Summary: Knight argues that the success of the detective story—specifically Sherlock Holmes—relies on the author’s ability to embody the values and fears of society within the detective and the criminals. Conan Doyle is successful because he embodies the Victorians’ value on individualism and rationalism while the criminals and their crimes represent disorders within the bourgeois family, motivated specifically by selfish greed and sexual desire.

Holmes represents the fascination with science and rational thought. Making a similar point to Priestman, Knight argues that Holmes’s individuality comes from the connection of his acute ability to observe and deduce using rational and scientific methods with his bohemian eccentricities that manifest themselves in his love of art and cocaine usage. For example, when Holmes is working on a case, he fasts, but when he is done with the case, he enjoys the traditional English breakfast, complete with a housekeeper. He is the unique in comparison to the average, respectable man represented by Watson.

Conversely, the crimes committed are against the stability and order of the bourgeois family, often coming from within the family or class itself. The first primary motivation is selfish greed. The bourgeois family values capitalistic and individualistic endeavors that are controlled by reason and self-control—these values hold together the class. However, when reason and self-control is lost, the endeavors are motivated by greed and anarchy. These crimes are “the dark side of the acquisitive individualism which is basic to the economic world-view of the city-workers, clerks and businessmen who patronised the Strand,” (372). The bourgeoisie feared this selfish greed “could bring disorder,” which Conan Doyle represented not only in his Sherlock Holmes stories but also in his other novels. Knight extends his argument outside the world of fiction as well, claiming that Holmes represented Conan Doyle’s shamefully selfish greed, since Doyle hated the stories but relied on them for his income.

The more alarming motivation for crimes in both the Sherlock Holmes stories and Conan Doyle’s other works is the fear of the oppressed women: “oppressors must fear the power of the oppressed,” (374). Knight argues that “money may stand for the power women hold to attract, unbalance, even to destroy the controlled, organized Victorian male as he sees himself,” (375). Order in the bourgeoisie—and the rest of Victorian society—relied heavily on the stability of class and power; should women realize how much power they held over men sexually, the order would be shaken.

Within the Holmes stories, this fear of being supplanted manifests itself in the form of a father figure who refuses to have his daughter leave his power. Additionally, Conan Doyle used his two main characters to demonstrate the ideal man: Holmes as the asexual man who could not be influenced by women and Watson as the happily married man who spends little to no time with his wife. Knight mainly uses Conan Doyle’s other works to illustrate his intense fear of female sexual power.

Analysis: I enjoyed this article’s analysis of the crimes themselves, which is something I am particularly interested. At the end Knight says “For anyone interested in seeing how dominant social groups use their literature to state and control fears, the Holmes stories are a fascinating source. They provide a means of recreating the structure of feeling in a complex period,” (379). It would be incredibly interesting to dig into this thought further, maybe see how the element of disguise adds to this method of oppression. In an interesting point, Knight points out how many of these problems are not really defeated but merely contained and avoided, often times by escape. The resolution of escape is a common solution to many Holmes stories, even to Conan Doyle’s problem of Holmes himself, who “dies” in Switzerland instead of England, as if England must remain a place of law and order. I also liked the point made about women and the new women since it is something I have thought about before; you don’t oppress someone for no reason. The oppression of women was not due to the weakness of women—as the patriarchy claimed—but due rather to the weakness of men. This element manifests itself in a confusing manner, since Holmes often prevents the patriarchy from maintaining control over the women, but rather helps them assert their new independence. I think this combines with the Hennessey and Mohan article since Holmes helps the women escape the selfish greed of one man and unite with a man that will supposedly prove a more stable and bourgeois husband.

