

Using mystery television dramas as a means to understanding British history and culture

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I Introduction

Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirotle; these are names that immediately spring to mind when considering the genre of mystery dramas. Indeed such is the power of the reputation of Sherlock Holmes that some people confuse him for being a real person. But why are these fictional characters and the mystery genre so popular? Is it the fact that each investigator in his, or her, own way has a unique, and almost infallible, understanding of human nature? Or does popularity derive from the investigator's ability to ensure that justice is done in a way that the official police is generally unable to do? Whether or not these questions are, in fact, answerable is debatable, but it is nevertheless true that since the 1850s reading about and, later, watching the solving of crimes is intensely popular. It is because of this that this paper will begin an investigation into the mystery genre with the intention of using mystery dramas to study of British culture. To this end, the purpose of this paper is threefold. Firstly, to provide a brief summary of three episodes from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, *Hercule Poirot* and

the Mrs Bradley mysteries to be used in class with the students. Secondly, this paper will detail aspects of British culture prevalent at the end of the nineteenth century and into the first quarter of the twentieth century (a later paper will provide a consideration as to why many of these elements began to change over this period and continued to change as the twentieth century progressed) that can be discovered from studying these episodes. Thirdly, this paper will outline several important factors to be considered in order to translate the topics and information raised into a course of study for university level students. Subsequent papers will report on the steps taken and the results of trialling the various teaching methods and materials used in order to put the course study into practice.

II Section 1

Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of The Norwood Builder

Following a fire in Norwood, in which the charred remains of a man's body are found, a young solicitor, Mr John Mcfarlane, is arrested by the police at 221b, Baker Street. However, prior to his arrest, Mcfarlane is allowed to tell his version of events.

A few days before, he was visited by a Mr Oldacre at his office. Oldacre asked him to translate a hastily written will into an official document. As Mcfarlane reads through the draft, he discovers that Oldacre wishes him to inherit most of his estate. In shocked amazement, he asks why Oldacre has done this. Oldacre explains that he was once in love with Mcfarlane's mother and, although she married Mcfarlane's father, Oldacre himself never married. Being a bachelor, he wanted someone to inherit his wealth after his death who he could respect, and, due to his continuing love for Mcfarlane's mother, he sees John Mcfarlane as the son he has never had. Mcfarlane gratefully

accepts the commission, and the explanation, but as Oldacre leaves, he makes Mcfarlane promise to say nothing about this to his mother.

Later that evening, Mcfarlane took the legally drafted will to Norwood. He arrived at 9.30 pm, and stayed late. The following day, having stayed at an hotel in Norwood, he reads the paper and discovers that he is suspected of having brutally murdered Mr Oldacre and subsequently burning his body in a fire near Oldacre's house.

Having related his story, Mcfarlane is arrested by Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard. The evidence against Mcfarlane is strong: he has no alibi for the night of the murder, his cane, left at Oldacre's house, is blood-stained, and the motive of greed is evident. Nevertheless, Holmes is sufficiently intrigued to take up the case, and also feels that Mcfarlane is an unlikely killer.

Holmes retains the draft will handwritten by Oldacre. From this he deduces that it must have been written on a commuter train coming from the suburbs of London and that for Oldacre to have written the draft then, it is unlikely to have been of any great importance to him (a point at odds with the normal importance attached to wills). Holmes determines, much to Inspector Lestrade's surprise to go to Blackheath to see Mcfarlane's mother. At this interview Mrs Mcfarlane claims that her son would be incapable of murder, but when pressed, she reveals that she told her son about Oldacre and the vicious character.

Holmes and Dr Watson visit the scene of the crime in time to watch Inspector Lestrade find a button in the ashes of the fire which is inscribed with the name of Mr Oldacre's tailor. Holmes retains an open mind and

goes to visit Oldacre's house. Here he meets Mrs Mackenzie, Oldacre's housekeeper. She is a cold and severe woman and instantly raises Holmes' suspicion. After searching inside the house, and leaving Dr Watson to work through the scattered legal documents in Oldacre's study, Holmes looks outside the house. At first he finds a strange symbol made of stones outside the entrance to the garden. Then, looking at the structure of the house, he becomes interested in the spacing of the walls and windows of the upper floors.

