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ADDENDUM TO G. B. BRYAN'S "THE PROVERBIAL SHERLOCK HOLMES": EXPANDING THE PAREMIOLOGICAL CATALOG IN THE HOLMESIAN CANON

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to reassess the use of proverbs in the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, taking as a starting point the article previously published by G. B. Bryan on this same topic in *Proverbium* in 1996. In it, Bryan came to the conclusion that proverbs did not abound in the series. For this reason, the collection of stories and the four novels published have been surveyed for their use of paremias in order to establish their frequency of appearance and how they are used by the author. Once a rather extensive catalog of sentences susceptible to being considered proverbs had been gathered, they were individually checked against dictionaries to establish whether they could be labeled as such.

After a detailed examination of the materials obtained, this paper contradicts the thesis presented by Bryan and demonstrates that Conan Doyle uses proverbs in his detective stories quite often, most frequently through the character of Holmes.

Keywords: G. B. Bryan, A. Conan Doyle, Index, Proverbs, Sherlock Holmes, Victorian Literature

1. Introduction

In 1996, the late George B. Bryan (1939-1996) published a paper in *Proverbium* entitled "The Proverbial Sherlock Holmes: An In-

dex to Proverbs in the Holmesian Canon" with the purpose of assessing whether a figure that has become "proverbial" achieved that status "through the use of proverbs as a stylistic device" (Bryan 1996: 47). In his article, the author resorted to one of the fathers of modern Paremiology, B. J. Whiting, to justify his own interest in a form of literature that was seen by many as low and undeserving of an intellectual of such stature. Whiting analyzed the works of important authors for the development of the investigative genre such as P. Wentworth, F. W. Crofts, R. Stout, E. S. Gardner, D. L. Sayers, G. Simenon, M. Allingham, M. Innes, J. Creasy, C. Aird, and A. Christie (Bryan 1996: 47-48), possibly one of the few authors that could dispute A. Conan Doyle's status as the absolute reference in the genre. Nonetheless, a scholar should not have to justify his or her interest and defend its legitimacy, particularly when dealing with a character, as well as a franchise, that has become ingrained in the folklore of the Western world, if not globally, having transcended his original geographical, linguistic, and temporal context to become one of the most recognizable fictional characters in the world. Proof of this are the continuous transmedial reiterations of the adventures of the consulting detective, from the original novels and short stories to radio broadcasts, film, television series, comic books, and even video games over the last few decades.

The adaptability and universality of the character of Sherlock Holmes were noted early on and in the third of the cinematic adaptations of his adventures into film, starring B. Rathbone as Holmes and N. Bruce as Watson, *The Voice of Terror* (1942), the audience is presented with a title screen that reads,

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

As is known, this film is a contemporary adaptation of the last adventure of the detective in the chronology of the canon: "His Last Bow", but adapting it to the context of World War II instead of World War I, which was the setting of the original story. As can be assessed without any fear of incurring false impressions,

this is as valid today as it was 80 years ago when the film was first released amid global conflict.

Recently, and following the trend of adapting the characters and plots of the original stories to present-day contexts, in 2010 BBC released a miniseries titled *Sherlock* (Gatiss and Moffat 2010-2017) of 3 episodes running for four seasons, plus a special episode, starring B. Cumberbatch as Holmes and M. Freeman as Watson, resulting in astounding global success. This TV fiction, together with *Elementary* (Doherty 2012-2019), starring J. Lee Miller as Holmes and L. Liu as Watson, have contributed to reinforcing the timeless character of Conan Doyle's hero and have helped to take his relevance well into the 21st century. Also responsible for this are films starring R. Downey Jr and J. Law first (Ritchey 2009, 2011), and, regrettably, the shameful spoof *Holmes & Watson* (Cohen 2018), starring W. Ferrell and J. C. Reilly, unworthy of the legacy of the pair after whom the film is named. Moreover, 9 videogames (Harrison 2021) have been released since the turn of the century, allowing players to take on the detecting powers of Holmes and play as him in order to solve various mysteries, proving that the detective remains relevant not only to those nostalgic of the original adventures but also among younger audiences at whom these kinds of productions are most frequently targeted. All of this should suffice to demonstrate that the character continues to be as popular with the public as ever.