Relevance: I think this article will also be related to my research, since it discusses the anxiety Conan Doyle and society felt concerning the changing role of women in the home and in the public.
Summary: In her article, Sally Ledger discusses the New Woman’s popularity peak in the mid-1890’s, analyzing the different portrayals of the archetype as well as the different critical interpretations. Ledger analyzes the perceived threat the archetype posed to the institution of marriage by discussing three important features of the New Woman: sex, sexual education, and motherhood. In Sidney Grundy’s 1894 satire The New Woman, two distinct versions of the New Woman are portrayed. The character Victoria Vivavish represents the sexually independent woman who wishes to enjoy the same sexual freedom as men. Conversely, Enid Bethune (representing the social purity feminists) argued against the men’s sexual freedom with the wish that men be held to the same sexual standards as women. Despite their differences, both portrayals resulted in the stereotypical New Woman being overly-sexual, overly-masculine, and over-educated but still foolish. The image of the New Woman was equated with the sexual lewdness of the male decadent, and many critics argued against the fictional sexual and sensual manner in which some feminist authors, like George Egerton, wrote the archetype. Other authors, like Sarah Grand, portrayed the New Woman as a sexually educated young woman whose responsibility is to “hold out ‘a strong hand to the child man’,” (157) who sexual immorality is akin to immaturity. This social purity feminist New Woman was largely in response to the Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1860s, which sought to curb the spread of venereal diseases in brothels. The Acts, however, sought to limit the disease by controlling the diseased prostitutes while doing nothing to prevent the equally diseased men from spreading the disease. Sarah Grand comments on this failure in The Heavenly Twins, in which the protagonist sexually educates herself using medical textbooks and refuses to consummate her marriage despite her sexual desires because she knows her husband has syphilis. After her first husband dies from the disease, her second marriage is plagued with the residual fear of contamination, the fear being a “pollutant effect of male sexuality” (159).

These two opposing portrayals of the New Woman are united by the singular theme of motherhood, which is approached with the theory of eugenics in the authors’ minds. One discussion within the novels was whether the maternal instinct was inherent in women or whether it was nurtured and taught. Ironically enough, some authors—like Egerton—characterizes non-biological motherhood as more fulfilling than biological motherhood. Motherhood and eugenics was also tied to race and imperialism in many aspects. In Olive Schreiner’s The Story of an African Farm, a young Rebekah competes with the black maid to raise a child, believing herself to be racially superior and morally obligated the raise the child. However, within the Anglo-Saxon race, the New Woman also refused to marry the immoral man she loved in favor of the honorable man (regardless of class) who could help produce babies that would further the superiority of the white race.

Analysis: This article was very interesting because it addressed many characteristics of the New Woman. My only image of the New Woman was Irene Adler in Conan Doyle’s “A Scandal in Bohemia,” which corresponds mainly with Grundy’s Vivian Vivavish. This article’s discussion of the New Woman very much reminded me of George Bernard Shaw’s play Mrs. Warren’s Profession, which I now realize portrayed two different versions of the New Woman. The mother was a prostitute who made a profit on male immorality. She did not want men to be more chaste like women; she wanted women to be as free as men. However, her daughter is one of the few women attending Cambridge University, and she wants to be able to study and travel and experience culture as freely as man. The daughter did not want to be considered merely a sexual and/or maternal tool for the continuation of society.

The critic’s interpretation of the sexually maniacal New Woman sounds very similar to critics’ opposition of New Realism, which was generalized as any piece of sexually lewd literature. Would many New Woman texts fall under New Realism? Was the New Woman a real and/or common figure in fin de siècle society, or was it more an argumentative fantasy?

I found the concept that non-biological motherhood is happier and more fulfilling than biological motherhood very interesting. The notion of a single woman caring for an illegitimate child alongside the fallen mother seems very imperialistic. This conception of the New Woman implies that the archetype is mainly confined to the bourgeois class. She is either asserting superiority over the fallen woman or she is able to support the child on a spinster’s income. Unless the New Woman is able to care for a foster child while married, in which case why would she care for someone else’s child instead of having her own? Was taking care of foster children common or acceptable? Conversely, the idea that biological motherhood breeds resentment within the child, aimed both at the child and at the mother, sounds reminiscent of Dicken’s Hard Times. Louisa Gradgrind resents her parents for raising her to be so mechanical, which almost leads her to a loveless marriage.

What I don’t fully understand, however, is the connection between the New Woman, motherhood, eugenics, imperialism, and racial relations. I understand the connection between the last four elements, but I don’t see how it connects to the New Woman. I liked the notion of motherhood being tied to imperialism and race—this could be further explored in Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Yellow Face”—but this struck me as a general Victorian attitude. The notion that Victorian women need to mother and properly care for children of other races (as well as other classes) can be seen in Dickens’s *Bleak House*. Does this count as feminist and fit under the New Woman archetype because women are actually caring for children they can physically and spiritually nurture instead of trying to do so miles away?

