

1943 Guide to Hiring Women

The following is an excerpt from the July 1943 issue of Transportation Magazine.

This was written for male supervisors of women in the work force during World War II.

Eleven Tips on Getting More Efficiency Out of Women Employees: There's no longer any question whether transit companies should hire women for jobs formerly held by men. The draft and manpower shortage has settled that point. The important things now are to select the most efficient women available and how to use them to the best advantage.

Here are eleven helpful tips on the subject from Western Properties:

1. Pick young married women. They usually have more of a sense of responsibility than their unmarried sisters, they're less likely to be flirtatious, they need the work or they wouldn't be doing it, they still have the pep and interest to work hard and to deal with the public efficiently.
2. When you have to use older women, try to get ones who have worked outside the home at some time in their lives. Older women who have never contacted the public have a hard time adapting themselves and are inclined to be cantankerous and fussy. It's always well to impress upon older women the importance of friendliness and courtesy.
3. General experience indicates that "husky" girls - those who are just a little on the heavy side - are more even tempered and efficient than their underweight sisters.
4. Retain a physician to give each woman you hire a special physical examination - one covering female conditions. This step not only protects the property against the possibilities of lawsuit, but reveals whether the employee-to-be has any female weaknesses which would make her mentally or physically unfit for the job.
5. Stress at the outset the importance of time the fact that a minute or two lost here and there makes serious inroads on schedules. Until this point is gotten across, service is likely to be slowed up.
6. Give the female employee a definite day-long schedule of duties so that they'll keep busy without bothering the management for instructions every few minutes. Numerous properties say that women make excellent workers when they have their jobs cut out for them, but that they lack initiative in finding work themselves.
7. Whenever possible, let the inside employee change from one job to another at some time during the day. Women are inclined to be less nervous and happier with change.
8. Give every girl an adequate number of rest periods during the day. You have to make some allowances for feminine psychology. A girl has more confidence and is more efficient if she can keep her hair tidied, apply fresh lipstick and wash her hands several times a day.
9. Be tactful when issuing instructions or in making criticisms. Women are often sensitive; they can't shrug off harsh words the way men do. Never ridicule a woman - it breaks her spirit and cuts off her efficiency.
10. Be reasonably considerate about using strong language around women. Even though a girl's husband or father may swear vociferously, she'll grow to dislike a place of business where she hears too much of this.
11. Get enough size variety in operator's uniforms so that each girl can have a proper fit. This point can't be stressed too much in keeping women happy.



September / October 2007

Her mother started at UC Berkeley before finances demanded that she take a job at Macy's. Then the war came and she made vacuum tubes. Her father fought in the war in the south Pacific, and married her mother on his return. He had jobs ranging from nurseman to real estate agent to gas station attendant to furniture repairman.

Born in Oakland California and lived in Walnut Creek.

"We moved so often when I was young, it wasn't until high school that I entered the same school in September that I'd been in the previous June. By then, I'd more or less given up on the tedious process of making friend, since libraries were always nearby."

Most of childhood spent in Santa Cruz and San Jose, California, then the suburbs of Tacoma, Washington.

Education: Moving more or less yearly, is not conducive to an even education and she would often have to repeat subjects as the curricula was different from one place to another. In the summer of 1967, she attended high school nearby Fort Lewis at the height of the Vietnam war, where she was the weird kid with long hair and gold-rimmed glasses, Army jacket with a green-for-ecology peace patch, the school's only hippie.

After high school, enrolled at the local junior college. Not much money for college. Impressed by a professor who taught logic, philosophy, and religious studies, and he was the first to suggest that religion was a passion that could permeate all life. Transferring to the University of California at Santa Cruz and life became ecstasy, studying religion. Her BA took seven years, as she was working and she has the first degree in her family. She never took a course in creative writing.

Went to the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley and spent seven years doing a 3 yr Masters degree. By then she was married, working, and had children.

Life: Took a day off of her day time job to visit ~~and~~ professor whom she hasn't seen for some time, and found "our conversation entering interesting avenues, well, marriage seemed a good idea." Twenty-five years later, it still does. She marries Noel King, from a family of Anglo-Indians, born in 1922 in India. He was ordained in the Anglican Church and by 1967 was hired by UC to begin a program in comparative religion. They married in 1977, her husband being 30 years older than she and immediately became world travelers, following her husband as he performed his religious duties.

On writing: One of the greatest pleasures in being the sort of writer I am, is looking up during a ~~sing~~ and seeing myself in the back row. The book, which begins with the heroine 15 yr. old yet easily capable of meeting the great S.H. as an equal, is the story I wish I had when I was 12 or 14. Fantasy, affirmation, a hint of romance, a dash of

adventure: along with those shy girls in the back row, I am Mary Russell. Or I was at that age, in my mind.

In truth, I was socially inept, physically awkward, excruciatingly shy, and always an outsider. Mostly I sat with my nose in a book. They move to Puget Sound in the 1960's and is a regular visitor to the Dash Point Public Library. A tall, gawky 10 yr old with cropped hair and a squint (for she will not get her first glasses until the following year.) Love The Black Stallion stories and spends time making clay models of horses. "Had it been the 1990s instead of the 1960s, I would surely have been in therapy and subjected to a regimen of mood-relieving drugs."

In Sept. 1987, with both her children in school, began to write the opening sentences of Beekeeper's. And like that, I was a writer. Wrote the entire novel in a month. Then rewrote it, and then wrote two more before a publisher expressed any interest. The next book was actually the third book in the series "A Letter of Mary". It became increasingly clear that the relationship between my two detectives was not going to be that of mere intellectual and professional partners, but rather a partnership in every aspect of their lives. See paper.

She writes without an outline, with only the vaguest idea of what the story is about or where it is going.

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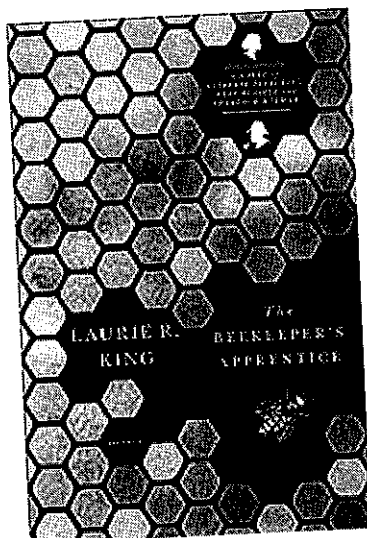
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THE BEEKEEPER'S APPRENTICE A Mary Russell Novel

AUTHOR: Laurie R. King
PUBLISHER: Picador USA, October 2007 (reissue)
WEBSITE: www.laurierking.com
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Mystery / Adventure / Women's
Lives
(Fiction)

An Agatha Award Best Novel Nominee

**Named One of the Century's Best 100 Mysteries by
the Independent Mystery Booksellers Association**

"King has stepped onto the sacred literary preserve of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, poached Holmes, and brilliantly brought him to life again." —The Washington Post Book World

"A fascinating and often moving account of a friendship so unusual and so compelling that one almost accepts it as being historically real." —The Denver Post

"Enchanting . . . The Beekeeper's Apprentice is real Laurie R. King, not faux Conan Doyle, and for my money, it's better than the original." —San Jose Mercury News

SUMMARY: *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* is the first in a series of books to follow the adventures of Mary Russell, a gawky, egotistical, recently orphaned young lady who literally falls into the lap of Sherlock Holmes. Though he appears long retired from crime fighting, and is quietly engaged in raising honeybees on his Sussex estate, Russell piques his interest and in short order impresses the detective with her intellect and powers of deduction. Under his tutelage, this very modern twentieth century woman proves a deft protégée and a fitting partner for the Victorian detective, and in this first volume, we witness the formative years of a character who will grow

and develop over many books to come.

The Beekeeper's Apprentice also paints a historically accurate picture of what it is like to live as a woman in misogynistic times. Between the strands of the mystery, King threads her own subtle commentary on how war transforms social status, and the mutability of gender roles even under oppressive circumstances. In addition, *Beekeeper* is a faithful and formally impressive foray into the world of Conan Doyle, one that carefully evokes the voice of Sherlock Holmes while at the same time presenting him with a new foil, and fresh adventure. King revives the literary tradition of Conan Doyle, and all of its pleasures, but from a distinctly different point of view.

In their first case together, they must track down a kidnapped American senator's daughter and confront a truly cunning adversary--a bomber who has set trip wires for the sleuths and who will stop at nothing to end their partnership. Full of brilliant deductions, disguises, and dangers, this first book of the Mary Russell--Sherlock Holmes mysteries is "wonderfully original and entertaining . . . absorbing from beginning to end" (*Booklist*).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Laurie R. King is the Edgar Award-winning author of four contemporary novels featuring Kate Martinelli, eight acclaimed Mary Russell mysteries, and four stand-alone novels, including the highly praised *A Darker Place*. She lives in northern California.

CONVERSATION STARTERS :



1. In an Editor's Preface, King playfully discloses the "true" origin of the story at hand: that what follows will be the actual memoirs of Mary Russell, which were mysteriously sent to her out of the blue, along with a trunk full of odds and ends. Why does King begin with this anecdote, essentially including herself in the story? Does it bring the world of the novel closer to our own? Have you read any other books (*Lolita*, for example) which begin with a false-preface, and what effect does this device have on the rest of the novel? Were you fooled?
2. It is 1915, the Great War is raging through Europe and the men of England are in the trenches. How does this particular period in history allow a character like Mary Russell to take the stage in areas of post-Victorian society usually reserved for men? In what significant ways does she seize these opportunities? Would she have thrived if born into a different, more oppressive social climate, say, one hundred years earlier?
3. How would you characterize Mary Russell based on her first opinion of bees? Does her disdain for their mindless busy-work and adherence to hive social structure reflect a particular attitude toward the social landscape of England at the time? Do you agree with Mary?
4. Holmes uses the game of chess to sharpen Mary Russell's strategic thinking and intuition. How does chess—and, in particular, the Queen—serve as a metaphor throughout the story? In what ways does King herself use the game to comment upon the master-apprentice relationship?
5. Russell and Holmes don disguises throughout *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, and their work sometimes requires them to cross dress. Discuss each point in the novel where either Russell or Holmes takes cover in the opposite sex; what special access does this method of disguise give them to the other characters? Is gender reversal necessary in order to win the confidence of certain people? How does Mary Russell's world change when she dresses as a man?

6. Watson is eternally known as the great detective's sidekick. Who, in your opinion, is a more effective foil for Holmes, Watson or Russell? What different aspects of Holmes's personality emerge in the presence of each? What would happen if Holmes were paired with a different partner, one more timid or less tenacious?
7. At Oxford, Mary Russell concludes that theology and detective work are one and the same. In your opinion, how are the two subjects related?
8. The art of deduction is constantly at play in *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*. Even when Mary notices that Watson has shaven off his mustache, she cares to look closer at the skin and imagine that it was done "very recently." Is Laurie King training the reader's perceptions to be more acute throughout the novel? Does every detail of our lives hold a mystery and a story?
9. What are some crucial differences between the training Patricia Donleavy received from Moriarty and the training Mary Russell received from Holmes? What mental and emotional strengths do both women have in common, and what separates them? Holmes comments: "A quick mind is worthless unless you can control the emotions with it as well." How does this maxim apply?
10. At what point in the novel did you suspect that Russell's adversary was a woman? When you read a mystery, what assumptions do you typically make about the gender of the villain? In what ways does King toy with the reader's assumptions about gender throughout the novel?

Click [here](#) to learn more about Mary Russell's adventures.



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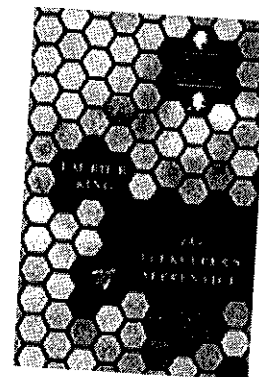
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The Beekeeper's Apprentice by Laurie R. King

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About This Book

The Beekeeper's Apprentice is the first in a series of books to follow the adventures of Mary Russell, a gawky, egotistical, recently orphaned young lady who literally falls into the lap of Sherlock Holmes. Though he appears long retired from crime fighting, and is quietly engaged in raising honeybees on his Sussex estate, Russell piques his interest and in short order impresses the detective with her intellect and powers of deduction. Under his tutelage, this very modern twentieth century woman proves a deft protégée and a fitting partner for the Victorian detective, and in this first volume, we witness the formative years of a character who will grow and develop over many books to come.

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Critical Praise

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— **Booklist**

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— **The Washington Post Book World**

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18: End at 6091 Brookhaven Ln

Laurie R. King and the phenomenon Mary Russell

by Mia Stampe

This article was originally written for the members of the Danish Sherlock Holmes Society. That's why I in the text refer to several Danish articles or books. However, instead of making a lot of changes I have thought it better just to translate this article directly and let you read it for what it is: a Danish Sherlockian/Russellian paper.

The four-letter abbreviations are the commonly used ones for the Sherlock Holmes stories in the Canon. They are listed [here](#).

Warning

The following article is a study in, and - admittedly - a praise of, Laurie R. King's (LRK) series of books featuring Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes. Sherlockian purists are to be warned in advance. I do not want to be the cause of an apoplectic seizure. Opinions, which can only be regarded as highly heretic, will be debated; so if you belong to those people who lose their temper over pastiches, where Holmes and Watson are ascribed points that cannot be quoted as instances in the Canon, please skip this article! Pray, forget my name, so that we in the future will still be able to chat in a pleasant way.

For liberal Sherlockians who have chosen to continue: You may end up smiling on this ♦fallen disciple,♦ but on the other hand it might happen that your curiosity will become aroused if some amongst you should not yet have become acquainted with the authorship of LRK. I have heard a few times: ♦I haven♦t read the books but I hate them!♦

I♦ll refer to LRK♦s complete Russell/Holmes stories as the Kanon, and the individual titles are:

(BEEK) The Beekeeper's Apprentice, or On the Segregation of the Queen
(MREG) A Monstrous Regiment of Women
(LETT) A Letter of Mary and
(MOOR) The Moor

The Canon refers, as usual, to the complete Sherlock Holmes stories by Arthur Conan Doyle (ACD)

How it all began:

It was a pure coincidence that I found BEEK at the library, but I remembered having read a book review of it in ♦ Sherlockiana ♦ the newsletter of the Danish Sherlock Holmes Society. It is a nice, thick book. It started as goodnight reading, but the book positively stuck to the palm and would not let go of it. I eventually put the book down - read - next morning. And then only reluctantly. I would greatly have preferred to be able to start all over at page one. This is the very first book I have read thrice in a week and it has changed my life! Well, at least that part which has something to do with my interest in Sherlock Holmes.

I have loved and enjoyed ACD ♦s books about the detective Sherlock Holmes since my early teens. As everybody else I created my own image of the main character, an image which maybe wasn ♦t in complete agreement with ACD ♦s version. But as I discovered LRK ♦s books I recognized *my* Holmes. So I fell. Without defense, without much resistance. I just let myself fall, in a state of unconsciousness. (Some will assert that my head seems to have hit the ground first). I confess to being addicted now. I know the influence is extremely harmful to the body, but it is a marvelous feeling. At my bookcase I keep no ♦ *seven-per-cent solution* ♦ but 4 volumes in which I indulge myself when the World around me becomes too commonplace....

