to having felt compelled to offer his military experience to Britain once again. In a letter addressed to the London war office, Rathbone inquired about re-enlisting:

[i]n due course I received an official letter of interminable length in reply. It began “Dear Sir” and ended with “Your obedient servant.” I waded through
it and all it said was: “You are too old!” Polite but firm. (Rathbone, 1962, 166)

By May 1940, as the war in Europe began to escalate, Rathbone and his wife Ouida became active with wartime relief agencies in Hollywood.

Then came Dunkirk and Britain’s year alone against the united Axis powers. It was then that Ouida organized her first benefit, the proceeds to be shared by the R.A.F. Benevolent Fund and the Red Cross. She organized it absolutely alone, with a secretary, at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel and netted some $10,000. It was a staggering job, attended by everyone who was anyone in the motion picture industry (Rathbone, 1963, 166)

Thus, while the United States remained officially isolated, Rathbone became a prominent supporter of Britain’s cause in Hollywood. Simultaneous to Rathbone’s signing of a 5-year contract with MGM in 1941, he was elected the west coast representative of the British War Relief, an agency organized in part by the Chase Manhattan Bank. In this capacity, Rathbone lobbied prominent Hollywood figures to donate financial support to the relief organization. (2)

With the introduction of American forces into the war following the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Basil and his wife Ouida escalated their charity work. Continuing his work for the British War Relief, Rathbone was elected to the Los Angeles area War Chest Executive Committee. The Rathbones were a prominent Hollywood British couple, and Basil’s wife Ouida began to assume a prominent role in the wartime Hollywood community, organizing many significant fund raisers and social functions aimed at solidifying civilian, and specifically Hollywood’s wartime image and morale. So prominent was Ouida’s presence during this period, that she was titled the “Hostess of Hollywood” and was even offered a radio program bearing this title (Rathbone, 1962, 171) (3)
Expanding their volunteer capacity into their private/domestic life, the Rathbones estate in Hollywood played host to British officers on their stop-overs in the United States.

We were host and hostess to Admiral Halsy and his family, Lord Halifax, four tank corp officers of General Montgomery’s Eighth Army, R.A.F pilots sent to the United States for a rest period, and innumerable others, too many to mention. Every other weekend we had as guests in our home six air corps trainees from a camp at Lancaster California. (Rathbone, 1962, 171)

Perhaps the Rathbones’ most prominent wartime social function was their involvement in the organization of the Hollywood Canteen. A weekly social event featuring entertainment and refreshments, it offered American servicemen the opportunity to “interact” with prominent Hollywood and radio celebrities. (4) Although open every day of the week, Sunday’s featured live music, performances and dancing, often hosted by Rathbone. Behind the scenes, Ouida served as an organizer, working to elicit celebrity involvement and assist in the managing of the Canteen’s services.

During the week there was canned music, but on Sundays Ouida insisted that it be live music. Emil Coleman and his band were particularly helpful to us and in spite of resistance from the musicians’ union we always had someone there to play for the boys. Then there was the show, and what a show - Arthur Rubinstein- Lotte Lehmann with Bruno Walter at the piano - Yehudi Menuhin - The Merry Widow - Gertie Lawrence - Red Skelton - Eddie Cantor - We had virtually every star in the entertainment world. Sunday after Sunday after Sunday there was a star-studded program. (Rathbone, 1962, 172)

Thus, it was his capacity as a prominent British social figure during the forties, sustaining a consistent off-screen identity, which became a nexus through which popular celebrity culture was re-channelled into promoting celebrity engagement in the Allied war effort. However, by the end of the war, as his promotional efforts lessened, Rathbone turned
his attention to his on-screen identity, and, in particular, his association with the figure of Holmes.

I frankly admit that in 1946 I was placed in a somewhat similar predicament—but I could not kill Mr. Holmes. So I decided to run away from him. However, to all intents and purposes I might just as well have killed him. My friends excoriated me for my dastardly behaviour, and for a while my long-time friendship with Nigel Bruce suffered severe and recurring shocks. The Music Corporation of America, who represented me at that time, treated me as if I were “sick-sick-sick”. (Rathbone, 1962, 183)

Rathbone’s disdain, along with (a) the death of the Universal series director Roy William Neill in 1946, (b) Rathbone’s cancellation of his Mutual Broadcasting radio contract, and (c) Universal’s decision to disband B-production late in 1946, combined to make Dressed to Kill (1946), Rathbone’s final screen appearance as Holmes. (5)

Holmes and Rathbone: Disguise and Wartime Performance

In this section, I will now address the ways in which such an adaptable star persona was employed throughout the Holmes series. As a recurring convention throughout the series, Holmes’ use of disguise functioned to reconfigure representations of Holmes/Rathbone’s for the purpose of wartime Anglo-American culture. Given that the Holmes series’ production were released simultaneous to America’s entry into the war in Europe and the Pacific, American culture rapidly broadened the boundaries of the national American imagination in order to integrate an emerging wartime Allied cultural alliance. Central to such an emerging cultural network of wartime cultural relations is Holmes, whose malleable trans-media presence becomes a focus through which to negotiate the anxieties of
Anglo-American wartime culture. Like his literary predecessor, Rathbone’s public profile as a supporter of the Allied war effort converged momentarily with the figure of Holmes during a period of national and international insecurity. Through a convergence of Rathbone’s diegetic and extra-diegetic personae, Holmes/Rathbone’s ability to effect the disguise of numerous linguistic and national character types arguably renders the national character traits of the ‘other’ knowable. Such a focus on the use of masquerade further highlights the series’ promotional Anglo-American ideology, by attempting to render the interior and exterior ambiguities of the shifting international wartime identities knowable. Masquerade, however, also works to grant Anglo-American culture an innate superiority over other cultures and to justify the war effort. Holmes’ ability to master several linguistic and national character types gives him an uncanny ability to pierce the culture of the other and thereby protect Anglo-American culture from infiltration. The consolidation of Holmes’ use of masquerade with that of his intuitive capacity as a detective, further highlights the series’ promotional Anglo-American ideology. By delineating the external and linguistic Allied/Axis wartime identities knowable, Holmes seemed capable of transcending the weakness of mere mortals such as myself...understanding us perhaps, accepting us and even pitying us, but only and purely objectively. It would be impossible for such a man to know loneliness or love or sorrow because he was completely sufficient unto himself. His perpetual seeming assumption of infallibility; his interminable success; (could he not fail just once and prove himself a human being like the rest of us!) his ego that seems at times to verge on the superman complex...One was jealous. Jealous of his mastery in all things, both material and mystical...he was sort of god in his way, seated on some Anglo-Saxon Olympus of his own design and making! Yes, there was no question about it, he had given me an acute inferiority complex!(Rathbone, 1962, 182)
Addressing some of the psychological effects that cumulative performances as Sherlock Holmes have had on his attitude towards the character, Rathbone’s quotation offers insight into the historically specific ways in which Rathbone/Holmes masculine performance was momentarily configured in the 1940s. Rathbone’s conflation of Holmes attributes (“mastery in all things, both material and mystical”) and his national/racial origins (“Anglo-Saxon”), signifies an inherent connection between idealized representations of masculinity and national and racial identity. As I will demonstrate further, through the convergence of Rathbone’s adaptable star persona and Holmes’ epistemological “infallibility”, the Holmes series narratives can be seen as representing an idealized Allied masculinity.