Relevance: Ledger’s article is mainly useful as background information of social issues during the fin de siècle since it does not address Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle directly. It did, however, give me the idea of exploring Holmes’s and Watson’s relationship with social conventions: while Watson conforms to social conventions, Holmes does not and yet Holmes protects the conventions in which he does not participate. Why does Doyle use this dynamic? Can one protect a society’s traditions and conventions while simultaneously partaking in them? Or does one have to be outside the circle to protect them? And does Conan Doyle address the idea of eugenics in his portrayal of males and females? I think he kind of addresses the debate in the “Greek Interpreter,” but is it further explored?
Summary: In this chapter from her book, *Framed*, Miller discussed the role of visuals and visibility in the Sherlock Holmes canon from the fin de siècle. Miller organized the chapter in ascending order, working up from the basic form of the image and photograph to more intangible forms of imagery, stereotyping/profiling, and invisibility and visibility. Acknowledging her audience’s unfamiliarity with the specific economics of the media and illustrations, Miller begins by discussing the effect of increased illustrations on the growing media presence and culture. Because of the increase of visuals in the media, illustrations became a key aspect to the Sherlock Holmes stories in the *Strand*, which emphasized the importance of observation and surveillance in criminology. Holmes is able to observe and identify certain visual and physical characteristics that all criminals were thought to possess in the Victorian era; these characteristics tended to criminalize foreigners of a less-civilized nationality, reflecting the imperialism of the age. Miller goes over many anthropological theories that influenced early versions of profiling that were more akin to stereotyping, and she points out the fault with deducing based on predetermined assumptions that are affected by Victorian society’s nationalism.

Because they are based on assumptions, Holmes’s deductions do no work on women. In some instances, the frailty of women prevent Holmes from seeing and speaking to them because they are sick and in bed. In others, however, women’s dishonesty prevents Holmes from seeing the truth. Holmes still sees women as the docile and passive “angels of the house,” —and sometimes that is what they are in the stories—which prevents him from properly seeing their role in the crimes. In one instance, Holmes cites women’s use of makeup as an “imagistic transformation,” which adds to their impenetrability in Holmes’s eyes. Miller uses many of the short stories to back her point, but the most important of them is “A Scandal in Bohemia,” in which Irene Adler completely throws Holmes off her scent. She has a beautifully feminine face, which—according to the anthropological theory Holmes has been using—means she cannot be a criminal; her outward appearance of femininity must mean she is the perfect woman. This assumption, however, allows Adler to deceive Holmes because she does not have the mind of a woman. As the King tells Holmes upfront, she has the mind of a man. More specifically, however, she has the mind of Sherlock Holmes in a woman’s body. This deception along with her ability to use disguise to subvert the gender system allows Adler to escape.

Broadening the lens a bit more, Miller then analyzes how this particular characteristic reflects fin de siècle society; in particular, she focuses on the first-wave feminist movements and legal interventionism in the private sphere. Much of Victorian society was characterized by the openness and clarity of the public sphere (dominated by men only) and the hidden secrecy of the private sphere (in which women resided). The government did not interfere with the private sphere because it was assumed that all private households were run respectfully by respectable gentlemen. Conan Doyle, Miller argues, uses Holmes unique role as the private consulting detective who sometimes works with the government to provide a window into the dark world of the private sphere; Holmes makes the private sphere visible to the reading public, that is. Holmes proves that the private world is not as orderly and honest as the public, and he calls for legal interventionism within the private sphere. Miller characterizes this interventionism as feminine since it calls for more rights and protection for women and children, who are frequently shown as being manipulated and/or abused by the greedy and/or depraved patriarch.

Despite this, however, Conan Doyle was considered a vehement opponent of the suffragist movement by some friends, and Miller demonstrates his ambiguity concerning women’s right through his ambiguous portrayal of women as the marker of “the line between public danger and domestic safety” (57) in the Sherlock Homes canon. Women are often portrayed as a “figure of protrusion at the boundary of dark and light” (58); she is often described as standing in a doorway, sometimes with the light from the home spilling into the public sphere behind her. Because women were suddenly on the line between the two spheres instead of just in the private sphere, they knew more about the public sphere than men thought they did, but they did not know enough to make the same “rational” decisions as men, which is frequently how they become female criminals. Despite their criminality, Holmes refuses to make them visible in the public sphere by covering up their crimes and withholding justice. Miller concludes that Conan Doyle’s “commodification of feminine violence and criminality” suits a “consumerist model of vision” instead of the anthropological model used for male criminals; “Consumerism redefined femininity as public and visible, but only when it conformed to the logic of consumerism,” (69).