Holmes then spends a night in the disguise of a tramp looking for his friend, a 'seafaring man'. He is told that the seafaring tramp had visited Mr Oldacre's house and that he had been kindly received by Mr Oldacre who had asked him to return the following day. As such the seafaring tramp had left a sign for other tramps showing that this was a place where they would be well received. The tramp returned the following day but after that he disappeared.

The situation worsens for Mcfarlane as a blood stained finger print is found by Inspector Lestrade in the cloakroom at Mr Oldacre's house. However, this conversely gives Holmes hope. Holmes rushes to Norwood, and here lays a trap for Oldacre. Holmes instructs that a fire should be lighted in one of the attic rooms. As a result Oldacre comes out of his hiding place, a secret room which he had constructed for this purpose. Oldacre admits to the 'joke' he has played on Mr Mcfarlane, but reveals his real character when he is accused of murdering the seafaring tramp. It becomes clear that Oldacre resented being rejected by Mcfarlane's mother, and wanted to wound her by causing problems for her son.

Oldacre is taken away to almost certain death by hanging.

Hercule Poirot and The Mysterious Affair at Styles

The story begins in June 1917, almost eighteen months before the end of World War One. One day, while Lieutenant Hastings (who has been injured in Flanders and is recovering in a military hospital in London) is watching a newsreel of events at the front, and which also tells of Belgian refugees arriving in Britain, an old friend, John Cavendish, comes to visit him. John tells Hastings about the members of his family; his younger brother, Laurence, who works as a doctor in a local hospital, and, in particular, his mother who has remarried a man twenty years her junior. The marriage is a source of much disquiet to the family. John also mentions the other people living in the family house; Evelyn Howard, who is a close friend of his mother (and seemingly a great enemy of Mr Inglethorpe), and Cynthia, an orphan who has been 'adopted' by John's mother. Cynthia works as a nurse in the dispensary in the same hospital as Laurence. At the end of the visit, John invites Hastings to come and stay with him at his house, called 'Styles Court' in the village of Styles St. Mary. Hastings agrees.

As an old friend of the family, Hastings gets on well with them and acts the perfect gentleman guest, though at times his jokes are not always found to be funny, particularly by John's mother, Emily Inglethorpe. Although Hastings has been told about John's mother remarriage and his dislike of Alfred Inglethorpe, he is still surprised at ostentatious attentiveness of Inglethorpe to his new wife. At afternoon tea, all the main characters of the story assemble and in the course of the introductions the conversation turns to topic of poisoning. Cynthia points out that in the past, due to a lack of medical knowledge, a respected colleague says it is highly likely that many

poisoners got away with their crimes. Later, John tells Hastings about the arrangements in his mother's will in which he will inherit both Styles Court and a house in London, while Alfred Inglethorpe will inherit his mother's money, which is a considerable fortune.

The situation comes to a head when Evelyn Howard has such a terrible quarrel with Emily Inglethorpe about her husband that she decides to leave Styles Court. As Evelyn Howard leaves, she warns Hastings to watch Inglethorpe closely as she thinks he will try to murder his wife. Later that day, Emily Inglethorpe is overheard by the housekeeper, Mrs Dorcas, and John's wife, Mary, having a quarrel with a man in her study about a letter pertaining to the difficulties between a husband and wife. Mary Cavendish believes Mrs Inglethorpe was talking with John, because she suspects him of having an affair with a Mrs Raikes, the widow of one their tenants. Mary demands to see the letter but Mrs Inglethorpe refuses to show her. That evening at dinner, the atmosphere is very tense, so to try to ease the tension, Hastings comments on the hot weather and the possibility of there being a storm later. However, his attempt at light conversation does nothing to change the atmosphere. In fact, Mrs Inglethorpe leaves dinner early, having eaten almost nothing, and asks that her coffee be brought to her room. At the end of the meal, Mr Inglethorpe says that he will go into the village to attend to some business and that no one should wait up for his return.