Most of the Russell fans - or Russellians - are women. This is reflected in the overwhelming majority of female members on the discussion list Russ-L. In the article What do Women see in Sherlock Holmes I shall try to discuss why this is so, but here I ♦ll just state the fact

① LRK ♦s books have become some of the most popular and at the same time controversial pastiches in recent history. She has achieved a substantial following, but she is also confronted with furious resistance from Sherlockian purists. One of the point of criticism is that LRK takes Sherlock Holmes ♦ name in vain, that is she uses his name as eye catcher just to earn the big money. In my humble opinion this is completely unjustified. LRK has showed in her other mystery series featuring the police detective Kate Martinelli that she is perfectly capable of earning a name by herself.

LRK and Mary Russell ♦s official web page is headed by a golden banner with the inscription: ♦ After 1914 Holmes is ours. ♦ That is indeed to wave a red scarf in front of the faithful Canonical Sherlockians. But, as I have written in the article: To find Kindred Spirits, I believe that what really provoke Sherlockian Purists is the very way , the complete conviction, by which the Russellians have adapted the narrations.

No one, not even the hardest opponents, can however deny that LRK carries out a very thorough investigation prior to writing the novels. This regards as well the Canon, the time and the social, cultural, and scientific, let alone the literary, environment. One can

2
continue to find details in her books. Details which in other contexts prove to be tokens of extensive research. She is not faultless; the plot is sometimes slim and at times she approaches the border of sentimentality. The worst is her reduction of Watson to a dear elderly man without much intellect. Poor Watson - what a great sorrow, why did she do that? In my opinion BEEK is still the best story, way better than its successors. But beyond the already published four novels, there is at least 2 and possibly more stories coming, so I and other Russellians are waiting impatiently. As someone of Russ-L expressed it: ♦God, now I know how the Strand ♦s readers felt !!! ♦ We sincerely hope, that LRK is able to keep the quality and preferably rise to the level of her first Russell novel. A superhuman wish, perhaps.

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One of the reasons that many, including myself, read pastiches is, that we are hungry after knowing ♦ what happens next ♦. It is unbearable just to leave Holmes there in Sussex and then that ♦s it. In my eyes many of the pastiches pretending to continue Watson ♦s style unfortunately appear rigid and unoriginal. It looks like many authors in pure eagerness make obvious hints and references to the Watson written stories and just want to expose their good knowledge of the Canon. New adventures, perhaps with suspense and really good plots, but the figure of Holmes nobody seriously dares to touch let alone develop. In that sense he is dead. Writing a good pastiche is wedging between heresy and recycling. LRK apparently does everything one supposed taboo. In BEEK Holmes meets and makes friendship with a young woman, a girl of only 15, feminist and theology student to be. Everything as far from him as it can possibly be. She becomes his apprentice, later his partner in detecting as well as in his private life (MREG, LETT and MOOR). And it goes surprisingly well! Isn ♦t that amazing?!?! I shall return to the question of why this may be possible at exactly that time. With Holmes ♦ own word from BEEK ♦Twenty years ago, even ten. But here? Now? ♦ And as happy readers we can only lean back and shouting out with joy add: ♦Ohh, yes! If not now, then when ?

A nice little detail about pastiches is that if our curiosity is not satisfied by reading about Holmes and Russell in the Kanon (or Holmes and Watson in the Canon), we are always free to write our own versions of the episodes and situations we might want to see. The same goes for the wish to ♦close holes♦ in the Kanon or to finish a dead end. Among Russellians there are several gifted writers who until now have offered the hungry fans more than 30 pastiches connected to the books by LRK. Technically these pastiches are pastiches of pastiches. We are far out, indeed, but it is so much fun! Those re-pastiches, as we might call them, are to be found in the collection The Hive at the Internet. There really are some literary pearls in between!

But actually I don ♦t want to talk about LRK as the author. That is not the realm of ours. No, it ♦s all about the two persons, Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes.

4 A Danish reviewer wrote about BEEK in 1995. He liked it as crime fiction, but he emphasized that it was a romantic story even though the atmosphere never did turn pinky or sticky. I whole-heartedly agree. The rose-colored ambience is avoided primarily because the dialogues between Holmes and Russell are sparkling with humor and irony. The same reviewer was however very disappointed about the following MREG. He characterized the book as a ♦ lady novel ♦ in the sense of harmless and sentimental. Herein I utterly disagree, except about one scene that not even I can swallow. But to equal ♦ lady ♦ with ♦ sentimental and harmless ♦, that is too much! As a matter of fact it is a pure Victorian exclamation of prejudice. Yet, I shall overlook it, this actually could have been one of Watson ♦'s sweet remarks. Watson, who I hold very dear.

5 In MREG and LETT there are marvelous scenes, puns and witty ping-pong. I admit that the mystery in the two books is no nearly as strong as in the first novel. This is partly due to the fact, that the story in those two books embraces only a few weeks and only deals with one single case. In contrast to BEEK, where we follow Holmes and Russell ♦'s actions during 4 years and where we see a considerable development of the personalities of the two main characters and of their professional lives. Here we are introduced to several smaller problems (♦ la Watson short story style) leading unavoidably to the final, fatal day of reckoning

The aging Holmes

6 Holmes is - or becomes as the story goes on - a more ♦ human ♦ person with problems and feelings not before seen in Watson ♦'s narrations. This ♦ new personality ♦ of his is nevertheless very convincing. Perhaps because it is not thrown directly in our faces but is shown (again very like Watson ♦'s style) in the acts and the details. A kind of ♦ understatement ♦ of which the effect is so much the more striking and genuine. The same argument can be used about Holmes and Russell ♦'s marital relationship. Here is an example I as a devoted Sherlockian should never have thought possible (LETT p. 234):

Holmes and Russell are lying in the bed speaking about the preceding days events. Holmes has had a hard week for the reason among others that he has had to sleep at the floor at night. Now he says: ♦ *I have been very cold without my Shunammite.* ♦ He refers to the Old Testament, Kings 1:2-4 (who would have believed that, but explanation follows). Here the old King David is brought a young girl, Abishag from Shunam, who is to lie in his bed to keep him warm. Simply a human hot-water bottle. A very prosaic way of expressing that he has missed her, I dare say! And the dialogue goes on. Russell doesn't know that Holmes - in his official capacity and disguised as a poor man - has spent some time in a Christian soup kitchen where he also attended bible readings. When Russell asks to his investigations he replies:

Holmes: ♦ *I have been reading my Bible* ♦.

[astonished] Russell: ♦ *I beg your pardon?* ♦

Holmes: ♦ *Sorry, was my arm over your ear?* ♦

To me this kind of humor is simple irresistible!

7 According to S.S. Van Dine ♦s twenty rules for writhing a good detective story, love and other misleading topics have nothing to do in crime fiction. LRK brakes this rule obviously and deliberately (ACD on the other hand did not ♦obey♦ either). Russell has a desire of telling several stories at the same time, not only about detection and investigation work. Her manuscripts are about evolution and development of personalities, some women history, some feminist theology and in MOOR she makes the place itself come alive, personifies it. I see this last novel as a tribute to one of Watson ♦s - well, one of the whole mystery genre ♦s - most famous stories (HOUND) and to Sherlock Holmes himself. It can be argued then, that LRK ought not call the novels crime fiction but categorize them as something else with a touch of suspense. Just like for instance the Danish ♦Miss Smilla♦s sense of snow♦ by Peter Hoeg, they are in a border-zone. But if we follow LRK ♦s intention and accept Russell ♦s wish of expressing more than one message, then we are rewarded - especially as Sherlockians - with tidbits, Canonical hints and quibbles to the great amusement. Russell is playing with fiction and ♦reality♦ using such an abundance of details and wit. Ostensible trifles are hiding references to other parts of crime fiction literature or the Canon itself. Here are a few examples:

puns 5 In BEEK (p. 71) a ♦practicing case♦ Holmes is waiting for his apprentice, Russell, to deduce the solution of the mystery. She does indeed so and bursts out in surprise: ♦Are you telling me the butler did it?♦ Again, according to Van Dine this is ♦naughty♦. The butler is never allowed to be the culprit. That ♦s why authors have fun in adding such an unconventional touch.

Another little gem from MREG (p. 280): Russell asks Holmes, very well aware that he is going to turn furious: ♦How are the fairies in the bottom of your garden?♦. My! A provocation unheard-of to wave in front of his (and our) nose this well known - and in our eyes to ACD - pretty embarrassing affair of the fake fairy photograph.

And like these examples one can continue to find new discoveries at each re-reading of the stories. Believe me, I have read them many times.

Charge and defense

I find that nothing in the Kanon sharply conflicts with the Canon. With one exception, which is Russell's description of Watson. As already mentioned, her representation is very far from the way he described himself. Russell gives us the impression, that Watson in one of the best people on Earth, but incredibly naive and not very bright. A fervently wounding presentation to us who know and love this friend and first biographer of Holmes from the Canon. At this point (and others) Russell is not a sympathetic person, but I forgive her. She is so young and looks at the world with the rebellious eyes of the teen. Furthermore, it is very possible that she simply envies Watson that he has know Holmes in his youth. Watson and Holmes have a common past and friendship she will never be able to be a part of.

In Sherlock Holmes the Detective Magazine Pat Ward effectively cuts down the Russell series. And many people share her point of view. The cardinal point of critics is that Holmes in LRK's books is unrecognizable and completely unlike the Holmes we meet in ACD's books. Especially because he - beyond being made some years younger - is depicted as an emotional human being. Well, I certainly shall not deny that Russell's description of Holmes is very different from Watson's. But the reasons are obvious, too!

Russell vs. Watson

The Canon and the Kanon necessarily must reflect the different narrators. Watson is a man, he is 45 years older than Russell and has a completely different social background. She is young, almost ahead of her time and possesses an intelligence able to match Holmes. It is inevitable that those two narrators interpret the disposition of Holmes and his deeds differently. Surely Holmes has also shown these two people different facets of his personality. We, as readers, also look differently upon the two narrators. Watson is sympathetic, devoting, the one fixed point in a changing age and we can only like him. He is not there to tell about himself, but about Holmes. It is much more difficult with Russell. She seems often to be arrogant and egocentric (just like we've sometimes seen Holmes) and actually not very likeable. It is extremely awkward to tell about one's own good characters without appearing boastful to ones surroundings. Holmes proclamations had this effect on Watson in those days. The only description of Russell we immediately can accept is when Holmes admires her. Because we know, that if anyone is admirable in his eyes, then that person must indeed be something special. In this way Holmes is as much a window to Russell as she is to him.

Furthermore, we should not forget, that we have no primary sources (with the exceptions of the few stories that are claimed to be written by Holmes himself). Watson wrote about

Holmes, and ACD was Watson's literary agent. Mary Russell describes her life with Holmes and LRK just transcribes and publishes her handwritten manuscripts. All of these are secondary sources. And unfortunately none of us have ever met the Master, which leaves us in the state, that each of us is left to create a picture of Holmes (and Watson and Russell and the others) from the sources we personally find most reliable. My argument in this debate is then, that just because Watson came first this should not be tantamount to regarding his interpretation as the one and only true. To cut it down, I think that we in LRK's books see another side of the person Holmes (notice! Not another Holmes!), because we see him through the eyes of another person.

See Holmes from another perspective

And finally, it is not without significance to remember, that Holmes, as an intelligent human being, obviously has to develop with age. Watson portrays him in the time they were younger. He tells us about Holmes' life as consulting detective in London. But actually we see already in Watson's stories a man who changes. Holmes behaves a little differently after his three years abroad. His character is further changed/developed in the last of the Canonical accounts (LION, LAST). Many Sherlockians don't like LION, but I do for instance because I there see a more human and wiser Holmes. (It is very deliberate that I use the non Stackhurst at Hounds-L). So, yes, of course Russell and Watson's descriptions of Holmes are different !!!

Holmes' rejuvenation

In LAST, which takes place in 1914, it is said (not by Watson, but by whom then?), that Holmes, alias Altamont is 60 years old, that is he is born in 1854. Russell claims that he really is born in 1861 and that it is Watson who in his stories has made him elder so to look more experienced and convincing. Can Russell's assertion be rendered probable? Yes, I think so:

Age of Holmes

Now first of all, in the Canon Altamont is *described* as being sixty. The narrator, not being Watson, would probably not know his actual age. Furthermore he is in disguise. Would Holmes not also have hidden his real age? Next. it was under his visit at his school friend Victor Trevor's home (GLOR), Holmes became aware, that he wanted to make a career as consulting detective. I anticipate, that young Trevor and Holmes must be about the same age as they attended college together. How old was young Trevor then? Well, in 1855 his father was on the ship Gloria Scott heading for Australia. Many things happened, but I think he would need as minimum
3 years to make himself a fortune in gold digging and for traveling
1 year to establish himself in England and to find a wife
1 year before Trevor was born.
- i.e. the year of 1860. At least. Say 1861, then Holmes and Trevor probably attended college together in the years 1876 and 1877. ♦ The Ultimate Sherlock Holmes

Encyclopedia♦, USH, dates the visit at Trevor♦s to a summer in the period 1872 to 1876. Baring-Gould says 1874, but 1875 is a realistic bid. We are just not used to seeing a teen talk and act so sure of himself as Holmes does. But I wonder if Holmes not already at that time should have been pretty cocksure. Holmes had his third real case as a detective in MUSG. At the same time he studies at the university. USH indicates a summer in the period 1878 to 1880. Baring-Gould mentions 1879. Taking the latter Holmes would then have been only 18 years old when he solved the Musgrave mystery. Well, this doesn♦t sound improbable to me. After all, he was a bright young man, wasn♦t he? He only has a few cases in the beginning of his career. This gives him time enough to attend some lectures and do his own experiments, enough to achieve a BA (probably in chemistry plus one other subject) before March 1881 or 1882 which of many Sherlockians is considered the date of Watson and Holmes♦ first meeting (STUD). Bringing me back to answer the original question. That Holmes should be born in 1861, that♦s fine to me!

This leaves a small problem, though: Watson. He took his medical exam in 1878. The education probably took at least 5 years and even though he started early at the university (about the age of 17) he hardly can be born later than 1855. Baring-Gould suggests in the beginning of the 50s. At best this makes Watson 6 years older than Holmes as a minimum. We♦ll have to live with that.

Holmes in matrimony, how is this possible?

There are several reasons, but the most important is *the time*. And with that follows an introduction of a female resource of intelligence. Holmes had his professional career in the Victorian era. Women of that time were not encouraged to use their brains (for analytical and logical thinking) or to do things for them selves. They were - in the very scientific sense (referring to Darwin) - considered as inferior human beings. Their roles in society were to be loyal wives, to bear and bring up the coming generation and to keep the home together. This is roughly speaking, and of course there were exceptions. If Holmes had tried to keep up a conversation with an average Victorian woman, her knowledge about the subjects he was interested in would be of the level of a child♦s. Not very attractive to a man, who value most of all the logic intellect.

Approaching WW1 and following, women♦s education independence accelerated. The war itself caused radical alterations everywhere: socially, economically, politically, psychologically and also relationally between the sexes. When the men were send to the battlefield, women took over jobs, which were earlier to be managed by men. They took on new responsibilities and obligations. After the war the country had a deficit of hundreds of thousands of men. The effect of this was that a lot of women had to create a self-supporting life on their own. Once the women as a group in the society learned to fend for themselves they got more independent, and because of their role in WW1

Love
③
⑩
Victorian
Era

women gained in the years after a series of improved conditions such as the right of voting, more privileges in cases of divorce and inheritance. The time after the war was quite different from the one before where a strong national optimism based on a conservative and orthodox foundation were prevalent. Now people in general were less conventional, life had to be learned and tried again, it was too short for sham correctness and old-fashioned hypocrisy.

