Music in Radio Drama: The Curious Case of the Acousmatic Detective[[1]](#footnote-2)

Despite the ever-expanding body of theory that reaches almost every corner of film music, consideration of music in radio drama is patchy and threadbare. Since the early days of radio, work has been undertaken about various aspects of radio’s sound *as* music – such as Rudolf Arnheim’s 1936 *Radio: an Art of Sound* that brought out the need for radio dramas to be alive to the “musical elements of speech and all sounds” (43) – but little attention has been paid to the music within popular radio drama.[[2]](#footnote-3) Neil Verma’s recent book, *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama,* comes perhaps closest. Its virtuosic exploration of the stylistic changes in “old time” radio drama (the 1930s thematization of psychological plots, the 1940s plots about information transmission, and so on), but while Verma notes the significance of early composers for radio drama such as Bernard Hermann, no framework emerges for discussing musical contributions which so often prove to be a major force for delivering radio drama. The recent collection of essays, *Music and the Broadcast Experience* (ed. Christina L. Baade, and James Dealville) contains but few references to this topic; one essay by Rika Asai bases its whole discourse on “framing” from Erving Goffman’s conceptualization of the radio drama frame which “focuses solely on the role of music and sound in representing “realism” in radio drama” (Goffman 1974, 156).[[3]](#footnote-4) But music’s role in “framing” dissipates, as we move further from Goffmann, whose theories had drawn our attention to factors specific to the musico-radio dramatic frame. Goffman described for example, how the music forms “bridges”:

music does not fit into a scene but fits *between* scenes, connecting one whole episode to another – part of the punctuation symbolism for managing material in this frame – and therefore at an extremely different level of application than music within a context (1974, 147).

Asai applies Goffman’s theory of framing to explore Benny Goodman’s on-air party *Let’s Dance*, and the topic of music and radio drama is set aside.

The irony of the under-exploration of music’s role in radio drama is no a small one in that, without a visual image to divert us, music generally operates closer to the foreground of our attention than in audio-visual media, connecting the various aspects of sound by means of what Arnheim calls an “acoustic bridge:”

By the disappearance of the visual, an acoustic bridge arises between all sounds: voices, whether connected with a stage scene or not, are now of the same ﬂesh as recitations, discussions, song and music (1931, 195).

Some well documented, highly novel sound explorations took place in the early experimental history of radio drama, particularly in avant-garde German radio where the *Hörspiel* moved further away from the theatre that had been at the heart of the English radio play (Huwiler 2005, 45; Cory 1974). Where the *Hörspiel* had taken early inspiration from Anglo-American radio plays such as Richard Hughes’s A *Comedy of Danger* (1924), by the 1970s, Mauricio Kagel was showing us that *Neues* *Hörspiel* had its roots in the Weimar avant-garde (Cory 1994, 366).[[4]](#footnote-5) Even in 1928, Walter Ruttmann created his experimental audio-only ‘film’ *Weekend*, commissioned by Berlin *Funkstunde,* which evoked expressionist soundscapes through montage techniques.[[5]](#footnote-6) In the UK, under the control of the BBC, radio drama served as modernist vehicle for artists such as Marinetti (1933, *Sintesti*), and Pound (1931, the radio opera, *Cavalcanti*). Debra Rae Cohen singles out Lance Sieveking, head of BBC’s Research Section, as creator of much “radiogenic experiment,” creating impressionist-inspired dramas with techniques such as montage and fade being transported from cinema.[[6]](#footnote-7) This tradition fuelled the 1950s musical experimentation, not least from the BBC Radiophonic Workshop’s cutting-edge compositions for radio shows. More recent BBC experiments in radio drama have included *The Foundation Trilogy* (1973, by David Cain) and Andrew Sachs’s The Revenge (1978), a mainstream continuation of this experimental tradition, which consists only of sound effects and non-verbal utterances of the central character (Sachs himself). Such experiments were intensely musical, but music also plays a major role, though perhaps a less overtly “modernist” role, in the more traditional genre of the English radio play that continued to develop in parallel.

In 1949 Boris Kremenliev was among the first to offer a practical account of composing for radio drama, though he perhaps began on the wrong foot by relegating music to the “background” in his title – “Background Music for Radio Drama”. In radio drama, when music is heard between voices and sound effects, it is often the only thing to focus on, and thus appears in the foreground. Without competing visual stimuli, it can be easier for listeners to be actively engaged with music, with space in the imagination to ruminate over its significance.[[7]](#footnote-8) Kremenliev does offer a broader taxonomy of functions for music in radio drama: “the music used in the present unseen drama falls into one of four categories: signature, curtain, bridge, and background” (1949, 76). The signature is the music that opens and closes the show, but the other three categories are more embedded in the drama itself:

A curtain indicates the end of an act or a scene which the producers think (perhaps justifiably) might otherwise lack finality. A bridge conveys the impression of transition in time or surroundings and is seldom more than ten seconds long. Often a bridge must contain two ideas, commenting on the scene completed and foreshadowing the one to come. Background music *per se* is music that actually backs up speech or action and contributes to the prevailing mood of the scene. (Kremenliev 1949, 76).

Because we cannot see what is happening in the story; the directors, dramatists, and musical directors must orientate us and escort our imaginations. The field of stimulus is shallower than in film in one sense, but much deeper because the listener’s imagination must fill the gap. Verma called his book on radio drama the “Theatre of the Mind,” noting that Paul Fussell had called the 1940s a “special moment in the history of human sensibility,” in which radio fired the “creative imagination” which substituted for visuals (Verma 2012, 9). He also notes the extent to which, by the 1930s radio drama had “begun to evolve from an expressive activity driven by narration to one driven by scene” (30). Andrew Crisell notes that “because radio drama shows less and involves the imagination more, it can ‘stage’ a whole range of situations which are quite beyond the scope of conventional drama” (1994, 151). And as Kremenliev avers,

Radio background music, like music in opera, motion pictures, musical comedy, ballet, and television, serves essentially to create atmosphere and heighten emotion. It keeps the story moving by giving it color and by holding the attention of the listener. And it has an added, special function peculiar to the medium because it must attempt, together with the narrator and sound effects, to compensate for the missing visual image (1949, 75).

Kremenliev’s comparison with opera, movies, etc. seems natural enough, though I hope to shine a light on some of the radio’s specific characteristics. The theoretical terms from audio-visual studies will prove particularly useful as starting points, but such tools need adapting, and consideration given to the particularities of radio.

In order to tease-out the musical possibilities that radio drama offers, I have chosen the long-running BBC Radio dramatizations of the complete Sherlock Holmes canon of sixty stories, a project that grew out of a series of adaptations by head writer Bert Coules. The series ran from 1989–1998, starring Clive Merrison as Sherlock Holmes and Michael Williams as Dr. John Watson. Music is prominent throughout the series, offering sometimes crucial layers of meaning. One producer-director, Enyd Williams, reflected at the end of the project,

I was particularly pleased with the *Valley of Fear*; its atmosphere, its drama, and especially the music. Our musical director Michael Haslam worked wonders with his piano and violin arrangements, and it was a real pleasure to watch him as he played the piano in the action, capturing the different characters of the various players. He was just as much an actor as the rest of the cast (Coules 2014, 37).

A cursory comparison with other dramas such as the BBC’s Agatha Christie collection shows that the Holmes collection integrates with greater intricacy. The Agatha Christie shows use different signature music for each dramatization, but have scant diegetic music and very few bridges, curtains, and background pieces. The Holmes series also compares more favourably with some radio dramas that should call forgreater musical sophistication, such as the 2010 adaptation of Hermann Hesse’s *Glass Bead Game*, by Lavinia Greenlaw – a dramatization of a novel that had music at its heart. Failing to live up to our deepest imaginations about the complexity of the profound ‘game’ (which synthesises academic disciplines), the triviality of the music played – such as Pachelbel’s canon – robs us of a certain amount of awe. There were at least four musicians working in the production team of Sherlock Holmes at different times – the late violinist Leonard Friedman, violinist Alexander Bălănescu, pianist Michael Haslam, who took over mid-way through, and Richard Friedman. The dramas generally use pre-composed music from the classical repertoire, though Leonard Friedman would often improvise passages on the violin, and Haslam would make piano arrangements.[[8]](#footnote-9) In avoiding common radio clichés, such as the “stings” so often trivialized in the Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce radio shows from the 1940s, where an organist would hit a diminished seventh chord to mark Holmes’ pronouncements as portentous, the BBC Sherlock Holmes series achieved a level of sophistication that pushes some of the boundaries of what can be achieved in radio dramaturgy. Experimenting with different narrative strategies over a nine-year period, and offering a staggering range of musical effects, they covered around 48 hours of radio time. The series therefore serves our reflection well and will raise fundamental questions about music in radio drama, so neglected in academic study.

Using these sixty shows as my case study then, the present study will first explore prevalent unpack notions of *diegesis*, some of which will prove useful,[[9]](#footnote-10) but I will establish Pierre Schaeffer’s term “acousmatic” (1966) as a particularly pertinent term, considering how its accompanying concept of “visualization” can work even without vision. Ultimately, this will lead me to question the ubiquitous violin music in the series, and explore the different narrative positions that it represents, considering how it frames the dramas. I then examine ways in which music creates a fantasy space between two representations of the same dialogue, before unpicking the ways in which music’s presence marks an *absence* – a fundamental ‘lack’ between characters. Finally, I will study the ways in which pre-composed musical allusions create what I call a *paradiegetic* space. While many of the techniques explored here can (and do) work in TV or Film, I hope to keep an eye (or rather, an ear) on (a) how they work differently in radio narratives, and (b) how some are more prevalent or more intense in radio, usually as an attempt to fuel our imaginations in the absence of visual cues. While most of the ‘tricks’ discussed in this essay can, and do, find clear analogies in film, some of them are particularly germane to radio and work differently in this medium, where the imagination provides the images.