Mary Cavendish serves the coffee and asks Cynthia to take it to Mrs Inglethorpe. In her room, despite the hot weather Mrs Inglethorpe has asked for a fire to be lighted and after bring the coffee, Cynthia sees Mrs Inglethorpe puts a letter into her dispatch case. Cynthia suggests that due to the hot weather Mrs Inglethorpe may want to take sleeping draft to

help her sleep but she declines. Later that night everyone is disturbed by cries coming from Mrs Inglethorpe's room. John tries the door but it is locked, as is the door adjoining from her husband's room. At this time, everyone notes that Mr Inglethorpe's bed has not been slept in. Nevertheless, having failed from side, they try to enter through the adjoining door from Cynthia's room, but Mary Cavendish (who happens to be standing beside Cynthia's bed) says that the door is locked. Finally, John, Laurence and Hastings manage to break Mrs Inglethorpe's bedroom door down. As they enter, Mrs Inglethorpe begins her final death throes and dies. The local doctor, a Mr Wilkins, is called but arrives too late to save Mrs Inglethorpe from dying. After her death, the Doctor locks the bedroom door and asks John for his permission to have an autopsy performed as he is suspicious about the cause of death.

At dinner the previous evening, Hastings had talked about a detective he had met in Belgium and, as luck would have it, and due to the effects of the war, it turns out that the same man has taken up residence in Styles St. Mary. Hastings suggests that John should invite Poirot to privately investigate the circumstances of Mrs Inglethorpe's death. John agrees that that would be better than calling the police in so Hastings informs Poirot of the main points of the death. At Syles Court, Poirot carries out a detailed search of Mrs Inglethorpe's room, during which Hastings remarks that Laurence Cavendish was shocked by something either connected with the mantelpiece over the fireplace or by the connecting door into Cynthia's room.

Later that day, the results of the postmortem reveal that Mrs Inglethorpe was killed by strychnine poisoning and as such there will be an

inquest into her death. At the inquest, evidence is presented to show that Mr Inglethorpe on the day before his wife's death bought strychnine from a local shop. Mr Inglethorpe denies having bought the poison but provides no alibi, and the evidence given by Mary and Laurence Cavendish also weighs heavily against Mr Inglethorpe. Also present at the inquest is Inspector Japp from Scotland Yard and after the jury returns a verdict of murder, the police start proceedings to arrest Mr Inglethorpe. However, Poirot warns very strongly against making such an arrest because he and several other witnesses saw Mr Inglethorpe in the village of Tadminster eight miles from Styles St. Mary at the time he was supposed to be buying strychnine. After the police have left, the housekeeper, Dorcas, tells Poirot and Hastings that in the attic there is a dressing-up box containing lots of old clothes. Poirot and Hastings search the box to try to find any green coloured clothes, as Poirot had found some green fluff on the bolt of the door between the rooms of Mrs Inglethorpe and Cynthia. Although they do not find any clothes of the correct green, Hastings does find some false hair which has been cut to match the exact shape of Mr Inglethorpe's beard. Meanwhile, events have moved on again, and this time the police have decided to arrest John Cavendish as a result of issues relating to his relationship with Mrs Raikes.

John's trial begins and the evidence, although circumstantial seems very strong against him. It is clear that John, although he will inherit Styles Court, is short of money but despite this, there is evidence to show that he has given money to Mrs Raikes. Finally, it is clearly no secret that he did not like his mother's new husband, Alfred Inglethorpe. Hastings, as John's friend, believes he could not have killed his own mother and Poirot feels uncomfortable with the case presented by the police, though he cannot put his finger on why he is uneasy. Quite by chance, Hastings mentions that

Poirot had to twice rearrange the ornaments on the mantelpiece of Mrs Inglethorpe's fireplace and at this Poirot realises what he has missed.