Because Russell has the background she has and meets Holmes at the time she does, she is able to catch him off his guard with that magic combination of intelligence, wit and independence, which Holmes had never met before, neither in a man and not at all in a woman. In addition to this they get attached in friendship while she is still just a child and when they realize she has grown up, it is too late to retreat.

The way we know Holmes from the Canon he was in many aspects on the front edge of the developments in the society. His methods eventually became standard police procedures. We can not imagine that man not being able to keep pace with latest news (if it was important to him). If he had lived in our time, he would without doubt have known exactly where on the Internet he could achieve certain information and in which subcultures he should mingle in order to contact certain people. He probably would appreciate e-mail as a modern form of wire to which an instant reply was possible (though, often he did not reply). I presume most Sherlockians will agree, that part of the charm and popularity of the Canon is due to the atmosphere described by Watson in the fin de siècle: London fog, Hansom cabs, warmth from the fireplace etc. All that is more or less the past in Russell's narrations, but I find that Holmes looks very good in the age of the automobile, too. Russell says, that when she finds him in BEEK, he has actually come to a mental halt, which Holmes admits himself (and which Watson over-dramatizes). We know Holmes's depressive point from the Canon, so this seems absolutely reasonable. But Russell draws him into an active life again. Think about that! If it wasn't for Mary Russell, Holmes would be dead by boredom as an anachronism in his own time. We Sherlockians truly have a lot to thank her for! And honestly, if Holmes decides to marry, we should accept this as his own private business. He certainly seems to enjoy this special marriage where neither of the two proud and self-confident people is prepared to leave a discussion without having fought for their respective opinions.

◆ You see why I married her, Mycroft? The exquisite juxtaposition of lady-like threats and backhanded compliments proved irresistible. ◆ (LETT p. 60).

Therefore it is only a natural evolution that Holmes under and after WW1 through his young apprentice accepts the new role women have come to play in the society. That he keeps up with the times is just another evidence of this strange man's intelligence and understanding of mankind. An ability we see increasingly through the Canon. Watson does give us the general picture of Holmes as a cold thinking machine, egocentric (how, by the way, can a machine be that?) and scientifically objective. But at the same time he

10

Women
in society

also describes him as ♦ the best and the wisest man ♦, and a true friend. In Watson ♦s stories we also see a vulnerable person who cares a great deal about his associates. A human being who doubt, feel shame and pride, love, despair and wonder. Innumerable details indicate this. A few quotes are listed in App. A, but the thorough discussion of them must wait for another time. Holmes is affected when he fails or is too slow. He says himself, that he is often wrong (App. B), but Watson mostly shows us his good results. We never see the dead ends Holmes necessarily must test and which - if depicted - would overshadow the (mostly) triumphant endings of his cases. All this is not an attempt of fiddling with the will-of-steel and superior energy of our hero, but I shall at any time maintain that Holmes, also in the Canon, is an emotional human being and also to some extent portrayed as so. But he restrains (to show) his emotion and is able to keep himself under control. In the article What do women see in Sherlock Holmes I shall comment further on this.

Why should Holmes not be able to fall in love?

③
On love

Even though ACD never found the one and only for Holmes, then neither has he ruled out the possibility of marriage or children. In DEVI Holmes philosophizes *"I have never loved, Watson, but if I did and if the woman I loved had met such an end, I might act even as our lawless lion-hunter has done. Who knows?"* ♦ In VALL we hear ♦ *"Should I ever marry, Watson, I should hope to inspire my wife with some feeling which would prevent her from being walked off by a housekeeper when my corpse was lying within a few yards of her"* ♦. About a young man in BERY, Holmes states, that ♦ *"He acted as I would be proud to have my own son do, should I ever chance to have one."* and in ILLU he says about Violet De Merville: *"I thought of her for the moment as I would have thought of a daughter of my own."* And it is very clear through the Canon, that Holmes, in spite of mistrust in women, loves kids. So the fact that he finds a wife (or that she finds him) should not be that surprising. Perhaps so young, but not surprising. Now, we just need him to persuade Russell into a child or two.....(sorry, I didn ♦t say that!)

The new time

We meet a lot of women in LRK ♦s books: intelligent, stupid, villainous or heroic women. They take up much more room and they mirror the new society. For example, Mrs. Hudson is depicted with much more thoughtfulness and love than we see in ACD ♦s books, where she just is part of the frame around Holmes and Watson. The capital villain - and actually Holmes ♦ superior - is in BEEK a woman. As main figures we also find Margery Childe in MREG - a woman who is able to provoke changes to social and gender/cultural barriers, Dorothy Ruskin in LETT - an outstanding, autodidactic women scientist in a man ♦s world. But also in the smaller roles we see the women gain access: for instance, we hear in LETT Lestrade Jr. referring to his female photographer in the police force. In LRK ♦s books Holmes meets - and acknowledge - remarkable, clever

women. He is not as reserved and distrustful as in ACD's books, and that has, as just explained, something to do with the time. Victorian standards have changed for women - and for men - in a dramatic way.

Together with the increasing number of women crime fiction authors during the last decades, classics such as Dorothy Sayers have gone through a renaissance. Her series featuring Lord Peter Wimsey is re-evaluated, analyzed and legitimated. LRK acknowledges a considerable debt to Sayers. It is no coincidence that in BEEK there is a reference to a certain younger son of a Duke, and that in LETT an elegant, monocle-wearing gentleman named Peter appears - just to mention the totally obvious hints. Russellians have in addition pointed out scores of connections between LRK and Sayers. This is in itself an extensive study.

It occurs to me when discussing time, that perhaps the very critical Sherlockian Purist simply just doesn't like to see Holmes portrayed as an elderly man with the old age incipient physical weaknesses. Now who is it to be called sentimental?! Following the natural order of things Holmes must necessarily age. Unless, of course, if you consider him immortal, which some do, but that discussion, too, must wait for another time. I suppose, though, that we can agree about the pathetic line Sherlock Holmes is immortal because he has never lived is an unworthy remark and certainly not an argument among Sherlockians?

Confession

Oh, horror, oh shame, oh infamy! Look what happens when you don't stick to the beaten Canonical road! But I stand by my conviction. When I now re-read the Canon I substitute Russell's - *and my* - Holmes into Watson's narrations (Watson himself I don't touch. I think Russell is completely wrong about him). I then read the well-known stories depicted through Watson's eyes, but with an inner, slightly immoderate joy and assurance, that I know more. I know points of Holmes, which Watson was not aware of. Because I also have a description of Holmes from another person's point of view. A person who to a higher degree is like me, a person, who I admire and who I *believe in*. To some of you this is blasphemy, heresy and unforgivable. But to me Watson's stories actually grow in beauty and richness. The characters become more full and details which earlier escaped my attention now stand out. The world of Holmes and Watson is added a third dimension.

To me there is no doubt. What Mary Russell has told us about Sherlock Holmes until now, is true. And from now on - in my mind - an adequate biography of Holmes is constituted of both the Canon as well as the Kanon. Though, amongst Sherlockian Purist

I shall attempt not to use the latter as base of evidence in our many small disputes. (I promise for instance never to refer to Holmes ♦ son)

Writing this, I speculate about if I with the present article have signed my own expulsion of the honorable Danish Sherlock Holmes Society. But one must follow one ♦s conscience, right? Did not even the Master do that? A few times he preferred to trust his own judgement and put his own conscience above The Law of England? (DEVI, BLUE). Meanwhile, I think I may defend myself with the official object of the very same society in which it is declared, that the purpose is to promote Sherlockian scholarship based both on ACD ♦s books as well as of any kind of apocrypha.

I shall finish this paper with the following remark. It belongs to a member on Russ-L, but the words could just as well have been mine (except for the word ♦creator ♦, of course). ♦*I ♦believe ♦ in these stories... Seriously in my mind Mary Russell is as real a character as Sherlock Holmes and they belong in the same world. It doesn ♦t matter whether ACD know about Russell or not. Holmes has attained a life independent of his creator - indeed one might well say he ♦s always had that kind of life and is not to be bound by trifling matters of authorship.* ♦

Appendix

A) Examples (out of many) of different points of Holmes ♦ personality

- [worry] ♦ it is not the situation which I should like to see a sister of mine apply for. ♦ (COPP)
- [pride] ♦ That hurts my pride, Watson, ♦ he said at last. ♦ It is a petty feeling, no doubt, but it hurts my pride. (FIVE)
- [moved] ♦ Thank you! ♦ said Holmes. ♦ Thank you! ♦ and as he turned away, it seemed to me that he was more nearly moved by the softer human emotions than I had ever seen him. (SIXN)
- [shame] ♦ if it should ever strike you [Watson] that I am getting a little over-confident in my powers, or giving less pains to a case than it deserves, kindly whisper ♦ Norbury ♦ in my ear, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you. ♦ (YELL)
- [affection for other people] ♦ You ♦re not hurt, Watson? For God ♦s sake, say that you are not hurt! ♦. (3GAR)

B) Less brilliant endings and embellished descriptions

- ♦ Would you be afraid to sleep in the same room with a lunatic, a man with softening of the brain, an idiot whose mind has lost its grip? ♦ (VALL)
- ♦ Because I made a blunder, my dear Watson - which is, I am afraid, a more common occurrence than anyone would think who only knew me through your memoirs ♦. (SILV)
- ♦ I think, Watson, that you are now standing in the presence of one of the absolute fools in Europe ♦ or ♦ 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. ♦. (TWIS)
- "Good heavens, Watson, what has become of any brains that God has given me? " (LADY)
- "I am dull indeed not to have understood its possibilities." (BRUC)
- "Idiot that I was!" (STOC)
- "I was slow at the outset-culpably slow" (LION)
- Holmes commits a series of stupid mistakes causing the death of a man (FIVE). Holmes doesn't have enough information to prevent the death of his client (DANC).
- Holmes is ♦ beaten by a woman ♦ in (SCAN)
- Holmes complains to Watson about the way he (Watson) reports his cases to the public (SIGN) chap. 1, (REDH), (COPP), (CROO), (ABBE) and many more.

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Autobiography

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Is a writer—is any artist, for that matter—born, or made? Or is it some near-random combination of chance and drive that shapes the person?

Well, yes.

My mother married my father in part because she was drawn to his family's stability, that his still-married parents had lived in the same house they'd bought upon moving from Minnesota to the San Francisco Bay area when he was three years old. She, daughter of a much-broken home, envisioned a secure life, in a house bought and paid for, with decades of raising children and getting to know the neighbors. Instead she got a string of rentals and a man with itchy feet—or, as family rumor had it, one who read his way through a library and then moved on.

We moved so often when I was young, it wasn't until high school that I entered the same school in September that I'd been in the previous June. By then, I'd more or less given up on the tedious process of making friends, since libraries were always nearby, and books were much better companions anyway. So for most of my childhood, in Santa Cruz and San Jose, California, then the suburbs of Tacoma, Washington, I lived in a community of fictional individuals—those of Walter Farley and Marguerite Henry and Albert Payson Terhune; Ray Bradbury and Robert Heinlein and Isaac Asimov; Rosemary Sutcliff and Madeleine L'Engle—plus biographies of pretty much everyone, travel books, teach-yourself Esperanto, you name it. I even read Dickens, whom nobody had yet told me was boring. So as we migrated up and down the West Coast, I was at home, because there were always libraries.

I am a writer, because I love and have been nurtured by books.

Ancestor Worship

My mother was born in San Francisco, as was her mother before her. My grandmother remembered camping in a tent in Golden Gate Park after the 1906 quake, waiting for the flames to subside. My grandfather, who had been in his twenties, always told us that had he been a good, law-abiding Christian, he would have been killed in his bed. But because he was out at an all-night poker game when the quake struck, he came home to find a brick chimney dropped neatly across where his sober, more virtuous self might have laid down.

My grandfather's name was Robert J. Dickson, known inevitably to all as Dick. He came out from Chicago after a year of university, when his eyesight began to fail and his doctor suggested a more active style of life. (This seems to have been a common prescription in the ill-lit nineteenth century: Richard Henry Dana's experience on a sailing ship, written up as *Three Years Before the Mast*, also began with a spell of blindness caused by study.) Dick's modicum of higher education qualified him for the nickname "Doc," particularly during the needy years of the world-wide Flu epidemic following the First World War. Dick raised peaches and white asparagus in the Sacramento river delta, and married a woman seventeen years his junior, Florence Adderley, in 1920. Their two children were Mary Jane, born in 1922, and Robert J. Junior, in 1925.

The Adderleys were minor English gentry who had migrated to the Bahamas in the seventeenth century. Over the next three centuries, the family gave rise to planters (read: slave owners), a sponge diver, a privateer, an unlicensed whaler, and eventually a CBE, KC, and Speaker of the House of Assembly in Nassau. One branch ended up in San Francisco. When her parents separated, my mother was more or less raised by two English aunts, maiden ladies who took their toast with marmalade, drank tea shipped in wooden chests from England, and never, ever contemplated applying for American

citizenship. Mother graduated from San Mateo High, and started at UC Berkeley before finances demanded that she take a job at Macy's in San Francisco. When the war came, she took work making delicate and essential vacuum tubes—Rosie the Riveter in miniature.

My father's people were more of a hodge-podge, so that he claimed to be a little of everything including Czechoslovakian, which last delighted me as a child although I suspect it was coined for that very purpose. As Disbrows, the family was in the New World by 1719, so that I could claim to be a Daughter of the American Revolution, were I so inclined. His family came from Minneapolis to the Bay Area, he interrupted his college career at Redlands in Southern California to enlist in the Army, fought his war in the South Pacific, and married my mother upon his return. His list of employment reads a bit like that of a stereotypical mystery writer, from nurseryman to real estate agent to gas station attendant to itinerant furniture repairman, but he never wrote anything more involved than letters, and sadly died before he could hold his daughter's first book in his hands.

Early Life

I was born in Oakland, California, across the bay from San Francisco—we lived in Walnut Creek, where my father worked for a nursery, but Oakland held the nearest Kaiser hospital. My sister was seven years older; my brother, three years younger than I, was born in Walnut Creek; when he was small we moved to the beach community of Santa Cruz, the first house and town I can remember. In the summers we would stand alongside busy Mission Street and shout, "Tourist go home!" at the passing cars. On warm afternoons, which near the ocean would more likely be in May or September than in the actual summer months, we would walk down the hills to the beach. Fifteen years later, when I moved to the Santa Cruz area as a college student, I would be constantly taken aback by coming around some corner or driving up some street and finding myself on familiar ground. My daughter, in 2002, lived across the street from a hillside where my tricycling brother nearly shot under a car in 1958.

The beach claimed by us locals was on the other side of the wharf from the glitzy Boardwalk, or if the tide allowed, along the bank of the San Lorenzo River south of the bright lights, where the water was calm but the scum and scraps from the upstream tannery a seagull-attracting annoyance. We did venture onto the Boardwalk sometimes—for the Fourth of July fireworks, certainly. I was a whiz at the game of skee-ball, but the only Boardwalk ride I really enjoyed was the ever-magical merry-go-round, its steam calliope, all parts visible, blasting out music as the shiny horses went up and down and the bigger kids stretched out to catch the brass rings. The town itself was away from the beach: Woolworth's with its cheap temptations and its soda fountain with my mother, the darkly fragrant United Cigar shop with my father (who confused me by calling it the "hot stove league," although there was no stove I could see, just magazine racks where he bought Astounding and Argosy, John D. MacDonald and the Doc Savage stories, along with those paperback novellas printed in a delightful, back-to-back format which meant that both covers made for a new beginning.) And always, the library.

