Stony Brook University

Tennyson's Adulteress and Doyle's Villain: Non-Normative Victorian Women and Narrative Failure

A Thesis Presented

by

Julia Shivani Sukhu

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

English

Stony Brook University

May 2017

Stony Brook University

The Graduate School

Julia Shivani Sukhu

We, the thesis committee for the above candidate for the

Master of Arts degree, hereby recommend

acceptance of this thesis.

Michael Tondre – Thesis Advisor
Assistant Professor of English

Roger Thompson – Second Reader
Associate Professor
Writing and Rhetoric

This thesis is accepted by the Graduate School

Charles Taber
Dean of the Graduate School

Abstract of the Thesis

Guinevere and Adler: Human Victorian Women

by

Julia Shivani Sukhu

Master of Arts

in

English

Stony Brook University

2017

"Tennyson's Adulteress and Doyle's Villain: Non-Normative Victorian Women and Narrative Failure" explores Guinevere from Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* and Irene Adler from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia." This paper examines how Guinevere and Adler are represented as "fully human" characters that embody masculine traits and exist in opposition to two-dimensional Victorian feminine ideals; it focuses the actions of the characters and their relationships with their respective male protagonists, Arthur and Holmes. Arthur and Holmes are "perfect" embodiments of Victorian masculine norms that are unable to understand Guinevere and Adler as they do not subscribe in turn to Victorian feminine norms; the ensuing misrecognition leads to the conflicts in their texts: the fall of Camelot and Holmes' singular failure to solve a crime. It is the conflict between the perfection of the male characters and the humanity of the female characters that reveals Tennyson's and Doyle's commentary about gender norms in the Victorian era. By following Guinevere and Adler, we see that

Tennyson and Doyle show us that refusing to understand women as more than domestic beings leads to catastrophic consequences.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

In the Victorian era, gender norms were used to define what it meant to be masculine and to restrict what it meant to be feminine. These norms made gender simpler and easier to understand. This is why the characteristics they perpetuate not only were the pervasive social views of gender, but were also reflected in the writing of the time. Men like Thomas Carlyle, Coventry Patmore, Sir John Thomson, George Romanes, and John Ruskin all worked to define Victorian masculinity and femininity in ways that reflected larger Victorian values. Carlyle believed that work and labor were necessary to define masculinity; Coventry Patmore's submissive protagonist in *Angel in the House* became the standard against which all women were measured; Thomson worked to prove the inferiority of the female mind; Romanes and Ruskin's low opinion of women defined the image of the Victorian woman whose mind could only properly understand housework. Alfred Lord Tennyson and Arthur Conan Doyle both reflect these norms in their characters Arthur and Guinevere in *Idylls of the King* and Sherlock Holmes and Irene Adler in "A Scandal in Bohemia." Tennyson and Doyle do similar things in creating their male protagonists Arthur and Holmes: they make them perfect, or as close to perfection as man can be, by having them adhere to Victorian masculine norms. In creating these perfect characters, Tennyson and Doyle give literary life to masculine ideals, but instead of having their male heroes prove victorious in their respective stories, their heroes fail because they are unable to understand Guinevere and Irene. Camelot falls in *Idylls of the King* and Holmes is "defeated" in "A Scandal in Bohemia." This is particularly why we should examine these two works across literary form. Though on opposite sides of the literary spectrum, Tennyson and Doyle use Arthur and Holmes to explore their commentary on Victorian gender norms and the suffocating restrictions they put on Victorian women. By having these perfect men fail, respectively due to

Guinevere and Irene Adler non-normative gender identities, Tennyson and Doyle show how incapable "traditional" Victorian masculinity becomes when it must deal with an actual "human" woman rather than a forced, two dimensional "angel in the house." Tennyson and Doyle explicitly show us that if Victorian women were understood to be fully human rather than through feminine "ideals", Camelot would not have fallen and Holmes would have successfully defeated Adler.

Guinevere long predates Tennyson's attempt at the Arthurian mythos. She is a character rewritten and reimagined in almost every age. Because of this, she reflects ideals and feminine traits of the period in which she is written. As Barbara Ann Gordon-Wise states in her text *The Reclamation of a Queen: Guinevere in Modern Fantasy*: "Although certain aspects the figure of Guinevere have been affected by genre, as well as historical, sociological, and ideological milieus…. she serves as a vehicle for assigning women their proper subordinates position within a hierarchy of gender-determined relations" (2). Guinevere's character is often derived from a series of medieval feminine archetypes of the mother, the seductress, and the witch (Gordon-Wise 5). She is a character often used to show the evil in women because of her role in the destruction of Camelot. According to Gordon-Wise, Tennyson seemingly follows the pattern with his portrayal of Guinevere in *Idylls of the King*. She writes "[Guinevere] is the terrible mother" whose adultery and failure to produce an heir has led to the downfall of society (53). While Gordon-Wise understands Guinevere's role in *Idylls of the King* understands her as the terrible, barren mother figure, she does note that at the ending of the idyll "Guinevere" reads more like a "Victorian husband angrily lecturing his wife" (53). This domestic ideology undercuts prominent scholarly work about Guinevere in the *Idylls* and is key to understanding her as fully human.

Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* is his Victorian retelling of the Arthurian mythos. On the surface, he reworks Arthurian characters to fit them into a Victorian narrative that glorifies work and loyalty. Tennyson was Poet Laureate for most of the Victorian era, a position appointed by royalty which made him "a salaried member of the British royal household" (Britannica). Therefore, Tennyson is subtle with his challenge to the social ideals of femininity. Unlike Doyle, Tennyson challenges Victorian femininity by building an inherent flaw in Arthur's Camelot and his relationship with Guinevere. He creates an oath safeguarding the consent of the women of Camelot, but Arthur ignores Guinevere's consent. When these two issues are explored in greater detail, we see that Guinevere is much more than just his adulterous wife. Her consent is ignored which is what leads to the fall of Tennyson's Camelot. The disconnect in the marriage of Arthur and Guinevere leads Tennyson's contemporaries like Algernon Swinburne to call Tennyson's *Idylls* "a case for the divorce court than for poetry" (Jump 57). This is a common thread noted by multiple scholars who focus on Guinevere in *Idylls*. Stephen Ahern and Ingrid Ranum, Elliot Gilbert, and Aaron Yale Heisler all note the central nature of their dysfunctional relationship to the destruction of Camelot.

Ahern and Ranum pull at similar threads, both reading Guinevere as a character deserving of sympathy. Ahern uses Guinevere's dialogue within *Idylls* to show how he believes that a sense of sympathy can be read in the text. He argues that "because her voice controls large sections of text, she has opportunities to present her own perspective on her lot and thereby to create a sympathetic audience for her version of the events leading up to the fall of Camelot" (Ahern 91). Ranum reads sympathy from the text by analyzing Guinevere's situation. She states that "Guinevere earns her label of "false" by being too human and by "wanting a touch of humanity in her mate" (9). Ranum notes the Godlike distinction between Guinevere and Arthur

in her analysis and analyzes how the fall of Camelot is due to failings on both of their parts, and to their fundamental incompatibility. Tennyson writes that Arthur is "meant to be a man who spent himself in the cause of honour, duty and self-sacrifice, who felt and aspired with his nobler knights, though with a stronger and clearer conscience. . . .[and that] God had not made since Adam was, the man more perfect than Arthur" in his notes published by his son Hallam (*The Works of Tennyson* 946). In the epilogue of *Idylls* Tennyson reinforces the idea that Arthur is "Ideal manhood closed in real man" ("To the Queen" ll 38). Arthur is divine created perfection. What Ahern and Ranum helpfully observe is the unequal relationship between Arthur and Guinevere; but while they explore the dynamics of their relationship, I believe that the sympathy that they note, while expressed in Guinevere's analysis of her relationship with Arthur, is also built into the Camelot that Tennyson has created. If we analyze the oaths in Tennyson's Camelot, we will see how Arthur compromises his own ideals in forcing Guinevere to be his wife and thus ensuring the fall of Camelot. The sympathy that these scholars observe is built into the narrative by not only creating a fully human Guinevere who embodies masculine and feminine traits, but by creating a Camelot that would have survived if Arthur had truly valued female agency. In the case of Tennyson's Guinevere, fully human means agency in the form of choosing her husband and having a mind capable of choosing Lancelot for herself because her marriage has failed, but "fully human" differs slightly for Doyle's Adler.