A significant narrative convention throughout all of the films is Holmes’ use of disguise. As argued earlier, the first two entries in the series produced at 20th Century-Fox in 1939, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, remained faithful to the Holmesian conventions, reproducing the British period setting and antagonists most associated with the short stories and novels. Significantly, the two 20th Century-Fox productions depict Holmes’ masculine masquerade along linguistic/regional and class lines rather than along international cultural lines.

In *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1939), Holmes succeeds in deceiving Watson, a recurring motif throughout the series, by posing as a local peddler with a club foot and cane. Holmes constructs the disguise of a typical Devonshire “peasant” in order survey the moors without drawing attention to himself. Similarly, in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1939), Holmes’ disguise is utilized as a spectacle, in order to maintain surveillance over a client: he a performs a song and dance number (“I do like to be beside the seaside -I do like to be by the sea”) in the guise of a music-hall performer. Importantly, Holmes demonstrates
not only his familiarity with the codes and histrionics of class identity and behaviour, but in
the process of masquerading as the class and regional ‘other’, also demonstrates his
knowledge of popular musical form and dance. Furthermore, Holmes’ knowledge of popular
forms of mass culture is later utilized in *Dressed to Kill* (1946), where Holmes learns that the
key to uncovering a counterfeiting ring which threatens the Bank of England lies in a popular
song played in a series of music boxes. Demonstrating both a knowledge and performance
of such popular musical forms as the music-hall, the construction of Holmes/Rathbone’s
identity as a male protagonist is significantly defined by his ability to masquerade
performance.

As outlined in chapter III, the series’ shift to Universal in 1942 occurred just as
America attempted to synchronize its cultural and industrial wartime production in order to
promote the goal of the Allied war effort. Subsequently, as the social and political context
in which the series was produced changed to incorporate a greater international focus, the
function of masquerade broadened so as to represent the Axis national and linguistic character
traits as the racial and ethnic ‘other’.

In *Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon* (1942), the opening scenes are set in
Switzerland. Represented as a space populated by Axis and Allied spies, this geographic and
moral zone of neutrality illustrates how international allegiances are contested, and identities,
through masquerade and disguise, remain unfixed. The film begins in a Swiss village where
an elderly Swiss bookseller (Holmes) is trading information with two Nazi spies. In this
instance, Holmes uses the disguise to obtain information as the German spies as they close
in on the location of Dr. Franz Toebel, a secretive Swiss scientist who is experimenting with
new bomb-sight technology. Given that Holmes’ normal appearance and accent would have
alerted the Nazi gents, his ability to manipulate his image saves both the scientist and the bomb-sight from the hands of the spies. Interestingly, the narrative's conflation of masquerade and technology situates Holmes/Rathbone within a radically shifting social and political international context. Indeed, the conflation also draws attention to the wartime ideological necessity of seeing (bomb-sight/ocular technology) and being seen (masquerade). By rendering the national and linguistic characteristics of the racial 'other' knowable, the military and ideological necessity to secure identities becomes apparent.

The use of wartime themes is discontinued after the release of *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* (1943). Consequently, by excluding direct references to the war, the use of masquerade to represent the cultural and racial 'other' shifts as well. In the 1944 release of *The Spider Woman*, Holmes faces his first female villain, Andrea Spedding. Faking his own death, Holmes goes underground to solve a series of murders in which the victims die from a deadly spider bite. Holmes concludes that the crimes were committed by a criminal organization directed by a woman:

Holmes: *Directing them is one of the most fiendishly clever minds in Europe today. I suspect a woman.*
Watson: *You amaze me, Holmes. Why a woman?*
Holmes: *Because the method, whatever it is, is peculiarly subtle and cruel. Feline, not canine.*
Watson: *Poppycock. When a bloke does himself in, that's suicide.*
Holmes: *Unless a bloke is driven to suicide; in that case it's murder.*
Watson: *Driven? That sounds like a woman, doesn't it?*
Holmes: *And above all, cautious. Therefore, my first step was to give her enough rope by passing out of the picture.*

Spedding takes advantage of insurance policy-holders whose suicides have been faked by her accomplices, trained Pygmy assassins. In an attempt to trap Spedding, Holmes poses
PM-1 3¼"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

1.0  2.5
1.2  2.2
1.1  2.0
1.4  1.8
1.25 1.6

PRECISION™ RESOLUTION TARGETS
as Raja Singh, a suicidal Hindu Indian officer. However, he is discovered, captured, and left to die by Spedding, strapped to a moving target of a cut-out image of Hitler in a shooting gallery where Watson unwittingly shoots at him.

As Holmes’ capture may attest, his anxiety to “get out of the picture”, to remain invisible by seeking the security of the unknown, by masquerading as the racial ‘other’ acquires a new meaning. The condensation of the criminal, racial, national, and sexual difference into the figure of Spedding, the Spider Woman, momentarily destabilizes, and ultimately, threatens his claims to control the appearances and ambition of the “other”. The incorporation of the image of Hitler serves as a sign which underlines the threat that Spedding poses to the social, culture and sexual ordering of difference in the Holmes series at this point into the war.