The Santa Cruz Public Library was a tall, dark-shingled Aladdin's cave of riches, which I remember draped with vines although I suspect that later imagination provided that decoration. I still have a small pin, brass and blue enamel, given me by the summer reading club when I was six. And in first or second grade, *The Hobbit* must have swum into the edges of my ken (although I cannot have been old enough to read it, and don't recall my parents reading it to me) because I can remember as if it was yesterday sitting in the sunny classroom and composing a story about a small creature that lived under a hill, illustrating each extra-wide line of the pulp paper with small, precise drawings of mysterious figures and round red doors set into grassy hillsides—and remember too the hot humiliation of failing the assignment because the illustrations had taken me so long. I ran out of time to do the text.

Thus the writer's first lesson: Finish the story.

Forty years later, it is a lesson I am still learning. The temptations to decorate, to revise and tinker with a horribly bald and incomplete manuscript instead of bashing through to The End is perpetual, but the mantra that runs through my mind every day of writing a first draft is: Finish the thing, then see what's there.

**

One of the great pleasures in being the sort of writer I am, in having published *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, is looking up during a signing and seeing myself in the back row. The book, which begins with the heroine fifteen years old yet easily capable of meeting the great Sherlock Holmes as an equal, is the story I wish I had when I was twelve or fourteen. Fantasy, affirmation, a hint of romance, a dash of adventure: along with those shy girls in the back row, I am Mary Russell. Or I was at that age, in my mind.

In truth, I was socially inept, physically awkward, excruciatingly shy, and always an outsider. We moved north to Washington state in 1961, and although we did our share of camping in state parks and going clamming on the wide ocean beaches, and I spent two summers in the camp on what used to be Spirit Lake before Mt St Helens erupted, mostly I sat with my nose in a book. My after-school hours in fifth and sixth grades were spent (when not reading) either in the company of a girl who alternated between using me as an audience for her renditions of West Side Story ballads (?I'm So Pretty? warbled while primping at the mirror) and creating devious ways to torment me, or else in the privacy of my room, where I had constructed an entire universe out of plasticine clay, horses and people, dogs and houses.

Picture, if you will, a small, neat house in the early 1960s, overlooking Puget Sound, that inland sea on top of which giant rafts of logs head down to Tacoma's foul-smelling paper mills and Japanese freighters come to load up, while below the surface nuclear submarines and pods of Orca play. Dash Point is a small community astride the road between Tacoma and Seattle (little changed thirty-five years later, although the Richardson family probably couldn't afford to live there now) with Janet's general store, a Presbyterian church, and an elementary school of six classes and a hundred students. When it snows, the steep road looping down to the water is closed to all but sledders, and in alternate summers the town hosts a fund-raising Dock Dinner barbecue. The town's public hall is perched halfway up the hillside, a place where the PTA and volunteer fire department hold their meetings, one room of which has walls covered with padlocked cabinet doors. Behind those doors, revealed at odd hours during the week, is the Dash Point Public Library, its limitations overcome by regular transfusions and exchanges with the main branch in town. A regular visitor—in fact the daughter of the part-time librarian—is a tall, gawky ten year-old with cropped hair and a squint (for she will not get her first glasses until the following year.) She surveys the new books, hoping for something as compelling as *The Black Stallion* or *The Diamond in the Window*, or that biography of Thoreau she read recently in which the young Henry speculated about the oddity of his sister "making" a bed, as if with hammer and saw. Today she finds nothing so appealing, but takes down a book she has enjoyed before, about some teenagers who have marvelous adventures in the sea, including having a foot trapped by a giant clam. She makes out the card with her name, Laurie Richardson, in round, upright script, and heads up the hill and through the blackberry-lined shortcuts to her house. Past the garden with the hateful bee-swarming hydrangea that makes lawn-mowing such a hazard, over the front lawn, in the door past the eight-foot grand piano (taken long ago by her father as commission in a real estate deal, its size for years determining which houses they could rent and which would be too small.) Up the stairs, past her high-school-aged sister's cubby, into the room she shares with her younger brother, the nicest room in the house with a panoramic view of the Sound and Whidbey Island. But the view is not of interest to young Laurie. Instead, she settles down on a high stool near the tall, deep plywood shelving unit her father has built, reaches for the crudely modeled figures of grey-blue clay, and enters into the world of her imagination.

I thought of it as an extension of the Walter Farley stories, the *Black Stallion* and *Island Stallion* series brought to three-inch, sticky life, every figure the dreary color of

the much-reworked clay. It was, without a doubt, a strange preoccupation for a child—had it been the 1990s instead of the 1960s, I would surely have been in therapy and subjected to a regimen of mood-relieving drugs. As it was, those long hours of fitting the figures onto the horses' backs and imagining the sensations of riding free, were my first excursion into telling myself stories.

I occasionally wonder, particularly when I've been talking to a group of kids, if I would have become a writer earlier had I actually met such an alien creature. But these were the days before book tours and author interviews, before schools brought in artists of various flavors to demonstrate the attainability of such ways of life, and the only person I knew associated with the world of books was a neighbor girl whose photograph appeared in a children's book on Hawaii. As far as I was concerned, it was God who put the books on library shelves, not mere mortals. Slow learner that I am, it didn't occur to me to write my own stories until I was in my thirties.

Education

Moving more or less yearly is not conducive to an even education. The differences in curricula meant that I repeated several subjects (I can still diagram a mean sentence) while others (states' capitals, for example) eluded me entirely. My parents separated for two years, during which time my mother and I lived in Saratoga, California, a wealthy community (except for us) on the outskirts of San Jose, nestling into the Santa Cruz mountains in which I would live as an adult. The Beatles roared into the scene while I lived in Saratoga, the Vietnam war got into gear.

In the summer of 1967, while the hippies were flocking into San Francisco with flowers in their hair, I was headed in the opposite direction. My mother and I rejoined my father and brother in a house at the southern end of Tacoma, where I attended a high school fed by nearby Fort Lewis (this at the height of the Vietnam war) where I was the weird kid with long hair and gold-rimmed glasses, Army jacket with green-for-ecology peace patch on the shoulder, the school's only hippie. High school found me more interested in science fiction than science, reading novels than writing papers, and my lackluster grades hardly encouraged counselors to seek me out with the stimulation of college dreams.

I seem to have had a certain grasp of language even in my teens. During my first year at Franklin Pierce, I wrote the following paragraph, a homesick fifteen year-old putting her longing into words:

San Francisco, as I last saw it, was enough to stir the heart of any native Californian. The scene was movingly beautiful. I can remember it as if I saw it just yesterday. It was from the freeway leaving the city, looking down through the tall, intricately woven expansion of the Golden Gate Bridge. The angular outlines of the downtown buildings were softened by a light gray fog. The mist cleared over the water, letting the morning sun shine down onto the bay. Alcatraz, foreboding yet lonely, protruded from the clear surface of the blue-gray water. An ocean liner slowly made its way past the tiny sailboats on its journey to the ocean. The scene slowly disappeared behind the hills surrounding the bay. The last things to be hidden from sight were the tall, proud pillars of that beautiful bridge.

This sentimental paragraph garnered an A, with the teacher's comment that the word selection showed it to be "quality communication." Still, an ability with language hardly amounts to a full-time university scholarship, and there was no way the family could manage to put both my brother and me through college. In the end, I more or less backed into university, when the aunt with whom I lived after finishing high school insisted I keep myself busy by enrolling at the local junior college.

It is extraordinary, how often in life ideas and teachers reach out and grab a person. A teacher by the name of Norman Miller—overworked, under-challenged, perpetually rumpled, the very essence of curmudgeonly—was my own encounter on the road to Damascus. This gruff individual taught logic, philosophy, and religious studies, and was the first to suggest that religion was a passion that could permeate all life, a drive

like any other, not some ethereal wimpiness. Typical of Miller was the debate staged between him and a philosopher whose difficult belief it was that all matter was illusion. Miller's response was to pick up the nearest chair and heave it at the man, which rather ended the debate.

Unfortunately, the provisions for the study of religion at a junior college in the 1970s was limited. However, just down the road was the shiny-new University of California campus at Santa Cruz, which had a program in religious studies. I applied in 1973, was accepted as a junior transfer, and spent the next two and a half years in ecstasy.

On the surface, it was a ridiculous choice, leaving me unprepared for any real employment. But I loved the study of religion, in which I perceived the blend of human yearnings and passions intertwining with rationality and observation. Religion was the way the human being sang with his or her entire being, the way we confronted the universe and tried to find out place in it. The subject chose me, and I could only go with it.

Anaïs Nin came to speak at Santa Cruz, and Houston Smith and Henry Chadwick. I studied Chinese language and Russian spirituality, Jungian archetypal psychology and Alchemical symbolism. I labored in the campus organic garden, planting red cabbages under the guidance of a garrulous and nearly incomprehensible Sikh, and wrote bad poetry about the experience. I read Lao Tse and Jacob Neusner and Carl Jung and Frank Waters, all of whom had something to say about the human religious experience. I wrote a thesis project on the role of the fool in Western culture, drawing on the New Testament and on American Indian Trickster mythology. I read and listened and talked, and I was at home.

In other words, a typical liberal-arts education from what was already known as the University of California's "touchy-feely" campus. A BA that took me seven years (since I was working my way through) and left me with the first university degree in my family. One that was completely worthless in terms of employment, yet which has, oddly enough, proven to be the basis for everything I now do.

I never took a course in creative writing, never signed up for any English class other than the basic requirement. If I had, no doubt what I write now would be very different. Instead, I followed my interests, and when I had fulfilled my Bachelor's requirements, I turned to graduate school, again staying close to home and applying to the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley.

The GTU is, as the name indicates, a union of the various graduate schools — seminaries — that have taken root on "holy hill" to the north of the UC Berkeley campus. It is a tree-shaded residential area with one incursion of student life, a short block of shops, cafes, and bookstores surrounded by shingled houses and god-talk. The GTU is an independent organization that utilizes the staff and facilities of the individual church schools to put together its academic degrees. In other words, if you wish to enter the ministry, you go into a seminary; if you want an academic degree, you go into the GTU. I affiliated myself with the Episcopalians, the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, but headed more deeply into academia, with the idea that my BA had given me a sense of the world's religion, but now it was time to look at my own heritage.

I spent seven more years doing a three-year Master of Arts degree, somewhat slowed by work, marriage, the raising of children, the renovation of houses, and round-the-world travel, about all of which I will say more later. Gradually, I found myself drawn to Old Testament instead of New, although I took Koiné Greek and attended classes in New Testament, church history, and Patristics. What really interested me was the tracing of roots and themes; how a phrase or image can be traced through the millennia.

There is a phrase from the Sufi mystic Rumi, referring to God as the thread that runs through the pearls of the world's religions. That thread is what drew me, tracing that quivering high-tension line of energy that begins in one place and comes out in another.

thousands of miles away, millennia removed, changed but recognizable.

For example, in the Old Testament, the personal, or covenantal, name for the God of Israel was Yahweh, but there are other names as well, prominent among them forms of ?El.? For a long time it was assumed that El simply meant ?god.? which indeed it does. However, with the 1928 discovery of Ugarit in northern Syria, it became clear that El was also a god, king of the pantheon, a bearded and remote male who hands down decrees from his tented throne. This figure contributes his own vocabulary to the poems and descriptions of the Hebrew Yahweh, winding through the Hebrew Bible's concept of God as El Shaddai and Elohim, before ending up on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel with Michelangelo's visualization of God as all-powerful and bearded.

Similarly, one finds a thread of God as female. Yahweh is male, invariably referred to with the masculine pronoun, yet images of the feminine persist, so that the Hebrew God is described as crying out in birth, or acting the midwife for "his" people, or comforting the people "as a mother comforts her child." But the thing that interested this MA student most was the other side of the feminine, that which at ancient Ugarit was personified in the goddess Anat, close sister to India's Kali. Anat loves warfare, lives for slaughter, exists for the joy of meeting soldiers in battle, and her attributes, phrases from her hymns, became linked with Yahweh: when the people Israel needed a vocabulary to describe the wrath of God, one of the sources they drew from was that of the violent goddess.

During my time at the GTU I also co-taught a course on "Women and Leadership in the Early Church," which looked at the roles of women in the first centuries of the Christian movement. But in the end, I chose as my thesis topic, "Feminine Aspects of Yahweh," digging into the textual roots of the question. Had I not had other obligations, I would no doubt have persisted, going on to a PhD involving six languages and countless trips to hot and fly-blown archaeological sites, and my published works would have borne titles such as "Problems in Ugaritic Phraseology" and "Elephantine: God's Wife or Wishful Translation?" instead of **A Grave Talent** and **The Beekeeper's Apprentice**.

But our choices are molded around our circumstances, and by the time the MA hood was lowered around my neck, I also had two small children and a husband nearing retirement age. Entering a lengthy PhD program would have been irresponsible.

Life

For some fortunate individuals, higher education is a period unto itself, a time when close concentration on the joys of the ivory tower is uncluttered by such concerns as bills and diapers. For many of us, particularly women, this is not the case. We put ourselves through, or do it in the corners of our lives free of other responsibilities, occasionally brushed by the wistful speculation of what it would be like to attend school full time, or to live in a dorm, or to hang around after class and drink a beer instead of returning to care for an infant or cook a meal.

Still, it is not granted to many young women to interrupt her graduate studies for a honeymoon in Papua New Guinea followed by a six-month tour across the southern Pacific Ocean, from Ayer's Rock to Machu Picchu. I had not intended to marry, and neither I think had he, but we are, as I said, shaped by our circumstances, and when, some months after graduation, I took a day off my job as manager of Kaldi's Fine Coffees and Teas in Los Gatos to visit a professor whom I hadn't seen for some time, and found our conversation entering interesting avenues, well, marriage seemed a good idea. Twenty-five years later, it still does.

Noel King was born in what was then India, is now Pakistan, in 1922. His family were Anglo-Indians, his father employed by the railroad to lay telegraph line across the northern face of the country, as far as Lhasa in 1924. After the war, Noel entered Oxford, then did a higher degree at Nottingham, and was ordained in the Anglican Church. He spent the next fourteen years in Africa, setting up programs in Religious Studies first in Accra, Ghana, then in Makerere, Uganda. He came to the newest campus

of the University of California in 1967, hired again to begin a program in comparative religion. That is where I met him.

We married in 1977. Our daughter was born three years later, a son three years after that, and I found, somewhat to my surprise, that I liked being a mother. Aside from the sheer physical fascination of infants, I never cared much for the babies of other people, and often thought their children more irritating than compelling; fortunately, however, I found my own two a source of endless fascination and intense amusement, particularly when they became old enough to communicate verbally. They are young adults today, and still make me laugh like no other people can.

My son turned one as I was writing my MA thesis, "Feminine Aspects of Yahweh" (an academic exercise considerably enriched by the recent personal experiences of childbirth, nursing, and the nurturing of small children.) While the children were small, my work was within the bounds of the farm—raising food and children is a full time job, and I was well and truly entered into the householder life. I volunteered at school, sat on various committees, became a leader of La Leche League, helping new mothers figure out how to juggle all the elements of their lives. And, because my husband was raised in colonial India when servants were a way of life, and is far better with a concordance than he is with a circular saw, for me the householder life involved not only shovels, kitchen stove, washing machine, and canning jars, but also Skil saws, framing hammers, paintbrushes, and electrical drills. How To books sprang up like mushrooms beside my volumes of textual criticism and feminist theology. I became, quite literally, a home-maker.