Arthur Conan Doyle, unlike Tennyson, did not earn his knighthood until later in life. He was a physician before he began his literary career. Because of this, Doyle has much more freedom when creating Irene Adler since he is not restricted by, nor does his livelihood come from, the crown. But, unlike Guinevere, Irene Adler is part of a short story so scholarship on her is not as extensive. Of the few articles on the Holmes canon, even fewer of them focus on Irene.

"'A Scandal in Bohemia' and Sherlock Holmes's Ultimate Mystery Solved" by Pascale Krumm is one of the few that focus on her short story and her. He walks through the plot ultimately noting that Holmes "fails to win this case, for his opponent is someone whose mind he cannot understand" (Krumm 6). Like Guinevere, Adler is viewed only through gender norms and not as a person. What is important to note is that Holmes "loses" this case. Scholarship on the Holmes canon all note the same thing, his "never-failing genius" and ability to conquer almost all challenges he faces (Huh 553). As Jim Barloon states: "Holmes is not so much a detective as an epistemologist and ideologue—an archaeologist of knowledge—one whose underlying methods and assumptions can be sifted by the same close analysis that Holmes employs in the practice of his own craft" (Barloon 34). Holmes is the "most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen" which Adler subverts by mimicking his actions ("A Scandal In Bohemia" 239). Through Holmes's failure, Doyle suggests that women are much more than reductive Victorian ideals and if we reduce them to that, we fail to understand their complex identities. The entire premise of "A Scandal in Bohemia" hinges on the binary between men and women and reducing Adler to stereotypes. Adler shows she is "fully human" because she not only exists beyond these stereotypes, but she mirrors Holmes, the text's image of masculinity. In this way, Adler and Guinevere both show that the refusal of a woman's agency will lead to ruin.

Guinevere and Irene Adler share the same characteristic of being "fully human" which makes their existence irreconcilable to their respective male protagonists. These characters are not the ideal of what women should be in the Victorian era, but rather they are a combination of masculine and feminine traits, thus making them fully human. Arthur and Holmes are perfect in two ways, they are images of Victorian masculinity because they clearly embody masculine norms and they are written as perfect in their own texts. This perfection hinders them in

understanding Guinevere and Adler as fully human and leads to the destruction of Camelot and Holmes' first and only "loss."

Chapter 2

Victorian Masculinity

To understand how Tennyson's Guinevere and Doyle's Irene combine Victorian masculine and feminine traits to make them "fully human" characters, we must first understand specific aspects of Victorian gender norms. Victorian standards of masculinity and femininity are complex and diverse because they are "alive" in the sense that they must evolve to encompass changing masculine and feminine characteristics. For Victorian masculinity, what is important for this thesis is how self-control, physical labor, and reason are central ideas to the men who worked to define the characteristics of Victorian manhood. Victorian masculinity called for men to be in control of themselves at all times. Physical labor became a prominent "measuring stick" of masculinity meaning one had to perform physical labor to be masculine. As for the mind, the Victorian masculine mind was inherently capable of great things and superior to the feminine mind. As for Victorian femininity, the popular image of the "angel in the house" and common assumptions of the inferiority of the feminine mind that relegated women to the domestic sphere are important to this paper. By understanding these norms, we will see not only how Arthur and Holmes embody masculine norms, but how Guinevere and Adler exist outside of restrictive feminine norms.

The centrality of self-restraint in Victorian codes of masculinity can be seen in the work of the Victorian philosopher Thomas Carlyle. He may not have created the definitive ideal of Victorian masculinity, but he worked to "establish a foundation myth of manliness for an industrial society" by conflating morality, masculinity, and self-regulation (Sussman 16). His understanding of masculinity is formed around the image of "the celibate male working and

praying within an enclosed all-male community" (Sussman 16). Carlyle believed that only in an all-male community, could men reach their full potential because there were no distractions from women. By connecting masculinity with religion, Carlyle entrenches his understanding of Victorian masculinity in the all-male sphere of the Church thus removing and demonizing femininity. He defines masculinity through self-control because he saw it as an internal energy that needed mediation.

Carlyle defines the core of masculine identity as dangerous if left uncontrolled. He believed that the "source of male identity" is the "unclean and diseased" "fluid energy" within men (Sussman 20). This energy was dangerous to Carlyle and needed to be controlled by "maintaining the fragile psychic stability" by "continuously transforming desire into productivity" (Sussman 19). Masculinity is closely tied to work for Carlyle because work offers a way to control men's otherwise uncontrollable masculine energy. More specifically, Carlyle believed that men could only control themselves and focus on their work in an all-male space.

Carlyle is called the "Victorian prophet of celibacy" because he believed that the feminine must be excluded from the masculine sphere or else men could not control themselves (Sussman 20). Carlyle specifies that the optimal place for men is a society divorced from the dangers of women. More specifically:

> "In Carlyle's vision of an all-male space beyond the society of the present day and of a literary terrain occupied only by *Men* of Letters the pollution of sexuality is controlled by excluding the female; the deep ambivalence toward male sexuality itself is resolved by an imaginatively distanced celibacy; virility is divorced from sexuality; potentially dangerous psychic energy channeled to productive work and contained by dissolving the

individual ego in affective submission to a stronger male within a bonded male society" (Sussman 17).

This passage does two things, it makes work a key feature of masculinity and creates a hostile binary between the genders. By divorcing virility from sexuality, Carlyle tries to separate "masculine energy" from a heterosexual relationship. Men who take care of men must defend against the distraction and corrupting influence that is women. By defining what is needed for men to function "properly" in such narrow terms, Carlyle gives us easy guidelines to follow to be a "proper" man. Though Carlyle may preach the idea of an all-male society where men support each other, it is not realistic for the men of Britain. They cannot live in his ideal society so they must rely on their self-control and channel their energy into their work. But not just any kind of "labor" is acceptable to Carlyle.

Carlyle believed in a single approach to deal with the destructive psychic energy of men: namely, to "channel [it into] productive work" to counter the "[o]ne monster there is in this world: the idle man" (Sussman 17, Carlyle 58). Work for Carlyle is physical labor. He places upmost importance on "muscular labor," not mental labor (Sussman 103). By solely using physical labor as the definition of work, he ignores all other kinds of "work" and ultimately forces non-physical labor in to the feminine sphere. Carlyle's understanding of masculinity is too narrow in its definition and must be expanded to include mental labor. This is how the Victorian male mind became another integral part to masculinity.