It is for this reason that a study on the use of proverbs in the adventures of one of the most popular fiction heroes in the history of literature is still considered to be of relevance. This is especially true taking into account that Bryan concluded that in the Holmesian canon, it "cannot be maintained that the proverbial detective employed more than marginally proverbial language" (Bryan 1996: 51). As is the intention of this piece of work to prove, after a close inspection of the canonical adventures from a paremiological scope, Bryan's affirmation seems rather inaccurate and, taking his 1996 paper as a starting point, some clarifications and expansions need to be made in order to demonstrate that the proverbial language in the adventures of Sherlock Holmes is, in fact, richer than what Bryan noted. Thus, elaborating on Bryan's article and following his organization and formatting to facilitate cross-referencing, a few commentaries and amplifications will be made over the next pages.

2. Preliminary remarks on Bryan's "Index"

To begin with, it must be pointed out that in his work, Bryan includes not only proverbs but other types of phraseologisms, particularly, nominations (Fielder 2007: 39-40) and stereotyped comparisons (Fielder 2007: 43-44), which despite potentially having a certain proverbial character, lack one of the most relevant defining features of proverbs: syntactic independence as a self-contained grammatical sentence (Mieder 2006: 2-4; Fielder 2007: 44-45). For this reason, in this paper, only proverbs that are unquestionably considered as such by dictionaries of proverbs will be presented, accompanied by a reference to their location in said dictionaries. Consequently, examples such as the following have not been considered for the present work, as their consideration as proverbs has not been proved after consulting various authoritative reference works.

> GODFREY EMSWORTH I hoped against hope (056: 1266) (Bryan, 1996: 61)

However, J. Ayto (2008: 179) lists the phrase in his *Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms.* This proves that the phrase is indeed a phraseological unit, just not of the kind that is of interest to this piece of research.

On his part, Bryan (1995: 49) affirms that throughout the canon, Holmes employs a total of only 11 proverbs, a pitiful amount considering that the collection of the stories spreads across almost 1500 pages and Holmes' words, as the obvious protagonist, make up for a significant percentage of the total, establishing Shakespeare as the primary source for Holmes' proverbial knowledge. Indeed, Holmes does cite the works of the Bard multiple times, contradicting the famous description by Watson in which the doctor assesses the knowledge of his recent roommate in relation to various disciplines and stating that Holmes' knowledge of literature is "nil" (Doyle 2004: 20). Moreover, Holmes also cites Goethe twice (002: 126, 174),[1] G. Flaubert (004: 468), T. De Quincey (008: 521), or H. D. Thoreau

[1] To facilitate cross-referencing with Bryan's paper, his organization has been used here as well. Thus, the adventure in which the quotation is to be found is identified with a number. The complete list can be found in the ***Appendix*** at the end.

(012: 605), proving that Watson's judgment was quite rushed. However, no evidence supports that the following phrases found in Shakespeare are proverbs,

> HOLMES "Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just" (045: 1192) (*King Henry VI* Pt. 2 3: 2)

> HOLMES Journeys end in lovers' meetings,' as the old play says. (027: 861; 044: 1139) (*Twelfth Night* 2: 3)

Apart from the fact that Holmes explicitly cites "the old play", i.e. *Twelfth Night*, as the source for the second sentence, Bryan seems to have been misled by his mastery of theater and his knowledge of the works of Shakespeare. Even though it is true that both statements have a certain proverbial resonance to them, none of the reference works consulted for the composition of this paper credit them as proverbs. M. P. Tilley does reference the first one in his prestigious dictionary, with which Bryan was unquestionably more than familiar, not as a proverb *per se* but as an allusion to the proverb "innocence bears defense with it" (Tilley 1950: 341); whereas for the second quotation, there is no reference whatsoever. Consequently, these two instances do not seem suitable for consideration as proverbs but, rather, as quotations that may be indicative of Holmes' fondness for theater and Shakespeare's work. After all, theater in Victorian England was a popular pastime "for Londoners '[h]igh or low, rich or poor" (Schoch 1998: 1).

