

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

Detective fiction is one of the most popular genres in literature. It is a narrative where the principal action concerns the attempt of an investigator to solve a criminal case and bring criminals to justice (Rzepka & Horsley, 2010). There is one person that is considered to be the top author of detective fiction, and his name is Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle. Doyle is a person who has played a big role in making crime novels popular among the public.

Conan Doyle has a notable character in his various works. He created a fictional private detective figure of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries named Sherlock Holmes. Holmes's first appearance is in the novel *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). In all of his stories, Sherlock Holmes is often described as a brilliant detective based in London, who is famous for his great ability in using logic and clever observation to solve many cases. For these reasons, Sherlock Holmes becomes the most well-known fictional detective figure ever created.

The story of Sherlock Holmes tells the idea of a detective's work. Each day, he faces clients with various types of cases. The difficulties of the cases also vary. There are the easiest ones, which are considered boring by him, to the hardest ones, which pump his adrenaline. Holmes has his own preferred method in solving these cases, and this makes him unique. In his journey, he is accompanied by a friend named John Watson, a former British army doctor who works later as Holmes's assistant.

Nowadays, there are many debates that concern whether or not Sherlock Holmes has sociopathic characteristics. The discussion concerning this topic has been spreading widely on the internet, and Konnikova (2012) is one of the people who contributed to the debate. In her article, she discusses how Holmes's statement of being a sociopath and his cold behaviors toward others character in the TV series entitled *Sherlock* (2010) lead to the current debate. She believes that Holmes's behaviors are not even close to being associated with either sociopath or

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psychopath since he still shows his concern toward two important people in his life, Dr. Watson and Mrs. Hudson. Different from Konnikova, Lewis (2016) and Gragert (2016) in their article covers more about whether Sherlock Holmes is categorized as a primary psychopath or a secondary psychopath (sociopath). They argue that Holmes is a primary psychopath as he is portrayed to be antisocial, lacking emotion, and having little concern for others' feeling. Thus, Holmes's quote on the new Sherlock Holmes in the TV serial entitled *Sherlock*, which is "I am not a psychopath. I am a high-functioning sociopath" causes people to question whether it is true or not that both the original and the new version of the detective have the mental illness.

As for the definition of sociopath itself, in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5* (DSM 5) (2013), sociopath is considered to be a mental disorder, specifically a personality disorder that is marked by antisocial behaviors. In regard to this, Sollid (2016) states that there are also differences between a sociopath and a psychopath. His main point is that sociopaths have sociopathic traits because of the environment around them. Thus, in order to gain a detailed understanding of whether or not the old version of the detective embodies the characteristic of a sociopath, the research is conducted.

Similar to psychopath, the term sociopath has a negative connotation in today's society. Peterson (2016) explains that the word 'sociopath', simply defined as someone who is very antisocial and does not have a conscience. She further argues that sociopaths can be dangerous toward other people, because they can cause harm and damage, such as hurting people physically, emotionally, or financially; manipulating, cheating, or lying to people to make fortune; and many more. On the contrary, Lykken (1995) claims that not all sociopaths harm other people's lives. He further elaborates that sociopaths can be further categorized into four main types: common, alienated, aggressive, and dissocial (see Section 2.2). However, most people might have little knowledge regarding the types of sociopath, which makes them think that there is only one type of sociopath with harmful attitudes. Therefore, by doing an analysis concerning sociopathy, it will broaden the knowledge of the readers regarding the types of sociopath.

Aside from the debates, there are two reasons why the character of Sherlock Holmes is chosen as the subject of the research. Firstly,