Analysis: I loved reading this article because of its logical structure and its interesting analysis of females and visibility within both the Sherlock Holmes canon and fin de siècle culture. The idea of visibility and invisibility is something my American Literature II class focuses a lot on, so these concepts were familiar and more interesting in a different, more British context. The idea of identifying a criminal based on their physical characteristics and the stories’
tendency to portray criminals as more primitive and ape-like in appearance reminded me a lot of a class discussion on the 1932 movie *Scarface* in which Tony and his sidekick are portrayed as illiterate gorillas; the director specifically made their appearance more ape-like. The anthropological theories Miller highlighted shed a different light on the representation of crime, tying their fascination with crime to their imperialistic tendencies. I also love the attention Miller pays to the dual nature of Victorian society, particularly London. The rigid and unyielding morals and beliefs of the time period created a divide in society; there were two worlds. There was the world everyone could see—the public sphere that mainly men dominated. This panoptical world was kept in order by the morals, ideals, and patriotism that British men took great pride in; no one would see them weak and immasculine. Then there was the world that no one could see—the private sphere. Men were assumed to be respectable and to treat their wives like a gentleman would, but there was no one to monitor them and the women had no voice to say anything. They could rape their wives every night or they could go out and find a prostitute. No one would stop them as long as they were in private. It’s no wonder Freud’s theories were so focused on the conscious and unconscious; they were the two worlds manifested within one’s own mind. What role does disguise play in allowing one to move between these two worlds?

**Relevance:** I would like this analysis to play an important role in my research. I am particularly fascinated by the visible and invisible worlds Miller analyzes, especially when connected to gender, and I would like my research to expand on this notion.

Summary: In his article, Priestman argues that “the form of the Holmes series, and of its individual stories, itself reflects and characterizes the social content of the stories,” (313). There are two axes that struggle within the stories: the indeterminate and the determinate. The indeterminate is the general picture, an amorphous mass that is indistinguishable and unspecific—London, a client’s mass of details, the series. Conversely, the determinate is the specific and singular—a criminal and his motivations, a deduction, a specific story within the canon. In general, the Sherlock Holmes canon takes the “sprawling anonymous city” of London and provides a point of singularity in Holmes’s identification of the criminals and the motivation. On another level, Holmes’s clients provide an array of details that appear trivial and insignificant to the average reader until Holmes shares his deductions and provides a point of peculiarity within the mess. Using “The Red-Headed League” as a specific example, Priestman points out that Holmes’s ability to identify the singularity and uniqueness of Jabez Wilson before dismissing him as unremarkable reflects not only the mindset of the criminals but also the story itself, which “abandons Wilson as of no further interest once his most striking claim to singularity, namely the story he has to tell, has been drained from him,” (317). Alternatively, Holmes embodies the singular due to his ability to “hold disparate aspects of experience in connection with each other,” (319). Priestman relates this ability to Holmes’s ability to disguise himself: “. . . this doubleness . . . constitutes ‘his singular character’,” (319). In this manner, he is also like the criminal, John Clay, who embodies both the upper class and the lower class, connecting the two through greed. These conflicting elements of the story mirror the paradoxical nature of the form of the series. A series is, by nature, indeterminate; it could go on as long as necessary. However, the individual cases and stories represent the determinate; they have a clear beginning and ending that offer a point of singularity in the mass of cases Holmes has solved.

Analysis: This article, overall, is very interesting, but I found certain points to be of particular interest. I was greatly fascinated by the classification of Holmes and John Clay as singular due to their duality. Holmes connects the free-flowing, artistic bohemian with the rational, scientific detective—culture with science. John Clay connects the upper class of which he is a part of by birth to the lower class of criminals of which he is also a part of because of greed. Priestman alludes to the role of disguise in helping to connect two classes or manners together within a character—I particularly liked this point. Though initially confusing, I found it interesting that the criminal has to operate in the indeterminate world—he has to be an invisible—in order to not be noticed. In identifying the criminal as a singular individual, Holmes brings them into the light and out of their shelter. This concept is something my American Literature II class has touched on, particularly when studying the gangster archetype. The gangster is invisible in society—because of his class, his ethnicity, and his illiteracy society does not really acknowledge him and he is left of the literature and culture. Because of his invisibility, he can commit crimes. Once the gangster steps into the light, oftentimes overcome by his desire to be seen and remembered, he is caught and killed or arrested. In doing so, the gangster is thrown back into the indeterminate, either with the masses of the dead or the masses of the criminals in jail. I think this article could have addressed the Watson as a symbol for the indeterminate since it classified Holmes as the determinate. Watson is a sort of flat character that could represent any member of the bourgeoisie, while Holmes—due to his duality, according to Priestman—is a unique and remarkable character.

Relevance: This article would also be very interesting to expand upon in my own research, particularly if put in conjunction with Miller’s article as well as Jaffe’s article.