A case of an inconsistency related to Shakespearean intertextuality, while also broadly considered a proverb, has to do with the proverb "this world's a stage and every man plays his part" (Wilson 1970:918), a paremia that was well-established in Shakespeare's time (Tilley 1950: 759) and which the playwright cited, quite conveniently, several times across various plays, arguably, most memorably in *The Merchant of Venice* (1:1). Thus, Holmes in two different instances states,

> HOLMES This, then, is the stage upon which tragedy has been played, and upon which we may help to play it again. (040: 196)

And again,

> HOLMES … for it is more than likely that you will have your part to play. (054: 1244)

Even though these may be just an accidental choice of words, Holmes' knowledge of Shakespearean works, as shown in the previous examples, could be taken as indicative of a deliberate allusion. Furthermore, the fact that Bryan omits both instances is surprising and cannot be justified by not being canonical uses of the proverb as he includes the modification of the well-known proverb "the exception proves the rule" (Wilson 1970: 234) when Holmes states "I never make exceptions. An exception disproves the rule" (002: 105).

Another dubious proverb uttered by Holmes as cited by Bryan (1996: 49) is

HOLMES The wages of sin, Watson, the wages of sin! (054: 1252)

In this case, we seem to be dealing with another literary allusion, rather than a proverbial one, in this case referencing *The Bible* in Romans (6:23), where it is stated that "the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Finally, the last case of inconsistency found in Bryan's paper has to do with the mistaken attribution of the proverb "let bygones be bygones" (Wilson 1970: 96) to Culverton Smith, the villain in "The Adventure of the Dying Detective", the story in which Holmes pretends to have contracted a fatal disease to get the former to confess to the murder of his own nephew. Reading the story, it becomes apparent that it is indeed Holmes who uses the proverb (046: 1178). This makes quite a difference, both quantitatively and qualitatively, because it is one of the few cases in which, according to Bryan, Holmes makes a canonical use of proverbs, which also contributes, to a certain extent, to undermining his portrayal of Holmes as a not very proverbial character.

3. Expansion to Bryan's "Index"

Having made some clarifications that seemed necessary in relation to Bryans's observations, in this section, Bryan's "Index" will be expanded by presenting well-documented instances of the use of proverbs in the different adventures of Sherlock Holmes that were overlooked by the author. For this purpose, and in or-

der to facilitate the identification of the different paremias, these are listed alphabetically in relation to the first noun included in them, following the style and formatting used by Bryan in his original work and identifying the adventure in which it was featured with a number in relation to their chronological order of original publication as indicated by Bryan. However, two minor modifications have been made in order to provide as consistent and uncontroversial a work as possible: on the one hand, next to the proverb, there is a reference to a dictionary of proverbs in which the paremia is found, so as to prove its existence and consideration as such by prestigious reference works; on the other hand, for each quotation from the Holmesian canon provided, the character that uses the proverb is identified with the purpose of easily determining which characters, or character-types, are particularly fond of the use of proverbs and whether Conan Doyle used this as a device to present certain characters in a certain way. For this purpose, and in order to reach a better understanding of the use of paremias in Conan Doyle's Holmesian corpus, a triple distinction has been made between proverbs used canonically, i.e., word-for-word as one would expect to find them in a dictionary; proverbs that show some modification in relation to that canonical, dictionary wording in order to adapt the sentence to the particular context to which it is applied; and, finally, allusions to proverbs. The last may be the most debatable category as it may be considered open to interpretation or biased by an inclination of the paremiological reader to find proverbs everywhere. Nonetheless, considering how troublesome this might be, out of the dozens of allusions noted, only a set of seemingly irrefutable examples will be presented here.