Holmes/Rathbone’s ability to affect the disguise of numerous linguistic and national character types arguably renders the national character traits of the ‘other’ knowable. As I have demonstrated, the dramatic shift in national and international identities and alliances which occurred simultaneous to the series’ production from 1939 to 1946, greatly influenced the series’ characterizations and narratives. The use of masquerade further underscores the series’ promotional Anglo-American ideology, as the means through which the star/detective, as the series’ overriding authoritative masculine identity, neutralized threats posed by the anxieties and ambiguities arising from shifting international wartime (eg Allied/Axis) subjectivities.
- V -

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to argue that the migration of the Holmes figure across media and historical periods and into the Holmes/Rathbone series during the 1940s, functioned ideologically to negotiate and redefine perceptions of the nation. To demonstrate this, I examined the specific historic and industrial forces pertinent to the production and reception of the series at both Universal and Twentieth Century Fox. Such a study confirmed that Hollywood’s use of the Holmes/Rathbone series functioned to produce reading formations which prioritized the goals of Anglo-American wartime cultural production and consumption.

In the first chapter, I reviewed the literature that has dealt with the Holmes/Rathbone series. Primarily, I constructed three general categories in which knowledge of the series has been organized: (a) historical surveys, (b) authorship and generic transformation, and (c) genre and industrial practice. Through an assessment of the individual limitations and contributions of these three distinct methodologies, it was my contention that Bennett and Woollacott’s work on the figure of James Bond could bridge the absences identified in other work on the Holmes series. Such a methodological reconsideration proposed to contribute to our understanding of the popular character’s role in reorganizing the relation between popular text and audiences. Furthermore, this reexamination provided the theoretical terrain through which I began to explore the Holmes series’ contribution to the formation of wartime national/international and reading formations.
In Chapter II, I outlined three issues essential to an understanding of the ways in which the Holmes/Rathbone series organized cultural and ideological relations during the Second World War. First, I examined the ways in which Conan Doyle increasingly came to situate Holmes within a larger, international context, culminating in Holmes' "service" to Britain during World War I. This period constitutes a significant moment in the character's career, as it embedded Holmes within Anglo-American wartime discourses on nation and gender. Second, this chapter examined the Hollywood history of Holmes as a film property. In particular, it concentrated on both the 20th Century-Fox and Universal studios, and outlined the stylistic and thematic differences of the films produced by them. Third, it related the stylistic and thematic differences observable in the films to the studio structures of 20th Century-Fox and Universal in the 30s and 40s.

In Chapter III, I explored the historical and ideological forces which served to situate Holmes as a figure actively promoting Anglo-American wartime ideology. In order to reconstruct the wartime discursive reading formations attendant upon the Holmes/Rathbone series, I examined the interrelationship between culture and the state, more specifically between the film industry and the specific contexts of wartime cultural production. I attempted to show how fictional texts work, in part, to organize the conception held by audiences of the nation as part of an imagined community. In particular, I examined the Holmes series' wartime role in the context of such inter/national re-imagining which figuratively locates England in America and America in England.

Throughout this chapter, Holmes' transition into an Anglo-American wartime cultural figure, was placed within the context of a series character whose moment of cultural re-emergence was contemporaneous with, and supportive of, the goals of a film studio in the
midst of a conversion to wartime film production. The latter part of this chapter focused on the first three Universal Holmes films: *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror* (1942), *Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon* (1942), and *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* (1943). Centrally concerned with the historical and political realities of World War II, an analysis of these three war-related films highlighted the activist role that Holmes played in the promotion of a wartime Anglo-American ideology, and of the mutual democratic values of both England and the United States.

In Chapter IV, I highlighted the way in which the recontextualization of the figure of Sherlock Holmes intersected with the casting and performance of the series’ star Basil Rathbone. This casting became especially significant in light of one of the recurring narrative conventions throughout the Sherlock Holmes films: Holmes’ use of masquerade and disguise.

As the films of the Holmes series constitute male-centred narratives supportive of the Allied war effort, this chapter drew upon critical work which explores masculinity as an historically specific cultural effect, in part, constructed through masquerade and disguise. The first section of this chapter interrogated how masquerade and disguise as aspects of masculine performance in the United States of the 1940s constitute “specific links to power, conflict and, struggle” (Holmlund, 1993, 214). Such work can contribute to our understanding of the way in which Holmes/Rathbone emerged as an idealized masculine wartime persona.

The second section provided an historical overview of Basil Rathbone’s film career in Hollywood until his final screen appearance as Holmes in 1946. Rathbone was a successful British actor working within the Hollywood star system. His casting in the role of Holmes allowed two significant wartime international reading formations to converge. Through an emphasis on (a) Rathbone’s status as a critically acclaimed dramatic performer and (b) his
proficiency in assuming numerous linguistic and national character types, I examined the mixture of Rathbone’s status as a star and his particular incarnation of Holmes as a wartime male detective hero.

The final section of this chapter focused on the repeated use of masquerade and disguise in the Holmes series. It demonstrated that the foregrounding of Rathbone’s authority as a prominent dramatic performer, whose adeptness at masquerade and mimicry of numerous national identities, is utilized throughout the Holmes series. Masquerade functioned to recast the masculinity of Holmes, thanks to the ability of Rathbone, in a way more appropriate to wartime Anglo-American culture. Masquerade, however, also works to naturalize Anglo-American culture’s superiority over other cultures and to justify the war effort. For example, Holmes possesses an unchallenged ability at detection and observation such that his statements and claims also possess an unchallenged epistemological certainty. Likewise, Holmes’ ability to effect the disguise of numerous linguistic and national character types gives him an uncanny ability to pierce the culture of the other and thereby protect Anglo-American culture from infiltration. This ability allows him to expose and render knowable foreign elements within the culture. Holmes’ privileged insight, combined with his gift of masquerade, further highlighted the series’ promotional Anglo-American ideology, by attempting to render the interior and exterior ambiguities of the shifting international wartime identities (i.e., Axis and Allied) knowable.