## Radio Diegesis and the Acousmatic Frame

One of the main features of music in radio drama is that the distinction between the so-called ‘diegetic’ (music that the characters can hear) and the ‘non-diegetic’ layers (which the characters cannot hear) is harder to determine than onscreen, because we cannot *see* the source of the music. It thus takes subtly of direction – and often a longer timeframe – to orientate us within the soundscape. The terms diegetic and non-diegetic have been weighed-up in recent years, and some of the refinements and extensions may prove useful to us. Several commentators discuss the liminal boundary in film music between these terms – what Robynn Stilwell calls “the fantastical gap”[[10]](#footnote-11) or what Aaron Hunter (2012) and Henry Taylor (2007) call the “trans-diegetic” movement. Yacavone (2012) refers to a “diegetic world” that characters inhabit, versus a “film world” that denotes the overall film system, chiming with Ben Winters’ (2010) return to Daniel Frampton’s “Filmind” (Frampton 2006; Winters 2010, 232). Anahid Kassabian (2013) argues that with the advent of videogame music and music for phone apps, new media has taken us to “the end of diegesis as we know it.” Even in film music, Winters objects that “branding music with the label ‘non-diegetic’ threatens to separate it from the space of the narrative, denying it an active role in shaping the course of onscreen events, and unduly restricting our readings of film” (2010, 224). Reserving “diegetic” for music that the characters actually hear or produce, Winters adopts other terms to delineate the different levels of narration. Thus “meta-diegetic” (a term generally used to by Gorbman to describe music being heard in a character’s mind)[[11]](#footnote-12), for Winters, means discourse that occurs during secondary narration by a character. Meanwhile “extra-diegetic” (which Claudia Gorbman uses to mean “non-diegetic” [1987, p. 22]) occurs at a level below the diegesis.[[12]](#footnote-13)

These concepts will prove useful in some corners of the present project, even without vision, but as a starting point for a study of radio, a more apt notion is Michel Chion’s notion of the “acousmatic,” a term introduced to us through Pierre Schaeffer’s *musique concrète* and became common in audio-visual parlance. “Acousmatic, specifies an old dictionary, ‘is said of a sound that is heard without its cause or source being seen’” (Chion 1999, 18). This is the zone in which radio, even more than film, resides, but because *everything* in radio is acousmatic, the term’s relationship to “visualisation” needs re-thinking for radio. As Schaffer intended the term in his *musique concréte* it attempted to provide a phenomenologically “reduced” form of listening, following the Husserlian *epoché,* wherelisteners were invited to listen to sound objects without associating them with their means of production (what Schaffer calls “anecdotal” listening [Kane 2014, p. 28]). The term “acousmatic” was associated with Pythagorean sects who listened to their master’s voice from behind a screen (Chion, 1999, 19); this magical voice was called the “*acousmêtre*” (21), a concept we will unpack in due course. Chion says of radio:

It should be obvious that the radio is acousmatic by nature. People speaking on the radio are acousmêtres in that there’s no possibility of seeing them; this is the essential difference between them and the filmic acousmêtre. In radio one cannot play with showing, partially showing and not showing (Chion 1999, 21).[[13]](#footnote-14)

#### ‘Visualization’: Showing / Not-Showing in Radio Shows

Chion possibly overlooks the subtleties of radio dramatists, who skilfully create layers of sound and action that ‘show’ us things in our imaginations – by making the source of sound clear to us – even without visuals. When we listen without images, for Chion, sound is “acousmatized;” when the source of the sound becomes clear, it is “de-acousmatized,” “de-mythologized”, or “visualized.” While “visualized” is to be taken literally in film, we might extend the term ‘visualization’ (with scare quotes) to radio, referring to a mental image of a revealed sound-source.[[14]](#footnote-15) Chion speaks of “instantaneous perceptual triage” (1999, 3) as a moment when we form immediate assumptions about how the music fits into the scene, concluding that, “it is the image that governs this triage not the nature of the recorded elements themselves.” This is not the case in radio as there is no *visual* image, but the elements of sound can produce a *mental* image of diegetic insideness or outsideness. Indeed, one of the primary tasks of music in the ‘blind’ medium is to help us to visualise where we lack visual clues to set the scene. As Verma notes:

To create plays that evoked spatial and temporal structures in the mind, 1930s  
dramatists required a set of sonorous marks that could inform auditors where  
they “were” and signify movement from one scene to the next. Perhaps the  
most expedient of these devices was music, a few bars of which could, in the  
words of one CBS executive, “take the place of scenery, lighting and costumes”  
or, as an NBC writer put it, “span continents or centuries in a few seconds . . .  
like a magic carpet.” A hint of stride piano evokes Harlem in the 1910s; “La  
Marseillaise” suggests France—in this way dramatists neatly incorporated  
into the play a network of preexisting associations and understandings among  
listeners in an audience, simplifying the task of representation by deploying  
fertile seeds of information (2012, 33).

In the Holmes radio drama collection we find many instances in which musical directors manufacture qualities in the music that make it realistic to the diegetic world (i.e., believable as music that the characters can hear) through manipulations of volume, ambience, resonance, panning and reverb, and even musical ‘quality’. The same occurs in film of course, though radio perhaps relies more heavily on the ‘grain’ of the performance without a visual cue to gauge the source of sound.[[15]](#footnote-16) We are located squarely in a Victorian drinking bar in “The Crooked Man,” because the piano that plays at the beginning is out-of-tune, and we hear conversational noise, with drunk singers providing the musical entertainment that the characters are part of. When we hear the crackly sound of Hans Sachs’ Act II singing in Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in “The Mazarin Stone” or hear Wagner’s “*Siegfried* Idyll” in “His Last Bow”, we know that we are in a drawing room, and that we are listening *with the characters* to new gramophone technology. At the beginning of “The Resident Patient”, when we hear the distant chimes of Big Ben[[16]](#footnote-17) recorded low in the audio mix and a barrel organ with moving stereo panning, we know that we are strolling through a London Park.[[17]](#footnote-18) Further, when Holmes makes deductions about Watson’s train-of-thought that involves his perception of this barrel organ, the sound field is fully ‘visualized’ or “de-mythologized”. Thus, in radio, one can ‘show’ the location of music – and our subjective point of view (or as Verma calls it, our “audio position” [2012, 35]) and this often involves making the music as *real* as possible (which often means *flawed*).[[18]](#footnote-19) This all requires us to be what Roland Barthes would call “alert” listeners (1985, 245) and make judgements about how likely the sound is to be what Chion calls “pit music” (1994, 80).[[19]](#footnote-20) We hear music that *could* be pit music, but because of its appropriateness to the physical situation rather than the emotional situation, we may more readily accept it as ‘visualized’ in the diegetic world. Such the case with the Strauss Waltz that accompanies the first meeting of two lovers in “A Case of Identity” and places us squarely in a Victorian dancehall even before Mr Angel invites Miss Sutherland to dance. A similarly visualized string quartet plays a Swiss Ländler in a hotel in “The Disappearance of The Lady Frances Carfax”. Techniques that convey the ‘reality’ of the musical production – that bear the trace, or grain of production - can all serve to ‘visualize’ the sound sources, and, as we will explore, can be used to play subtle games.

Often the ‘visualized’ nature of the music is confirmed by a simple ducking technique whereby the sound reduces volume as the characters begin to act, the volume being proportional to the characters’ engagement with the music; if the characters are paying attention to the music it is louder; if it goes unnoticed, it is quieter. Chion discusses this “cocktail party effect” where an auditor masks a general hubbub to zoom into a specific conversation (2016, E-book),[[20]](#footnote-21) and these ducking effects are common in radio drama.[[21]](#footnote-22) The cocktail party technique is used to particularly good effect in the opening of “The Veiled Lodger”, when the over-blown circus music fixes us in the diegetic circus ring (our unconscious triage mechanism might ask: “why else would a Sherlock Holmes drama start with circus music?”) and then immediately ducks to become a distant sound as we focus on the characters in the wings who are preparing to go on stage. This creates a rather literal instance of Chion’s “in the wings effect” where a diegetic sound lingers on as we leave a scene (1994, 83). When the tragic heroine of the tale, Mrs. Ronder, takes to the stage, the sound pans to fill the audio spectrum with herself in the centre through an agreement of our point of view with hers. These instances of ‘visualized’ background music, which clarify our auditory point of view, tend to work quite intuitively and effectively, providing the conceptual backdrop for much invention in playing with the presence or absence of music within the dramatic frame of the sound field.

A director of radio drama certainly can “play with showing, partially showing and not showing”, contra Chion, even where everything is invisible. The Wizard of Oz’s booming voice is just as ‘visualized’ as a man behind a curtain in Frank Baum’s novel (1900) as it is in the MGM film (1939). This is in fact the *coup-de-theatre* of one of the stories as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle conceived it. In “The Mazarin Stone”, Holmes plays on this very trick by pretending to practice the violin in an adjacent room with the aid of a gramophone, all the while in fact hiding behind a curtain. The villains, hearing Holmes’ performance of the Barcarolle from Offenbach’s *Les Contes d’Hoffman* thus believe him to be absent, and audibly reveal the location of a stolen jewel. Holmes then reveals himself, putting us listeners in same duped position as the villains, though at different narrative levels. All are surprised when Holmes steps forward, revealing himself not as the source of *sound* but as the source of *non-sound*, showing that the music behind the wall was not his own. The door is opened, and we hear the crackle of the gramophone. The music is ‘visualized’ by Holmes, and although he was not the direct *source*, he was nonetheless the master of the acousmatic zone.