3.1. Canonical uses of proverbs

It is widely accepted that proverbs, as elements of folklore, may manifest with slight variations that are due to their preeminently oral spread (Mieder, 2004: 5, 9). It is for this reason that some of the following examples may seem to differ from the wording included in the dictionary quoted. Yet, they can only be considered the variants of the same proverbial idea given that all the main concepts are present with no significant, conscious modification made by the speaker in order to adapt their use to a particular

conversational context. Thus, the following 18 examples have been found, which in itself, is comparable to the total number of proper proverbs listed by Bryan and which amount to 11 including the aforementioned dubious instances, as well as the celebrated "Persian saying" from "A Case of Identity" and which seems to have been an invention of Conan Doyle's (Bryan 1996: 49) as no evidence of the existence of the proverb has been found (Waterhouse 1990).

1) ***Appearances*** *are deceptive* (Speake 2008: 7)
HOLMES: "And how deceptive appearances may be, to be sure!" (028: 879)

2) ***Better*** *late than never* (Wilson 1970: 54)
HOLMES: "I confess that I have been as blind as a mole, but it is better to learn wisdom late than never to learn it at all." (008: 536)

2) *You can't make* ***bricks*** *without straw* (Speake 2008: 36)
HOLMES: "I can't make bricks without clay." (014: 641)

4) *The* ***die*** *is cast* (Wilson 1970: 186)
WATSON [*as the narrator*]: "I clasped his hand in silence, and the die was cast." (041: 1107)

5) ***Familiarity*** *breeds contempt* (Wilson 1970: 243)
MRS MERRILOW: "...as usual, familiarity begat contempt." (059: 1377)

6) ***Honesty*** *is the best policy* (Wilson 1970: 380)
DUKE OF HOLDERNESSE: "I agree with you that complete frankness, however painful it may be to me, is the best policy in this desperate situation" (031: 942)

7) *The darkest* ***hour*** *is that before the dawn* (Wilson 1970: 168)
WATSON [*as the narrator*]: "...it was the darkest hour which precedes the dawn" (032: 954)

8) *Every **man** is a master in his own house* (Wilson 1970: 229)

WATSON [*as narrator*]: "My own complete happiness, and the home-centred interests which rise up around the man who first finds himself master of his own establishment, were sufficient to absorb all my attention." (003: 429)

HOLMES: "It's easy to see a man who is master of his own house." (031: 935)

9) ***Misfortunes** never come alone (single)* (Wilson 1970: 535)

PERCY PHELPS: "Misfortunes never come single" (025: 820)

10) ***Money** isn't everything* (Speake 2008: 213)

MRS WARREN: "Money's not everything." (044: 1136)

11) *If you gently touch a **nettle** it'll sting you for your pains; grasp it like a lad of mettle, an' as soft as silk remains* (Speake 2008: 224)[2]

HOLMES: "Grasp the nettle, Watson!" (049: 1273)

12) *Once a **parson** (priest), always a parson (priest)* (Wilson 1970: 594)

MR WILLIAMSON: "Once a clergyman, always a clergyman." (030: 917)

13) ***Promise** is a promise* (Mieder, Kingsbury and Harder 1996: 486)

HILTON CUBITT: "...a promise is a promise." (029: 887)

HILTON CUBITT: "A promise is a promise, Mr. Holmes." (029: 888)

14) ***Revenge** is sweet* (Wilson 1970: 673)

ENOCH DREBBER: "I had always known that vengeance would be sweet, but I had never hoped for the contentment of soul which now possessed me." (001: 87-88)

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[2] Note that in the entry to this proverb, the author explains that "The metaphorical phrase to grasp the nettle, to tackle a difficulty boldly, is often found" (Speake 2008: 224).

15) *It takes all **sorts** to make a world* (Wilson 1970: 11)
MRS MARKER: "...it takes all sorts to make a world, and the professor hasn't let it take his appetite away" (036: 1021)

16) *No **time** like the present* (Wilson 1970: 824)
MCMURDO: "No time like the present." (048: 377)

17) *The **truth** will come out* (Wilson 1970: 845)
ANNIE HARRISON: "If we keep our courage and our patience the truth must come out." (025: 818)