Poirot returns hurriedly to Styles Court and then comes back to London. In London, he conducts an experiment on the effects of adding bromide to a solution containing strychnine. The result is that the strychnine collects at the bottom of the container in a concentrated form. Later that evening, just as the jury is considering their verdict against John, Poirot assembles the key characters in the story. Poirot first goes through who each of the suspects are and explains how and why they may have wanted to poison Mrs Inglethorpe. But everyone is shocked when Poirot accuses Mr Inglethorpe and Evelyn Howard of being lovers and of conspiring to murder Mrs Inglethorpe. At first they deny it, but Poirot produces a letter (the letter Mary Cavendish thought referred to John and Mrs Raikes) written by Mr Inglethorpe telling Evelyn how much he loved her and that he will put their plan to murder Mrs Inglethorpe into operation very shortly. It was this letter that Mrs Inglethorpe found and which she locked up in her dispatch box. The story ends with Inspector Japp arresting Mr Inglethorpe and Evelyn Howard and the release of John Cavendish.

The Mrs Bradley Mysteries: Laurels are Poison

On a stormy night, a child wakes and sees torchlight shining through his door. He is not scared, instead, he gets up and follows after the disappearing figure. As he walks along, he trips and his mother finds him. He tells her that he's seen the ghost of his father because the figure was wearing a soldier's uniform.

Mrs Bradley with her chauffeur, George, has decided to visit her friend,

Isabel Marchmont on the pretext of investigating her 'haunted house' . They arrive at the house, which is a big old isolated country house, and it is in this house that the child seen at the start of the episode lives. However, Mrs Bradley's knock at the door is answered by a very rude middle-aged woman whom it turns out is the housekeeper and cook, Amy Parkin. The cook abruptly tells Mrs Bradley where to find Mrs Marchmont and then leads George through the house to place Mrs Bradley's bags in the room she is to have. On the way, George notices a photograph of some soldiers wearing the uniform of the First Royal Rifles regiment. This causes him a great shock which is increased when he discovers that the master of the house is a Captain Douglas Prideux.

In addition, as both Mrs Bradley and George move around the house, they notice the tensions which exist between the servants, between the servants and the family and between various members of the family themselves. In particular, Mrs Bradley is intrigued by Isabel's seeming indifference to the behaviour of everyone in the house. It is also clear that a key figure in creating all the tension is the handsome young gardener, Seth Billings.

Later that day, while tidying her room, the cook pricks her finger on a sharp object under her bed. Although she feels no immediate ill effects, later she collapses and dies. While this is happening, George learns from Isabel's chauffeur about the family's history. He is told that the soldiers in the photograph George saw were Isabel's three sons and Douglas Prideux. Prideux was the only one who returned at the end of World War One and upon his return he married Isabel's only daughter, Lacey. Despite being childless for a number years, Douglas and Lacey now have a child and it

appears that Lacey is expecting a second baby. Mrs Bradley, on the other hand, witnesses a confrontation between Seth Billings and Lacey and she suspects that Seth is blackmailing Lacey and Douglas in some way. After these events, Jessie, a servant and the cook's daughter, discovers that her mother's body. The body is carried to her bedroom but the police are not called as it seems that the cause of death was a heart attack. Mrs Bradley helps Jessie to prepare the body and while they are dressing it, Mrs Bradley comments on the fact that the cook was not wearing a corset. Jessie seems reluctant to talk about it, but obviously knows the reason why.

That evening, Mrs Bradley talks with Isabel in her conservatory about her passion for laurels. Isabel mentions that there are poisonous plants amongst the laurel family. Elsewhere, George looks through the various ornaments around the house. He comes across an open casement from which it appears there is something missing. All that remains is the description, 'veneno'. Later George tells Mrs Bradley about his discovery and she tells him that veneno is Portuguese for poison. Together Mrs Bradley and George search the cook's bedroom and there discover an arrow, the tip of which is blood stained. They conclude that it must have been one of the poisoned arrows taken from the casement George found.