More often, however, the reverse happens, where what we imagine to be acousmatic – outside of the frame – turns out to be inside; it is ‘visualized’ or demythologized. Twice in the series, violin excerpts that so often serve as acousmatic “bridge” passages, suddenly turn out to be part of the diegetic world, moving from the level of narrator to the level of narrated. In the first of the short stories, “A Scandal in Bohemia”, the acousmatic violinist suddenly makes a mistake in the *Sarabande* from Bach’s Partita no. 1 in B minor, and we realise that Holmes is playing within the diegetic space; he has been distracted by Watson’s entrance. In a parallel moment in “The Final Problem” (the story in which Holmes famously ‘dies’), Moriarty interrupts Holmes playing Paganini’s Caprice No. 4 in C minor, and the excerpt we might have assumed to be one of many bridges or “flourishes” (as they are often referred to in the scripts) is included in the diegetic frame. We can then immediately reflect on the significance of the music – a piece for solo violin but with a two-part canon whose polyphonic voices represent the intertwining destinies of the two masterminds, Holmes and Moriarty. When the same piece returns in “The Missing Three Quarter,” Holmes musically (as well as verbally) compares his antagonist, Dr Leslie Armstrong, to Moriarty. These devices concern our sliding perception of agency, not necessarily shifting our audio-position from outside to inside the diegesis (though this is certainly one affect) but allowing us to be in both at the same time. The violin is being played by Holmes, therefore Holmes possessesnarrative agency. This runs contrary to the tradition, continued in the dramatizations, that Watson – as controller of the *diegetic* realm, where Holmes is the actor, *mimetic* – is Holmes’ “Boswell,” narrating the stories years after they occurred. This may remind us of the movie “Without a Clue”, in which “Holmes” (actually out of work actor, played by Michael Caine) is the slapstick puppet for the ‘real’ detective, Dr. Watson (Ben Kingsley), who is both narrator and ‘real’ subject of narration. The film plays on a certain trait of humorous “one-upmanship” between Holmes and Watson in the stories, perhaps most recently featured in a sketch by Mitchell and Webb in which two actors have to change roles from scene-to-scene to solve the argument about who gets to play Holmes. In a perhaps less light-hearted version of this sport, what we find in these dramas, as we will now explore, is a situation in which Holmes’s musical activity pushes him into the same storytelling space that Watson occupies, staging a narrative tug-of-war. Even in the dialogue of Bert Coules’ scripts, the pair reach to the outer layers of the narrative frame, sometimes even discussing their own portrayal in early 20th-Century popular culture. For one thing, the complaints (present in the books) from Holmes about Watson’s over-romanticization of their adventures in the Strand Magazine, are developed into a discussion about the infamous William Gillette stage-portrayal of Holmes from *Sherlock Holmes* (1899).[[22]](#footnote-23) These twists from Coules form an obvious way of engaging Holmes in the narrative strategy at several levels of narration above the story itself. The musical contribution to these narrative games, however, involves more subtlety, and warrants investigation.

## Holmes’ Violin and Narrative Agency

Many of the musical excerpts trade on Holmes as a violin player, creating profound effects on the levels of diegesis within the musical acousmatic frame. It is established in the beginning of the canon that Holmes is a violinist. In an early scene of “A Study in Scarlet” Coules has Holmes play Watson the Gavotte from Bach’s Partita no. 2 in E major, switching whimsically to Gilbert and Sullivan’s “I’m called Little Buttercup” and, later, Wagner’s “Song to the Evening Star” from *Tannhäuser*. Furthermore, in this crucial early scene, Holmes presents himself as musical narrator of the drama. A famous moment in Holmes and Watson’s relationship is when Holmes finds Watson’s list of Holmes’ limitations, reading it back to him with great relish (“Astronomy: Nil; Politics: feeble,” and so on). Improvising a cadential flourish on the violin, Holmes announces himself, “Sherlock Holmes” before hitting a dissonant ‘bum note’ in the low register and continuing, “... his limits.” He then reads out Watson’s list, much to Watson’s chagrin. From here on the violin music is associated with Holmes, and it *could* always be him playing, even in the violin passages that acousmatically sutures some of the scenes together. The status of the violin in the narrative frame is forever questionable and we are kept in a kind of suspended diegesis, never entirely sure where exactly Holmes is, and at which level of narration he operates at. This may remind us of Goffman’s analysis of how the same piece of music can operate on different narrative levels: “the same piece of music is heard differently or defined differently” and can perform a radically different “frame function”(1974, 148). In fact, through Holmes’ violin music, he is capable of being in two places at once through different diegetic levels; he becomes the grand “acousmêtre” of the dramas. Chion defined *acousmêtre* thus:

The *acousmêtre* is this acousmatic character whose relationship to the screen involves a specific kind of ambiguity and oscillation … We may define it as neither inside nor outside the image. It is not inside, because the image of the voice's source—the body, the mouth—is not included. Nor is it outside, since it is not clearly positioned offscreen in an imaginary “wing,” like a master of ceremonies or a witness, and it is implicated in the action, constantly about to be part of it. This is why voices of clearly detached narrators are not acousmêtres (1994, 129).

While on radio we do not *see* Holmes, his presence as source of the music is just as clear as if we had. Verma discusses how the radio-acousmêtre operates in his analysis of the long-running *The Shadow*, although his ultimate conclusion that the real acousmêtres are the sponsors is perhaps somewhat overly cynical in my view: “The *acousmêtre* is not the Shadow at all, but the Blue Coal Company sponsoring *The Shadow* in order to promote the sale of Pennsylvania anthracite” (147-148). The sponsors of the show do not have enough of a foot in the dramas to be taken seriously as acousmêtres, but through an isomorphism with his musical instrument, Holmes is suspended over the entire dramatic enterprise of the sixty stories, keeping one foot inside the drama, and one foot outside of it. He has the properties of “omnipotence,” “omniscience,” and “ubiquity,” that properly define the acousmêtre for Chion (1994, 130). There are at least three different ways in which Holmes and his violin behave as acousmêtres, each of which deserves consideration.

#### Mendelssohn’s Curtains

The violin plays the show’s characteristic signature tune, the unaccompanied introduction from Mendellsohn’s violin sonata in F minor, Op. 4 (Ex. 1). This is used as a frame for each story, bookending the drama with tortured chromatic twists and turns that embody Holmes’ complex nature, reminiscent of the theme from the Granada series, starring Jeremy Brett and David Burke / Edward Hardwick. However, on one occasion Holmes actively plays this signature, after announcing that he intends to “while away these bleak, autumnal evenings” and reaches for his violin at the close of “The Noble Bachelor”. Here he steps forward as acousmêtre. This either draws the frame and the drama together. The same occurs in the Granada Sherlock Holmes series when, in one episode, ‘The Six Napoleons,’ Brett begins playing the violin signature tune to close the show.[[23]](#footnote-24) This makes us wonder whether Holmes is *always* playing this signature theme, which normally exists outside of the diegetic space of the 45-minute dramas.[[24]](#footnote-25) The answer is that he probably is, but we have to suspend clear judgement. In “The Missing Three Quarter”, to accompany the air of deep sadness at the episode’s close, Holmes and Watson discuss the case over the signature tune; they are in the countryside, miles from home, so there is no question of Holmes playing the violin *at that time*, and the diegesis splits into two temporalities, one framing the other. Chion claims that, “[i]n radio, we cannot perceive where things ‘cut’. As sound itself has no frame.” (1999, 22) Yet sound does become this very framing device to these stories, putting Holmes the violinist, rather than Watson in control of the narrative. This may seem surprising because Watson so often narrates over Holmes’ violin playing. A very telling moment occurs in “The Red Headed League”, when Conan Doyle places Holmes in a Sarasate concert in St James’ Hall.[[25]](#footnote-26) We imagine Holmes listening to Sarasate and listen with him to the first movement of Mendelssohn’s violin concerto. The concerto in the foreground ducks as Watson begins to narrate, describing Holmes’ introspective enjoyment of the concert. The concerto is seamlessly cut to adapt to the changes in Watson’s tone. As Watson recounts, “I have often thought that he was possessed of a dual nature…” the lyrical *Andante* movement is heard, magically springing out of the *Allegro molto appassionato* first movement. Watson narrates further,

For myself, I felt his extreme exactness and astuteness in detection represented a reaction against the poetic and contemplative mood occasions such as the present brought to the fore. That the swing of his nature would shortly take him from extreme languor to devouring energy, promising an evil time for those he had set himself to hunt down.

This creates a homology between Holmes’ dual-personality and the dialectics within nineteenth-century symphonic forms. But this is not just a symphony; this is *concerto*, where an individual of great virtuosity is placed centre stage. The curious result here, however, is that Holmes is passive (at least he is listening rather than playing). And yet he is somehow in complete control of the narrative world, because the story and its music is *about* him. Notwithstanding Watson’s regular narration of text in the stories (reflecting of course the fact that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle made Watson his mouthpiece), Holmes has ultimate control, because he is taking the lead role in the enacting the dramas themselves, performing himself, while controlling how Watson tells the story. Holmes’ musical utterances, in which his violin synecdochally stands for himself as narrative *acousmêtre*, gives him a direct voice, Holmes’ violin representing perhaps a counterpoint with Watson’s direct narration.