Carlyle focuses on the psychic balance needed to regulate destructive male energy, but he does not fully acknowledge the labor of the mind as actual labor. He notes that "great men" have a "flowing light-fountain of native original insight, of manhood and heroic nobleness," but this

power does not translate into labor capable of controlling male energy (qtd in Sussman, 239). The issue, especially for Tennyson and Doyle, is that under these parameters "writing poetry seemed like woman's work, even though only men were supposed to do it," so "male Victorian poets worried that they might in effect be feminizing themselves by withdrawing into private work" (Mermin 67). If following Carlyle's understanding of masculinity, can we classify the work of Tennyson, Doyle, or Carlyle as fulfilling the specially defined "labor" needed to control male energy and thus define them as masculine? No, we cannot and that raises a problem because these men are cultural touchstones. Tennyson was a Poet Laureate, Doyle created one of the most popular characters of the era and Carlyle wrote to understand masculine norms. These were men with some renown so of course they must be seen as masculine. This is why there is a necessary shift from the basic understanding of masculinity that Carlyle gives us to include a more specific understanding of the Victorian male mind and how it is specifically masculine.

To define writing as conventionally masculine work, reason must become an essential part of the Victorian masculine ideal since this is mental work. Victorian scientists "talked of the masculine mind's superior ability in terms of abstract reason, leadership, original thinking and, most importantly, judgement" thus laying the ground work for connecting products of the male mind clearly with masculinity (Boddice 323). By defining intellectual superiority as inherent to the male mind, Victorian ideals of masculinity shifts so that "middle-class manhood depends not upon bodily, but upon psychological strengths, upon the ability to maintain the psychic balance that, [were] often registered in tropes of the physical" and thus includes "psychological fortitude" in the idea of masculinity (Sussman 103). This allows for situating the act of writing "not in the qualities of isolation and emotional intensity associated then with the feminine, but rather in the attributes of energetic activity, commercial endeavor, and phallic sexuality identified with

entrepreneurial manhood" (Sussman 82). By incorporating mental labor into masculine models of behavior, they legitimize written work. But by defining the male mind, they define a mental sphere that women cannot exist in. Exclusion is built into the Victorian gender binary. Victorian gender norms are defined in oppositional terms thus invoking the power imbalance between men and women. If masculinity is defined through physical labor, women must be unable to perform labor like a man can. If masculinity is defined by the intellectual ability and creative capability of a man's mind, a woman's mind must be inferior. If masculinity requires control, femininity must be incapable of control. These definitions of control, work, and the mind are all important parts of Victorian masculinity but they also show us how negatively femininity was defined.

Chapter 3

Victorian Femininity

Victorian feminine ideals are uniquely complex because they are not defined by women as masculinity is defined by men. Men defined female intelligence and the common image of women in the Victorian era, including norms of female intelligence. It is through the understanding of men that Victorian feminine ideals glorify intellectual inability and the image of the submissive "angel in the house."

As Carlyle worked hard to define his ideal masculinity, he explained his low opinion of femininity. Since the Victorian gender binary is based on a system of opposites, Carlyle, by thoroughly defining his ideas of masculinity, helped flesh out his ideas of what femininity is. Carlyle sees women as the "violent other" to men. To him, women are the "anti-muse that figures the unhealthful potentially uncontrollable energy that defines the male body" and a means to make masculine energy uncontrollable (qtd in Sussman 21). To Carlyle, the female represents the "sickness, the excremental … at the center of the male self" (qtd in Sussman 21). He defined the female self as everything dangerous to the male self. The binary he creates hinges on the superiority of one and inferiority and control of the other. While extreme and overwhelmingly negative, his view of women and femininity is the norm. This is essential to Tennyson and Doyle as they both create female characters who are more than the "anti-muse" to their male counterparts. But in writing Guinevere and Irene, they had many obstacles to overcome; one in particular is the inability of the feminine mind.

The superiority of the male mind was based not only in the inferior ability in female mental capabilities, but also in the physical characteristics of the female brain. It was a

commonly held belief that the "gravity of both the white and gray matter of the brain is greater of man than woman" (qtd in Boddice 375). A larger brain meant a better mind. We can see this in the work of Sir John Thomson and his important medical treatise the *Evolution of Sex.* In his text, he "summed up the 'traditional Victorian scheme of sexual temperaments" (Bodice 322). He wrote: "male intelligence was greater than female, men had greater independence and courage than women, and men were able to expend energy in sustained bursts of physical or cerebral activity" (qtd in Bodice 322). By making high "intelligence" inherent to gender and a key part to masculinity, men of the Victorian era reaffirmed their power by defining intelligence as a part of their natural state.

Since Victorian femininity is typically created in opposition to Victorian masculinity, the capability of the male mind inherently shows the inability of the female mind. Multiple prominent men supported the idea of feminine mental inferiority as they worked to define the place of women and the characteristics of femininity. George Romanes, a friend of Darwin and renowned evolutionary biologist, said: "We rarely find in women that firm tenacity of purpose and that determination to overcome obstacles which are characteristic of what we call a manly mind" (qtd in Boddice 1). A man of Romanes's stature claiming that the female mind is not capable of complex thinking is damning. The male mind was defined as logical and capable by prominent Victorian men which leads to the validity of these statements. John Ruskin, another prominent Victorian social critic, in his essay "Of Queen's Gardens," gives a clearer explanation of how the mind of the Victorian woman is seen:

> "woman's power is for rule, not for battle---and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places. Her great function is Praise: she enters into no

contest, but infallibly adjudges the crown of contest. By her office and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation" (120).

Ruskin states that not only is a woman's mind suited to domestic duties, but it is best for her since the home offers her a place of protection. Ultimately, the consensus is that women are unable to do complex mental labor. The mind of the Victorian woman is dedicated to homemaking, which her intellect, that is for "sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision," aides. Ruskin effectively places Victorian women in the home and thus cements the idea that because women's intellect naturally is inclined to function in a way to support a home, it is where she should be. The Victorian home, which is to "provide a place of renewal for men, after their rigorous activities in the harsh, competitive public sphere," confined women to domesticity not only because the home is domestic, but because that is where she works best (Gorham, 4). The woman's space, the home, exists to aid her husband. These descriptions are lacking a distinct sense of self for the Victorian woman but still creates a distinctive identity. Her lack of identity is her identity as an archetype known as the "angel in the house."

The original title of Coventry Patmore's poem, "the angel in the house" names the qualities that were expected of Victorian women. As we can see in the excerpt:

"Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself.
How often flings for nought, and yokes
Her heart to an icicle or whim,

Whose each impatient word provokes

Another, not from her, but him;

While she, too gentle even to force

His penitence by kind replies,

Waits by, expecting his remorse,

With pardon in her pitying eyes" (Patmore 75).

The perfect wife exists only to serve her husband. She must always be her "best" in all sense of the word even if her husband is impatient. She must be gentle and wait for him to feel remorse for being impatient with her. The focus is clearly on the husband in this passage and the wife living her life around him. Everything about her existence relies on him. Her actions, her mood, and her appearance are all meant to serve her husband. But the passage goes on to continue to identify the proper actions of an "angel":

"And if he once, by shame oppress'd,

A comfortable word confers,

She leans and weeps against his breast,

And seems to think the sin was hers;

Or any eye to see her charms,

At any time, she's still his wife,

Dearly devoted to his arms;

She loves with love that cannot tire;

And when, ah woe, she loves alone,

Through passionate duty love springs higher,

As grass grows taller round a stone" (Patmore 75).