That night two events take place. Firstly, Isabel goes to Lacey's room and asks her directly whether or not Douglas is the father of her new baby. Lacey becomes very angry but says that he is the father. Secondly, George sees a light in the garden and goes out to investigate. In the garden, he is almost shot by Seth, who is walking around carrying a shotgun. Seth marches George back to the house and there is another confrontation between George, Seth and Douglas. However, it seems that on this occasion Seth has the upper hand.

The following day, Seth meets Alf, the chauffeur, and teases him about the death of the cook, Amy. Seth hints that Alf may have caused Amy's death and this causes Alf to react very strongly, though without actually coming to blows. At the same time, George, due to some connection with Douglas Prideux, apparently gives in his notice and walks away from the house. Mrs Bradley follows him in her car and together they discuss what is concerning George. It transpires that George's brother had belonged to Captain Douglas Prideux's regiment and had fought with him in France during World War One. Prideux had written a standard letter informing George's mother of her son's death and this unfeeling response has caused George's resentment and anger. Mrs Bradley persuades George to see the situation in a more balanced way and George agrees to return to her employ. On the way back to Isabel's house, Mrs Bradley points out that Seth's position in the house needs clarifying and that George should talk with him to find out exactly what he knows.

Back at the house, Mrs Bradley talks with Jessie about her mother's relationship with Alf. Jessie admits that Amy and Alf had a physical relationship. Mrs Bradley then talks with Isabel about her cook and chauffeur and she admits that she was aware of the nature of their relationship. Isabel also points out that it is impossible for secrets to be kept in a household such as hers.

Later that night, while Seth is walking in the garden he is shot with a poisoned arrow and crashes through the conservatory window where Mrs Bradley and George happen to be discussing the situation together. One point that confuses Mrs Bradley is that although Douglas and Lacey had

been childless for nine years, when Seth Billings appeared, Lacey suddenly became pregnant. However, following Seth's murder, this line cannot immediately be pursued rather Mrs Bradley tells Isabel that the police must be called. Isabel also tells Mrs Bradley that her late husband kept in his collection a box of poisons from Brazil but when she tries to show Mrs Bradley the box, they discover that it is missing.

Events come to a head, when George together with Douglas Prideux sees a light in the garden. They go to investigate and they find Alf with a bow and an arrow. Alf admits that he left an arrow under Amy's bed and that it was this that killed her. He also admits to killing Seth and trying to kill Prideux, though he does not have time to explain in detail why, except hinting that he knows of the master and Jessie's secret, as he pricks and kills himself with the last poisoned arrow.

Meanwhile, Isabel again confronts Lacey about who is the father of her baby. This time Lacey walks out of her room and goes to the nursery where the baby is being taken care of by Jessie. When Lacey comes to the nursery, she has a knife and appears to be about to kill the baby. However, Jessie grabs the baby out of the cot and it is at this point that Mrs Bradley realises the truth; Douglas is certainly the father but that Jessie, not Lacey, is the mother. Having heard the commotion coming from the house, George, closely followed by Douglas, bursts into the nursery carrying a sword that he has picked from Isabel's husband's collection and swings it at Lacey. He cuts her stomach. Instead of blood, feathers come out of the cut. It becomes clear that Lacey was never pregnant and worst still that her marriage to Douglas has never been consummated. Clearly Seth's 'secret knowledge' was that he knew Douglas was having a relationship with Jessie and that Lacey also

knew about it and was prepared for some reason to pass off the baby as her own.

The story ends with Lacey deciding, with Mrs Bradley's help, to spend some time in Italy whilst Jessie effectively moves in with Douglas (though it is not clear whether the marriage between Lacey and Douglas will be formerly terminated).