Building was an unanticipated satisfaction, the creation of shelter and comfort, the externalization of an idea, a joining of muscle and mind. I will admit that I never grew entirely comfortable with either plumbing or electricity, both of which can leak with disastrous results, but I did everything else, from putting up track shelves to installing a pantry in the kitchen and finally designing and building a two-story addition on the old farmhouse. This last involved everything from the ground up: foundations and framing, windows and insulation, sheetrock and siding. We built it so the kids could have separate rooms—and so I could have, in Virginia Woolf's words, a room of my own (although the attendant five hundred pounds a year Woolf includes in her essay would have to wait a bit.)

Ironically, in marrying a peripatetic man, I found what my mother did not: stability. We have owned three houses in all these years, plus a house in England to which we go occasionally. Each has had its own strong personality, each was suited to our time of life then.

Our first house was on the side of a redwood-lined creek in Santa Cruz, small and quirky, a typical cabin with rooms added on over the years, with a deck perched over the water and a dirt road above. We heated with a wood stove, brought our daughter home to the house, and soon realized it would never do for an active child, much less two.

So we moved, to an eighty year-old farmhouse on two acres of rich Pajaro Valley soil, with an orchard, a field, and a separate house for the grandparents who had semi-retired from the Pacific Northwest. For fifteen years the kids ran wild there, gobbling raspberries off the bushes, racing after our Irish Wolfhound, collecting brown, white, and pastel blue eggs from beneath the chickens, picking green beans and apricots, whacking down the nuts from the old walnut tree every October. All summer the kitchen was fragrant with jams, catsup, chutneys, applesauce; at holidays the walls bulged with relations.

Now we live on the top of a hill overlooking that same Pajaro Valley, above the Monterey Bay summer fogs, a mile from the epicenter of the big 1989 earthquake. The house is quieter, surrounded by live oaks and a few redwoods, visited by coyotes, hummingbirds, and red-tail hawks. We go regularly to England, where we have family, and maintain the yellow-brick terrace house in Oxford, one street in from the River Isis, within sound of the bells at Christ Church.

Travel

Settled as a home-maker I might have been, but travels have always been a part of my married life. I married at twenty-five and set off almost immediately for an England so freezing the gas in the wall-heaters refused to glow anything but a sullen red, so jammed with pre-Christmas traffic the imperturbable London cabbies threw up their hands and made for the pubs, so near mid-winter the sun barely rose above the horizon before it was setting again. London in December opens one's eyes to the bleaker aspects of Dickens.

After three weeks, my new husband and I parted company, him to Africa and Pakistan, me to close up my rented apartment in Santa Cruz and await visas. Ten weeks later, having heard not one word from him since we had parted at Heathrow, not knowing if his plans had changed, if his mind had changed, or he'd even made it out of the subcontinent in one piece, I set off across the Pacific, washing up a day or twenty later, hugely jet-lagged and queasy from an airline breakfast of near-raw Australian steak, in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. In that state, nothing much would have surprised me, including find myself at the hot end of the world without a clue of what to do next, or where to go. It was rather like a dream, in which getting off the plane to find my husband waiting at the terminal was less a relief than a part of a natural, if confusing, sequence of events. But then, much of my life has felt like that.

Moresby itself was unrelenting, hot and crass and plagued by crime. It was a joy to head for the highlands, up into the misty reaches of a land where one could still meet individuals who recalled the arrival of the first white face, a land where the Bird of Paradise flitted, where men donned formal leaf aprons, elaborate head-gear, and face paint to embark on the repair of a bridge, where pigs were used as currency, where a third of the world languages—languages, not dialects—were born.

We stayed at missions, mostly Catholic and Lutheran. As an introduction to a foreign culture, it was as dramatic as a person could ask for, a constant surprise, from the gas-run washing machine to the smoke-scented string bags used to carry everything from yams to babies. I studied Pidgin English with a woman named Yasiamé, who lived near the mission with her two children, although I never met her husband. She wove me a string bag from bright wool I sent her from Australia, with some old kina coins woven into it: when I put it to my face, I can still smell the highlands in its fibers.

We stayed in the highlands for a month, flying in and out of tiny air strips, hitching rides with locals to pig kills and the colorful ceremonies called sing-sings, seeing how the Christian church interacted and intertwined with local belief and custom, learning how utterly foreign yet similar people can be. When we left, we spent another week in the Sepik River area, exploring grass-swamps in a boat carved from a tree and powered by outboard motor, gazing at Haus Tamborans (spirit houses,) and twitching from chloroquin. Then back to Moresby, and on to Australia.

The next months saw us island-hopping across the Pacific, spending a month in Australia, then to New Zealand, followed by Tonga, the two Samoas, Tahiti, and Easter Island. Because we were going to spend some time in South America, I had been working my way through a Spanish grammar I picked up in Melbourne, which made for tremendous confusion in French-speaking Tahiti, but helped somewhat after that. Easter Island was incredible, unreal, provocative—and cursed with the worst airport I have ever seen, a swirl of heat and shoving and bureaucrats with guns, run by the Chilean military with more concern for homeland security than the sensibilities of tourists. Still, the great stone heads stand looking out across the now-barren landscape, with the half-cut statues lying still in their quarry.

Santiago, La Paz, and Lake Titicaca; the Spanish colonial Cuzco and the Inca capital of Machu Picchu, Lima's desert archaeology and the tensions in a country on the edge of a revolt, the foul air and tumult of Mexico City.

Santa Cruz seemed bizarrely calm, on our return.

I returned to the GTU, my husband to his responsibilities at the university. And eighteen months after our daughter was born, we packed up and moved to northern India for a six month stint at the Punjabi University.

Travel with a small child is an experience. Worries and labors are increased a hundredfold, of course, from figuring out how to dry cloth diapers in the frigid climate of the lower Himalayas to keeping the shopkeeper's affectionate hand (which you have just seen being used to blow his nose into a gutter) away from your small blond daughter's rosy cheek. However, joys are magnified as well—doors are opened, hearts poured out, the traveler becomes something far more than just another tourist. Cooks and tailors allowed her (and us in her wake) to wander freely through their jealously guarded realms. Airline clerks miraculously conjured up adjoining seats in sold-out flights. Hardened civil servants melted. The Dalai Lama dandled her on his knee and made her chortle. I recommend taking a child along, if your nerves are strong enough.

Two years later, my MA granted and my career as a writer but a shape on the distant horizon, we took both children to Israel. There, too, hearts opened. An Italian woman atop Masada took one look at the blue-eyed boy riding on my back and the curly-headed girl clutching my hand and exclaimed, "You are so brave!" A stern Palestinian gardener allowed the kids to pluck his roses. The eyes following us were gentler, and certainly more interested, than they would have been, had we been intruding as two mere adults.

Writing

But what do a much-uprooted childhood, a love of theology, travel to distant places, and the establishment of three homes have to do with the Laurie R. King entry in *Contemporary Authors*? If my husband had not been so near to retirement age, I might well have gone on into doctoral studies, become a Biblical scholar, and had a far different entry. Or if back in high school my math teachers had been more encouraging, my other secret passion might have taken root, leading me into architecture, in which case a Laurie King biography would have been found in another series entirely. Or if life had tugged just slightly harder in another direction, I might have pursued the mysteries of birth, and plunged into the joyous obscurity of a midwife, known only to those whose babies she had caught.

Instead, in September of 1987, when my daughter was in her second grade classroom and my son off to his preschool three mornings a week, I sat down with the Waterman fountain pen I had bought on the Oxford high street the summer before and wrote on a canary pad the words, "I was fifteen when I met Sherlock Holmes, fifteen years old with my nose in a book as I walked the Sussex Downs, and nearly stepped on him."

And like that, I was a writer.

Where does this drive for fiction come from? How does a person who had expressed no recognizable urge toward story telling since her sixth-grade immersion in the plasticine land of make-believe sit down and write an entire novel in a month? And then have the good sense to rewrite it so it was better, then continue on and write another, and a third—before any publisher expressed the faintest interest? And how long would I have gone on, I often wonder, how many unsold manuscripts would I have produced before giving up on the idea of writing and getting a real job?

Many writers in my own genre come into print by a similar path, finding in writing a second career after a decade or two practicing law or journalism or raising children. Some writers, of course, begin in college, with a degree in creative writing, learning the skills and never looking back. For others of us, writing is a little like going to a foreign country to learn a language. At first, one listens, gradually absorbing nouns and verbs, taking on the patterns of grammar (or storytelling) and thinking about the means of expression. Eventually, however, the urge to say something grows too strong to deny. And on that day one speaks out, or takes pen in hand.

I had, of course, been producing words in considerable volume all during the years of college and graduate school. Even though the sort of writing produced for a class in.

say, Church Fathers has a different aim from the sort which builds a novel, the ultimate aim is that of communication. And there is no doubt that, as with the journalist who turns novelist, being accustomed to produce words regularly makes a person less intimidated by a blank page than most. Too, the study of Bible as a text emphasizes the importance of words, each word, as well as the rhythm of language and the subtle purposes behind the story one is telling.

Perhaps if I had undergone formal training in the writing of fiction, I would write in a very different way. Like taking a language in school, learning to write in a program naturally stresses the structural aspects of creating fiction, whereas learning by absorbing, imitating, and transforming comes more slowly. I, on the other hand, am one of those who write without an outline, with only the vaguest idea of what the story is about or where it is going. This is not a system for everyone—many writers need a visible outline of where the novel is going before they feel comfortable with sitting down to page one. Others of us merely shove ideas and images around in the back of our heads until either looming bills or internal pressures conspire to drive us to pen or keyboard.

In any case, whether through ignorance or inclination, when I sat down to write about my new imaginary friends in what became *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, I felt as if I were setting out in an uncharted system of caves with a questionable flashlight in hand. (Truth to tell, I feel the same every time I begin a book, although after fourteen times, it is a sensation I have come to anticipate.) This is the story of a young woman, just fifteen when the book opens, who meets the retired Sherlock Holmes on the Sussex Downs in southern England, impresses him with the sharpness of her eyes, wits, and tongue, and becomes first his apprentice, then his partner. She is, one might say, a young, female, Twentieth century version of the Great Detective; the two mix like oil and vinegar.

I wrote the book in September and October of 1987, penning (literally, with that Waterman fountain pen) the core 280 pages in 28 days, a pace I have rarely matched since then. At the beginning of 1988 I began sending it out to publishers, collecting a fair number of rejection slips over the next two years before it occurred to me that I could either write or send, but not both. In 1989 I found an agent, Linda Allen in San Francisco, the first professional to look at my work and see it as—well, my work.

But before I got in contact with Linda, I wrote another Russell and Holmes book, called *A Letter of Mary*, which eventually became the third in the series. And when that was finished and the publishing world was not beating down my door, I changed times and locations to write *A Grave Talent*, a contemporary novel about a world-rank woman artist—a “female Rembrandt”—who is being investigated for the murder of three young girls. As luck would have it, this third book was the first to sell, in December 1991, to be published by St Martin's Press in January, 1993.

A Grave Talent was the first in a series of (at present) four books concerning Kate Martinelli, a homicide inspector with the San Francisco Police Department. A year later, *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* came out; two weeks after its publication, my editor called to announce that *A Grave Talent* had been nominated for the Edgar award for best first novel by the Mystery Writers of America. My then-fourteen year old daughter and I went to the awards banquet in New York in May, where I was completely stunned to hear my name announced as the winner. The only thing I'd ever won in my life was a box of brandied cherries at a community Bingo game in the Dash Point town hall, a prize quickly confiscated by my parents as I was only ten at the time. As I write these words, Edgar sits brooding from the corner of my bookshelf, at his side the later prizes I have won, including the beautifully carved Creasey dagger, a stolid bust of a scowling Nero Wolfe, and the certificate noting that in October, 1997, Laurie Richardson King was granted the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, my old seminary.

One of the purposes of this essay is to attempt an illustration of how one person became a writer, and how her life had formed her work. In that vein, I would like to take a closer look at the writing itself.

The Martinelli Books

Following the publication of **A Grave Talent** and **The Beekeeper's Apprentice**, I continued to alternate the exploits of Russell and Holmes with the somewhat less frivolous stories concerning Kate Martinelli. The Martinelli books, which are written in fairly straightforward American English and in the third person, are often classified as police procedurals, for the simple reason that the main characters are cops. In truth, I was one of the many writers surprised to be told that her novel is actually a mystery. Genre classifications ("He is a mystery writer; she writes horror") are more for the convenience of booksellers and the publishers' sales reps than any true description of what is inside the covers of a particular book. Jane Smiley, Ron Hansen, Michael Chabon, and other "literary" writers have all produced crime fiction, whereas some of my books lodged in that category are only suspense by the most generous description. The hat of "mystery writer" does chafe occasionally, but for the most part I am comfortable with it.

In any case, **A Grave Talent**, featuring as it does a homicide detective and some dead bodies, was called a mystery. And although I had not thought of it as the first in a series—indeed, by the time I finished the book I was more than ready to leave Kate and the rest of them off the Golden Gate Bridge—my editor was interested enough in the cast of players to ask for another. So a topic I had been pushing around in the back of my mind for some time came into play: What would a holy fool look like in twentieth century America?

The holy fool is by his (or occasionally her) nature the product of a rigid society. His function is to embody chaos, to throw the concrete structures of feudalism into question, to let in the creative forces of disorder. It can be a dangerous game—fools were regularly locked up or beheaded for their chronic impertinence—but a necessary one. Who but a fool would speak the truth to a king? The religious elements of foolishness are myriad, from the antics of Zen masters to the declaration by St. Paul that he is a fool for Christ's sake, chiding the church in Corinth for their self-aggrandizement (1 Corinthians 4.) And since the fool is by nature the product of a tightly controlled social order—Lear's fool only exists because of the nature of royal power—I asked myself, could such a creature function in a society such as that of contemporary California, where chaos rules and the means of tweaking the powerful are many and varied?

I thought it possible, and wanted to write a novel about what such a person would look like. Thus it is, in **To Play the Fool**, that Kate Martinelli meets a homeless holy fool named Brother Erasmus, an escapee from the author's undergraduate thesis. Erasmus lives in three worlds: among San Francisco's poor and homeless, to whom he ministers; inside the ivory-tinged walls of Berkeley's Graduate Theological Union, where he embodies the rich contradictions of the Christian message; and among the tourists of Fisherman's Wharf, showing them the neediness beneath their wealth.


As I began to write Erasmus, I found an unexpected side of the man: He speaks only in the words of others. He preaches, orders breakfast, and answers the questions of his interrogators entirely in quotations, a challenge to a writer I do not think I would care to attempt again. It was a book I thought would be too quirky for the taste of most readers, but I have been pleased to find that its popularity remains steady, and for some readers, Erasmus's story is their favorite.

Kate's next outing, **With Child**, involves her in the lives of two teenagers, one a homeless boy, the other the daughter of her partner Al Hawkin's new bride. The book received several nominations, either despite or because of its being less a mystery than the story of Kate's personal involvement in the lives of the two young people. Written at a time my own children were entering the dark undergrowth of adolescence, it is also a mother's reflection on the vulnerability of the young—a recurring theme in the novels.

Kate's latest story, the fourth, is **Night Work**, which immerses her in the worlds of women's shelters, leather bars, Kali worship, and bride burning (Just a typical outing

for a San Francisco cop....) It plays with the idea of how far a woman can go to defend herself and her own, and uses as its theme the figure of Kali, the Indian goddess who glories in bloodshed, whose wholesale slaughter of men and monsters lays the groundwork for rebirth and healing. Kate the cop has to believe that it is wrong for a woman to lay violent hands on an abusive man; Kate the woman isn't so sure.