The proper “angel” is intensely sympathetic to the moods of her husband so she should burst into tears and blame herself if anything should upset him. She should be completely, and tirelessly, devoted to him because her love is more than just love. Her love of her husband is her duty. The only thing a wife should concern herself with is her husband and she should concern herself with him to such a degree and that any mishap in his mood should be taken as her failure. Romanes and Ruskin support this understanding of Victorian women as completely dependent, obsessive, and one dimensional. By defining a woman’s mind as incapable, women must rely on capable minds, masculine minds, to live. We see how intensely supported by men this idea is by their limited understanding of the “personality” and “mind” of the angelic monolith they describe as “women.”

Chapter 4

Alfred Lord Tennyson's career as one of the Victorian Poet Laureates spanned nearly fifty years, in which he spent much time working on *Idylls of the King*. The first idylls published were "Enid," "Vivien," "Elaine," and "Guinevere" in 1859 in *The True and the False: Four Idylls of the King.* Since he worked on *Idylls* from 1833-1885, for most of his life, it comes as no surprise that many scholars note that Tennyson "updates Arthurian romance to speak to the concerns of contemporary England" (Ahern 89). Tennyson made obvious narrative choices when reinventing the Arthurian mythos for his Victorian audience. For example, he does not include Arthur's half-sister Morgause, removes the incest between her and Arthur, and in doing so does not make Arthur father and uncle to Mordred; the latter detail was key to Mallory's interpretation of Arthurian mythos in the 1500s. What Tennyson did do is create an Arthur that is a Carlylean paragon that is "respectable" in an era that valued work and purity. But while Arthur adheres to gender norms, Guinevere does not. Tennyson makes Guinevere "fully human." Tennyson creates a Guinevere that does more than accept the role she has been given. He gives her a voice about her relationship with Arthur and allows her to explain her "side" of the story which makes her incompatible with Arthur since he cannot understand a woman that does not adhere to traditional gender norms. Tennyson creates an Arthur that is incapable of recognizing Guinevere's humanity which leads to the fall of Camelot.

To understand how Guinevere is "fully human" and what that means, we first need to understand the Camelot that Tennyson builds in *Idylls* and why it has the potential to value female agency. To do this, we need to analyze the final oath Arthur has his knights swear by. Helene Roberts notes that "Arthur has sanctioned the power of women in an egalitarian society" which essentially means that he has created a society where women are allowed some power

(30). This is true and based on more then his ruling style. In *Idylls of the King*, Tennyson uses Arthur's last oath to create a "progressive" Camelot. It reads as such:

> "To love one maiden only, cleave to her.
>
> And worship her by years of noble deeds.
>
> Until they won her;
>
> for indeed I know of no more subtle master under heaven
>
> Than is the maiden passion for a maid.
>
> Not only to keep down the base in man.
>
> But teach his thoughts, and amiable words.
>
> And courtliness, and the desire for fame.
>
> And love of truth, and all that make a man" ("The Coming of Arthur"11 475-80).

Tennyson inadvertently defines a role for women with this last oath, and gives them considerable power considering Victorian feminine norms. According to the last oath, a woman's role is to teach men's "thoughts," teach them manners, and make a man "gentle." This is in direct contrast to the ideals for the Victorian woman discussed before. Only domestic skills and subservient qualities were expected because a woman's was seen as incapable of more intellectual feats. When women did teach, it was to small children, and rarely to adult men, let alone their husbands. This reinforced the belief that a woman's mind could not possibly influence a man's, let alone have any knowledge that he would want to learn from her. A wife could not teach her husband.

The other important idea in the oath is that a knight needs to worship his potential wife with years of noble deeds to win her. The choice of words here is important. Arthur telling his knights they need to "worship" their potential wives until they "won" them insinuates that the women in Camelot have a choice in who they marry rather than accepting who choses them. Tennyson has made women essential in Camelot because they are now integral to the knights fulling their oaths. But with this last oath, he inadvertently gives women power by allowing them to choose who they marry and thus allowing them a choice in who they "work" with to honor Arthur and Camelot. By writing this oath into his Camelot, Tennyson allows for sympathetic readings of Guinevere by allowing her choice and thus allowing her judgement. This oath allows us to question Guinevere's role in the fall of Camelot, outside of her adultery by asking if Guinevere had a choice in her marriage. By allowing women this choice, it shows that the women in Arthur's Camelot did not strictly adhere to Victorian gender norms and lets us read Guinevere differently because Guinevere shows us that she has a mind capable of rational, masculine, thought.

Guinevere is "fully human" because she does not fully adhere to Victorian feminine norms as defined by the "angel in the house." Her character combines gender traits. We see this in her ability to rationalize her choice to pursue a relationship with Lancelot. Returning to George Romanes' belief that women are not able to overcome obstacles and lack determination to do so because of their lacking mental capability, we see that Guinevere proves the opposite (Boddice 1). She is capable of the tenacity of purpose and determination of a "manly" mind when she defends her actions and her relationship with Lancelot in "Lancelot and Elaine." The lines read as such:

"She broke into a little scornful laugh:

'Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless King,

That passionate perfection, my good lord—

But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?

He never spake word of reproach to me,

He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,

He cares not for me: only here today

There gleamed a vague suspicion in his eyes:

Some meddling rogue has tampered with him—else

Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,

And swearing men to vows impossible,

To make them like himself: but, friend, to me

He is all fault who hath no fault at all:

For who loves me must have a touch of earth;

The low sun makes the colour: I am yours,

Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the bond" (Lancelot and Elaine ll 120-130).

Guinevere's understanding of her situation shows us her "manly mind." Guinevere is imperfectly human and the first few lines define her as such by using Arthur's perfection to define her imperfection. She calls him the "faultless king," her "passionate perfection," thus highlighting the qualities that make them incompatible. The next line, "But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?," highlights the distance between them. The nature imagery in this is line important because it is constant throughout the *Idylls.* When we first meet Guinevere, she is defined as encompassing the Earth's beauty to show that she is Arthur's opposite and his compliment and Guinevere's use of this imagery refers back to their marriage in "The Coming of Arthur." From the first idyll, Guinevere has been described as the earth and Arthur as the sun to show they are

two opposites yet in a symbiotic relationship. Here, she uses the distance of the Earth and the Sun to show the great distance between them and why their relationship is flawed, as we see in the next lines. Guinevere tells Lancelot that the reason Arthur has not addressed their infidelity is because he has not noticed it. He is so far removed from her and their relationship that he cannot see her needs or when she turns to Lancelot to replace him. She supports herself well, following these lines with the assumption that someone has informed Arthur of her relationship with Lancelot which explains the suspicious look in his eye. Guinevere is reinforcing that Arthur could never understand her or pay attention to her without someone else's input. Only then could he be pulled from his work to pay attention to her. Guinevere's description of a distant and uninterested Arthur leads us to the conclusion that Arthur had little time for Guinevere. Guinevere tells us that most of Arthur's time is dedicated to his men, trying to make them in his image, and to his "table round." He is the sun, encompassing all that see him and doing his best to impart on them his warmth, but that is not enough for Guinevere. She ends her commentary on him by saying he is at fault for the deterioration of their relationship, but still faultless because he has not wronged her as his wife. While Arthur has worked to make his knights in his image and his kingdom as his vision, he has made Guinevere an object rather than his wife. Arthur is the "sun" shining down on her but he is far too distant and consumed by changing all those under him to be anything more to Guinevere. He is faultless, he is perfect, and not human like her. Guinevere wants someone who loves her to "have a touch of earth." She is asking for relatable imperfection and someone who is like her. Arthur's perfection alienates Guinevere's imperfection and forces her to Lancelot as she says, "The low sun makes the colour: I am yours." Arthur is the sun, so she is laying her infidelity at his feet. This dialogue is key in understanding why Guinevere is a "fully human" character because it shows how her mind is capable for more

than sweetly arranging a house. Tennyson has given Guinevere an identity of her own outside of Arthur, Camelot, and her role as queen. He humanizes her in this dialogue and tries to redefine the adultery between Guinevere and Lancelot as a personal choice for a better relationship.