III Section 2

This section will briefly present aspects of British history and culture that can be discovered from an intensive watching of the episodes outlined above.

The first aspect that becomes clear is transportation. Certainly, in the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, horse drawn vehicles, such as personal carriages, hansom cabs, omnibuses, and even fire engines (though combined with steam pumps for pressurizing the water for the hose) remain the main form of transportation. The importance of horse power is still clear even in the investigations of Hercule Poirot, in particular where the horse provides the power for moving most farm machinery. However, by the interwar years, horses are being used increasingly for pleasure rather than as working animals, though in special circumstances horse drawn vehicles are still the preferred means of transportation. This is shown in the Mrs Bradley mysteries in that Mrs Bradley herself travels in a Rolls Royce but in the same episode the hearse carrying the body of Amy Parkin, the cook, is horse drawn.

Another form of transport presented in these mysteries, and one that

had an enormous impact on life in Britain, was the use of steam engines in rail transport. Interestingly, though, travel by rail figures mostly in the adventures of Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot rather than in those of Mrs Bradley. The reasons for this will be dealt with in subsequent papers.

The second aspect that can be seen is the mechanisms of enforcing law and order. All three of the main characters are private investigators, and they are all, for the most part, amateurs in the sense that they have trained themselves and developed their methods which allow them to operate independently. The possible exception would be Poirot, who before coming to Britain, belonged to the Belgian police authorities. One feature that becomes very apparent is the tense relationship that exists between the fledgling police force and the private investigator. This is shown not only between the two groups themselves but also in the fact that private individuals still, for various reasons (but generally for impartiality), feel more comfortable with private investigators rather than the official police. One other aspect which is shown in this relationship is that the private investigator has the ability not only to investigate occurrences but also, to a certain extent, act as judge and jury by choosing whether or not to reveal what they have discovered to the police.

A further aspect which is shown in relation to law and order, is the operation of the British court system. This comes over perhaps mostly strongly, though not exclusively, in the Poirot episode. Here we are shown both the operation of the coroner's court in establishing whether or not a death requires further investigation and also the functioning of the high court and the division between solicitors (who are able to engage another group of people), barristers (who are engaged by solicitors to prosecute and defend cases), judges (who ensure that evidence is presented appropriately

by the barristers) and the jury (which still at this time, is comprised of twelve men). These stories also show that the basis of British law is that a person must be proved guilty rather than proving that they are innocent.

Thirdly, the interiors of the houses of the wealthy are most often depicted in these stories. From this various points can be seen. Firstly, that important documents were often stored in a safe place at home. In the stories of all three of these characters a lack of faith in outside institutions holding valuables and value documents is shown. Protection could take the form of installing a safe or more often in the design of the garden. Walled gardens, iron gates, guard dogs and even servants patrolling with guns are all shown as methods of providing privacy and security.

The interiors of houses are also shown. Decoration to show wealth and taste is clearly obvious either through art, items of furniture and china. In addition, the design of the houses is shown, such as the kitchen being located away from the main part of the house. Various other features connected with kitchens are also shown, for example that often the walls were tiled and the floor was covered with flag stones. Elsewhere in the house, many the rooms have wood panels. Furthermore, there is indication of the separation between areas primarily for the servants and those for the family. Interestingly, the Poirot story presents information about the domestic arrangements between husband and wife, in that they have separate but adjoining bedrooms.

The final aspect to be considered is one that is both obvious but also difficult to explain in words, and that is clothing. One point that becomes clear is that the greatest change in fashion effects women rather than men. Men's style of clothing in all three stories remains largely the same. Men

dress in three piece suits (tailor made), white collarless shirts with separate stiff collars, ties (or on some occasions, bowties), black overcoats hats (ranging from top hats to bowler hats), gold watch chains and walking sticks. In the countryside, this strictness is relaxed a little with the appearance of tweed jackets, blazers, slacks and straw-boater hats.