The Russell Books



In the meantime, the Russell stories were also making their appearance. This is a very different kind of a series, not only because they are written in a formal, even ornate British English, and in the first person, but because of their style and humor. Early King reviewers, in fact, found it difficult to be sure that the Laurie R. King of **A Grave Talent** was the same one credited with **The Beekeeper's Apprentice**, an ongoing problem of categorization which eventually gave rise to the sales flyer produced by Bantam proclaiming, "What Laurie King writes next is always a mystery!?"

But indeed, the two authors are the same, although readers continue to believe in the opening sequence wherein my intrepid UPS delivery woman deposits the Russell manuscripts on my doorstep, leaving me to decipher and transcribe them. It is, I generally assure such innocents, but a literary device, done to explain how one Laurie King comes to speak in the voice of Mary Russell—and to collect her royalties.

The series opens when our heroine is fifteen, which may explain in part the popularity of the books with bright adolescent girls. Mary is mature beyond her years, brilliant enough to get the better of The Great Detective, and if the attentive reader begins to suspect a certain degree of electricity between the girl and the considerably older man, well, only the most devout Sherlockians have been offended with how it all turns out. The book was chosen by the American Library Association as one of their notable books for young adults, which honor I cherish.



As mentioned already, the book I wrote after Beekeeper was actually the third in the series, **A Letter of Mary**. As I was writing Beekeeper, it became increasingly clear that the relationship between my two detectives was not going to be that of mere intellectual and professional partners, but rather a partnership in every aspect of their lives. However, because I had no idea how I was going to get them to that point, I put aside the next to write the third instead. Then, once I had seen what their marriage looked like and the balances and compromises it entailed, I could go back and write the story of how they reached that point. It is, incidentally, a method I occasionally resort to within an individual book: If I am not sure where the story is going, I skip forward a chapter or five and write a scene I am certain about, after which I have a clearer picture of what I need to do to get there.

A Monstrous Regiment of Women opens in the waning days of 1920. Mary is on the eve of her coming of age when she meets an old friend and is introduced to a woman religious leader in London. Mary is already feeling torn between her desire for a feminist independence as an Oxford intellectual on the one hand and a greater commitment to the always-difficult Sherlock Holmes on the other: meeting Margery Childe only brings the conflict into greater contrast. In the course of the book, Russell spends considerable effort in tutoring the woman on the feminine aspects of God to be found in the Bible, overlooked because of translations and expectations.

A Letter of Mary finds Mary's decision made, and the duo married for nearly three years (and no, I do not intend to write about the Russell-Holmes honeymoon. When it comes to those two, dignity is paramount.) She is working on an academic paper. Holmes is (as often the case) bored with inactivity, when to their Sussex house comes an archaeologist friend from their time in Palestine. She brings Mary a papyrus document, apparently written by Mary Magdalene, who refers to herself as a disciple of Jesus. When the archaeologist is killed, the duo is launched on an investigation that may or may not hinge on the potentially transformative, even revolutionary effects the Magdalene's letter would have on Christendom.

The fourth Russell (*The Moor*) takes Mary and Holmes to Dartmoor where, with *The*

1943 Guide to Hiring Women

The following is an excerpt from the July 1943 issue of Transportation Magazine.

This was written for male supervisors of women in the work force during World War II.

Eleven Tips on Getting More Efficiency Out of Women Employees: There's no longer any question whether transit companies should hire women for jobs formerly held by men. The draft and manpower shortage has settled that point. The important things now are to select the most efficient women available and how to use them to the best advantage.

Here are eleven helpful tips on the subject from Western Properties:



1. Pick young married women. They usually have more of a sense of responsibility than their unmarried sisters, they're less likely to be flirtatious, they need the work or they wouldn't be doing it, they still have the pep and interest to work hard and to deal with the public efficiently.

2. When you have to use older women, try to get ones who have worked outside the home at some time in their lives. Older women who have never contacted the public have a hard time adapting themselves and are inclined to be cantankerous and fussy. It's always well to impress upon older women the importance of friendliness and courtesy.

3. General experience indicates that "husky" girls - those who are just a little on the heavy side - are more even tempered and efficient than their underweight sisters.

4. Retain a physician to give each woman you hire a special physical examination - one covering female conditions. This step not only protects the property against the possibilities of lawsuit, but reveals whether the employee-to-be has any female weaknesses which would make her mentally or physically unfit for the job.

5. Stress at the outset the importance of time the fact that a minute or two lost here and there makes serious inroads on schedules. Until this point is gotten across, service is likely to be slowed up.

6. Give the female employee a definite day-long schedule of duties so that they'll keep busy without bothering the management for instructions every few minutes. Numerous properties say that women make excellent workers when they have their jobs cut out for them, but that they lack initiative in finding work themselves.

7. Whenever possible, let the inside employee change from one job to another at some time during the day. Women are inclined to be less nervous and happier with change.

8. Give every girl an adequate number of rest periods during the day. You have to make some allowances for feminine psychology. A girl has more confidence and is more efficient if she can keep her hair tidied, apply fresh lipstick and wash her hands several times a day.

9. Be tactful when issuing instructions or in making criticisms. Women are often sensitive; they can't shrug off harsh words the way men do. Never ridicule a woman - it breaks her spirit and cuts off her efficiency.

10. Be reasonably considerate about using strong language around women. Even though a girl's husband or father may swear vociferously, she'll grow to dislike a place of business where she hears too much of this.

11. Get enough size variety in operator's uniforms so that each girl can have a proper fit. This point can't be stressed too much in keeping women happy.

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September / October 2007

Hound of the Baskervilles echoing in the background, they investigate a suspicious death and a smattering of supernatural sightings. Holmes describes to Russell the discovery of a body, a discovery suspiciously akin to a former Holmes adventure on Dartmoor. Mary responds:

"No! Oh no, Holmes, please." I put up my hand to stop his words, unable to bear what I could hear coming, a thundering evocation of one of the most extravagant phrases Conan Doyle ever employed. "Please, please don't tell me that 'on the ground beside the body, Mr Holmes, there were the footprints of a gigantic hound.'"

He removed his pipe from his mouth and stared at me. "What on earth are you talking about, Russell? I admit that I occasionally indulge in a touch of the dramatic, but surely you can't believe me as melodramatic as that."

I drew a relieved breath and settled back in my chair. "No, I suppose not. Forgive me, Holmes. Do continue."

"No," he continued, putting the stem of his pipe back into place. "I do not believe it would be possible to distinguish a hound's spoor from that of an ordinary dog—not without a stretch of ground showing the animal's loping stride. These were simply a confusion of prints."

"Do you mean to tell me..." I began slowly.

"Yes, Russell. There on the ground beside the body of Josiah Gorton were found"—he paused to hold out his pipe and gaze at the bowl, which seemed to me to be drawing just fine, before finishing the phrase—"—the footprints of a very large dog."

I dropped my head into my hands and left it there for a long time while my husband sucked in quiet satisfaction at his pipe.

Holmes, it will be noted, does from time to time get the better of Russell.

One of the pleasures of *The Moor* for its author was encountering the eminent Victorian Sabine Baring-Gould, real-life squire of Lew Trenchard manor in Devon, author of hundreds of books from pot-boiler novels to lives of the saints and natural histories of werewolves, composer of hymns such as "Onward Christian Soldier" and "Now the Day has Ended," and collector of folklore and traditional songs. When I came across the man, first through his books and later in an article in *Smithsonian* magazine, I knew I just had to have him. I was immensely pleased to find that, if I hurried, I wouldn't even have to interfere with the date of his death.

The next book in the series, **O Jerusalem**, takes place out of sequence, going back five years to the time of **The Beekeeper's Apprentice**, to present in greater detail an episode referred to only in passing. Here, Russell and Holmes travel to what was then called Palestine, during the early days of the British mandate over the country, to investigate a problem for Holmes' mysterious brother Mycroft, who is something to do with British Intelligence. This is 1919, when General Allenby governed the country, T. E. Lawrence was struggling for Arab rights at the Paris peace talks, and decisions were being made that continue to reverberate to this day. One of the more interesting challenges in writing the book was precisely that sense of reverberations: A 1919 conversation about the hopes for peaceful cooperation among Christian, Muslim, and Jew rings loud to a reader in the year 2000 who knows that those hopes would be continually dashed. On another level, because the book is set when Russell and Holmes are still master and apprentice, her internal speculations concerning the nature of their relationship allows the reader a small and superior smile—at least, the reader who had met the series already.

The most recent volume in the Russell saga is *Justice Hall*, with links to the characters of **O Jerusalem** that serve to explain the latter's out-of-sequence publication. When the two Bedouin "brothers" who guided Russell and Holmes through

Palestine appear in England in 1923, they are under decidedly different guise. Justice Hall concerns the British aristocracy, and the dreadful injustices that occurred during the Great War. It also permitted the author to create a pair of glorious houses, giving full rein to her architectural fantasies. (A typical letter to one of my antiquarian bookseller friends began, If you could have any half dozen books in your library, what would they be?) But the book goes on to examine the burdens that go with such riches, the responsibilities to family and king that cost a young man everything.

The seventh Russell will appear in spring of 2004, and will be set in India.

Stand-alone Novels

In 1998, after publication of **The Moor**, I reluctantly said good-bye to my beloved St Martin's Press editor, Ruth Cavin, and moved to Kate Miciak at Bantam Books, which had been doing my paperbacks all along. My first book there was also my first stand-alone novel. **A Darker Place** (published in England as **The Birth of a New Moon**) is the story of Anne Waverley, an expert on modern religious movements who occasionally consults for the FBI by going undercover into religious communities—groups the media invariably condemns as ?cults?—to help judge their stability and internal security. Here, she encounters the movement ?Change,? a movement using the language and symbolic activities of the medieval alchemist to speak its spiritual truths. I wrote the book to explore the question of how a religious movement becomes mainstream—Christianity, after all, began as a lunatic offshoot of Judaism, which itself was at least in part a radical re-working of Canaanite beliefs.

A second stand-alone, **Folly**, came out in 2001. In it Rae Newborn, a woodworker with a long history of severe depression, goes to a deserted island in the northern reaches of Puget Sound to rebuild a house, and ends up rebuilding her life. The physical process of building, from clearing ground and laying the building's foundations to raising the walls and roof, is mirrored by the story of Rae's building recovery. It also allows the author to flaunt her familiarity with the minutiae of load-bearing two-by-fours and eight-penny nails.

Toward the end of **Folly** a character is introduced named Allen Carmichael. He is a minor player in the book, but is central to **Keeping Watch** (2004,) which marks the first time I've written a novel with a male protagonist. Allen is a Vietnam vet who finds his purpose in the rescue of abused children and their mothers: He gets them away, he hides them, he finds them new lives. In the course of his work he rescues a young boy who turns out to be more than he appears, and we enter into the question of how a killer is made, what forces have to conspire to make a child pick up a gun.

Endpiece

In this account of the novels, I have attempted to show the number of places at which the author's former lives have surfaced in her fiction: an undergraduate study in alchemy here, a BA thesis on the fool or a Master's thesis on the feminine aspects of God there, a trip to India, the hands-on experience of housebuilding and a childhood spent in the Pacific Northwest and a close familiarity with Oxford and an intimate grasp of a parent's nightmares—why, there are even brief mentions of breastfeeding babies and canning fruit (in **A Grave Talent** and **Keeping Watch**.) It is truly extraordinary how often the interests of an author and her characters coincide....

This is less a case of the old rule for beginning writers, ?Write what you know,? than it is a matter of building on, and with, what fascinates the author. In fact, the primary thrust of a book may well be something about which I know little or nothing at all—the art world, modern religious movements (?cults,?) and Vietnam are just a few. I tend to use the things I have done or studied as background, to lend dimension to the story or to characters.

One of the unanticipated side-benefits of writing about religious matters has been that my novels are taken seriously in some interesting quarters. Several of the books are required reading in English courses scattered across the country. **Folly** is being used in

a psychology class to illustrate depression, and in the spring of 2002 I spent a week as writer-in-residence at Hanover College in southern Indiana, a small school with a strong interest in matters theological.

But, as I asked at the beginning: Is a writer born, or made?

LRL's books - very popular, but controversial (1)

For Book Groups

The Beekeeper's Apprentice is a novel with a remarkably wide appeal, to all ages and many genders. I began the book not knowing a great deal about the period after World War I, but it did not take much reading to find a peculiarly familiar flavor to the time. My own period of growing up was the Sixties, and Mary Russell's teens and Twenties felt eerily similar: the devastation of the Great War found an echo in Vietnam; women made huge strides in basic rights during both eras; their air flight presaged our moon shots; their growing dependence on the telephone found a parallel in the infancy of computers. Women of the two periods even looked the same: skinny adolescents in short skirts.

1914-1918

Discussion questions for the *Beekeeper's Apprentice*

1. In what ways does the War shape the book? Are the guns of the Somme merely background noise, or central? How much would the story change if set in, say, 1910, or 1920?
2. Russell and Holmes, though similar in many ways, yet differ profoundly in others. How does Russell's sex influence her outlook and actions? How does her interest in theology reflect and affect those differences?
3. What does the book's subtitle mean, beyond a reference to Holmes' book on Beekeeping?
4. There's a considerable age difference between Holmes and Russell. How would it affect your attitude toward their relationship in this book if you knew they later married? How would it affect your attitude if you knew they did not marry?
5. Is it fair, for a writer to make use of another writer's creation? Does it make a difference if the later work is a straight pastiche (that is, a story with the same characters, setting, etc as the original) or if it merely incorporates the earlier work in a different story (as with **Beekeeper**, whose main character is Mary Russell, not Holmes)?

The narrator of *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, Mary Judith Russell, is a brilliant but unhappy young woman, recently orphaned and now heir to a sizeable estate, who literally stumbles over the retired Sherlock Holmes in the middle of the Sussex Downs. When she and Holmes meet, she is fifteen and he is fifty-four, but the two form an instantaneous friendship which soon becomes a partnership as he begins to teach her the art of detecting. Over several years and a succession of cases that range from frivolous to deadly, Russell's skills and the strength of their alliance increase, until there can be no doubt that she has become, in truth, the great detective's equal...

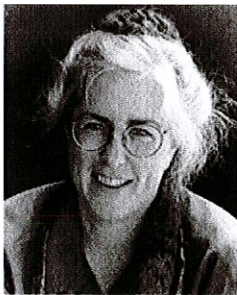
Over the past few years, Edgar award-winning mystery author Laurie R. King has written a series of bestselling novels about Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes, which many readers rank among the best Sherlockian fiction ever written:

The Beekeeper's Apprentice (1994)
A Letter of Mary (1996)
O Jerusalem (1999)
The Game (2004)

A Monstrous Regiment of Women (1995)
The Moor (1998)
Justice Hall (2002)
Locked Rooms (2005)

King's novels surpass many other works of Sherlockiana because of the intelligence and sensitivity with which she handles the character of Sherlock Holmes -- deftly bringing into three dimensions elements of his personality that his original creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was content to leave in two, while still remaining true to the famous detective's well-known origins.

The books are fresh and ambitious, delightfully seasoned with allusions to the original Holmes stories as well as the writings of Dorothy L. Sayers, Rudyard Kipling, and numerous other classic works of mystery and adventure. King's sophisticated plots, complex characters, deft use of symbolism and richness of historical detail ensure that these novels may not only be enjoyed as casual reading, but can stand up even to in-depth literary analysis.



Laurie R. King is a third-generation Californian who emerged on the mystery writing scene in 1993 with *A Grave Talent* and shortly thereafter won the Edgar for Best First Novel. She is the author of the Kate Martinelli series of police procedural mysteries and the Mary Russell books, as well as several standalone works of suspense (*A Darker Place*, *Folly*, *Keeping Watch*) and a science fiction novel, *Calafia's Daughters*, which she wrote under the pseudonym of Leigh Richards.