This thesis has a number of implications for communications knowledge and further research. As an analysis of the relationship between the transmedia movement of a popular character and Hollywood series production in the 1940s, I think this study represents a contribution to the field of communications research. Significantly, however, in this research,
I observed that despite the fact Rathbone had played Holmes in all Hollywood films between years 1939-1946, he had concurrently performed as the same character in over three hundred weekly radio dramas. Thus, my attention has been drawn to the fact that cultural historiographies limited to a singular institutional history, such as the Hollywood studio system, cannot adequately account for the trans-media institutional interaction between cultural industries, for example, as in the interactions between the Hollywood studio system and the broadcasting industry. Consequently, a failure to account for the complex institutional interaction between cultural industries can potentially limit our historical and theoretical understanding of the ways in which popular cultural forms manifest in multiple and simultaneous media representations work to construct meaning at any given historical moment.
- Endnotes -

Notes to Introduction

1. For my purposes here I am borrowing from Rick DeCroix, who defines the series film as “a group of motion pictures which feature a core group of characters and, usually, similar narrative situations. To differentiate a “series” from a “sequel,” there must be at least three films in the group.” (DeCroix, 1991, 165)

Notes to Chapter I

1. Focusing his analysis of Tarzan on the “trans-media iconographic differentiation” of the characters representations in various media, Morton defines his use of the icon as follows.

[1]he definition of the ‘iconic’ posits a ‘sign’ or representation with a strong fidelity to the ‘original’. We expect the iconic representation of Tarzan to be motivated by and analogically derived from the Tarzan character created in the novel. But if we look at the marginal differences created in moving the icon from one medium to another, we see the specific devices a given medium favours in communication. (Morton, 1993, 106-107)

2. During a speaking tour of the United States in 1894, Doyle commented on the public reaction to Holmes’s untimely death a year earlier in “The Final Problem”;

it was only after Holmes’s death I realized what warm friends he had made. I assure you, if I had killed a real man I could not have received more vindictive letters than those which poured in upon me after the event. The fact that he was a very real person to many people is evident by other letters, which ranged from the funny to the pathetic. People went so far as to ask me for a lock of his hair, and one asked for his photograph at different ages. But it was justifiable homicide, when a man has been the hero of twenty-six stories it is about time for him to get out. (Redmond, 1987, 163)
3 In “The Adventure of the Empty House”, Watson recounts that, “Holmes’ knowledge of the byways of London was extraordinary”. (Doyle, 1981:489) Like the flaneur or city stroller before him, Holmes’ relationship to the city of London plays a central role in the development of his character as well as providing a dramatic backdrop to the narrative action. Murch writes:

Victorian London, which Conan Doyle knew so well, gives its own characteristic atmosphere to the tales of Sherlock Holmes, so much so that the mere thought of that hero conjures up the great metropolis of the period, with its November fogs and August heat, its hansom cabs and gaslight, the docks and railway stations, the dignity of Westminster, the humdrum suburbs, the squalor of an East End opium den. (Murch, 1958, 180)


5. In outlining the extent of Bond’s popularity since 1953, Bennett and Woollacott acknowledge that:

United Artists estimated that, by 1977, the Bond film had been shown to a worldwide cinema audience of 1000 million...To this there must be added the substantial television audience both in Britain...and America...The statistics regarding novel sales on the British market totalled 27863500. Their significance, in publishing terms, can perhaps best be gleaned from the fact that the Bond novels accounted for ten of the first eighteen titles in paperback to sell over a million copies in Britain. (Bennett and Woollacott, 1987, 12)
Notes to Chapter II

1. In order to help fulfil his ambitious and prolific duties as a writer, Doyle moved away from publishing serialized chapters from a novel (A Study in Scarlet (1887) and The Sign of Four (1889)) in magazines like The Strand, to publishing short stories featuring his master detective. A.E. Murch notes that this change in publishing strategy from serialization to short, autonomous stories was a brilliant plan

far more effective than a sequence of disconnected tales and maintaining all the advantages with none of the disadvantages of the serials upon which most of the monthly magazines of the period relied as a means of keeping up their regular circulation. The danger of a serial lay in the fact that the reader who missed even one instalment almost inevitably lost the thread of the story, and consequently interest. By visualising each instalment as a short story about the same hero, Conan Doyle brought up to date and improved upon the method first adopted by Edgar Allan Poe. (Murch, 1958, 171)

Although the short story was slow to appear as a distinct literary form in England, it was a format conducive to the development of a popular character. As well, the short story format adapted to fill the new cultural needs of a growing reading public. The short story was affordable and of the perfect length to be read in one sitting. Commenting on this new narrative and marketing strategy, Edgar Allan Poe stated that

if any literary work is too long to be read in one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression, for if two sittings are required, and the affairs of the world interfere, anything like totality is at once destroyed. (Murch, 1958, 172)

Thus, with little space and time devoted to the development of new characters in each new story, the popular character partially emerges out of an economic necessity for new publishing strategies.

2. Besides the publication of the Holmes and Watson detective adventures, historical novels and poetry, Doyle also began publishing the exploits of another character, Professor Challenger. (Note: In 1925, Professor Challenger was brought to the screen in the silent 1925 feature The Lost World. The first of two screen adaptations, Professor Challenger was originally played by Wallace Beery, and in the 1960 remake by Claude Rains.)

Similar to many other popular male characters of the period such as Professor Challenger, Holmes and Watson were both Scientist and Professor, detectives and adventurers. After the appearance of the laboratory in the Baker Street apartment.
every successful detective would operate a private laboratory. Each would be competent in the art of chemistry, physics and the detection of subtle poisons. By the time we reach down to the Doc Savage Magazine in 1933, the main characters will be operating five private laboratories... After Holmes, other detectives adopted the personal laboratory rather quickly. By 1904, Nick Carter has not only established a lab but uses it in the creation of advanced gadgets... the popular character, (therefore) becomes one way in which to trace the penetration of science and technology in the Turn of the Century America. (Sampson, 1984, 4)

The presence of such scientific narrative conventions correlates with the emergence of a scientific discourse in all aspects of contemporary late Victorian life. Following what has been termed the era of great improvement in England between 1789 and 1867, institutional, political and economic consolidation brought about an increasingly orderly perception of social relations, framed around the concept of the nation-state (Porter, 1981, 151). Consequently, it was against such social and cultural conditions that a great deal of faith was invested in centring perspective through a uniform individual, rational imagination. As the personification of the scientific method, these popular characters were ambassadors for an optimistic age.