Guinevere combines masculine and feminine traits because again, she has a firm tenacity of purpose and determination to overcome obstacles when it comes to who she wants to love. Guinevere does not act as she should and lives for herself rather than Arthur. She challenges it and when asked why, she defends herself with sound logic without claiming she is "right" for her choices. She is not driven to adultery out of spite or vengeance, she is driven to it because she wants a "knight who won her" and pursues that relationship. Guinevere's understanding of her relationship with Arthur, his relationship with his knights, and of herself show us that she has a rational mind, like any Victorian man. This is why Ahern calls her "the most balanced and fully human figure in the *Idylls"* (Ahern 97). She is not fully pure like the "true" Enid and Elaine, and she is not traditionally feminine. She understands that her adultery is wrong, but she justifies her actions by explaining her desires and wants. Tennyson makes her an individual. She does not embody a singular ideal. She decides that not only is she happier with Lancelot, but she is going to be with him as long as she can, which is not a characteristic of the angel in the house. How Guinevere's feminine traits combine with her masculine traits is that her choice revolves solely around her emotions. She uses her dialogue to explain to Lancelot and the reader why her relationship with Arthur has failed in a manner the garners sympathy from Ahern and Ranum. But while Guinevere explains her choices as making the best of her situation, this marriage should have never taken place. As Ahern says, Guinevere's "freedom of choice is limited by the world in which she finds herself, but she has no qualms about asserting her agency in the one arena in which she as a woman of noble stature can exert control—the arena of love" (Ahern 97).

The last oath acknowledges "the arena of love" for noble women and states that Guinevere should have had some control over who she married. But if we continue to discuss Guinevere's marriage in context of the last oath, her marriage to Arthur seems odd. Arthur who wants his knights to win their wives with years of noble deeds, and to listen to their wives so they could learn from them, ignores his own oath when he marries Guinevere. Arthur who wants his knights to emulate him, does not embody his own ideals.

The last oath does two things, it opens possibilities for women and allows us to question the marriage of Arthur and Guinevere. If Arthur truly wanted his knights to emulate his actions, shouldn't he have followed the oaths he made them swear? By including this oath, Tennyson has Arthur share the blame for the fall of Camelot by not allowing his wife the same choice that the other women of Camelot are allowed in favor of following traditional masculine norms. By assuming he would be happy with Guinevere, without asking her consent to their marriage, he sees her only as an "angel in the house" whose existence is only to serve him and his goals. Arthur's "appropriation of Guinevere's gendered identity" leads to the fall of his kingdom because Guinevere's gender identity is not two dimensional since she does not exist solely for him (Ahern 95). Tennyson has Arthur play a pivotal role in undermining his own kingdom because if we ignore this oath, the *Idylls* is a Victorian retelling of Arthurian myth. If we analyze the beginning of Arthur and Guinevere's marriage with the oath in mind, it shows how Arthur ignores Guinevere's consent and focuses only on himself. Arthur inherently sets up a kingdom that allows women power over who they marry, but he does not allow Guinevere this choice. Arthur chose to ask Leodogran, Guinevere's father, directly for her hand in marriage instead of "winning" Guinevere with "noble deeds." Because Arthur did not follow his last oath, because

he did not win Guinevere, he laid the foundation for Camelot's ruin when he decided she would be his wife.

To understand how Arthur breaks his last oath, we must begin with Guinevere. After the dedication, the first lines of the *Idylls* are about Guinevere. "The Coming of Arthur" begins with:

> "Leodogran, the King of Cameliard,
> Had one fair daughter, and none other child;
> And she was the fairest of all flesh on earth,
> Guinevere, and in her his one delight." ("The Coming of Arthur" ll 1-4)

Without any context, we learn about Guinevere before we do Arthur and we learn what is important about a woman, her lineage and her beauty. We begin with a superficial description of Guinevere which remains all that the readers know about her of in "The Coming of Arthur." These lines focus on the only thing that attracts Arthur to her in the first place, the fact that she is the "fairest of all flesh on earth." He begins envisioning his future and her place in it. Though there is one problem: Guinevere has no means of consenting to any of Arthur's planning. Arthur's first lines regarding Guinevere show only his infatuation with her:

> "Desiring to be joined with Guinevere;
> And thinking as he rode, 'Her father said
> That there between the man and beast they die.
> Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
> Up to my throne, and side by side with me?
> What happiness to reign a lonely king" (The Coming of Arthur ll 76-81)

Arthur idealizes Guinevere the moment he sees her. He sees her as something that needs to be saved from "this land of beasts." He feels that he can not only save her from the savagery that is the current turmoil of the land, but he can enlighten her by lifting her up to his throne. He has not spoken to her at all. He has no idea how enlightened she is. Arthur shows how he subscribes to traditional Victorian masculine qualities because his assumption falls in line with the thinking of Ruskin. He believes her mind is inherently lesser and not enlightened like his and assumes that she needs his intervention to better her life. He then questions why he should "reign [as] a lonely king" without a queen by his side. Arthur here first and foremost wants a companion to ease his loneliness and someone to help build his vision. By only seeing Guinevere's physical appearance, he assumes that she will be everything he wants her to be so he can achieve his ideals. In these lines, we can begin to see how Arthur expects "Guinevere to conform to his reconceived vision of her wifely role" and to "sacrifice her own identity to his greater cause" (Ahern 105). He is solely focused on himself and this is exemplified in the next lines as he describes his dreams.

The latter of Arthur's dialogue delves into his dreams of Guinevere and what she means to him, then quickly builds up to the non-choice Guinevere has in marrying Arthur. The first half of this dialogue is concerned with Arthur speaking to the universe yearning for Guinevere, the second half shows us how Arthur believes Guinevere is necessary to him and his vision:

" Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,
O earth that soundest hollow under me,
Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be joined
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,

And cannot will my will, nor work my work

Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm

Victor and lord. But were I joined with her,

Then might we live together as one life,

And reigning with one will in everything

Have power on this dark land to lighten it,

And power on this dead world to make it live" ("The Coming of Arthur" ll 77-83)

Arthur curses the universe for showing him Guinevere because she is everything to him the moment he sees her and she does not notice him. Understanding the first five lines as Arthur's lament, the following lines read more as a justification for his need of her rather than an exposition to help us understand Arthur's vision. He is burdening Guinevere with his inability to fulfill his goals and this "makes Guinevere the central reference point of his worldview" (Ahern 95). Arthur has taken a woman he has only seen once, and burdens her with the future of his kingdom. He attributes a mystical supporting power to her that would allow him to create his ideal kingdom. There is nothing in these lines that could support this, only the social perception of the Victorian era that women exist for men. Arthur takes this a step further by making Guinevere inherent to his masculinity because he needs her to "work his work." For him to achieve Carlyle's understanding of masculine labor, he needs her. But, again, there is nothing to substantiate what Arthur is claiming. The only thing Arthur knows is that Guinevere is the most beautiful woman he has ever seen, but beauty does not translate into her capability as a queen or her ability to help him embody Victorian masculine norms. Still, Arthur is infatuated with Guinevere which leads him to ask Leodogran for Guinevere's hand in marriage after he defeats all opposing kings of the land ("The Coming of Arthur" ll 128). It is important to note that while

the oath specifies that a knight should win his wife by years of noble deeds, Arthur's deeds here were not for Guinevere, they were for Leodogran. Arthur says "If I in aught have served thee well" to Leodogran before asking him for Guinevere to marry ("The Coming of Arthur" ll 129). He asks for Guinevere as a reward for his service. Arthur has not won Guinevere by his noble deeds. What he has done is impressed her father. If Arthur tried to win her in the way his last oath outlines, he would have known that Guinevere has no interest in him.