For women, styles in the times of Sherlock Holmes were very different to those of Mrs Bradley's era. In the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, middle class women wore long dresses with a 'bustle' at the back (a type of bow where the dress's material was gathered). Most often their hair was tied and pinned up under a hat or bonnet rather than loosely hanging down. However, by the time of Mrs Bradley, fashionable middle class women were wearing tighter dresses which made the use of corsets unfashionable. Hair styles had also changed; becoming shorter in the bobbed style. Finally, fashion jewelry was worn more ostentatiously.

In addition, the clothing styles of servants can also be seen. In general, maids wore a long black dress with a white apron over the top and a white hat. The housekeeper would also wear a black dress but without the apron. Male servants, particularly the butler, would wear a suit and a coat with tails. Male servants working outdoors would be less formally dressed unless they also had responsibilities which involved meeting guests.

Although this list is by no means exhaustive, it is clear that these episodes provide a wealth of information about British history and culture. As has been pointed out above, a more detailed discussion of these points will form the basis of a future paper.

IV Section 3

As was pointed out in the introduction, the purpose of this paper is provide background to creating a course of study based around using mystery dramas as a means of studying British culture and history. This section will indicate the steps to be taken in order to translate this information into a workable one-year course of study.

Firstly, the episodes indicated above need to be further analysed in order to draw out aspects that the students will need to be aware of. In particular, this will involve creating question sheets to help them to watch the stories actively. Very often students watch dramatisation passively and fail to pick up on important aspects. As the use of the DVDs will be twofold, it will be necessary to construct questions which enable the students to identify both aspects of British culture and features common to the mystery genre.

Secondly, although the dramatisations of these stories provide an abundance of information about British culture from the late nineteenth century, it will be necessary to supplement this information with additional and more authoritative information. In general, the types of books that could provide this information are at a level which is linguistically too advanced for second language learners. As such, it will be necessary to produce background information sheets which are more appropriate to the students' linguistic abilities. This process will need careful monitoring so as to provide information accessibly and succinctly. Therefore, the background information sheets will need to be trialled and where necessary edited to ensure that they fulfill the purpose they were created for.

Thirdly, it will be useful to identify on-line sources of information which the students can access as part of their own study and for homework. Such sources should relate both to the episodes chosen for study and to provide further reliable information about the British history and culture. It would also be useful if these sites could provide visual images of where the programmes were made and information about the history of the actual production sites. This would help the students to realize that the interiors and exteriors of the buildings they see are not always connected. Very often one building will be used as an exterior image of a place in the story whilst one or more others will provide that building's interior.

Fourthly, it will be important to provide some biographical information relating to the authors who created the characters to be studied. It is thought that this will be useful as very often a knowledge of the circumstances surrounding an author's life can help to illuminate his or her attitudes towards society and the values that he or she particularly valued.

Finally, the students will need to be guided in producing a glossary of key aspects and language of the mystery genre with examples from the dramatisations they watch. Such a glossary will help them to engage more easily with the data that they are using.

V Conclusion

This paper is the first in a series the purpose of which is to illustrate how mystery dramas can be used to find out about British history and culture in an educational context. Initially, three episodes, each relating to a different private investigator, were summarised. The purpose of the summaries was to ensure that the essential elements of the story are

known. In a subsequent paper the episodes will be revisited to look at common features of mystery dramas. Secondly, very briefly, examples of British history and culture that are shown in these episodes were described. These examples really form only the tip of the iceberg as there is so much information presented in every minute of every scene. Recounting and analysing all of this information is impossible in a paper of this length. In particular, the examples chosen relate to the development of the authorities connected with law enforcement and the administration of justice and the houses and fashion styles of the wealthy. In a further paper, these examples will be discussed in more detail and reasons for changes will be considered. Finally, this paper presents the next steps to be taken in order to translate this research into a programme of study so that university level students can successful use mystery dramas to learn about the historical and cultural development of Britain.

Sources

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

The Mysterious Affair at Styles

Laurels are Poison, The Mrs Bradly Mysteries