Science achieved a golden age in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, with extraordinary advances in all its major branches, with widespread institutional and academic organizations of research... The optimism of the age was directly tied to confidence in science and in its powers to improve indefinitely the state of human knowledge, health and general welfare.” (Tarnas, 1991, 355)

With the guiding hand of industry and the supporting logic of science, the popular male character was invested as the embodiment of Cartesian epistemology.

3. One of Holmes/Conan Doyle’s main literary rivals, a challenger to Holmes’s cultural presence, was the character Nick Carter. First appearing in the New York Weekly in 1886, Nick Carter achieved similar levels of migration into other media, appearing in the 1939 film Nick Carter-Master Detective. Passing through the hands of countless writers over the course of his literary existence, la Cour and Mogensen write that “a generation ago Nick Carter was anathema to all the pious critics of the entire genre”. (la Cour and Mogensen, 1971, 78) No doubt the high-brow contempt was a reaction to the voluminous output of the authors involved.

The first writer to immortalize him in print was John Coryell, who was soon to be succeeded by Frederik van Rensleter Dey. Dey wrote more than a thousand Nick Carter stories and was very proud of his hero, who never smoked, drank, swore or permitted a lie to pass his lips. “I’ve never written a Nick Carter story that I would be ashamed to read to a Sunday school,” he once said. (la Cour and Mogensen, 1971, 78)
Part of Doyle's early success in the United States can be attributed to the anarchical distribution networks and poor copyright protection that existed prior to the International Copyright Agreement of 1891. Furthered by many technological advances in print publishing during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the falling costs of mass production, and an expanding reading public, the pirating of primarily British popular fiction generated large profits for American printers who benefited from the reliability of popular character series publication:

The demands of a new burgeoning reading public could hardly be met by American authors; and the supply of reading matter produced in the country was endless. If material were used, it need not be paid for. American authors could hardly find a market among the reprints of English books (Redmond, 1990, 4)

The practice of literary piracy paradoxically helped solidify for Doyle an "immediate or overwhelming impact; yet they (pirates) were undoubtedly a factor in the lasting popularity of the creation - or the genesis of the Sherlock Holmes myth". (Redmond, 1990, xviii) As confirmed by the best-selling novel The Sign of Four, published in 1890, Doyle engaged upon a speaking tour in 1894 of North American cities where he gave up to thirty-nine lectures and countless interviews. (Redmond, 1987, 24)

Interestingly, in a preface to his final anthology, The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle diplomatically acknowledges his debt to the loyal reading audience, while at the same time recognizing the dangers of unduly punishing Holmes for his years of "public service":

I fear that Mr. Sherlock Holmes may become like one of those popular tenors who having outlived their times, are still tempted to make repeated farewell bows to their indulgent audiences. This must cease and he must go the way of the flesh, material or imaginary. One likes to think that there is some fantastic limbo for the children of the imagination, some strange impossible place... Perhaps in some humble corner of Valhalla, Sherlock Holmes and his Watson may for a time find a place, while some more astute sleuth with some less astute comrade may fill the stage which they have vacated. (Doyle, 1981, 984)

For fear of public retribution, Holmes' career came to a simple end. Unlike his first "death", a noble and dramatic sacrifice off Reichenbach Falls fighting "the Napoleon of crime" Moriarty, a more subdued exit was in order. In the great tradition of British eccentrics Holmes ultimately escapes from the modern world, retiring to the country to practice the simple art of bee-keeping.

The Germans invaded Luxembourg on August 1, 1914 and Belgium on August 3, 1914. As a result, the Germans violated the treaty of 1839 in which the British had
guaranteed Belgian neutrality. On August 4 the British officially declared war on Germany. (Kagan, 1987, 885)


8 As Haralovich notes, Variety’s representative cities included Chicago, Louisville, Montreal, Philadelphia, Kansas City, Newark, Washington, Cleveland, New York, Boston, Seattle, Detroit, Providence, Minneapolis, Cincinnati, San Francisco, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Denver, Los Angeles, Omaha, Indianapolis, St. Louis. (Haralovich, 1979, 56)

9 Besides their popular screen appearances, Abbott and Costello, capitalizing on the success in their 1939 Broadway production The Streets of Paris, translated their success to radio beginning in July of 1940. Appearing first as a 1941 Summer replacement for Fred Allen, NBC debuted “The Abbott and Costello Program” on October 8, 1941. For the next six years, along with their popular Universal series, “The Abbott and Costello Program” remained one of the top fifteen radio shows for the next six years. (Mulholland, 1977, 46)

Notes to Chapter III

1. Examples of Hollywood’s early interventionist stance included; Confessions of A Nazi Spy (1939, Warners); Hidden Enemy (1939, Monogram); Foreign Correspondent (1940, United Artists); Enemy Agent (Universal, 1940)

2. Such hostile depictions of the Japanese present in the public service ad, were common throughout the war. Unlike the Chinese, who were supported by the United States in their war with Japan which began in 1937, negative images of the Japanese began to occur with increased frequency beginning with the battles of Bataan and Corregidor in 1942. (Blum, 1976, 46) Mysterious and animal like, common wartime depictions constructed Japanese as “the ‘ominous shadow’ of the Oriental schemer, devious and slant-eyed” assuming in the public mind “characteristics once attributed to that dreaded fictional Chinese villain, Fu Manchu. A sampling of public opinion in 1942 disclosed that Americans considered the Chinese diligent, honest, brave, and religious, in contrast to the Japanese, who were deemed treacherous, sly, cruel, and warlike.” (Blum, 1976, 46)

3. Besides debates surrounding Holmes’s national origins, other BSI scholars have sought out equally contentious subjects, pieced together and argued in numerous imaginative and convincing ways. These speculative essays included in the collection, “Watson Was a
Woman?” by Rex Stout, “Was Sherlock Holmes a Drug Addict?” by George F. McCleary, and one of the most highly contested subjects, “Oxford or Cambridge” by Gavin Brend, debating Holmes’s alumni. (Shreffler, 1976)