So far, Arthur has only focused on the beauty of Guinevere's appearance, and has neglected to notice that he is unremarkable to her. Guinevere watches the men riding out to battle and Arthur is among them. Guinevere "saw him not, or marked not, if she saw" ("The Coming of Arthur" ll 52). She took no notice of him. Arthur does ride as "a simple knight among his knights" wearing nothing to signify his royal status so Guinevere could have overlooked Arthur, but because she could not discern him from his other knights we see that she does not have an initial attraction to him like Arthur has to her ("The Coming of Arthur" ll 51). Arthur's attraction to Guinevere is based solely on her beauty, but Guinevere is not attracted to any of Arthur's physical characteristics. This continues throughout "The Coming of Arthur," especially in the description of Arthur's and Guinevere's wedding. If Arthur paid attention to her body language instead of her beauty alone, he would have noticed her disinterest in him.

During the wedding of Arthur and Guinevere, her body language reveals how she truly feels about the situation. During the ceremony, "The Sun of May descended on their King,
/ They gazed on all earth's beauty in their Queen, ("The Coming of Arthur" ll 64-63). All of those in attendance admire Guinevere for her beauty and nothing else. Everyone focuses on her so it is surprising that no one notices her lack of excitement at her own wedding. Guinevere's lines when she marries Arthur are as such: "To whom the Queen replied with drooping eyes,

/ 'King and my lord, I love thee to the death" ("The Coming of Arthur" ll 470-71). Her words are correct for the occasion, but her body language is not. Though this can be taken as modesty, it can also be seen as reluctance. She is marrying a man unremarkable to her, one she could not even pick out of a crowd. She is marrying a man who sees her face before he sees her as a person. Guinevere's beauty distracts Arthur from her humanity. Regardless of his oath, Arthur has put so much importance on Guinevere's beauty, it is the sole reason he makes her his queen. He does not consider what she wants, but assumes that she would want to be his queen because it is her duty to be a good wife. This assumption is what leads to Camelot's downfall. Her connection to Arthur and Camelot is weak and could have easily been avoided if Arthur cared about Guinevere as a person.

Guinevere in the *Idylls* may be "false" in her loyalty to Arthur romantically, but the fall of Tennyson's Camelot could have been avoided if Arthur followed his last oath. Guinevere never "purposely set out to do damage" (Ranum 47). Because we have so little information about Guinevere before her marriage to Arthur, we do not know her goals or ambitions. But we can assume from her lukewarm reception of Arthur that she was not aiming to be the queen of Camelot. Even after their marriage, she "does not actively strive to undermine his authority" but just chooses to pursue a relationship with a man who "won" her (Ahern 107). She chooses Lancelot and Lancelot chooses her, thus making their relationship more in line with Arthur's last oath than the marriage between her and Arthur.

Tennyson's reimagining of Arthurian myth implicitly critiques traditional gender norms of the time. He has built into his Camelot the ability for women to be more than just objects by allowing them the agency of choice in who they are to marry, normally the biggest decision of their lives. But by incorporating this choice into the oaths for Arthur's knights, Tennyson allows

for readings that understands Arthur's share of the blame in a unique manner. When read this way, Tennyson creates an Arthur that contradicts his own ideals to get what he wants. He creates an Arthur who assumes Guinevere would be happy to be the "angel" in his house because that is how women are supposed to be. But because Guinevere is more than just an ideal, their relationship fails and so does Camelot and because Arthur embodies masculine norms, he is unable to understand a Guinevere who does not embody feminine norms. He is unable to separate Guinevere from her beauty and from his assumption that she would want to marry him.

Chapter 5

Arthur Conan Doyle follows in a path similar to Tennyson in the *Idylls.* Like Arthur, Holmes misjudges Irene Adler, the "villain" of "A Scandal in Bohemia." Doyle creates a fully rounded female character who, like Guinevere, is understood through gender norms for most of the story. Adler is viewed through gender stereotypes, and, like Arthur, Holmes' inability to recognize Adler outside of feminine norms causes him to "lose" the case. Doyle uses Holmes, his male protagonist, as a means of showing how capable Adler is in a patriarchal culture. He, like Arthur, is perfect in his embodiment of masculine norms, yet they do not enable him to solve the case. Adler, like Guinevere, is a character more competent than the male characters give her credit for. Doyle challenges the "angel in the house" image with Irene Adler as she is the only character to defeat Holmes and the only woman to earn his respect.

Doyle wrote "A Scandal in Bohemia" in 1891, making it the first short story to be published after the novellas *A Study in Scarlet* and *A Sign of Four*. It is centered around the theft of a photo of The King of Bohemia and Irene Adler. The King has rejected Adler because she is an American woman with no noble heritage. As revenge, she threatens to release the photo of them on the day his marriage is announced which will cause a scandal. Holmes and Watson work the case and attempt to steal the photo from Irene, but fail to do so. Scandal is averted because Irene decides not to use the photo to ruin the king's marriage. Holmes may be the protagonist, but Adler has the power in this story. But for most of the story, Adler is classified as a simple spinster and a vengeful woman by Holmes. He underestimates her and the threat she represents because of his assumptions of gender norms, which he can do because he is an ideal image of Victorian masculinity and perpetuates gender norms.

Holmes is a character defined both by his physical labor and mental labor which are essential qualities to Victorian masculinity, both of which Holmes preforms. He defines himself as a Victorian working man:

> " [n]ow the skillful workman is very careful indeed as to what he takes into his brain-attic. He will have nothing but the tools which may help him in doing his work, but of these he has a large assortment and all in the most perfect order. It is a mistake to think that that little room has elastic walls and can distend to any extent. Depend upon it there comes a time when for every addition of knowledge you forget something that you knew before. It is of the highest importance, therefore, not to have useless facts elbowing out the useful ones." ("A Study in Scarlet" 13)

Holmes combines mental labor with physical in this description of his mind. He defines information as his tools, the skill it requires to select what is important, and the refinement of what "tools" he leaves in his mind. As for physical labor, Holmes states his history of "bar fencing and boxing", his tendency to follow subject of interest in and out of disguises, and his ability to defend himself when needed shows us the physical labor that he has to perform ("The Gloria Scott" 251). Holmes is the perfect workman, ever evolving so he can always perform his labor perfectly. But his dedication to his trade is not the only part of his character that exemplifies Victorian ideals, his view on women is especially Victorian.