Example 1: Mendelssohn’s Violin Sonata in F minor, Op. 4



#### Violin Bridges

The violin “bridges”[[26]](#footnote-27) that “take us” (as Coules often puts it in the scripts) from location to location, reflect Holmes’ moods, to create what Chion calls “empathetic music” (1994, 222). Holmes is telling us, in music, how he is feeling. For example, the low slump of lethargy and despondency in “The Reigate Squires” is accompanied by Kreisler’s angular musical sighs from his “Recitative and Scherzo” that perfectly exemplify Holmes’ nervous exhaustion. On other occasions, whenever “the game is afoot” we have the more energetic virtuoso passages from Paganini’s caprices acting as what Goffman calls “a sort of aural version of subtitles” (1974, 147). In fact, it is no surprise, given that Holmes is often called a ‘Sleuth-hound’ that when he follows Toby the sniffer dog in “The Sign of the Four” or Pompey the Beagle in the “Missing Three Quarter” the animals also run to Holmes’ frantic, virtuosic violin playing. These dogs represent Holmes, just as the violin does; they can therefore represent each other. But these acousmatic violin bridges also need to sew two scenes together, taking something from each as Kremenliev outlined above. In some instances (“Silver Blaze”, “The Naval Treaty” and “The Illustrious Client”) we hear screams which fuse with a screeching violin, which slowly calms the atmosphere and takes us to a new scene. In a different moment in “The Illustrious Client”, Holmes expresses the need for a “direct approach” and the bridging music is extremely angular and tortured, showing us that this direct approach is impossible, confirmed by the game of intellectual cat and mouse that follows between Holmes and his antagonist. These links – much more subtle than the gongs that used to indicate scene changes in much of pre-war radio drama – all come from the magical commentary of Holmes’ violin, the grand *acousmêtre*, whose music occupies so many different diegetic positions.

#### Fantastic teasers: or, accompanying one’s special effects

Guido Heldt’s work on composer biopics suggests that “the double role of a composer’s music as object and means of narration links the life and work in a myth-making (or more often myth-reinforcing) feedback loop.” (2009, 25). If we substitute “composer” for “performer” here (although we are told by Conan Doyle that Holmes is also a composer of no ordinary merit), we can acknowledge that the violin bores even deeper into Holmes’ soul through a split diegesis, in which ‘narrator’-Holmes plays the violin to accompany ‘actor’-Holmes’ speeches, now heard simultaneously, though at conceptually different times. There are four shows whose “teasers” (the industry term for the attention-grabbing opening scene, heard before the signature tune and credit announcements) feature Holmes delivering key speeches that sometimes recur later in the main drama. In all cases, when the speech returns (i.e., in its true setting) it is delivered purely without any background music or additional ceremony, but the teaser version is constructed magically, marked out as otherworldly and acousmatic through added music and reverberation effects on Holmes’ voice. Merrison delivers such lines intimately, sometimes as a whisper, and yet the reverb effect projects them to the further flung regions of the audio field, making him seem timeless, ethereal, almost god-like. In “The Final Problem” there is no music, only the cold reverberation of Holmes’ voice (in this episode, Holmes faces death). In “The Blue Carbuncle”, the speech is accompanied by a warming yet plaintive violin fragment, marked simply as “*something eerie and mysterious*” in the script, which displays Holmes’ curiosity as he handles the famous gemstone (“Look at it. Just see how it glints and sparkles.”). This latter creates something similar to what Holly Rogers calls “sonic elongation” when “noise from within the film’s world is broadened until it becomes unfamiliar: when source sounds abstract from their visual referents to take on musical form and texture” (2020, forthcoming).[[27]](#footnote-28) A similar effect to this is employed in Michael Bakewell’s adaptation of Agatha Christie’s “The Mystery of the Blue Train” when every unveiling of the famous ruby –“the heart of fire” – is accompanied by highly refined violin harmonics that seem to zoom into the delicate, barely perceptible noises emanating from the intricate facets of the jewel, like fingers running the rim of a wine-glass. Examining another realm of natural beauty in his famous speech from “The Naval Treaty” (“'What a lovely thing a rose is …”) Holmes’ violin soars into the highest echelons with the mysterious leaps and chromatic slides of the 10th variation of Paganini’s 24th Caprice, marking out that Holmes is taking time out from the reality of the case to explore the mysteries of nature.[[28]](#footnote-29) In “The Three Garridebs”, Holmes’ opening speech that explicates the Latin phrase “latis anguis in herba” (“there is a snake in the grass”) is underscored with similarly mysterious music and, although this speech never returns in the diegetic world, the episode closes with Watson spotting an adder, leading Holmes to ruminate upon the nature of fate: “To you, Watson, it’s like a sniggering schoolboy; to me it seems like a snake in the grass.” In all four examples, there is a subjunctive kind of diegesis, in which the music creates a parallel universe of how the otherwise ordinary speech *could* have been delivered in a more interior (meta-diegetic in Gorbman’s terms) world, through music. And it uses Holmes’ violin as narrator and romanticizer (which Holmes ironically always accuses Watson of!) of his own life. It gives us a glimpse into Holmes’ inner world at things which Watson could not narrate for him and has only limited access to. When Stilwell coined the term “fantastical gap” between diegetic and non-diegetic sounds, she described how was pleased with the term because it was

particularly apt for this liminal space because it captured both its magic and its danger, the sense of unreality that always obtains as we leap from one solid edge toward another at some unknown distance and some uncertain stability (2007, 186).

Even beyond the equivocal position of the music here as diegetic or non-diegetic, there is certainly much fantasy in these teasers, and not just the poetic magic of Holmes’ imaginative adoration of natural beauty (or ugliness in the case of the snake). In the gap between the two iterations of the same speech from different diegetic positions (one diegetic, one metadiegetic [or perhaps even non-diegetic]) there is the music.[[29]](#footnote-30)

## Musical presence as lack

Chion describes how the “failure” of talkies was that they filled the void of silence in which “desire had built its nest” (1999, 4). The lack of integrated sound was fascinating to us, and we used our imaginations to fill the void. This fascination was stolen from us when sound was introduced. A radio drama enthusiast may well feel the same about television’s visual field, which takes power away from the imagination, thus limiting our desires and fantasies. Music within radio dramas can fuel desire still further, and this desire plays itself out in the diegetic frame as well, reminding us of what the characters, and ourselves, lack. Our individual fantasies, as well as those of the protagonists, thus supplement the drama we hear, guided by music.

#### The Tchaikovsky Leitmotiv: Holmes’ Violin as Watson’s Lack

The chromatic twists and turns of Mendelssohn’s signature tune can remind us that Holmes’s character is not straightforward, nor is his relationship with Watson. Without wishing to fuel the futile speculations about Holmes and Watson’s sexuality, it is safe to claim that the two men clear love each other deeply, and both fulfil a certain lack in the other’s life. Watson is alone, homeless (in a sense), and drifting when he meets Holmes, who gives his life purpose again. This is offered musically in their meeting in “A Study in Scarlet”. When Watson recounts his war-horrors as narrator in the episode’s teaser, the underscoring music is a piece of low, disturbing, dissonant, tortured, orchestral rumbling with only an intermittent flute to explore the upper register, and fragments of a violin line that seems to be trying to find its voice, distinct from the low orchestral conflict.[[30]](#footnote-31) As described above, when Holmes and Watson begin sharing rooms, the first thing that Holmes does is give Watson a demonstration of his prowess on the violin. In a sense, the sophisticated violin is the missing piece of Watson’s puzzle; it fulfils him.[[31]](#footnote-32) This musical fulfilment cuts much deeper as the stories progress, throughout the entire canon, using a kind of *Leitmotiv* or signature tune for Watson’s relationships with both Holmes and with his romantic interests – Tchaikovsky’s *Sérénade mélancolique* in B-flat minor for violin and orchestra, Op. 26 (1875).

The melancholic B-flat minor theme (Ex. 2) of this serenade is first heard as the signature tune of “The Sign of the Four”.[[32]](#footnote-33) This, the second story in the canon, was directed by Ian Cotterell, who, according to Coules, possessed a great “love of music” (2014, 21). The theme is first heard as an underscore to accompany Watson’s narration as he describes the dejection he feels when he first falls in love with their client, Mary Morstan. As Watson turns away after dropping her home the script reads simply: "Music. Over it we move with Watson as he walks slowly to the carriage, opens the door, and gets in" (Coules 2014, 30). Later, when Watson has declared his love, there is no underscoring, but we afterwards hear the violin theme played entirely unaccompanied, and this is followed by “Come in Watson” as we realise that this is Holmes playing. Holmes steps forward once as musical narrator of Watson’s love life. Unlike Watson’s highly rich emotional world, Holmes’ is solitary, lonely, sparse. While Holmes possesses what Watson lacks, symbolically registered as the violin, Holmes *only* has the violin, and Watson has the richness of the orchestral accompaniment, which, however, lies outside of the Holmes-Watson relationship, belonging to Watson’s more fully social existence.