4. Having begun their radio career as Holmes and Watson in 1939 Rathbone and Bruce’s radio series “The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes” was also carried on The Voice of America radio. Unlike the contemporized settings of the Universal Holmes series, the radio series retained the characters’ orginal Victorian era setting. At the rate of thirty-nine original episodes per season over the course of eight years, the new stories were loosely based on the original Doyle characterizations. With a world wide audience, the international of the characters presence was underscored by the May 14, 1945 broadcasts opening refrain, “This episode from the life of Sherlock Holmes will be transmitted to our men and women overseas by shortwave and through the world wide facilities of the Armed Forces Radio Service” (“In Flanders Fields”, Broadcast date, May 14, 1945)

International radio propaganda developed in Europe and Asia during the 1930s, and by September of 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, every major power except the United States had its own international broadcast service. America did not officially enter the world of international propaganda-over-the-air until 1942, but once launched, the Voice of America became a permanent instrument of international politics (Shulman, 1990, 3).

As well, like many broadcasts of the period, the wartime installments of “The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes” featured a plea for consumers to service their country through the purchase of war bonds. Beginning in 1945 and throughout 1946 this service continued after the formal end of the Second World War, with Nigel Bruce at the close of broadcasts making a plea for “American relief for Italy” a fund to assist in the post-war donations to be given to the people of Italy.

Notes to Chapter IV

1. Rathbone comments further:

I do not remember a single instance from 1939 to 1962 where an interviewer from some newspaper or magazine, or a member of an audience, or a friend has not smiled somewhat indulgently when the subject of my association with Mr. Sherlock Holmes has arisen. In the upper echelon of my very considerable following as Mr. Holmes, there has always been a somewhat patronizing, if polite, recognition of my modest achievement. In the lower echelon I have experienced nothing but embarrassment in the familiar street-corner greeting of recognition, which is inevitably followed by horrendous imitations of my speech, loud laughter, and ridiculous quotes of famous lines.
such as, “Quick, Watson the needle” or “Elementary, my dear Watson,” followed by more laughter at my obvious discomfiture. Quite frankly and realistically, over the years I have been forced to accept the fact that my impersonation of one of the most famous fictional characters in all literature has not received that respectful recognition to which I feel Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s masterpieces entitle him. (Rathbone, 1962, 178)

Interestingly, in relating his experiences of being type-cast, Rathbone draws a parallel between his career and that of the character’s creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Similarly, (as I detailed briefly in chapter II) both of their careers were plagued by their inability to dissociate themselves from the character of Holmes.

2. Petitioning many studio heads for their financial and personal support for the British war effort, he recounts that:

As president of the British War Relief I wrote to all the top executives of MGM asking them to contribute. Not one of them so much as answered my letters. But with the Warner Brothers it was very different. They were terrific Anglophiles and supported us with their time and money. Both Harry and Jack Warner were dedicated to our cause. One’s major hope for results in making requests for help at this time was not to talk of Britain’s problems and needs, but to use almost everyone’s tremendous admiration for Winston Churchill as a means of approach. (Rathbone, 1962, 167)

3. However, Rathbone confides that this public acknowledgement was cause for concern:

During this time Oudia earned, most unjustly, the title of Hostess of Hollywood. She was even offered a radio program bearing this title. The connotation suggested extravagance and self-exploitation. Success in any field usually brings criticism from certain quarters where a dissatisfied jealousy often breeds vicious discontent. A prominent weekly magazine attacked Oudia in the most disgraceful and unpatriotic manner. Upon the advice of good friends and legal counsel we were advised to ignore it. (Rathbone, 1962, 171)

4. For a better understanding of the function and services at the Hollywood Canteen, refer to the 1944 film The Hollywood Canteen, an episodic feature with appearances and comic sketches by such stars as Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet, Jack Carson, Ida Lupino and Bette Davis and musical performances by the Andrews Sisters, Roy Rogers and Jack Benny.

5. It should be noted that Rathbone’s career, like that of most popular stars of the studio era, failed to sustain his popularity with the decline of the studio system after WW II. Following the release of the final film in the Holmes series, Dressed to Kill (1946), Rathbone appeared in 16 feature films, and numerous radio and theatrical productions between 1946 until his
death in 1967. However, Rathbone never successfully overcame being typed as Holmes. Pohle and Hart argue that:

When he played Holmes from 1939 through 1946 on the screen, and in addition on stage, television, and over two hundred radio performances, producers forgot about everything he had done before Holmes, and he couldn’t get the work he deserved. (Pohle and Hart, 1977, 164)
- Annex A -
Holmes Series Filmography, 1939 to 1946

The Hound of the Baskervilles, dir. Sydney Lanfield, Twentieth-Century Fox.
**Date of Release:** 31 March 1939 in the United States; September 1939 in Great Britain.

**Synopsis:** Adapted from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Set in 1889, Holmes and Watson travel to the moors of Dartmoor in Devonshire to investigate the death of Sir Charles Baskerville.

----------------------

**Date of Release:** 1 September 1939 in the United States; March 1940 in Great Britain as *Sherlock Holmes*.

**Synopsis:** Based on an original stage play by William Gillette, Holmes confronts his arch enemy Moriarty in an investigation that includes murder and an attempt to steal the Crown Jewels from the Tower of London.

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Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror, dir. John Rowlins, Universal.
**Date of Release:** 18 September 1942 in the United States; 22 November in Great Britain.

**Synopsis:** The first of the Universal series begins with a modernization of Conan Doyle’s short story “His Last Bow”. Hired by the British government, Holmes and Watson investigate a series of Nazi propaganda radio broadcasts that lead to the unmasking of a Nazi spy in the midst of the British Inner Council.

----------------------

**Date of Release:** December 1942 in the United States; 2 January 1943 in Great Britain.

**Synopsis:** Holmes helps a top British scientist escape Nazi agents in Switzerland. Moriarty, hired on behalf of the Nazis, competes with Holmes to capture Dr. Franz Toebel’s invention, a highly accurate bombsight. Based loosely upon Doyle’s short story “The Dancing Man”.