18) *Come **what** come may* (Wilson 1970: 135)
HALL PYCROFT: "However, come what might, I had my money." (018: 700)
TREVOR SR: "But you shall know, Victor. I'll see that you shall know, come what may." (019: 713)
HOLMES: "Meanwhile, come what may, Colonel Moran will trouble us no more." (027: 865)

As can be seen, some of the examples above show some deviation from the wording gathered in the dictionaries cited, most noticeably, Holmes' substitution of "straw" for "bricks" in "you can't make bricks without straw", a proverb of Biblical origin that makes a reference to Genesis (5: 7-18). But the majority of the changes that can be observed have to do with the use of synonyms, such as 'frankness' for 'honesty', 'clergyman' for 'parson' or 'priest', or 'vengeance' for 'revenge', apart from minor changes in the tenses of verbs as in "the die was cast" (041: 1107) or "familiarity begat contempt." (059: 1377); a third type of variant shows the inclusion of modal verbs different from what is registered as canonical as in "how deceptive appearances may be, to be sure!" (028: 879) or "truth must come out." (025: 818). Nevertheless, as mentioned above, proverbs are subject to small variations that do not affect their general idea and use, which is the case for all the items listed above, and therefore, they can only be considered canonical uses.

3.2. Modified Proverbs

It is generally accepted in Paremiology that despite their fixedness, "In actual use, especially in the case of intentional speech play, proverbs are quite often manipulated", as Professor Mieder (2004: 7) categorically states. This implies a "creative alteration of the structure and/or components of a PU in order to adapt it to a particular communicative situation, thus creating specific effects" (Rodríguez Martín 2014: 4), which can be carried out in three ways: through substitution, expansion, reduction, and permutation (Fielder 2007: 95).

Surprisingly, though, the number of consciously manipulated, or modified, in the words of Rodríguez Martín and Fiedler, proverbs in the Holmesian canon is quite underwhelming, with just the following 10 examples found:

19) ***Extremes*** *meet* (Wilson 1970: 235)
HOLMES: "You may have noticed how extremes call to each other." (054: 1242)

20) ***Fields*** *have eyes* (Wilson 1970: 255) / *Walls have ears* (Wilson 1970: 864)
COWPER: "Be quick. The very rocks have ears and the trees eyes." (001: 80)

21) *The darkest* ***hour*** *is that before dawn* (Wilson 1970: 168)
CHAPTER TITLE: "5. The darkest hour" (048: 402)

22) *One does not wash one's dirty* ***linen*** *in public* (Speake 2008: 340)
JAMES WINDIBANK: "...it is far better not to wash linen of the sort in public." (005: 479)

23) *What* ***must*** *be must be* (Wilson 1970: 552)
SIR ROBERT: "Well, if it must be, it must." (060: 1394)

24) *Never too* ***old*** *to learn* (Wilson 1970: 563)
JOHN FERRIER: "Guess I'm too old to learn." (001: 69)

25) *As they* ***sow****, so let them reap* (Wilson 1970: 767)

TEDDY BALDWIN: “You’ve sowed—and by the Lord, I’ll see that you reap!” (048: 377)

26) *All **things** are possible with God* (Speake 2008: 4)
JACK STAPLETON: “...all things are possible upon the moor.” (040: 228)

27) *Changing of **works** is lighting of hearts* (Wilson 1970: 114) / *A change is as good as rest* (Speake 2008: 49)
HOLMES: “One of our greatest statesmen has said that a change of work is the best rest.” (002: 149)

28) ***Virtue** is her own reward* (Wilson 1970: 861)
HOLMES: “As to reward, my profession is its own reward.” (010: 560)
HOLMES: “The work is its own reward.” (028: 882)

As can be seen in the examples above, various cases of proverbial modification by substitution have been found as in the following examples:

1. “...extremes call to each other.” (054: 1242)
2. “The very rocks have ears and the trees eyes.” (001: 80)
3. “...it is far better not to wash linen of the sort in public.” (005: 479)
4. “Well, if it must be, it must.” (060: 1394)
5. “...all things are possible upon the moor.” (040: 228)
6. “One of our greatest statesmen has said that a change of work is the best rest.” (002: 149)
7. “As to reward, my profession is its own reward.” (010: 560) / “The work is its own reward.” (028: 882)