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Holmes himself is one of the most iconic characters in detective fictions. He is famous because of his great intelligence and sharp deduction when solving various cases. Up until today, many people still recognize him as the world's greatest detective character. Secondly, the story of Sherlock Holmes is continuously maintained and made famous through many adaptations. As cited in the website of Imdb (2016), Sherlock Holmes has been adapted by more than 50 films, from the oldest, which is *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* (1900), to the most recent one, *Mr. Holmes* (2015). Aside from the films, there are also several numbers of television series of Sherlock Holmes, and one of its popular shows is the *BBC Sherlock*, created by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss in the year of 2010. Moreover, there are several stage play adaptations of Sherlock Holmes stories, such as *The Burglar and The Lady* (1905), *Sherlock's Last Case* (1987), *The hound of Baskervilles* (2015), and the like. Furthermore, the stories of Sherlock Holmes have influenced many Japanese animations 'anime', in creating detective characters similar to Sherlock Holmes in their stories. The examples of such animes are *Sherlock Hound* (1984), *Detective Conan* (1994), *Tantei Opera Milky Holmes* (2010), and so on. All of the adaptations show that the influence of Sherlock Holmes has spread widely throughout the world through various kinds of media, such as movies, stage plays, and animations, and the adaptations have been watched and enjoyed by people starting from children up to adults. For these reasons, it is therefore intriguing to analyze the sociopathic attributes of Sherlock Holmes, since the character might affect the psychology of the readers.

In the previous analysis of Carli (2014), Onderková (2015), and Sollid (2016), both the original version and the TV series of Sherlock Holmes are shown to be characterized with the habit of consuming narcotics when to ease themselves. For the people who have less knowledge concerning sociopathy, they might not realize that it is actually one of the attributes of being a sociopath. According to the Hare's (1998) Psychopathy Checklist-Revised, the habit of consuming drugs is categorized as a sociopathic characteristic named need for stimulation. This is just one uncovered sociopathic attribute that is possessed by Holmes, and there might have been more characteristics of a sociopath that are depicted in the stories of Sherlock Holmes. Therefore, it is important to further investigate the attitudes of Sherlock

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Holmes thoroughly in the novel *A Study in Scarlet* since he might be classified as a sociopath.

Looking at how much influence that Sherlock Holmes has, it would be worrisome if he is truly classified as a sociopath, since people who admire him might imitate his behavior. It is true that Holmes is just a fictional character in literature, but literature itself can be a reflection of reality. Therefore, it might affect particular aspects of people's lives. Koopman and Hakemulder (2015) maintain that reading literature can also affect an aspect of a person's life, which is empathy. This happens when the readers are absorbed into the narrative of the literature and their empathetic imagination gets stimulated. At this point, they are imagining themselves in a certain character's shoes in a particular event and under specific circumstances. In addition, Kaufman and Libby (2012) suggest that people can also be influenced by a fictional character and change their beliefs, attitudes, and identity into the ones similar to those adopted by a particular character. Kaufman and Libby (2012, p.2) called this phenomenon 'experience-taking.' Both statements show that literature can influence particular aspects of life. As such, by reading literature, people's attitudes might change, whether it is for the better or worse. As in the present research's case, when the readers read the literary works with a sociopath as the main character, they will be involved in seeing the world from the perspective of a sociopath. As a result, the readers might be influenced to mimic the characteristics of a sociopath. This provides all the reasons to conduct the present study.

Current studies of sociopathy in fictions are comparatively few. Perhaps it is because the term itself is often used interchangeably with the term psychopath, and the two terms are difficult to distinguish. According to Hare (1991, as cited in Mackenzie, 2014), the difference between a psychopath and a sociopath is that the first one is a mental disorder owned from the moment the psychopath was born, whereas the latter one is mostly caused by environmental and social factors surrounding the patient. In relation to this, Grohol (2018) explains that all psychopaths have difficulties in creating a sort of emotional attachments with anyone, so they mostly fake their feelings in a relationship with others. This trait makes psychopaths rarely feel any conscience of their actions toward people and treat people only as objects to be manipulated. Slightly different from psychopath,

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sociopaths can still feel an emotional attachment with like-minded groups of people. This implies that sociopaths still able to feel guilty and not consider all people merely as objects. Grohol further explains that in terms of danger level, psychopath is considered as more dangerous since they mostly do not have any conscience at all, and if they are engaged in criminal actions, they tend to plan it carefully with minimal risks of being caught. Thus, as the definitions above, the present research regards sociopath as a mental disorder that is caused by mostly by the effect of environmental and social aspects surround the reader, and it is a different and a less severe mental illness than psychopath.