She has a master's degree in theology and is married to a man thirty years older than herself, whom she fondly describes as "a peripatetic anglo-Indian professor of religious studies". They have two grown children, and currently reside in northern California.



RUSS-L is a mailing list dedicated to the discussion and analysis of the Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes mysteries, and new members are always welcome. This is a spoiler-intensive list, however, so reading all the available Russell books is recommended before joining.

Subscribe to RUSS-L

enter email address



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If you've joined the list (or even if you're a veteran), these friendly files will help you know how to participate:

- The RUSS-L Guide for New Bees
- RUSS-L Frequently Asked Questions

The Laurie R. King Website: Mary Russell's World

From the official LRK site, this page includes excerpts from each of the Russell books, a timeline, and numerous historical and literary notes of interest.

Dammit, Holmes!

The premier Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes community on LiveJournal, featuring in-depth discussion, fanfics, and more.

The Hive

This page features an impressive number of Russellian pastiches, many of which are the work of our RUSS-L list members.

The Beekeeper's Holmes Page in Japan

This Japanese-language page by list member Naomi includes an image of the Japanese cover for *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, and translations of several Russellian pastiches.

The Mary Russell/Sherlock Holmes Atlas

Steve Spicer reports: "Being an armchair traveller and infected with Russellitis, I've created a web page about places described in the Russell books. There are maps, a picture or two and links to the places Laurie takes Russell and Holmes."

Dining with Sherlock Holmes and Mary Russell

Jenny Newbury's attempt at compiling a definitive Russellian cookbook, using recipes contributed by other members of the RUSS-L list.



The RUSS-L Casting List

Created by "A nineties number with feathers and sequins", this site features photographs and brief filmographies of leading contenders for the roles of Holmes and Russell in our imaginary movie of *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*.

Author Spotlight: Laurie R. King

Located at the website for Random House, the publishers of the Russell series in paperback, and a good many other excellent mystery novels besides. Several excerpts from, and reviews of, Laurie's books are available.

Sherlockian.Net

Chris Redmond's comprehensive Sherlock Holmes site.

Formerly known as *The Beekeeper's Holmes Page*, this site is maintained by R. J. Anderson, whose love of the Russell books does not extend to agreement with all or even most of the viewpoints expressed therein.

For the maintainer's beliefs on subjects such as theology and feminism, please visit her homepage.

LRK on Sherlock Holmes

When I first started writing the Russell stories, I was firm in my statements that I did not write Sherlock Holmes stories. I wrote Mary Russell stories. Having, I think, proven that fact over the course of eight books, I am no longer quite so scrupulous about having nothing to say about the man with the pipe.

Any writer of crime fiction has to deal with the presence of Sherlock Holmes in the background, just as any serious artist has to know and acknowledge the greats who have gone before. This is why so many writers, even those who don't generally get classified as mystery writers, touch down on the genre of the Sherlockian pastiche. Pulitzer prize winner Michael Chabon's story of Holmes in his (gasp) dotage is but one example.

~~Mary Russell is who Holmes would be if the Victorian detective were young, female, and of the twentieth century. Conan Doyle's stories cease to be set after the beginning of the Great War (he wrote stories after 1914, but they were invariably set long before), because that war killed off the world that was Sherlock Holmes.~~

In the Russell stories, I look at what Holmes might have looked like after that huge change in his society. I honor and respect the character, and his creator, at all times, even when I tweak them for their male posturing and pretensions. Imitation may or may not be the sincerest form of flattery, but it is certainly a form of love.

And if that isn't enough of LRK on SH, you can check out my articles on the Holmes chronology and one on Arthur Conan Doyle.

A Russell and Holmes timeline

Spring 1914—Mary Russell meets the Beekeeper and becomes his Apprentice
December 1918—February 1919— Oh, Jerusalem! It's cold in Palestine...✓
December 1920—Russell is drawn into a Monstrous Regiment of Women ✓
August 1923—Dorothy Ruskin brings them a Letter of Mary ✓
September 1923—Rev Sabine Baring-Gould calls them to the Moor ✓
November 1923—the Duke of Beauville invites them to Justice Hall ✓
January 1924—Mycroft sends them to India to play The Game ✓
May 1924: They jump ship in San Francisco and end up in Locked Rooms ✓

LRK on Mary Russell

Mary Russell is what Sherlock Holmes would look like if Holmes, the Victorian detective, were a) a woman, b) of the Twentieth century, and c) interested in theology. If the mind is like an engine, free of gender and nurture considerations, then the Russell and Holmes stories are about two people whose basic mental mechanism is identical. What they do with it, however, is where the interest lies.

Russell is a child of her parents, first and foremost, half Boston Brahmin, half English-Jewish. She is also a product of the defining trauma of her childhood, when her family was ripped from her, as well as being shaped by the world around her. To her, the world is not a secure place, as it would have been for an upper class male growing up in the late Nineteenth century. She was allowed access, if limited in scope, to higher education, but even by the time of *Locked Rooms* (1924) she cannot yet vote in an election.

However, English history is scattered with the most extraordinary women, women like Gertrude Bell and Mary Kingsley (links below) who simply didn't listen when told there were things they really shouldn't do. I like to think of Mary Russell as kin.

In which Miss Mary Russell—Oxford theologian, sleuth extraordinaire, partner and wife of Sherlock Holmes—interviews Laurie R. King, Berkeley theologian and mystery writer.

MR: Good morning, my dear. Care for some tea? No? Suit yourself. Now, I'm not quite certain I grasp the point of this exercise. They wish me to put questions to you?

LRK: Right. You ask. I answer.

MR: And people find interest in this informal viva voce? Extraordinary. I should have thought my answers would prove more absorbing than yours, all things considered. My life, after all, has been a full one, whereas yours...

LRK: Miss Russell, please, could we just get on with the format?

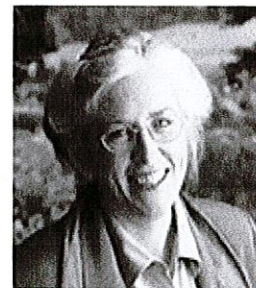


Photo: Seth Affoumado

MR: As you wish. I hardly need ask about *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* and its sequels: I did, after all, write them: meeting Holmes in 1915 and becoming his student, partner, and finally wife, all our little adventures in England and Palestine and—

LRK: *Little* adventures? You nearly died. Holmes was abducted, international incidents were narrowly averted, lives saved. The Conan Doyle stories pale in comparison.

MR: True; as a partner, I stimulated Holmes mind rather more than Dr Watson did. It was even, at times, something of a challenge for Holmes to keep up with me. But to return to this interview: I understand you write novels as well as edit my manuscripts.

LRK: I do, yes. Mysteries, for the most part—I do a series about a San Francisco cop, as well as three stand-alone suspense novels.

MR: This 'cop', as you call him—

LRK: Her. The cop in *A Grave Talent* and the rest is a woman, Kate Martinelli.

MR: You don't say? We tried women constables during the Great War, but unfortunately their numbers rather diminished once the men returned from the trenches. You find a woman constabulary serviceable, though?

LRK: It's not a separate force, they're in with the men. But yes, women are as good as men, whether it's as a street patrol officer or, as with Martinelli, in investigations.


MR: One might argue that women are rather, er, taken advantage of...

LRK: If you mean by the bad guys, that's why all cops carry guns—they're a great equalizer. And if you mean taken advantage of in the relationship sense, well, that doesn't enter into it as much with Martinelli, because she's gay and her partner's a man. Um, you understand the word 'gay'? as in lesbian?

MR: 'Gay'—a charming figure of speech. Yes, I can see that might be an advantage, in a man's world such as the police. What about the other books, your 'suspense novels'?

LRK: *A Darker Place* is about a professor of religion—again, a woman—who investigates so-called 'cults' for the FBI; *Folly* concerns a woman who retreats to an island in the Pacific Northwest to rebuild a house—one that was originally built by a soldier returned from the First World War, in fact. And most recent was *Keeping Watch*, in which the veteran of another war, Vietnam, rescues endangered children.

MR: A 'professor of religion'—do you have an interest in religion, yourself?

 LRK: I did an MA in Old Testament theology—storytelling at its most basic—especially its feminine aspects, and was later given an honorary doctorate by my seminary.

MR: And you now write novels? Still, it must add a certain depth to your stories.

LRK: I think so, yes. But then, one joy of mysteries is that you can weave all kinds of interests and abilities into them—house building, child rearing, life in Papua New Guinea, Greek verbs, holy fools, trench warfare, the hills of north India....

MR: My, how...piquant. But this raises a question: How do you keep people from confusing the works that concern Holmes and me with the novels you also write?

LRK: Er, well. I can't exactly say that I do.

MR: *(Her voice going icy.)* You 'can't say..'? Am I to understand that the manuscripts I sent you—*my personal memoirs*—have been published as *fiction*?

LRK: Well, they're exciting and exotic and tell of little-known events in history—

MR: And this next one, which you have entitled *The Game*. I suppose readers will imagine you invented it, too? That Holmes and I did not actually race across Europe for the ship to India and join the hunt for the missing spy? That we never became itinerant magicians or encountered the Maharaja of Khanpur or joined forces with a Bolshevik or met Kipling's Kim or went pig-sticking? That we never—oh, this is simply too outrageous. Young woman, if you wish to claim sole authorship of the books, then you may conduct this so-called interview without me as well. Good day.

LRK: Oh, Miss Russell, watch the—oh, please—don't! Oh dear, *(Sighs.)* She's gone.

k) *What does the motto mean, "After 1914, Holmes is ours"?*

In an interview a couple of years ago, Laurie jokingly remarked that scholars of the canon can say whatever they like about Holmes's life up to the final Conan Doyle story, "His Last Bow" (which takes place in 1914), but that "After 1914, Holmes is mine." The members of the RUSS-L list, having discovered this quote, pounced upon it with glee and turned it into our group motto.

l) *What are "noms" and how do I get one?*

"Nom" is short for "nom de plume" (Fr., "pen name") and refers to an alias or nickname adopted by some list members. A RUSS-L nom can be the name of a character, the name of an object, or just a pithy phrase from either the Russell books or the original Sherlock Holmes stories (although it is generally understood that no one uses "Mary Russell" or "Sherlock Holmes" as their nom). Please note that Noms are NOT required on the list, nor do they indicate any special status; they are purely for fun.

o) *What is the "canon" and what is the "kanon"?*

In Sherlockian circles the term "canon" refers to the original Sherlock Holmes stories, as edited by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In Russellian circles the term "kanon" refers to the Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes stories edited by Laurie R. King.

p) *What are "repastiches" and where can I find some?*

The writer of a "pastiche" attempts to emulate or duplicate the atmosphere and narrative style of someone else's work. Sherlockian pastiches purport to chronicle adventures of Sherlock Holmes not previously revealed, using the style and voice of Dr. John Watson.

By this definition the works of Laurie King are not really pastiches, as she does not use Watson as a narrator but rather provides her own original narrator in the form of Mary Russell. However, they usually get thrown in with the pastiches anyway, because of the presence of Sherlock Holmes as a major character.

"Repastiche" is a term used for a pastiche of a pastiche, as it were -- in this case, stories written by fans of the Russell books, using Russell and Holmes as characters, which chronicle events other than those revealed by Laurie King. You can find numerous examples at [The Hive](#), a Russellian repastiche archive maintained by list member "Foxhound" a.k.a. Kristopher Preacher.

q) *Who is Jeremy Brett and why has he sometimes been discussed on the list?*

Besides Basil Rathbone, the late Jeremy Brett is the best-known actor to have portrayed Sherlock Holmes. Many Sherlockians consider Brett to be the best Holmes ever to appear on camera. It was through watching Brett in the Granada TV serials that Laurie King first became interested in the idea of writing about a female detective of equal intelligence and knowledge to Holmes -- a character who became Mary Russell.

r) Why has the "tent joke" been banned from the list?

The Sherlockian joke which ends "...Watson, you fool, someone has stolen our tent" might have been funny the first time, but many of us have heard the joke about twenty times, so when some well-meaning person posts it to the list yet again, it makes us all want to scream. There's nothing wrong with the joke itself, but repetition makes anything tedious, so... please don't.

Part 4:

About Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes

a) When is Holmes's birthday?

Holmes's birthday is never actually stated directly in any of the Conan Doyle stories. However, of all Shakespeare's plays, Holmes quotes most frequently from "Twelfth Night", and many Sherlockians have accepted January 6 as the most likely date for Holmes's birth.

b) When is Mary Russell's birthday?

The Beekeeper's Apprentice sets the date for her birth as January 2, 1900.

c) What type of Judaism does Mary practice?

Former list member Shelby Peck (now sadly deceased) believed that Mary is a Humanistic or Reconstructionist Jew. Definitions of the various types of Judaism may be found [here](#).

d) Why does Holmes call Russell "Mary Todd" in BEEK?

When they disguise themselves as gypsies, Holmes takes the alias of "Mr. Todd", and since she is posing as his daughter, Mary becomes "Mary Todd". It should be noted that "Mary Todd" is also the name of a wildflower herb.

e) What's this about Holmes and Irene Adler?

In BEEK, Patricia Donleavy tells Holmes, "I know about you and the Adler woman after my father's death..." When questioned about the meaning of this line after writing BEEK, Laurie admitted to following noted Sherlockian scholar William S. Baring-Gould's theory that Holmes and Irene Adler had an affair during the Great Hiatus (the three years that Holmes was missing and presumed dead after his battle with Moriarty at the Reichenbach Falls).

f) *Does Holmes have a son?*

Yes, by Irene Adler. This was confirmed in MREG, where Russell thinks that Miles reminds her of Holmes's "lovely, lost son", and later makes reference to Irene Adler having loved Holmes and let him go. Laurie once mused that in a future book she would like to write about Holmes's son in the trenches during WWI, but this seems to have been covered by Gabriel Hughenfort's story in *Justice Hall*. We may yet hear about him in some other capacity, though.

It should be noted, however, that according to Laurie the son is *not*, as William S. Baring-Gould suggested, Rex Stout's famous detective Nero Wolfe. His name, age, and details of how he became "lost" to Holmes are as yet unrevealed, but the books imply that Russell has met him and that he has been estranged from his father due to some tragic circumstance (possibly drug use or mental illness). He may even be dead.

g) *Is the "younger son of a Duke" mentioned as one of Holmes's associates in BEEK a reference to Lord Peter Wimsey, and is this the same "Peter" that Mary encounters in LETT?*

Yes. Laurie is a great admirer of Dorothy L. Sayers and her books about Lord Peter, and enjoys dropping hints and references to Sayers' work in her own books.

h) *Will we see Lord Peter in any future Russell books?*

Sadly, no. Laurie didn't realize this was going to be a problem at the time, but she used the character of Lord Peter without permission of Sayers' estate and has been advised that she may not do so again.

i) *Is the mention in BEEK of Holmes disappearing and reappearing some weeks later with a cough and a scratch across one cheek a reference to the Peter Cushing movie "The Masks of Death"?*

No. Laurie has never seen the movie in question.

j) Is it true that there's going to be a new Holmes movie starring Alan Rickman as Holmes, Gabriel Byrne as Watson and Catherine Zeta-Jones as the love interest?

No. Although the rumour was persistent enough to generate a brief magazine article (accompanied by an amusing caricature of Rickman as Holmes), it appears to be completely false. When one of my personal friends asked Rickman about it backstage after a performance of PRIVATE LIVES in London, he said without hesitation that he had never heard of this film project, much less been asked to play Holmes in it.