It must also be noted that sometimes, various types of modification may occur, as in examples number 2 and 5, where apart from a substitution, an expansion can be observed. In relation to pure cases of expansion, just one example has been found:

8. "You've sowed—and by the Lord, I'll see that you reap!" (048: 377)

Similarly, there is only one case of reduction, the one employed as the title for chapter 5 in *The Valley of Fear*:

9. 5. The darkest hour (048: 402)

Finally, even though no case of permutation has been found, a fifth type of common phraseological modification appeared, which according to Fiedler (2007: 96), implies the negation of an affirmative phraseologism or *vice versa*. This can be observed in

10. "Guess I'm too old to learn." (001: 69)

Consequently, it can be stated that proverbial modification in the adventures of Sherlock Holmes seems to be an oddity and despite being consistent with the precepts of phraseological and paremiological scholarship, it is not as frequently used as canonical proverbs or, as shall be seen in the following section, proverbial allusions.

3.3. Proverbial Allusions

Quite often, proverbs are employed in such a manner that includes various types of modification at the same time, or their combination with other stylistic devices (Fiedler, 2007: 95). In those cases, the term 'allusion' would be more accurate. As Mieder (2004: 7) states, "proverbs are often shortened to mere allusions owing to their general recognizability". However, "proverb allusions run the risk of not being understood, even if they refer to very common proverbs" (Mieder, 2004: 177); furthermore, in the eye of an avid paremiologist, random strings of words may be considered to have a certain proverbial resonance, or they may be considered to present some connection with a well–established proverb. It is for this reason that this last category seems the most conflictive to present and deal with in an unbiased approach. Consequently, out of the 111 allusions to proverbial wisdom found across the different adventures, the following 13 cases seem to be the most straightforward, indubitable, and illustrative for their inclusion here:

29) ***Appearances*** *are deceptive* (Speake 2008: 7)
SIR ROBERT: "Appearances are against me." (060: 1394)
HOLMES: "Never trust to general impressions, my boy, but concentrate yourself upon details." (005: 477)

30) *The best* ***defense*** *is a good offense* (Speake 2008: 72)
JONATHAN SMALL: "I believe the best defence I can make is just to hold back nothing, but let all the world know how badly I have myself been served by Major Sholto." (002: 173)
HOLMES: "...there are times when a brutal frontal attack is the best policy." (053: 1314)

31) *The* ***devil*** *is in the details* (Speake 2008: 74)
HOLMES: "It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important." (005: 473)
HOLMES: "It is, of course, a trifle, but there is nothing so important as trifles." (008: 533)

32) *Like* ***father*** *like son* (Wilson 1970: 248) / *Like breeds like* (Wilson 1970: 646)
HELEN STONER: "Violence of temper approaching to mania has been hereditary in the men of the family, and in my stepfather's case it had, I believe, been intensified by his long residence in the tropics." (010: 561)
HOLMES: "My dear Watson, you as a medical man are continually gaining light as to the tendencies of a child by the study of the parents. Don't you see that the converse is equally valid. I have frequently gained my first real insight into the character of parents by studying their children. This child's disposition is abnormally cruel, merely for cruelty's sake, and whether he derives this from his smiling father, as I should suspect, or from his mother, it bodes evil for the poor girl who is in their power." (014: 651)
HOLMES: "I have no doubt at all that a family mannerism can be traced in these two specimens of writing." (021: 753)
HOLMES: "But the man had hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind. A criminal strain ran in his blood." (026: 832)
HOLMES: "...the reason why I tell you is that I hope frankness may beget frankness." (043: 1214)

33) *One does not wash one's dirty* ***linen*** *in public* (Speake 2008: 340)

ROBERT ST. SIMON: "...it is not my custom to discuss my most intimate personal affairs in this public manner." (012: 611)

GRANT MUNRO: "One does not like to speak of one's domestic affairs to strangers." (017: 680)

