Men on film: Sherlock Holmes and masculinity
Sherlock Holmes was invented by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Between 1887 and 1927, Doyle published four novels and 56 short stories about Holmes
Early examples of Holmes on film

*Sherlock Holmes Baffled* (1900)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmffCrlgY-c

Basil Rathbone in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1939)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBSOsD4XNmo
Later filmic examples


http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7EuKu2C5t0

Theatrical trailer for *Sherlock Holmes* (2009):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Egcx63-FfTE
Further examples of Holmes on screen

Trailer for *Sherlock* (2010):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcFHeTaS9ew

A compilation of various Holmeses on film:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nS6-AMmvqWo
...in many of these narratives it is not a professional criminal who causes the challenge to the dominant order but rather an individual putatively of the dominant order and even representative of it.

(Kestner 1997: 16)

In many of the stories, criminals are respectable people gone wrong, turned aside from their proper roles ... Doyle offers fables in which the class whose language, epistemology and values are enacted can examine the dangers that arise if its members are untrue to its codes ... The stories have mastered a problematic which locates disorder in the failure of middle-class people – and some aristocrats – to be faithful to their moral roles.

(Knight 1980: 90, 91, 94)
Gender and Victorian Culture

The Victorian Period registered the most extreme form of gender segregation yet seen in an industrialized nation. This gender segregation was articulated and reinforced by images and texts that either implicitly or explicitly argued that work was ‘manly’ and therefore inappropriate for women.

(Danahay 2005: 2)

Clubland operated as a lifetime training ground for men wishing to exclude women. Aggressively and urbanely heterosexual, even rakish, in their discourse, the clubs were the stronghold and headquarters of opposition to women’s suffrage.

(Showalter 1990: 12)
Gender and Victorian Culture

The famous sitting room and domestic arrangements of 221B Baker Street constitute, of course, a club in microcosm, and it is within its walls that Holmes demarcates the male from the female sphere in his statements about women.

(Kestner 1997: 34)

Central to the evolution of the male image was the Victorian ideal of ‘manliness’ ... as embracing qualities of physical courage, chivalric ideals, virtuous fortitude with additional connotations of military and patriotic virtue. In the second half of the nineteenth century ... the concept underwent a metamorphosis. To the early Victorian it represented a concern with a successful transition from Christian immaturity to maturity, demonstrated by earnestness, selflessness and integrity; to the late Victorian it stood for neo-Spartan virility as exemplified by stoicism, hardiness and endurance ... ‘Manliness’ symbolised an attempt at a metaphysical comprehension of the universe. It represented an effort to achieve a Weltanschauung with an internal coherence and external validity which determined ideals, forged identity and defined reality. (Mangan 1987: 1-3)
Fin-de-siècle anxieties

- Race and nation
- Class
- Gender
Holmes and turn-of-the-century masculinity

Baden-Powell could plausibly endorse the Holmes tales as constructing a masculine script, given that they confirmed qualities which were radically gendered as masculine in Victorian culture: observation, rationalism, factuality, logic, comradeship, daring and pluck.

(Kestner 1997: 2)
Challenges to hegemonic masculinity in Sherlock Holmes

1. Holmes as the permanent bachelor
2. Holmes and drugs
3. Homosexuality?
Holmes and homosexuality

Watson and Holmes navigate around the question in *Sherlock* (2010):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mYpOEqGBCo
Holmes and women

*Sherlock Holmes* (2009): Holmes meets Irene Adler:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6rbyINshrl
A fighting Holmes?

Fight scene from *Sherlock Holmes* (2009):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGCMfprPJ0A
Bibliography