LRK on: Holmes

– Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

– A Holmes Chronology

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**Author's Preface**

*My attitude toward Sir Arthur Conan Doyle bears a marked resemblance to the attitude of Mary Russell to Sir Arthur's creation: immense respect and affection balanced by a realistic eye. ACD was both a writer of his time and a man who transcended his limitations by giving voice to a modern archetype. Over the years I have attempted to explain my thoughts about the man, and through him about his creation. For two articles by LRK on ACD, see "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle" in *AZ Murder Goes Classic* (Poisoned Pen Press, Scottsdale, AZ, 1997) and the introduction to the Modern Library Paperback Classics edition of *Hound of the Baskervilles* (Random House, October 2002.) The following article was written for the *Penguin Classics* web site as a general introduction to Conan Doyle.*

"Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms."

It really is the only explanation. Not just for Mr Sherlock Holmes, who says those words as he muses over the source of the detecting abilities he shares with his brother Mycroft (and thus siding with the Detective-as-artist school of thought over the Detective-as-calculating-machine), but equally to explain the man who penned the words, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle himself. How else to account for the strange, vivid, flowers of fiction that burst from this outwardly ordinary British gentleman, except to say that Conan Doyle had art in his blood? Certainly he came from a family of artists on his father's side, and his mother was a born storyteller with a strong sense of the dramatic. That Sir Arthur's father, a failed artist from a clan of successful artists, was also a huge problem to the family-erratic, alcoholic, and finally condemned to a mental asylum-while his beloved storyteller mother was a strong moralist who raised her seven living children to the Roman Catholic faith, served to lay the groundwork for an extreme polarity of vision that was to characterise Conan Doyle's life and work.



Conan Doyle started out ordinary enough. He grew up in Edinburgh, went to an appropriately brutal boy's school in England, followed it with medical school like a good son, did well on his exams, splurged on a brief trip with an Arctic whaling expedition that put some money in his pocket but more to the point gave him Adventure enough to blow the cobwebs of the lecture hall from his brain; then he settled down to work. Except that he didn't. He spent the next ten years hopping from one place to the next, acting as medical officer aboard a West African steamer and training as an oculist in Vienna, marrying and begetting and trying his best to be a responsible husband and father.

But he could not deny the art in his blood. Even while at medical school he had written fiction, and now, in the slow intervals between patients, the doctor sat at his surgery desk and took up his pen. (All praise to the patron saints of storytelling and doctors, for ensuring that the Conan Doyle medical practice, although considerably more of a success than the man's later self-mythologising would indicate, did not roar immediately into packed waiting-rooms.) Mysteries and adventures, historical tales and fantasies, one after another they trickled out and, with gratifying and increasing regularity, found homes for themselves in the pages of Strand and Cornhill Magazine, until in the spring of 1886, Conan Doyle found the character he was born to write: With a sharp cry of triumph and the words "You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive," Sherlock Holmes met Dr John Watson, and a legend was born.

Note, please, the sequence in our introduction to the young proto-detective: The ecstatic cry comes first, then the analytical deduction. Holmes might be called a thinking

machine, even by his closest friend, but it is that cry that rings in our ears, that almost childlike delight in his discovery over the test-tubes that animates his thin face in our mind's eye, forging a human link to the close analysis of perceived data that follows.

Dichotomy delights. Sherlock Holmes, the world's first consulting detective, might think of himself as a cool-blooded calculator of data, might even convince his audience that he is nothing but a feverish brain appended to an inconvenient body, but any reader of Conan Doyle knows better. We know that Holmes' cold and massive rationality is in fact driven by an equally immense passion, for life and action and above all, for Justice. Holmes may indeed be a Thinking Machine, but he is a machine that regularly bubbles over with *joie de vivre*: He jokes, he rants, he plays pranks, he relishes his food and lusts after the challenge of a good case, he loses himself in music and philosophises on the Goodness represented by the existence of a rose and once, just once, reveals his heart to Watson.

Yet it can not be denied that Holmes at times verges on the inhuman, greeting the news of a client's death with mild regret and a philosophic determination to solve the case regardless, shamefully misusing his ever-faithful companion-at-arms Watson (or indeed any number of other innocents) when a case seems to call for it, and often seeming incapable of looking beyond the puzzle before him to its human elements. Holmes is dichotomy personified: the scientist fuelled by passion, the arch-egotist who lives for the good of his fellow man, the friendless misanthrope adored by millions, and even (whisper this last) the monk-like bachelor who has contributed so much to the fantasy lives of women.

Holmes is not the only one of Conan Doyle's creations to demonstrate the author's innate sense of polarity. One of the Professor Challenger stories frankly shocks modern sensibilities by blithely murdering off the world's entire population in order to prove the Professor right: one wonders uneasily if Mrs Challenger was saved merely to provide necessary genetic material for the next stage of human development. Certainly the Professor's affections did not extend to his neighbours, his long-time employees, or even his King, any of whom might have benefited from a word of warning concerning the efficacy of oxygen—even though, by all accounts, the author himself was a man of hearty affections and considerable loyalties. He would not divorce a dying wife, even with an eager and much-loved second-wife-to-be waiting patiently in the wings. His softness of heart led him to lengthy advocacy of strangers (such as the case of George Edalji, a half-blind Indian accused of the nocturnal serial mutilation of...cows. Holmes would have burst out in his famous biting laugh.) The doctor was an easy touch for causes.

Which brings us, necessarily, to Conan Doyle's spiritualism. Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of the world's great rationalist, was a fervent believer in all things spiritual, ghostly, ectoplasmic, and charlatan. A self-declared agnostic who stated firmly that he could not accept an unprovable thesis such as Christianity, he later seized on the eminently disprovable performances of mind-readers and automatic writing to explain his world. Particularly after the disasters of the Great War, he became ever more deeply committed to the belief that his dead son had survived the grave and that his mother was watching over him; in the end he gave all his energies and most of his fortune to the sort of muscular spiritualism that called to him, declaring the furthering of mediums to be his mission in life. He was convinced, for example—he knew to his bones—that Harry Houdini escaped his chains not by mere trick, but by dematerialising from within their iron bonds and resuming his corporeal self off to one side. He stuck to his belief even when Houdini explained, over and over again, that it was mere technique: Poor deluded Houdini might not recognise his own psychic powers, but Conan Doyle did.

A bundle of contradictions. Sir Arthur: gullible skeptic; earth-bound romantic; law-abiding suburbanite whose great hero had little respect for the law or the law's agents; spokesman for rationality who yet joyously accepted a child's simplistic photographs as proof of the existence of fairies; creator of a character any writer would kill for (as those of us who have tried to write Holmes are too painfully aware) who after a brief seven-year run heartlessly tossed the character off a high waterfall because he was threatening to interfere with his creator's "real work" of historical romances:

unschooled literary force capable of tight-knit prose studded with such nerve-tingling gems as the horrified, "Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!"; or the admission that a mystery was proving "a three-pipe problem"; and the most famous of all his exchanges, the protest, "The dog did nothing in the night-time" followed by Holmes' enigmatic reply, "That was the curious incident."

Immortal, language-enriching phrases, vital, immediate places and people flowed from the doctor's pen with an ease that makes a writer writhe with envy. And the most frustrating thing is knowing that the Holmes stories were so easy for Conan Doyle, he discounted them entirely. They were of such minor importance in his own mind that he would toss off a story with little revision, send it off, pay his bills, and then return to his real work. Conan Doyle was like some artist capable of exquisite, evocative pen-and-ink sketches who yet sees value only in the huge, overworked oil canvases he insists on producing.

The only revenge a poor imitator can take is the knowledge that the unloved detective won out in the end, that the light and unimportant fiction Conan Doyle reverted to when time came to support a family and his spiritualist enterprises managed to sneak around the backs of those closely researched and utterly earnest historical novels and take on a life of their own away from their creator, leaving Holmes standing alone, uncreated, timeless, and infinitely more immediate in the world's eye than the stolid British doctor under whose name the stories are kept on shelves from Azerbaijan to Zanzibar.

(It may even be a good thing that Conan Doyle did not take the Holmes stories seriously, or we might have seen the detective's personality stretched and twisted to promote the cause of spiritualism, Holmes depending on automatic writing to solve a case, or consulting an ectoplasmic medium--one shudders at the possibilities.)

Thus, in the end, Sir Arthur was overtaken by his own creation. Holmes' great shadow engulfing his own. Surely there can't be many writers who habitually receive mail addressed to his or her fictional character-and, moreover, get it delivered by the postman? We might spare a moment of sympathy for the good doctor's dignity, as he battled to free himself from the sticky webs of his own brilliant fiction.

But perhaps only a moment. I for one am happy enough to take up my slim, engagingly worked volume about, and by, a man transformed by the art in his blood; I join with a throng of others in a Babel of languages, all of us eager to step again into those pages lit perpetually by the hissing gas jets, as we prepare to flag down a hansom cab in the pursuit of villainy.

The game, surely, is still afoot.

A Holmes Chronology

Readers of the Mary Russell books, beginning with **The Beekeeper's Apprentice**, will notice that Sherlock Holmes they contain is a somewhat younger man than most Holmesians (or Sherlockians, on the left side of the Atlantic) have been led to expect. He is, after all, long retired to the Sussex Downs (as seen in the preface of *His Last Bow*) and the Sidney Paget drawings of him that accompanied the original Strand magazine publications depicted a man already middle aged in the 1880s. So what's this with referring to him in 1915 as "fifty four"?

First of all, we must remember that specific references to age and even dates are both rare and conflicting within the Conan Doyle canon. Sir Arthur was not aiming to construct a fictional biography; he was writing tales to entertain, and often couldn't be bothered with the details.

Let us look at two of the stories that do give certain reference points of dates.

A Study in Scarlet

The initial appearance of Holmes and Watson into each other's lives, and into ours.

comes in *A Study in Scarlet*, published in the 1887 Christmas issue of Beeton's Annual. It is narrated, as are most of the Holmes tales, by Dr John Watson, who tells of receiving his medical degree in 1878 and going to India in time for the Second Afghan War, which began in November of that year. Watson therefore was on the Northwest Frontier by March or April of 1879, where he was wounded in the battle of Maiwand, which took place in late July, 1880. He was evacuated when the relief forces arrived (in September), then lay with "months" of fever before recovering and being sent home to England.

(Incidentally, and having nothing to do with this chronology, the question has often come up as to the precise nature of Watson's wound. Here he claims the Jezail bullet takes him in the leg, yet later in the canon the injury migrates to his left shoulder. The simple explanation is that the bullet, as with most Afghani bullets being home-made from bits of scrap metal, has fallen apart in mid-air, thus hitting Watson in two places. This explanation, I should say, I owe to my husband, who has not read a Holmes story since he was a schoolboy in Simla, but who knows his Afghan war history.)

In London, Watson meets an old colleague, complains to him of the high cost of living in the city, and is taken to meet a rather peculiar fellow who also happens to be looking to share rooms. "You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive," Holmes tells Watson, and the doctor and the audience are hooked. This meeting in the laboratories of St Bart's hospital would have taken place in the winter or spring of 1881, and over the next weeks of sharing Mrs Hudson's house, Holmes is making his first ventures into the profession of consulting detective.

And here we come into our first chronological conundrum. Watson refers to seeing a printed piece of (as he finds it) nonsense called "The Book of Life" on the fourth of March, but neglects to tell us if this is 1881 or 1882. If the former, then the entire period between Watson's arrival in London and his being introduced to Holmes' odd profession takes a mere few weeks; if the latter, then long months wandering the city, followed by many months getting to know Holmes, makes it March of 1882.

In any case, Holmes is finished with his two years of university (as given in "The Gloria Scott") and embarking on his work, but still young enough that he is finding himself.

"The Gloria Scott" Adventure

Now let us turn to the second story, that of "The Gloria Scott," published in 1893. This is a tale narrated to Watson by Holmes himself, concerning his first real case. It opens during Holmes' university career (the year is not given), when he goes to visit the house of one of his few friends, Victor Trevor, and meets the young man's father. There he shocks the older man into a dead faint with a demonstration of his skills in observation and logical deduction. Some weeks later, at the end of the long vacation, Holmes is called again to the Trevor house, to find that the father is dying.

The man's history comes out as follows. Born James Armitage, Trevor was convicted of making use of funds that were not his and transported to Australia on the barque Gloria Scott, only to have the ship taken over by his fellow convicts and sunk. Armitage participates unwillingly, is put off the boat carrying the mutineers, and eventually finds rescue and is taken to Australia, a free man.

In Australia, it is said, "we prospered, we travelled, [and] we came back as rich Colonials to England," after which "for more than twenty years we have led peaceful and useful lives." Until, that is, one of the murderous prisoners tracks down Trevor/Armitage, and addresses him, saying "it is thirty years and more since I saw you last." The man, whose name interestingly enough is Hudson, blackmails the elder Trevor into an early death, at which point both younger men learn the story.

If we take all the story's internal dates at face value, we must add "thirty years or more" to the date of the Gloria Scott's wreckage in November of 1855, which would mean that Holmes was finishing his university career in 1885—clearly problematic when one takes the *Study in Scarlet* dates into account. If, however, one excuses

Hudson's "thirty years" as exaggeration, and takes Trevor's twenty years as closer to the facts, adding a brisk five to make a success of the gold fields in Australia and return home rich, then we are looking at 1880 as the second year of university for our detective, much closer to the facts of Watson's introductory tale.

The birth date of Sherlock Holmes

Working backwards from those dates, we look for the birth date of Sherlock Holmes. Assuming that he began university at a reasonably early age—it was, and indeed still is, commonplace for bright students to enter at seventeen or even younger—then a date for the Gloria Scott adventure of 1885, with Holmes then 17, would present us with a birth date of 1868. If the tale takes place in 1880 and Holmes is, say, 19, then he was born in 1861. In this case, he is 54 when he meets Mary Russell on the Sussex Downs in 1915; if one takes the later birth date, he would be only 47.

Either chronology would mean that when Holmes "retired" from Baker Street in 1903 to keep bees on the Downs, he was not yet forty, so that his Baker Street career was that of a man in his twenties and thirties. That this perception jars with our image of the man is not because of any conflict with Conan Doyle's words, but is rather due largely to the original Sidney Paget drawings, which invariably show a man in his middle years—being, after all, modeled on Paget's older brother.

The other reason we think of Holmes as older can be traced to the secondary literature about the life of Holmes, the "higher criticism" of such notables as Dorothy L. Sayers and Ronald Knox. And, most importantly, of William S. Baring-Gould, whose detailed "biography" of the great detective bears some fairly remarkable resemblances to the life of his own grandfather, the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould, squire of Lew Trenchard, collector of folk-music, writer of turgid bodice-rippers, saints'-lives, natural history books on werewolves, and popular hymns ("Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Now the Day is Ended" but two.) In fact, a close comparison of the first volume of Baring-Gould's autobiography, *Early Reminiscences*, and his grandson's later will show an at times identical series of events, down to the wording of childhood hobbies and a German winter spent in tents—although he did add a decade to his grandfather's birth date for that of the detective.

In addition, stage and film productions of the Holmes stories, wherein the character was played by actors in the middle years (from William Gillette to Basil Rathbone), served to nail down the public's mental picture of Holmes as a man with thinning hair and the deliberate manner of a man in his fifties. His younger years have been set aside for films that dwell on the titillating, the unlikely, and the hugely conjectural.

In conclusion, readers familiar with the Holmes canon who encounter the Russell books assume that the author has violently manipulated the chronology for her own purposes, to make a younger Holmes who is hence both more active and more believable as the partner of a young woman. In fact, I have merely restored Holmes to his proper years, and freed him up for a long and healthy middle age.