DR LESLIE ARMSTRONG: "Where your calling is more open to criticism is when you pry into the secrets of private individuals, when you rake up family matters which are better hidden, and when you incidentally waste the time of men who are more busy than yourself." (037: 1037)

34) *Though* ***modesty*** *be a virtue, yet bashfulness is a vice* (Wilson 1970: 537)

HOLMES: "I cannot agree with those who rank modesty among the virtues." (024: 785)

35) *No* ***news*** *is good news* (Wilson 1970: 572)

MRS ST. CLAIR: "No good news?" Holmes: "None." Mrs St. Clair: "No bad?" Holmes: "No." / "Thank God for that." (008: 531)

36) *Bad* ***news*** *travels fast* (Speake2008: 11)

SCANLAN: Oh, it got about—things do get about for good and for bad in this district (048: 373)

DR LESLIE ARMSTRONG: "...when once such a whisper gets about, it is not long before everyone has heard it." (037: 1044)

37) ***Self-preservation*** *is the first law of nature* (Wilson 1970: 712)

ABE SLANEY: "If I shot the man he had his shot at me, and there's no murder in that." (029: 902)

38) *One scabbed* ***sheep*** *will mar a whole flock* (Wilson 1970: 702)

MCGINTY: "There's no room for scabby sheep in our pen." (048: 399)

39) ***Silence*** *gives consent* (Wilson 1970: 733)

HOLMES: "You can refuse to answer; but you must be aware that your refusal is in itself an answer, for you would not refuse if you had not something to conceal." (048: 338)
ALEXANDER HOLDER: "Why is he silent, then, if he is innocent?" (013: 624)

40) *The **sun** does not shine on both sides of the hedge at once* (Wilson 1970: 786)
HOLMES: "...you may possibly remember that you chaffed me a little, some hours ago, when the sun seemed on your side of the hedge, so you must not grudge me a little pomp and ceremony now." (028: 881)

41) ***Truth**/fact is stranger than fiction* (Wilson 1970: 884)
HOLMES: "...life is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent." (005: 469)
WATSON: "The crudest of writers could invent nothing more crude." (005: 469)

Consequently, it can be stated that there are some widespread proverbs that seem to motivate or justify the utterances of various characters. These proverbial allusions are repeated multiple times by the same character, e.g., "promise is debt" (Wilson 1970: 649), by various characters, e.g. "One does not wash one's dirty linen in public" (Speake 2008: 340), and even by the same character across various stories, e.g., "like father like son" (Wilson 1970: 248) or "like breeds like" (Wilson 1970: 646). All of this is indicative of a certain tendency by the author to have his characters use proverbs in such a way as to become a distinctive element of their personality that can help the reader form a certain idea in his or her mind of the personality of said character.

4. Conclusions

G. B. Bryan concluded his original paper by stating that "it cannot be maintained that the proverbial detective employed more than a marginally proverbial language" (1996: 51) and in relation to this, the first and foremost conclusion that can be drawn from the present work is that this is indeed not the case and if

anything, the adventures of Sherlock Holmes show an interesting tendency towards the use of proverbs, most frequently through allusions to proverbial pieces of wisdom.

Moreover, out of the 60 items that make up the Holmesian canon, between novels and short stories, only 7 have been found to not contain any kind of proverbial reference, whether as a canonical use, a modification, or an allusion: "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle", "The Adventure of Silver Blaze", "The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual", "The Adventure of the Second Stain", "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans", "The Adventure of the Creeping Man" and "The Adventure of the Retired Colourman". In relation to this, through successive processes of refinement and sieving, from an original catalog of 250 proverbial uses noted, a final sample of 141 seemingly undisputable proverbial references have been found, the vast majority of which are allusions to proverbs.

To demonstrate the actual proverbiality of *Sherlock Holmes*, 18 proverbs have been found to be used canonically, some of them on multiple occasions. This exceeds Bryan's list by 7 items, notwithstanding all the different types of phraseologisms included in his article, which despite their alleged proverbiality, cannot be considered proper proverbs. Additionally, another 10 cases of proverb modification and 13 of proverbial allusion, none of which are found in Bryan's work despite the repetition of some of them, have been presented in order to provide a better understanding of the complexity and elaborate character of the use of proverbs in the Holmesian canon.