The beginning of "A Scandal in Bohemia" introduces Adler as "The Woman" and explains why this title is so important, mainly because Holmes does not have a very high opinion of women before he meets her. Watson tells the readers that Holmes used to "make merry over the cleverness of women," as in he found their attempts to be clever funny ("A Scandal in

Bohemia" 262). This simplistic view of women leads Holmes to categorize Adler as a "spinster" who is still "the daintiest thing under a bonnet" ("A Scandal in Bohemia" 250, 252). To Holmes, female beauty is a nuisance because it becomes the "grit in a sensitive instrument" known as his deduction process ("A Scandal in Bohemia" 239). Holmes acknowledges Adler's attractiveness because he sees it as a defining factor of her being a woman and Victorian feminine standards. Holmes shows us his Victorian sensibilities in his categorization of her; she is beautiful, as a woman is supposed to be but she is apparently unmarried or unattached to a man so she is a spinster. His focus on her physical characteristics dismisses her mental ability. Much like Ruskin and Romanes, he does not believe she has capable of being dangerous which causes him to "lose" to her. His views make him unable to understand Adler as she truly is, a complex character. But unlike what happens to Arthur, Holmes was warned that Adler is much more than her gender.

Holmes' failure to retrieve the photo in "A Scandal in Bohemia" could have been prevented if he listened to the King of Bohemia. The King tells Holmes that Adler has a "soul of steel" and "the mind of the most resolute man" when he makes his case ("A Scandal in Bohemia" 248). The King emphasizes that Adler's mind is not to be taken lightly. He compares it to a masculine mind because he understands her from their history and uses his failures to steal back the photo as proof. Coming to Holmes is the King's last resort. The King tells Holmes that "[t]wice burglars in [his] pay ransacked her house," "[o]nce [he] diverted her luggage when she travelled," and "[t]wice she has been waylaid" without any success of stealing back the photograph ("A Scandal in Bohemia" 248). The King has shown Holmes multiple times that Adler can thwart his agents, but this does not worry Holmes as it should. While Holmes is represented as a brilliant character, cases that are brought to him are unusual. He calls himself

the “the last and highest court of appeal in detection,” but fails to understand that the reason the King of Bohemia comes to him is because Adler is much more than a “spinster” (“The Sign of Four”). He loses because he cannot see past his socially normative belief that women are equipped only with a feeble mind made for domesticity.

Because he thinks so little of her, Holmes dismisses Adler when she notices the rocket Watson throws in her window to cause a distraction. Holmes’ plan to retrieve the photo is to gain access to Adler’s home by disguising himself as an injured priest. Watson then throws a rocket through the window which will begin to smoke and simulate a fire. As Holmes predicts, Adler automatically runs to save the most precious thing in her home, the photo, and reveals its location to Holmes. All of this goes according to plan until Holmes tells her it’s a false alarm. He tells Watson that when he “cried out that it was a false alarm, she replaced [the photo], glanced at the rocket,” and left the room (“A Scandal in Bohemia” 258). Adler obviously notices the rocket, and Holmes notices she does but does not question it. His arrogance makes him dismiss the possible consequences of her noticing this part of his plan. Subscribing to Victorian gender norms cripples him as it makes him ignore obvious signs that Adler has deduced his plan. He does not think that Adler would question why a rocket came flying through her window or why it would happen right after she helped an injured priest. These are two extremely odd and extraordinary events to happen on their own and ludicrous when they happen in succession. Holmes does not treat this case or Adler with the seriousness it deserves so he fails to retrieve the photograph. Much like Arthur, Holmes ignores Adler’s ability to subvert his deduction and planning because her classification as a woman removes all sense of “danger” and ability from her character. He disregards her mind even after he is warned not to. But Holmes is only one of

the men in the narrative. The King and Watson both have their unique perceptions of Adler that are just as lacking.

What Doyle has done is use three men of different social status, Holmes, the King, and Watson, to show us how different men focus on different parts of a woman's character. From the beginning of the short story, we are told she is an intelligent woman who is loyal to her convictions. So far, Holmes has ignored that description and he is not the only one to misjudge her. This is important because Adler is present in the story for very few scenes so we mostly depend on the male characters' perceptions of her to define her. The King, and the client, describes to Holmes a formidable woman who, due to scorn, is bent on destroying his upcoming marriage. While he mentions what is unique about Adler, namely her mind, his focus is on his life, the lost opportunity that is Irene to him, and the potential damage she can cause him. The King tries to convey this to Holmes in the beginning, but then quickly shifts focus back onto himself and the damage she can do. While the King may have the most well rounded understanding of Adler, he does not present it well since he only has one line dedicated to explaining her "manly" resolute mind and her lack of nobility. It is never forgotten that even though Adler may be smart, she is still common. He explains why Adler has a photograph of them together, because he "was only Crown Prince then" and young (Doyle 259). His relationship with Adler is a youthful indiscretion. This continues throughout the story. At the end, after Adler leaves and decided to not ruin his life, the King says: "'What a woman—oh, what a woman!" ... "Did I not tell you how quick and resolute she was? Would she not have made an admirable queen? Is it not a pity that she was not on my level?'" ("A Scandal in Bohemia" 269). His focus remains on himself even at the end of the story. He sees her as an object rather than a person, pitying that the only thing separating them is her "level." He only

focuses on what Adler lacks and why she is not suitable for him. The King thinks like a noble but Watson has a more “common” understanding of Adler.

Watson has the most two-dimensional understanding of Adler because he only focuses on her beauty. Watson, who was there when the King described how formidable Adler is, is taken aback by her beauty when he first sees her. He regards her as a "beautiful creature,” with a "superb figure” "that all gorgeous women have," which causes him to be “heartily ashamed” of himself for conspiring against her (A Scandal in Bohemia 257, 256). Watson most clearly objectifies her. While he does note her "kindliness,” he takes more interest in her physical beauty and what it represents because this is what is important to Watson. Beauty to Watson is the first step to being a woman so the rest of her attributes, her mind, her personality, come after. Understanding how the male characters understand Adler is important because they show us what conventional Victorian men value in a woman namely, beauty and a good lineage. This is what Holmes uses to dismiss her as a vengeful spinster at the outset of the text. While Adler is defined by the male characters for most of the text, her actions, and her sparse dialogue, are important because this is where Adler defines herself.

Adler is one of the most unique antagonists in the Holmes canon not only because she beats him, but because her words have weight. Again, Adler has few lines in the story, but there two instances where her dialogue has power over him, when she bids Holmes “goodnight” and her letter that she leaves in place of the photo. After Sherlock tricks her into revealing the location of the photo, Adler follows him home and bids him goodnight. Holmes is about to enter 221 Baker street when a “slim youth in an ulster” tells him good night (“A Scandal in Bohemia” 261). Holmes notes that he has “heard that voice before” but he is unable to place it (“A Scandal in Bohemia” 261). At this point, Holmes has tailed Adler twice and has spoken to her face to

face, yet he cannot recognize her voice. Here, Adler is mocking Holmes; she deliberately gives him the message that he has lost because she has figured out who he is and his plan. The next important dialogue that Adler has is the letter that she leaves for Holmes to find in lieu of the photograph. The letter left to Holmes represents the only monologue she has in the text and, more importantly, we finally learn about Adler from herself. In her letter, Irene explains the whole ordeal from how she understood that she was tricked to how she is now in "love and am loved by a better man than" the King which is why she has decided not to release the picture ("A Scandal in Bohemia 262). Irene has the power in these two instances because Sherlock and the others are either unable to figure out it is her or are waiting to see what she will do. Because the letter replaces the photo in the safe, they must read it. Adler's dialogue becomes integral to the text because to controls the narrative and proves how intellectually capable she is.