----------------------

**Date of Release:** 30 April 1943 in the United States; 8 February 1944 in Great Britain.
**Synopsis:** In this original screenplay, Holmes and Watson travel to Washington to recover lost microfilm after the death of a British agent. In the process, Holmes uncovers a Nazi spying ring operating in a Washington antique store.


**Date of Release:** 17 September 1943.

**Synopsis:** After the blatantly propagandistic effort of the year's previous outing, Holmes and Watson return to England in an adaption of Doyle's "The Musgrave Ritual". Working at a convalescent home for British army officers, Watson seeks the assistance of Holmes to investigate a mysterious murder.


**Date of Release:** 21 January 1944 in the United States; 8 May 1944 in Great Britain.

**Synopsis:** Faking his own death, Holmes assumes the identity of a Hindu to investigate a series of mysterious London murders. Undercover, Holmes links the deaths to Andrea Spedding, the mastermind behind a insurance murder scheme.


**Date of Release:** 26 May 1944 in the United States; 18 September 1944 in Great Britain.

**Synopsis:** Travelling to the remote Canadian village of La Morte Rouge, Holmes and Watson investigate a series of murders attributed to a legendary phantom. Holmes traces the murders to be the work of an escaped criminal actor posing as the phantom. Finally, Holmes confronts the phantom whose murders were an act of revenge upon those responsible for the convicts imprisonment.


**Date of Release:** 22 September 1944 in the United States; 19 February 1945 in Great Britain.

**Synopsis:** On the trail of a jewel thief who has hidden priceless pearls inside the plaster of a Napoleon bust, Holmes links a series of murders to the thief's attempt to recover the lost jewels. Based upon Doyle's short story "The Six Napoleons".
Date of Release: 16 March 1945 in the United States; 9 July 1945 in Great Britain.

Synopsis: A series of murders plaguing the members of a Scottish men’s group, “The Good Comrades”, leads Holmes to trace the disappearance of Watson during the course of the investigation. Based on Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Five Orange Pips”.

------------------------

Date of Release: 27 July 1945 in the United States; 20 August 1945 in Great Britain.

Synopsis: Scotland Yard turns to Holmes to help investigate the murders of several women in London whose corpses have been discovered with their right forefinger amputated. Moriarty returns and is involved in a plot to blackmail Sir George Fenwick, who is hypnotized into believing he is responsible for the series of murders.

------------------------

Pursuit To Algiers, dir Roy William Neill, Universal.
Date of Release: 26 October 1945 in the United States; 4 February 1946 in Great Britain.

Synopsis: Set on a ocean liner, Holmes and Watson escort King Nikolas back to his native Algiers. Along the way, Holmes and Watson must protect the King from assassins on board.

------------------------

Date of Release: 1 February 1946 in the United States; 8 June in Great Britain.

Synopsis: Set on board a train from London to Edinburgh, Holmes and Watson are hired to protect the “Star of Rhodesia” diamond. A series of murders en route lead Holmes to discover and confront Col. Sebastian Moran, Moriarty’s partner in crime.
Dressed to Kill. dir Roy William Neill, Universal.
Date of Release: 7 June 1946 in the United States, 26 August 1946 in Great Britain as Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Code.

Synopsis: The final film in the series ends with Holmes and Watson working to recover stolen Bank of England engraving plates. Discovering that clues leading to the uncovering of the plates are encoded in tunes played in music boxes, Holmes must match his wits against Hilda Courtney, the gang's deadly leader.
Annex B
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle - Chronology 1859 to 1930

1859

1868 - 1875
Attends Hodder, a Jesuit run Catholic preparatory school until 1870. Attends Stonyhurst where Doyle excels as a sportsman and begins his interest in literature.

1875
Passes matriculation with honours and visits Austria to learn German.

1876
Enters Edinburgh University to study medicine.

1880
After two years of apprenticeship, Doyle begins his fascination with “adventure” and enlists as a ship’s doctor with an Arctic whaler for a period of seven months.

1881
Graduates from Edinburgh University with a Bachelor’s in Medicine and begins second sea voyage as ship’s doctor on cargo steamer heading for West Africa.

1882
Begins medical practice in Portsmouth.

1883
First short story published in Cornhill magazine.

1885
Marries first wife Louise Hawkins.

1887
 Publishes first Sherlock Holmes story A Study in Scarlet in Beeton’s Christmas Annual.

1889

1891
Failing to study medicine in Vienna, Doyle opens practice in Devonshire Place. Begins to increase his literary output with the publication of six Holmes stories in The Strand Magazine and completes book The Doings of Raffles Haw, another mystery character based upon the exploits of a gentleman criminal.

1893
Following the death of his father Charles, Doyle publishes several Holmes stories including “The Final Problem”. Killing off Holmes, Doyle plans to cease the continuation of his popular character after only four years. Increases his personal interest in spiritualism and the paranormal.

1894
Visits America on a lecture tour.
1895
Travels to Egypt on therapeutic trip with Louise to help her battle with tuberculosis. Publishes *The Stark Munro Letters*.

1896
 Writes prolifically on his tours through Egypt. War correspondent for *The Westminster Gazette*.

1899
Outbreak of the Second Boer War. Doyle attempts to enlist but is deemed unfit for service.

1900
In February joins hospital unit and sails for South Africa. Returns to England in July and writes *The Great Boer War* and *The War in South Africa*, a defense of British treatment of the Boers.

1902
Doyle knighted for his patriotic defence of British policy in Africa. Writes *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, a story dated before Holmes death.

1903
Financially persuaded by American publishers, Doyle rescues Holmes from certain death and begins publishing Holmes adventures in *The Strand* with the publication of “The Adventure of the Empty House” in October.

1906
Doyle takes on prominent role as a public figure running in the General Election unsuccessfully as a Unionist candidate in Hawick. As well he both publicly defended the wrongful imprisonment of George Edalji and actively petitioned in support of the Divorce Reform Movement. Death of his first wife Louise Doyle.

1909
Publishes *The Crime of the Congo*, an expose of cruelties forced upon the matives in the Belgian Congo by trading companies.