**Example 2: Tchaikovsky’s *Sérénade mélancolique* in B-flat minor for violin and orchestra, Op. 26 (1875)**



In later stories, Watson adopts the lonely unaccompanied version when, during the period in which he believes Holmes to have been killed at the Reichenbach Falls, his wife Mary also succumbs to death in “The Empty House”.[[33]](#footnote-34) We hear Watson reading Holmes’ farewell letter, while the solo violin version of the serenade wafts through his memory (and ours). Watson is now doubly alone and has assumed a deep empathy with Holmes’s former solitary existence. In “Black Peter” (after Holmes’ ‘reincarnation’), Watson is melancholy throughout, preoccupied with the anniversary of Mary’s death. When he stands at her graveside, we again hear the unaccompanied Tchaikovsky, referring back to “Sign of the Four”. All Watson has left is Holmes’ violin playing to replace the richness of his former marital life. Holmes even reports that he envies Watson because he himself cannot fall in love. This solo version returns in the final adventure in the canon, “The Retired Colourman”, an episode in which Coules was briefed to make the episode ‘a real farewell.’ When Watson enters 221b Baker Street to discover that Holmes has gone to live a new life in the Sussex countryside, a faint, half-remembered conversation is tinged with distant reverb to place us meta-diegetically (in Gorbman’s sense) inside Watson’s memory. Beneath the unaccompanied Tchaikovsky, Watson remembers his first introduction to Holmes’ violin (“Have you ever seen a genuine Stradivarius?”) and also recalls their last words together, woven together with this despondent theme. Watson is once again alone, and the excerpt is greatly elongated to keep compounding his sense of loss. After the “Sign of the Four” this theme is notably never played again in the diegetic world and only exists in Watson’s memory, always underscoring his love, either for Holmes or for his own successive wives. But this is an acousmatic memory of something that had once been ‘visualized,’ now moved to the meta-diegetic . The script says simply: “*The music cuts and so do the memories*” (Coules 2014, 151).

#### Holmes as Wagnerian

This is not the only theme that speaks of the Watson-Holmes relationship. One of the richest musical set-pieces is the ode to Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* in “The Devil’s Foot”. Coules claims, “I was keen to use music to evoke the bleakness and grandeur of the Cornish coast where Holmes finds himself an unwilling convalescent” (Coules 2014, 110-111). That both opera and detective story are set in Cornwall is only the beginning of the marriage. Holmes is there in convalescence with Watson, and it is surely no coincidence, that when using Wagner’s *Tristan* as underscore, the prelude from Act III of *Tristan* is employed, rather than the more recognisable Act I. In Act I, the famous opening yearning motive represents the Schopenhauerian gulf between Tristan and Isolde; in Act III, Tristan is convalescing with his faithful aide Kurwenal – Tristan’s very own ‘Watson’.[[34]](#footnote-35) Holmes again provides the musical narration as Watson does not know *Tristan and Isolde* and asks, “What do the words mean?” Holmes then provides a translation of the Act II love duet (“So stürben wir …”) over the Act III prelude. Coules admits that there is “[m]ore non-realism there, but the moment can take it” (Coules 2014, 112).[[35]](#footnote-36) Ironically, for all that Watson’s fullness of love received full orchestration in the Tchaikovsky theme, it is Holmes who clearly has the knowledge of the repertoire of deep emotion. What then is the status of the music here? Perhaps it represents an unbridgeable gap between both Holmes and Watson, a gap that exists between them individually and between them and the rest of the world. Music also represents the gap between Holmes’ inner knowledge of deep emotion, and his real life, in which he is a “calculating machine” as Conan Doyle puts it. There is also a gap – a ‘fantastical one’ – between levels of diegesis in the acoustic realm. When Holmes recites poetry from Wagner, and we hear the orchestra, this is what he hears in his mind as a meta-diegetic (in Gorbman’s sense of music playing within the mind) gesture. This metadiegetic music also symbolizes here the fantasy that fills the void between the characters. Here then we might find a different type of “fantastical gap” a rather psychoanalytical one, in which a psychological gap (or ‘lack’) the characters feel is filled with musical fantasy.

This is not the first time that the Wagnerian world of *Tristan* is used as a symbol of Holmes’ *Sehnsucht*. In the first short story, “A Scandal in Bohemia”, Holmes recounts how he listened (two layers of meta-diegesis in Winter’s use of the term removed from the actual source) to Irene Adler singing in her home. Playing up the angle that Irene Adler is “*the* woman,” she sings Wagner’s “Träume – Studie zu *Tristan und Isolde*” from his *Wesendonck Lieder* (1857). Earlier, when Holmes’ client, the King of Bohemia, was reminiscing about Adler, his former lover, we heard her sing (metadiegetically) the same song (though a different part of it). In later listening outside her window, Holmes thus aligns his gaze of Adler with the King’s, strengthening their mutual fascination with her. Wagner’s songs were dedicated to Mathilde Wesendonck, with whom he was amorously attached (extra-maritally of course) while writing *Tristan*. This particular song, with its ever-rising melodic lines, painfully reaching upwards for a point of satisfaction or repose, makes use of material from Act II of *Tristan*. The text speaks of dreams – “Tell me, what kind of wondrous dreams are embracing my senses, that have not, like sea-foam, vanished into desolate Nothingness?” Again, however, Holmes is on the outside listening in (where the King was on the inside). All Holmes can do is dream outside of Adler’s window. The music has a clear ‘visualization’, but it serves to highlight a fundamental blockage between Holmes and romantic enjoyment, just as romantic love was barred from Wagner and Mathilde Wesendonck. The music is present but symbolizes an absence. This is also an example of music serving as an aural version (as it was originally designated in fact) of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s “gaze,” so common in discussions of film since Laura Mulvey coined the term “male gaze” (1975) to demonstrate that, in watching cinema from a male perspective, we objectify women. Returning the concept back to the acoustic realm we can perhaps be truer to Lacan’s gaze, which can involve listening, reading, or dreaming, and resides in the imagination. As Lacan makes clear, basing his concept on Sartre,

If you turn to Sartre's own text, you will see that, far from speaking of the emergence of this gaze as of something that concerns the organ of sight, he refers to the sound of rustling leaves, suddenly heard while out hunting, to a footstep heard in a corridor (1978, 84). [[36]](#footnote-37)

If Lacan’s concept of the gaze was that the watcher (or listener) feels *themselves* objectified by an *imagined* gaze – something from another world that lies behind what can be actually seen or known – then Holmes is himself the objectified, powerless, mesmerised listener here; “*the* woman” (Irene Adler) is the singing subject, asserting full control of the gaze that “overwhelms him [Sartre for Lacan, Holmes for us] and reduces him to a feeling of shame”.[[37]](#footnote-38) The power of her gaze is proved when she outwits Holmes, and she further escapes his narrative control by doing so, wielding a musical power much greater in its freedom than Holmes’ solitary acousmatic violin. She has ousted Holmes as *acousmêtre*; she controls both Holmes’ and the King’s imaginations through her music-as-gaze.

## *Mise en abyme*: Music as Paradiegetic Allusion

Following on from these Wagnerian associations, we now need to theorise this technique of using well-known music that comes with ready-made associations that reflect themes in Holmes’ world. A similar concept to this may be what Kassabian called “affiliating identifications,” whose “ties depend on histories forged outside the film scene” (2001, 3). However, Kassabian discusses the associations brought by popular music genres rather than specific signifiers of other narratives. Describing a different but equally related model of engagement, Rogers talks of “sonic aporia” (2020) – moments when there is a gap between what we “see” (or in radio perhaps, *know* to be happening) and “hear,” which activates us to align our pre-existent knowledge with the sounds we hear, and fill the space of the aporia with our pre-associative connections. This “develops horizontally on its own terms, as though referring to an alternative, or parallel, world to the one we see” (2002, forthcoming). In these radio dramas, techniques are used that invite a parenthetical musical drama into the frame, based on resemblance, that open us up to something which we could call *paradiegetic.* The prefix “para” has a broad constellation of meanings and associations, including ‘alongside’, or ‘adjacent’ but can also serve to mean ‘resembling’ or ‘similar’. In all of these senses, I use it to refer to allusions to pre-existing secondary narratives that are brought into the primary narrative, to work alongside it, comment upon it through comparison (or rather invite us to *find* comment on it), elucidate and draw out new meanings. This definition accounts situations, like that in the previously disused scene, where two stories work in tandem, but is differentiated from the strategy of violin narration, because there, a single story is being told from two or more points of view. While *paradiegetic* describes the situation of two parallel narratives unfolding together (while often temporally dislocated) and commenting on each other, we might specify further, that in these dramas, this happens mostly by *allusion* to pre-existing narratives which are invited into the main frame via purely musical means. The *Tristan* connection is central to ‘The Devil’s Foot’ and is explicated in the dialogue, but there are many more surreptitious instances of this technique, each with different strategies for integrating with and commenting on the main dramatic plot. These often, though not always, produce *mise en abymes* – stories within the stories – which, because they are musicalized rather than verbalized, are told only through music. The same happens of course, in film and television of course. Even in the Granada series, we hear Mozart’s *Don Giovani* underscoring Baron von Gruner as he pastes a photograph of his latest sexual conquest into his perverse book of ‘collected women.’ *Tristan* itself is often evoked, for example, in ITV’s adaptation of Agatha Christie’s *Five Little Pigs*, or the episode of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, in which lady Bellamy has scandalously had an affair with a younger artist, or even in the Sherlock Holmes adventure, ‘The Red Circle’ in which a lover is murdered backstage at the opera. It is worth considering though, that, although this happens often in Film and TV, the high concentration of the technique in radio may be a response to fact that other avenues for drawing in connections – such as a character reading a particularly relevant book or standing in front of a relevant theatrical poster – cannot be ‘shown’ visually. In “The Golden Pince-Nez”, for example, we cannot *see* that the main character is reading *Anna Karenina*, and therefore the connection needs to be brought out in the script, which thematises the connections between the ‘Anna’ in both stories, adding also to the Russian flavour of the Holmes adventure (where the Granada series has a whole visual dimension that more subtly plants Russia in our minds – revolutionary banners in Cyrillic script, the characteristic winter hats, and so on). In this instance, the paradiegetic allusions are marked through literature, and is foregrounded to hammer the connection home. Along with this dialogue, many musical allusions give us an insight into how radio drama relies heavily on the technique.