In the letter, Adler proves that her mind matches that of the most resolute of men, Sherlock Holmes. She explains how she has been warned about Holmes and that the King might seek his help. She explains how she understood his plans and explains that she "rather imprudently, wished [him] good-night," and identifies herself as the "slim youth" ("A Scandal in Bohemia" 261). Then she explains how she "often take[s] advantage of the freedom" that a male costume gives her, calling the outfit her "walking-clothes," referencing the fact that she has done this before and finds it quite useful (A Scandal in Bohemia, 261). Adler shows us that she understands gender roles and manipulates them. She knows the role she must act as a woman, and uses the disguise of a man to do what a woman cannot. She shows how her mind departs from what Romanes or Ruskin believe and that the King was right in his description of her. She knows what she is doing, what she wants, and how to get it. Adler has shown us through her actions why she has earned the title "the Woman," and the respect of Holmes, but a man's view

point still holds power over Irene. The Sherlock canon in its entirety is told by John Watson. Most of the time we can forget he is narrating until he actively shows his perspective. This is why we do not realize that in her actions, Irene Adler directly mirrors Sherlock Holmes.

In "A Scandal in Bohemia", Holmes himself defines masculine aptitudes and in mimicking him, Adler mimics masculine traits. To find out more about Adler, Holmes tails her for a day in disguise as a "drunken-looking groom" to the Church of Saint Monica, to the "most preposterous position" Holmes has ever found himself in, a witness to a wedding (A Scandal in Bohemia 252). After this, Sherlock then uses the disguise of a "kind old clergyman" to gain entry to Adler's home and find the location of the photo ("A Scandal in Bohemia" 261). Adler then does the same thing. After realizing that she "betrayed herself" into revealing the place of the photo, she deduced that the clergyman might have been Sherlock Holmes. Though he "made her reveal what he wanted to know," Adler follows Holmes, like he did her, to confirm her suspicions and if she "was really an object of interest to the celebrated Mr. Sherlock Holmes" ("A Scandal in Bohemia" 261). Adler does exactly what Holmes has done in the same situation. She uses disguises to get close to him and then decides her best course of action ("A Scandal in Bohemia" 261). Adler is "fully human" for she not only combines the masculine and feminine, but she combines femininity with logic, with deduction, with the essence of Sherlock Holmes.

Chapter 6

Tennyson and Doyle's "fully human" characters, Guinevere and Irene Adler, challenge Victorian gender norms. They use their texts to critique the status of women in Victorian society by showing how "perfect" men fail when they refuse to understand women are not restricted by masculine defined feminine roles. They show us that regardless of norms, women can embody traits that are "masculine" because women exist for more than domestic service. Guinevere's ability to explain her situation to Lancelot and understand why her marriage has failed is key to understanding why Arthur's last oath is so important. Adler's letter shows us exactly how she has a "resolute mind" and that women can stand on an equal playing field with masculine minds. Both Tennyson and Doyle made a specific choice in having their "perfect" male protagonists fail because of a woman, and by having them fail because of their own inability to understand women outside of two dimensional societal norms, Tennyson and Doyle have made Guinevere and Adler female characters who showcase the moral, mental, and social potential of women.

Bibliography

Ahern, S. "Listening to Guinevere: Female Agency and the Politics of Chivalry in Tennyson's Idylls." *Studies in Philology*, vol. 101 no. 1, 2004, pp. 88-112. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/sip.2004.0002

Barloon, Jim. "The Case for Identity: Sherlock Holmes and the Singular Find." *Clues: A Journal of Detection (Taylor & Francis)*, vol. 25, no. 1, Fall 2006, pp. 33-44. EBSCO*host*, proxy.library.stonybrook.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hus&AN=23423281&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Boddice, Rob. "The Manly Mind? Revisiting the Victorian 'Sex in Brain' Debate." Gender & History, no. 2, 2011, p. 321. EBSCOhost, proxy.library.stonybrook.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgao&AN=edsgcl.262049991&site=eds-live&scope=site.

The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Poet Laureate." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., n.d. Web. 04 May 2017. https://www.britannica.com/art/poet-laureate.

Carlyle, Thomas. " On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History." Trans. Array *Victorian Prose and Poetry*. USA, Oxford University Press, 1869, pp 38-52.

Doyle, Arthur Conan. "A Scandal in Bohemia." 1891. *Sherlock Holmes The Complete Novels and Stories*. vol. 1. Bantam, New York, 2003, pp. 239-63.

- - -. "A Study in Scarlet." 1891. *Sherlock Holmes The Complete Novels and Stories*. vol. 1. Bantam, New York, 2003, pp. 1-120.

- - -. "The Gloria Scott." 1891. *Sherlock Holmes The Complete Novels and Stories*. vol. 1. Bantam, New York, 2003, pp. 584-603.

Gordon-Wise, Barbara Ann. *The Reclamation of a Queen: Guinevere in Modern Fantasy*. West Port Connecticut, Green Wood Press, 1991.

Gorham, Deborah. The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal. Vol. 19, London, Routledge, 2013.

Huh, J. "Whispers of Norbury: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Modernist Crisis of Racial (Un)Detection." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 49 no. 3, 2003, pp. 550-580. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/mfs.2003.0052

Jump, John Davies., ed. *Lord Alfred Tennyson: The Critical Heritage*. London, Routledge, 1995.

Krumm, P. ""A Scandal in Bohemia" and Sherlock Holmes's Ultimate Mystery Solved." *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, vol. 39 no. 2, 1996, pp. 193-203. *Project MUSE*, muse.jhu.edu/article/366786.

Mermin, Dorothy. "The Damsel, the Knight, and the Victorian Woman Poet." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1986, pp. 64–80. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1343554.

Patmore, Coventry. *The Angel in the House*. Cassell & Company, 1891. *Project Gutenberg*, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4099/4099-h/4099-h.htm

Ranum, Ingrid. "Tennyson's False Women: Vivien, Guinevere, and the Challenge to the Victorian Domestic Ideology." *Victorian Newsletter*, 2010, p. 39. EBSCO*host*, http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.stonybrook.edu/eds/detail/detail?vid=3&sid=f69

30931266443a6941b1dab94b693d3@sessionmgr103&hid=119&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ==#AN=edsgcl.230765399&db=edsglr.

Roberts, Helen. “Divided Self, Divided Realm: Typology, History and Persona in Tennyson's Idylls of the King.” Pre-Raphaelitism and Medievalism in the Arts, E. Mellen Press, Lewiston, NY, pp. 29–48.

Ruskin, John. Of Queen's Gardens. London, Ballantyne Press, archive.org/details/ofqueensgardens00ruskrich.

Sussman, Herbert L. *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art*. Cambridge UP, 2008.

Tennyson, Alfred Lord. "The Coming of Arthur." *Idylls of the King*. Penguin Books, 1996. pp. 21-35.

- - -. "Lancelot and Elaine." *Idylls of the King*. Penguin Books, 1996, pp. 168-205.

- - -. *The Works of Tennyson*. Edited by Hallam Lord Tennyson, London, Macmillan, 1913, books.google.com/books?id=uZdlAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA946&lpg=PA946&dq=#v=onepage&q&f=false.