1912
Publishes novel *The Lost World* featuring new character, Professor Challenger.

1914
With the outbreak of WW I Doyle organizes local volunteer force and enlists as private in the Army. Writes a propagandistic treatise in support of the war entitled *To Arms!*

1916
Doyle visits French, Italian, and British on the war fronts.

1918
Death of eldest son, Kingsley from war related-pneumonia.

1920
Travels to Australia to support latest research into paranormal and spiritualism

1922
Embarks upon a lecture tour of America.

1923
Return to the United States and Canada.
1925
Visits Paris and speaks to International Spiritualistic Congress.

1926
Publishes final series of Holmes mysteries in The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes.

1929
After visits to Scandinavia and Holland, suffers heart-attack upon his return.

1930
Conan Doyle dies on July 7.

Chronology of Sherlock Holmes Novels and Stories:

1888 A Study in Scarlet (novel)
1890 The Sign of Four (novel)
1892 The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (anthology)
1894 The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes (anthology)
1902 The Hound of the Baskervilles (novel)
1905 The Return of Sherlock Holmes (anthology)
1915 The Valley of Fear (novel)
1917 His Last Bow (anthology)
1927 The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes (anthology)
Annex C
Basil Rathbone Filmography, 1921 to 1967

As the following filmography testifies, Rathbone’s film career was highly prolific. Spanning 46 years and 83 features, Rathbone’s career and star persona extended well beyond the screen, sustaining a simultaneous dramatic career in both radio, theatre and television.

Basil Rathbone: Filmography

*Innocent* (1921)
*The Fruitful Vine* (1921)
*The School for Scandal* (1923)

*Trouping with Ellen* (1924): Rathbone’s first American film.

*The Masked Bride* (1925): After touring the United States extensively in a stage production of *The Swan*, Rathbone signed with MGM studios, his first film contract.

*The Great Deception* (1926): WWI espionage drama featuring Rathbone as a German agent

*The Last of Mrs. Cheyney* (1929)

*The Bishop Murder Case* (1930): Starring as the detective Philo Vance, this was the first of seven films he would make in 1930.

*A Notorious Affair* (1930)
*The Lady of Scandal* (1930)

*This Mad World* (1930): Rathbone plays a French spy in this WWI melodrama.

*The Flirting Widow* (1930)
*A Lady Surrenders* (1930)
*Sin Takes a Holiday* (1930)
*A Woman Commands* (1932)
*One Precious Year* (1933)
*After the Ball* (1933)
*Loyalties* (1933)

*David Copperfield* (1935): Produced by David O. Selznick for MGM, this adaptation of the Dickens novel was to be the first of three Selznick productions starring Rathbone released in 1935.

The Last Days of Pompeii (1935)
A Feather in Her Hat (1935)


Captain Blood (1935): Cast as yet another French aristocrat, Captain Levasseur, Rathbone stars with Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland in this swashbuckling adventure.

Kind Lady (1935)
Private Number (1936)

Romeo and Juliet (1936): Cast in the role of Tybalt, Rathbone received an Oscar nomination for a part he had performed over 500 times on the theatrical stage.

The Garden of Allah (1936): Rathbone’s fourth and final film for Selznick, he co-starred with Marlene Dietrich in this early three-color Technicolor production.

Confession (1937)
Love From a Stranger (1937)
Make a Wish (1937)

Tovarich (1937): In this Warner Brothers comedy, Rathbone plays Soviet Commissar Gorotchanko.

The Adventures of Marco Polo (1938): Cast along side Gary Cooper, Rathbone plays another villain, Ahmed, the Chinese Minister of State.

The Adventures of Robin Hood (1938): Rathbone, Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland are recast in this swashbuckling adaptation of another popular British character.

If I were a King (1938): Receiving his second Oscar nomination for his role as French King Louis XI, Rathbone co-starred with Ronald Colman in this Paramount remake. Based on a Preston Sturges screenplay.

The Dawn Patrol (1938): MGM remake of the Hawks WWI drama featuring Rathbone as a British air force officer.

Son of Frankenstein (1939): In this Universal horror sequel, Rathbone plays Baron Wolf Von Frankenstein.
*The Hound of the Baskervilles (1939)
The Sun Never Sets (1939)
*The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (1939)
Rio (1939)

Tower of London (1939): Starring as Richard III, Rathbone is cast as the infamous English King in this Universal production.

Rhythm of the River (1940)
The Mark of Zorro (1940): As Druxman points out, Twentieth Century-Fox's swashbuckling response to Warner's The Adventures of Robin Hood (1939), recast Rathbone to play the villainous Mexican officer Captain Pasquale. (Druxman, 1975, 238)

The Mad Doctor (1941)
The Black Cat (1941)
International Lady (1941): In this comedy, Rathbone plays a Scotland Yard detective investigating coded radio transmissions sent to Nazi agents seeking to destroy secret Allied defense materials.

Paris Calling (1941): Rathbone is cast as a French government official who sells secret information to the Nazis.

Fingers at the Window (1942)
Crossroads (1942)
*Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror (1942)
*Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon (1942)
*Sherlock Holmes in Washington (1943)

Above Suspicion (1943): WWII tale of espionage featuring Rathbone as a Gestapo officer.

*Sherlock Holmes Faces Death (1943)
Crazy House (1943): A brief appearance with Nigel Bruce as Holmes and Watson.

*The Spider Woman (1944)
*The Scarlet Claw (1944)
Bathing Beauty (1944)
*The Pearl of Death (1944)
Frenchman's Creek (1944): In this Paramount technicolor adaptation of the Daphne du Maurier novel, Rathbone plays a 17th century English nobleman. Nigel Bruce co-stars.

*The House of Fear (1945)
*The Woman in Green (1945)
*Pursuit to Algiers (1945)
*Terror by Night (1946)
*Heartbeat (1946)
*Dressed to Kill (1946)
Ichabod and Mr. Toad (1949)
Casanova's Big Night (1954)
We're No Angels (1955)
The Court Jester (1956)
The Black Sheep (1956)
The Last Hurrah (1958)
The Magic Sword (1962)
Tales of Terror (1962)
Two Before Zero (1962)
The Comedy of Terrors (1963)
Pontius Pilate (1964)
Queen of Blood (1966)
Ghost of the Invisible Bikini (1966)
Voyage to a Prehistoric Planet (1967)
Autopsy of a Ghost (1967)
Hillbillys in a Haunted House (1967)
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