Finally, albeit unsurprisingly, Sherlock Holmes arises as the character most inclined to use proverbs in the series. This, which might have been presupposed, as the entire collection is made up of his biographical account as taken down by Dr Watson, can now be firmly stated and it is relevant inasmuch as it may challenge some of the archetypal representations of the detective, particularly in film, given that, traditionally, the use of proverbs was expected to be avoided by individuals in an attempt to come across as refined due to the consideration of proverbs as tasteless and vulgar (Mieder, 2000). Yet, this fact is just another demonstration of Holmes' ability to "[move] effortlessly through all levels of society" (Boyd et al., 2015: 301), which may be part of

the reason why Conan Doyle's creation became so popular at the time of publication and has remained so over a century later, in spite of all the changes that society has undergone.

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***Appendix*: *T*he Holmesian Canon (as presented by Bryan)** [3]

001 *A Study in Scarlet* (1887)

002 *The Sign of the Four* (1890)

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (1892)

003 "A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891)

004 "The Red-Headed League" (1891)

005 "A Case of Identity" (1891)

006 "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" (1891)

007 "The Five Orange Pips" (1891)

008 "The Man with the Twisted Lip" (1891)

009 "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" (1892)

010 "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892)

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3 There are some inconsistencies between the editions consulted by Bryan and myself. Numbering follows Bryan's to facilitate cross-referencing. The differences are indicated in the footnotes below.

011 “The Adventure of the Engineer’s Thumb” (1892)
012 “The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor” (1892)
013 “The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet” (1892)
014 “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches” (1892)
The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes (1893-94)
015 “The Adventure of Silver Blaze” (1892)
016 “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box”[4] (1893)
017 “The Adventure of the Yellow Face” (1893)
018 “The Adventure of the Stockbroker’s Clerk” (1893)
019 “The Adventure of the ‘Gloria Scott’” (1893)
020 “The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual” (1893)
021 “The Adventure of the Reigate Squires” (1893)
022 “The Adventure of the Crooked Man” (1893)
023 “The Adventure of the Resident Patient” (1893)
024 “The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter” (1893)
025 “The Adventure of the Naval Treaty” (1893)
026 “The Final Problem” (1893)
The Return of Sherlock Holmes (1905)
027 “The Adventure of the Empty House” (1903)
028 “The Adventure of the Norwood Builder” (1903)
029 “The Adventure of the Dancing Men” (1903)
030 “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist” (1903)
031 “The Adventure of the Priory School” (1904)
032 “The Adventure of Black Peter” (1904)
033 “The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton” (1904)
034 “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons” (1904)
035 “The Adventure of the Three Students” (1904)
036 “The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez” (1904)
037 “The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter” (1904)
038 “The Adventure of the Abbey Grange” (1904)
039 “The Adventure of the Second Stain” (1904)
040 *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902)

4 Included in *His Last Bow* in the edition referenced in this paper.

His Last Bow (1917)[5]
041 "The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge" (1908)
042 "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans" (1908)
043 "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot" (1910)
044 "The Adventure of the Red Circle" (1911)
045 "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax" (1911)
046 "The Adventure of the Dying Detective" (1913)
047 "His Last Bow: The War Service of Sherlock Holmes" (1917)
048 *The Valley of Fear* (1914)
The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes (1927)[6]
049 "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone" (1921)
050 "The Problem of the Thor Bridge" (1922)
051 "The Adventure of the Creeping Man" (1923)
052 "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire" (1924)
053 "The Adventure of the Three Garridebs" (1924)
054 "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client" (1925)
055 "The Adventure of the Three Gables" (1926)
056 "The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier" (1926)
057 "The Adventure of the Lion's Mane" (1926)
058 "The Adventure of the Retired Colourman" (1926)
059 "The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger" (1927)
060 "The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place" (1927)

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5 Stories follow a different order in the edition consulted.
6 Stories follow a different order in the edition consulted.