#### A Paradiegetic Force of Destiny

References to opera are quite common. An instance in “The Red Circle” does not even require the music itself to be heard, when Holmes teasingly drives Watson to Covent Garden for an appointment with, “a mysterious murder … a crime of jealous passion and revenge, an Italian stabbed to death.” Of course, Holmes reveals that they are about to see Verdi’s *Rigoletto*, whose plot contains the same elements to those that we have heard in the adventure.[[38]](#footnote-39) A less accessible instance of this kind of *mise en abyme* occurs in the Italian mafia-driven plot of “The Six Napoleons”, whose dramatization alludes to music from Verdi’s *La forza del destino*, drawing its family feuds and famous knife fights into Conan Doyle’s parallel narrative. We hear the overture’s ‘fate’ theme, with its famous tragic octave Es in the brass, leading up to a catastrophic diminished seventh chord that coincides with a melodramatic female scream of “Noooo!” that capsizes the melodramatic operatic world (with vast chunks spoken in Italian) back into the Holmesian drama. The fact that the narration also makes clear that the screaming female character had been at the opera while a precious pearl was stolen, binds the two worlds surrounding the sonic aporia together. Later on, this interruptingdiminished seventh is ‘corrected’ to cadence properly as the case is resolved and Lestrade declares “that was first class!” The joke here is that we might instantly assume the music to be diegetic, Lestrade commenting as the friends leave the opera together, when in fact it subsequently emerges that he is talking about Mrs. Hudson’s cooking, and dinner has just finished. The opera was not in the diegetic frame after all. In terms of the drama’s diegesis, this is perhaps closest to how Giorgio Biancorosso views shifts from one diegetic level to another – as a kind of “epistemological joke” (2009). The joke, which can only work in radio, is clearly at Lestrade’s expense; Holmes – qua musical narrative agent – views life through the lens of operatic drama, while Lestrade is the uncultured Scotland Yard official. This kind of game is more conducive to radio than visual media, because radio can conceal more than film, and can conceal for longer. The moment of ‘visualization’ is easier to withhold in the dark. The idea of the ‘play within a play’ in this story is brought out more fully in this episode, when Holmes takes Watson through the squalid streets and a plaintive, slow woodwind section plays a nostalgic theme in A minor from the overture, with fragments of the main ‘fate’ motive woven in. Holmes calls this realm of the Italian immigrants “a city within a city,” a poignant reflection of the “play within a play” now figured as the gap between grand opera and squalid reality.

#### The Paradiegetic Red Herring

An instance of music having a subliminal but directly paradiegetic relevance to our experience of *the mystery itself* is heard at the opening of “The Speckled Band”. While the main protagonist, Miss Helen Stoner, is writing a letter (and is about to hear her sister Julia scream from the next room), we hear the violent opening violin solo from Ravel’s *Tzigane* (1924 – marginally anachronistic). This rhapsodic composition sets the tragic tone, continued in the sound of the harsh scratching from the Miss Stoner’s quill pen.[[39]](#footnote-40) The music is Gypsyesque (the title *Tzigane* being a play on the French ‘*gitan’*, *tsigane*, as well as the Hungarian *cigány*) and subtly implants the ‘red herring’ of the camping gypsies who are blamed for the sister’s dying reference to a “speckled band” (associated with their bandanas). This appears to be non-diegetic because the music is not heard by Stoner herself. However, the main signifier of death in the story is the sound of a low whistle that the lady *can* hear at night, which could again have something to do with the gypsies’ music (she claims, “I believe they have a way of communicating with whistles”).[[40]](#footnote-41) This alternative to the gypsy whistle which *would* be diegetic, is an instance of a subjunctive diegesis – a virtual world. This is music that is *not* heard by the characters but stands in for music that *is* heard and has the same effect on the characters within the diegetic frame that it can have on us the radio listeners. Note also, that even without identifying the piece as Ravel’s *Tzigane*, its gypsy topics are easily identifiable as such – the dramatic, snapped rhythms, the Hungarian scales etc. Another layer of subtlety is that this is a false lead; the gypsies have nothing to do with the crime. The subliminal musical red-herring could well dupe listeners, just as it dupes the characters in the tale.

#### Paradiegetic Parlour Songs

It is important that listeners without knowledge of the repertoire are not alienated; each instance has to work on its own terms. Supplementary layers of meaning must remain supplementary, however enriching they might be. Some of these paradiegetic *mise en abymes* are quite abstruse but others are transparent and self-revealing – less *allusions*, more direct *comparisons*. Coules admits to having most musical fun with his dramatization of “The Solitary Cyclist”, and must have similarly enjoyed “Charles Augustus Milverton” and “The Valley of Fear”, for the use of near-complete parlour songs that are fully ‘visualized’, but which give us a form of musical dramatic irony if we pay heed to them, for they always comment on the unfolding mystery. Reading “The Solitary Cyclist”, Coules came across the lines: “Mr Carruthers takes a great deal of interest in me. We are rather thrown together. I play his accompaniments in the evenings.” (Coules 2014, 77). Coules asks us, “What more could an audio dramatist ask for?” (78), and made the young music teacher, Miss Smith, and her new employer Mr Carruthers, a regular source of musical intermezzo. Coules claims, “I could break up what limited action the story contained with snatches of Victorian ballads and after-dinner songs, and what’s more, I could choose pieces that would actually comment on the plot as it progressed.” (79) In these songs, the intimacy between employer and employee is clear, but even beforehand, the difficult realities of the relationship are given in musical terms. Carruthers had been part of a plot to marry Miss Smith for her inheritance, but through their musical association, begins to genuinely love her, and tries to call a halt to the plot. The warning signs are there for us listeners, but should have been clear to her too, if only she had listened to the music she was playing. But they are not alone in the household. Miss Smith’s first duty is to Carruthers’ child, young Sarah. Sarah tells Miss Smith that her mother used to accompany her father before she died, placing Smith in the maternal role. Likewise, Miss Smith’s father died, and thus Carruthers seems to be playing father to both females. Miss Smith is playing the role of mother and (would be) lover at the same time, forming what C. G. Jung might call, apropos of Freud’s “Oedipus complex”, an “Elektra complex,” which confuses fatherly love with romantic love. Love is certainly symbolised in the act of accompanying, as is clear from the dialogue, when Miss claims to love accompanying: “two elements that go together to make a greater whole.” It is no coincidence that the first song they perform to themselves (and to us) is “Home, Sweet Home” as it establishes the new domestic triangle. Miss Smith soon plays a tune on the piano that Sarah in her naïve way describes as “lovely and sad at the same time.” The tune she plays is the antecedent of the melody from “And you’ll remember me,” but halts abruptly. Those who know the lyrics of the song, will know that they predict a bleak future, with warm remembrance of the present:

*When coldness or deceit shall slight  
The beauty now they prize,  
And deem it but a faded light  
Which beams within your eyes;  
When hollow hearts shall wear a mask,  
'Twill break your own to see:  
In such a moment I but ask  
That you'll remember me!*

Miss Smith’s abrupt abandonment of this song perhaps shows her disavowal of what she unconsciously knows to be true – that she is in the midst of deceit. Once the cat is out of the bag, and Carruthers’ role in the plot exposed, we hear a more complete version of the song with Carruthers’ (played by actor Denis Quilley) completing the vocal line. This is a remembrance of course, ‘visualized’, but only in retrospective metadiegetic memory. Coules notes that the song “Daisy Bell” included “a clear warning that the singer might well prove to be less than stable” (79) (“I’m half crazy all for the love of you”), but in choosing to pepper the drama with “The Gypsy’s Warning” he makes further warnings:

*Do not trust him, gentle lady, though his voice be low and sweet,  
Heed not him who kneels before you, gently pleading at thy feet.  
Now thy life is in its morning, blight not this, thy happy lot,  
Listen to the gypsy's warning, gentle lady trust him not*

*…*

*I would shield thee from all danger, shield thee from the tempter's care,  
Lady, shun that dark eyed stranger, I have warned thee, now beware,*

The irony is that while Carruthers is warning Miss Smith in song, he is warning her about himself. Fortunately, Miss Smith heeds these warnings and retains her independence, which is also registered musically. Just before Carruthers proposes marriage, they perform “Drink to me only with thine eyes,” but Miss. Smith’s musical independence is shown when she slips into a lengthy imaginative piano postlude, of the sort that Schumann employs in songs from *Dichterliebe*. This has a resistant effect, showing that she is ultimately going to be independent from her employer’s control. Her unspoken answer, pre-emptive to the question, is clear through her playing.

As mentioned, the songs break-up the drama and offer a kind of diegetic time loop; they are really happening, but not *now*. The final song (“And You’ll remember me”) makes this clear and is entirely retrospective. Described in the script as “*plaintive, sincere and tragic,*” this is the most obviously atemporal paradiegetic moment; it is the one when she appears closest to her temporary father’s voice after the happy period is over. It was a song too personal for Carruthers to sing with her in real-life, and was thus halted earlier, but now they reach a musical climax in her fantasy space.