Even though most researchers often use the term psychopath and sociopath interchangeably, there are two researchers who explicitly analyzed sociopathic traits. They are Sollid (2016) and Angraini (2016). Both studies show that fictional characters can be analyzed by the theories of sociopath/psychopath, which are Hare's Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) (1998) and Grossman's Advanced Personality Assessment (2015, as cited in Angraini, 2016). The first theory assesses the tendency of someone being a sociopath or a psychopath by comparing his or her attitude with the twenty items related to the sociopathic attribute (see Section 2.3), whereas the latter one analyzes people's behaviors and compares them with the five categorizations of sociopath: (1) covetous sociopath, (2) schizoid-avoidant, (3) histrionic sociopath, (4) narcissist sociopath, and (5) sadistic-paranoid sociopath. From both theories, Hare's (1998) PCL-R is considered to be one of the most reliable tools to assess the characteristics of psychopath/sociopath compared to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* 5<sup>th</sup> edition (Sollid, 2016) as there are more aspects that can be analyzed. However, both studies mainly focus on investigating fictional characters from TV series and movies rather than from literary texts, such as novels or short stories.

Therefore, to fill the gap in the literature, this study intends to investigate sociopathic traits in the fictional detective figure of Sherlock Holmes by focusing on focalization and characterization in a novel entitled *A Study in Scarlet* (2013) by using Focalization theory (Genette, 1980) and Characterization theory (Minderop, 2005) as supporting theories. For the main theory in analyzing the sociopathic attributes of Sherlock Holmes, the study uses Hare's (1998) PCL-R theory, with the

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categorization of its twenty sociopath items by Scarlet (see Section 2.3), since it has been proven as a reliable tool for assessing the sociopathy and psychopathy tendencies. Furthermore, the Hare's PCL-R does not prioritize the evidence of conduct disorder at an early age, which is suitable for the analysis of *A Study in Scarlet* that does not provide any childhood background of Sherlock Holmes.

## **1.2. Purpose of the Research**

This research aims to reveal whether or not sociopathic behaviors are embedded in the original version of the fictional detective character of Sherlock Holmes. The research analyzes the characteristics of Sherlock Holmes by using Hare's PCL-R theory (1998) and Scarlet's (2011) categorization of Hare's PCL-R items, combined with the focalization approach by Genette (1980) and the characterization approach proposed by Minderop (2005) as supporting theories.

## **1.3. Research Question**

As stated above, the goal of the research is to examine the original Sherlock Holmes' character and compare it with the sociopathic traits listed in Hare's Approach (1998). Hence, the following research question has been formulated:

- To what extent are sociopathic characteristics attributed to the character of Sherlock Holmes in the novel *A Study in Scarlet* (2013)?

## **1.4. Clarification of Terms**

- Sociopath is a term that is often used interchangeably with psychopath in much research. American Psychiatric Association (2013), in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5* (DSM 5), classifies sociopath as a personality disorder with a trait of antisocial behavior. In regard with this, Hare (1991, as cited in MacKenzie, 2004) argues that in psychology, the term sociopath is considered as a secondary psychopath, and this mental disorder is caused by the environment around the person with sociopath illness. The definition of Hare shows that sociopath is different from the term psychopath.

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Thus, it is used as the basic knowledge of the research.

- Focalization is a term that is introduced by Genette (1980) for analyzing literary texts. According to Genette (1980), focalization is an approach to analyze narrative texts through the viewpoint or perspective, which is to say the point-of-view from which the story is told. From this explanation, it is evident that focalization can be used to reveal the characteristics of Sherlock Holmes from the view of Dr. Watson as the narrator.
- Characterization is an important tool to analyze the characteristics of a character. According to Minderop (2005), characterization is divided into two groups, direct and indirect methods. The direct method focuses on the description from the author, whereas the indirect method shows the way the character presents his or her own characterization. Each group has a number of sections. For the direct method, it has the aspect of name, appearance, and characterization by the author. As for indirect method, it analyzes dialogue; location or situation of the dialogue; mental quality of the character; inflection, pressure of voice, and the usage of words; and character's behavior. The definitions are used as the basis of understanding the method of characterization by Minderop.

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

The results of this research contribute to the current debates of the fictional detective of Sherlock Holmes, who is assumed to be a sociopath. It will also benefit the development of the analysis of sociopath's attributes in fictional characters. Moreover, the research provides readers insight into more than one kind of sociopath, and that only a few of them are considered dangerous. Furthermore, the research can extend the usage of Genette's focalization theory (1980) and Minderop's characterization method (2005) as tools in analyzing sociopathic characters in fiction in the future.

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