Among Holmes’ most morally controversial actions (along with cocaine usage, deceiving Watson into thinking he is dead, letting criminals off ‘Scott free’, and forgetting Watson entirely in “The Dying Detective”) is the act of seducing his blackmailer-enemy’s maid, Aggie, away from her long-standing suitor, Harry. Holmes pitches his woo and abandons her in order to gain admittance into the abominable Charles Augustus Milverton’s house. There is no reference in Conan Doyle’s text to the musical aspects of his courtship, but under Coules’ dramatization, music plays its role in the duplicity. A hint of tragic irony is given when the pub singers gather around the out-of-tune piano to sing “There was I waiting at the church” – a song about abandonment. The courting couple step outside and the diegetic source becomes immediately quieter, allowing it to work subliminally now. We know that the song is diegetic because of the ‘realistic’ delivery, but it is also revealed to have been digested by Aggie as she begs, “Harry, you wouldn’t do that to me would you? You may not be much but you’re all I’ve got.” The tables turn when Holmes enters later in the episode, disguised as plumber (with plenty of jokes about the contents of his toolbox!). The song sung along with the out-of-tune piano that accompanies Holmes’ blunt intrusion into the relationship is “Those daring young men on the flying trapeze”. This song represents Holmes’ ability to swoop in and steal ‘the girl’ right under Harry’s nose. The lyrics speak of a lover jilted for a trapeze artist (“my love he purloined away”). These songs are fully ‘visualized’ but contain within them the non-visualized aspects of the *mise en abyme*. They exist in the *now* but play their dramas out in the main diegetic space at different speeds, or on Winters’ ‘metadiegetic’ planes, happening paradigetically to the main drama.

The “Valley of Fear”, as noted by Enyd Williams above, is another story full of musical set pieces, following cues given in the novel itself. Music here ameliorates a fundamental problem with the four long Sherlock Holmes stories, which is that they are essentially two stories in one; three of the four have lengthy flashbacks.[[41]](#footnote-42) The character in the flashback who we follow most closely in “The Valley of Fear” is as duplicitous as the singing characters in the stories just discussed. Birdy Edwards from Pinkertons’ Detective Agency is disguised as John McMurdoe to infiltrate a corrupt lodge of Freemasons. Part of Edwards’ strategy for winning the trust of the crime boss, McGinty, is his singing of patriotic songs at their meetings. Like “The Solitary Cyclist” the songs are ‘visualized’ but contain narrative elements that play out paradiegetically. The favourite choice of song for the Irishman (other than “Danny Boy”) is “The Minstrel Boy”, commencing, “The minstrel boy to the war is gone / In the ranks of death you'll find him” and culminating in stirring line, “Thy songs were made for the pure and free / They shall never sound in slavery.” Iain Glen, the actor and singer, fills the space with his big finish to rapturous applause, the irony being that he is singing of how he is bringing down the organisation, and the organisation itself is loving every minute of it – a paradiegetic form of dramatic irony. But from the perspective of the visualized frame, the interesting aspect is that the performances are still framed by Holmes as musical acousmêtre, even though neither Holmes nor Watson could know of their existence because the songs are part of the flashback. The songs are not in Conan Doyle’s scripts and we must assume that these moments of flashback either harken back to a *possible* past imagined by the detectives, or an *accurate* past that the detectives are alienated from. The accuracy of these flashbacks is beyond Holmes’ powers (or ours) to verify, so it would be impossible for these songs to enter Holmes’ diegetic space – either Holmes-the actor’s, or Holmes-the narrator’s. And yet, when Holmes is slipping back into melancholy at the close of the case, the music traverses this impossible space when Holmes himself, after warming-up his violin, plays “The Minstrel Boy” in a minor-key Even here, however, there are further “fantastical gaps” to be crossed, as Holmes’ violin melody eventually becomes accompanied by an ‘impossible’ piano (who is playing it?).[[42]](#footnote-43) Holmes therefore steps into the flashback frame itself that he could not know, through only his musical imagination, musically substituting himself for the Pinkerton’s detective through a close musical empathy for the role which, by solving the case, he has earned the right to assume. Unless we are to suspend our belief about the entire diegetic situation, the only conclusion we can draw in the sphere of reality, is that the flashbacks were happening in Holmes’ own mind.

#### Holmes, the Paradiegetic Priest

A particularly well-chosen piece of pre-composed music is the Queen of the Night’s aria from Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* to accompany the flashbacks of Mrs. Ronder, the much-abused wife of a circus ringmaster in “The Veiled Lodger”. The reference is explained toward the end of the drama in a flashback of sexual abuse during which the feared Mr. Ronder dubs his abused wife, “queen of the night.” She was a circus entertainer, now reduced to a veiled creature, living in the shadows, after a tragic disfigurement incurred from a circus lion during an incident in which her husband was killed – she is now properly “queen of the night”. One of Mozart’s many geniuses in the *Die Zauberflöte* is that our initial perceptions of Sarastro (as villain) and the Queen of the Night (as force of good) turn on their heads, which her furious aria of rage and revenge brings to the foreground. Likewise, this theme, used partly as the melancholic *Leitmotiv* of her past, shows ultimately that she was a murderess rather than (just) a victim. However, the music is played on the solo violin in a sorrowful, reflective mood. We may well feel that, even in her flashbacks, it is Holmes who is playing, intruding into her secret narrative space as part of his strategy for taking musical narrative control. This view is heightened when the music finally increases in volume, appearing to cross into the ‘visualized’ frame of Holmes’ drawing room as Holmes and Watson finally reflect on the case. Holmes’ role as musical narrator is undercut in this case, however, because Holmes is merely a confessor; he solves nothing. Mrs Ronder describes choosing Holmes to hear her story rather than a priest or a policeman, because he acts as both. Holmes is granted powers of absolution, but is ousted as true narrator because Mrs. Ronder narrates through him, musically and textually, relying on him to be her proxy. Once again, recalling the first story in which Holmes is famously outwitted “by a woman” (Irene Adler), Holmes is also out-*narrated* by one here. However, the fact that her character is produced as a musical representation of what men say about her (her husband called her “queen of the night”; Holmes plays the same tune) is embodied for me in the touching pathos of the performance, now rendered as a spectre of what was once, in Mozart’s drama, the most extravagant show-stopper.

## Case Closed?

All good things come to an end. In the chronologically final adventure,[[43]](#footnote-44) ‘His Last Bow,’ Holmes returns from retirement to penetrate an espionage ring during the first world war. As we hear about both his and Watson’s adaption to the “modern age,” Watson gets into his car to visit Holmes in Sussex, and we hear a piano rag. This, and the “Siegfried Idyll” are the only musical excerpts in the show; gone is the comforting sound of Holmes’ fireside violin-playing and gone is his ability to act as the grand *acousmêtre*. As he declares himself, it is not *his* world anymore. He has laid down his violin.

Perhaps though, the most poignant musical moment in the entire canon occurs outside of the canon itself. Coules wrote four highly successful series of additional cases himself, *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, with Andrew Sachs replacing Michael Williams as Watson. Adopting titles of cases that Conan Doyle tantalizingly alludes to within the stories, the final episode, “The Marlbourne Point Mystery”, recorded in December 2009, says farewell via music in “*the* final scene” (Coules 2014, 214). The script notes: “*[Holmes] briefly checks the tuning, then begins to play Wagner’s ‘Song to the Evening Star’.”* Watson remembers Holmes’ earliest performance, saying, “You played that for me just a few days after we moved in here.” Then Holmes strikes “*a tremulous chord*” and makes a touching speech to Watson about how they have become immortal through Watson’s stories. Apparently, there were tears in the recording studio when the final lines were delivered, and it is only fitting that music, which had taken a lead role in the entire series, be central to this closing scene.

And the music of the series has helped us to recalibrate theories of audio-visual media to the audio-imaginary medium of radio drama. This has involved us returning traditionally audio-visual terms back to their lost acoustic origins – such as “acousmatic” and even, *en passant*, Lacan’s “gaze” – unlocking new meanings by substituting the visual for the imagined-visual, which is at the very heart of radio listening:

As a little boy in Tampa once said while watching a television story, ‘You know, mamma, I like stories better on radio ’cause the pictures up here [pointing to his head] are better.’[[44]](#footnote-45)

Perhaps the main difference between audio-visual drama and radio drama, as has hopefully come through my analysis, is that radio keeps us “acousmatized” for longer, suspending us in an acousmatic zone without clear ‘visualisation’. ‘Visualization’ in radio is always imaginary in any case, but can be achieved in acoustic terms, and a musical director can toy with our perceptions perhaps more profoundly than in film. Music is also easier to foreground than in film, where filmgoers always have the visual field to demand their primary attention, and it thus achieves a heightened intensity. Music also works between scenes more often than in film, acting as “bridges” to portray transitions between two places that we can’t see, but can imagine through the extreme reliance on musical cues (e.g., we can’t *see* a Christmas scene in a radio drama, but we can *hear* a Salvation Army band or Carol-singers). While what I call “paradiegetic” moments are certainly available (and in clear use) in film, their high quotient in radio dramas attests that, with the absence of a visual dimension, music becomes a primary way of reaching out of one drama and into others, to draw connections. In the case of the BBC Sherlock Holmes shows, and doubtless other radio dramas, the association of the character as agent of this musico-narrative device allows many clever musico-narrative games to be played. Film and radio share the art of storytelling, which means that there must be some obvious overlap in the tools we use to understand them. While radio, as noted by Chion, is the acousmatic craft *par excellence*, music itself appearing here as the magical *acousmêtre*, operating at the highest level of narration, I hope to have shown that there is much more to it than just magic. The case of music in radio drama is far from closed, and *the game*, as Holmes would say, *is decidedly afoot*. Hopefully the present essay has offered a glimpse of adventures yet to come.

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1. This article is dedicated in equal measure to Bert Coules and Ken Smith (snr.): Bert for giving me a love of radio drama at age 9 with his first “Hound of the Baskervilles” adaptation (which I borrowed on cassette from my school friend John Fowler), and Ken for recognising the excerpts of Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto in “The Red-headed League,” and then giving me my first musical pocket score of it. So began a 31-year research project. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Other key texts in this area include Grundman et al. *Re-Inventing Radio: Aspects of Radio as Art* (2008); Kahn, and Whitehead’s *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio, and the Avant-garde* (1994); Crisell’s *Understanding Radio* (1994); Hall’s thesis, *Radio After Radio: Redefining radio art in the light of new media technology**through expanded practice* (2015); Robert Hawes, *Radio Art* (1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Asai discusses further applications of Goffman’s framing, including work by Michelle Himes (including, pertinent to U.S radio dramas, the role of the sponsor). *Rika Asai*, “From Operatic Pomp to a Benny Goodman Stomp!”: Frame Analysis and the National Biscuit Company’s *Let’s Dance”* 153 – 172. See also, Michele Hilmes, *Hollywood and Broadcasting: From Radio to Cable* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 97–108. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Examples of such intricate production occur in *Die Klassefrau*/*The Class Woman* by Jochen Ziem (1973). Here “listeners realize that they are not listening to the ‘realistic’ account of a relationship, but to two different, subjective views of that relationship, and there is no way of telling which character traits are the ‘real’ ones.” (Huwiler 2005, 53). Another example of innovation in music in German radio drama would be Hildesheimer’s *Das Atelierfest*/*The Studio Party* (1955) in which “music and noises, both ‘real’ and electro-acoustically [are] manipulated, in order to characterize the people in the play. A workman who is mending a window in the studio is characterized as rather dull by means of a trumpet-like sound sequence that accompanies everything he says, thereby imitating his speech tone and emphasizing his slowness and tediousness. The speech of a woman who enters the studio, constantly talking and not listening to what the artist has to say, is accompanied by a high pitched, rattling, xylophone-like sound.” (54). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Ruttmann’s work is explored in connection with his previous films that were influenced by radio broadcasting by Carolyn Birdsall (2015). Andy Birtwistle (2017) further assesses the sounds of the technology heard within the soundscape of Weekend. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Cohen discusses his 1928, “Kaleidoscope,” “rhythm representing the life of man from the cradle to the grave” and describes some of the resistance to the modernist use of the radio in organs such as *The Listener* (595-6) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. On the role of the imagination in radio drama, see Crisell’s chapter “Radio Drama” (1994, 143–163). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. The use of pre-composed music in radio drama can be carefully crafted to give added depth to the drama, as Jarman and Baker show in their examination of a famous scene from ‘The Archers’ where a choice of dinner music, with potentially murderous consequences, comments with deep irony on the highly tense dinner discussion (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Plato introduces the opposition between diegesis and mimesis, discussed by Berger (1994), who uses the “diegetic mode” to refer to the level of narration, with the “dramatic mode” referring to the actual drama. (Berger 1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. “The diegetic and nondiegetic are conceived as separate realms, almost like two adjacent bubbles, and there seems to be little possibility of moving from one to the other without piercing the skin that explodes the two “universes,” which certainly is one reason for the reliance on the language of “transgression.” But perhaps it is a failure of metaphor. It seems a perfect candidate for theorizing.” (Stilwel 2007, 186) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Gorbman describes a situation in which a memory triggers music to be heard, in one sense non-diegetically, but in another sense it is described as “metadiegetic” – “since the conversation seems to trigger X’s memory of the romance and the song that went with it” (Gorbman 1987, 22–23). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. “This is music that accompanies certain montage sequences, or seems to be deliberately distanced from the here-and-now of the narrative space’s everyday world: it may have a self-consciously narrative function or may even be perceived as an expression of the filmind’s own emotional reaction” (Winters 2010, 237). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Part of this rethinking is achieved by Verma (2012, 147). “In Chion’s view, broadcast radio is an acousmatic medium par excellence because it does not allow for such an unveiling. Radio voices can never remove their masks, so the magic of the medium is also its trap.” [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. For Schaefffer, this ‘visualized’ sound was called “direct sound”. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. If, in film, for example, a car stereo’s music fills the cinema with perfect play-back quality, we do not necessarily doubt its provenance as diegetic – emanating from the car. However, on radio, its status would be more questionable. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. These chimes become a musical feature in “The Second Stain”, where they symbolise the national importance of the mystery, which concerns missing government papers. First, Big Ben is heard in the near distance from a blackmailer’s home. Second, the blackmailer picks the tune out on his piano, which demonstrates his sophistication (he is noted as a singer) and places us in the drawing room. Third, in order to refocus us in Holmes and Watson’s sitting room, their own carriage clock intones the bells, symbolising that the full force of Westminster – the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary – are about to intrude into their domestic space. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Verma notes how one dramatist claimed, “I needed London, and what is London? London is foghorns, and Big Ben, and so on” (1012, 34). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Recent studies, such Martine Huvenne’s exploration of modes of intertwining music and sound in film, have leaned away from discussion of ‘soundtrack’ and focused more on ‘soundscape’, which considers the relationship between audio rather than audiovisual elements. Soundscape is a useful concept here because of its primarily acoustic nature, and its blend of ‘musical’ and recorded sounds which situate as listeners in a specific environment, Huvenne citing soundscape artist Hildegarde Westerkamp: “The essence of soundscape composition is the artistic, sonic transmission of meanings about place, time environment, and listening perception (Huvenne 2016, 123). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Chion talks of pit music and screen music thus: “I have given the name *pit music* to music that accompanies the image from a nondiegetic position, outside the space and time of the action. The term refers to the classical opera's orchestra pit. I shall refer as *screen music,* on the other hand, to music arising from a source located directly or indirectly in the space and time of the action, even if this source is a radio or an offscreen musician” (1994, 80). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. This phenomenon in which “transmitted sounds can be selectively disattended” is also discussed by Goffman (1974, 145). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. The opposite, where someone has to shout over a din, is also common in scenes where Watson tries to communicate to Holmes while he plays the violin. Such effects were described in 1936 by Arnheim: “In the use of music in radio drama, too, suﬀicient attention is not always paid to the correct distance from the microphone. Incidental music must be kept suﬀiciently far oﬀ throughout; it must not, because it is wanted a little louder, be pushed into the foreground and thus confuse the issue. If it is a case of using music to bridge the intervals between scenes, it should be placed close up so that the music sounds from the same distance as the main dialogue, and so that the listener may become conscious that it is not meant as an accompaniment or as background music, but as an independent, equally important and therefore foreground performance” (69). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Watson is nervous about whether Holmes will be upset by the ‘love scenes,’ but fortunately, he isn’t. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. The irony here is that, although Jeremy Brett is a highly skilled actor, we can easily tell that he is not *actually* playing the violin! [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. A sole exception occurs in “The Engineer’s Thumb” when the Holmes’ client recounts arriving at a sinister house. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Such a concert took place on the afternoon of Saturday, October 11th, 1890 where Sarasate played the Mendelssohn. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Goffman describes how “music can also be used as part of the radio drama frame to serve as a ‘bridge’, a signal that the scene is changing, music being to radio drama in part what curtain drops are to staged drama” (1974, p. 147). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. “A variant of this process – by which location sounds or sound-effects are heightened, often through a process of ‘hyperorchestration’ (Sergi Casanelles) until it blends with the instruments of the dramatic score—can be found throughout film history” (Rogers 2019, forthcoming). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. This less often occurs within the body of the dramas themselves (i.e., not in the teasers). Holmes and Watson’s cab drive to save the golden ingots in “The Red-Headed League” is accompanied by Paganini’s most ‘mystical’ sounding Caprice, No. 6 in G minor, with its descending trills, that foretell the lustre of the gold they will soon be seeing. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Music’s role as distant commentator lies at the heart of Winters’ category of “extra-diegetic,” (237) using the example of Samuel Barber’s Adagio in *Platoon* (1986) which provides a romanticized commentary on the death of one of the central characters. Kassabian (2013) continues Winters’ discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Coules reports that this came from a “mood music library,” recalling, “[m]uch as I wanted to, I was never able to use the gloriously atmospheric first movement of the Sibelius violin concerto (surely the finest Hound of the Baskervilles score ever written!) simply because it would have cost too much” (personal communication, 19/05/ 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. About this first meeting, Coules asked me: “Are you aware of what is perhaps the main musical puzzle in the stories?  Holmes, enthusing about a particular violinist, asks himself, "What’s that little thing of Chopin’s she plays so magnificently: Tra-la-la-lira-lira-lay”?  A great deal of Sherlockian brain power has been exerted to identify the mystery melody but no entirely satisfactory answer has ever been proposed.  I cheated, ignored the reference to Chopin, and had Clive Merrison tra-la-la to the tune of the Gypsy Dance ("Les tringles des sistres tintaient") from Carmen.  Not a bad match” (Personal Communication, 18/ 05/ 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. The four ‘long stories’ have different signatures to the 56 ‘short stories.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Perhaps more poignant still, in the previous story in which Holmes is believed dead, Watson’s utter sorrow is rendered palpable by the sheer absence of music that might more normally accompany his narration. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. A similar parallel between the third act of *Tristan* is drawn by Agatha Christie via her character Mr. Satterthwaite in “Man from the Sea”, a short story in the collection *The Mysterious Mr. Quinn*. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Coules’ recalls Clive Merrison’s interjection of “I say, steady on,” when spotting the direction notes: “*And they clasp each others’ arms. A moment of breathing, relief … and love*”. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. “The gaze I encounter – you can find this in Sartre's own writing – is, not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other (84)”. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Ibid. (84) [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Similarly, at the close of “The Hound of the Baskervilles” the pair go to see *Les Huguenots* by Meyerbeer. In Coules’ earlier (1988) dramatisation of “The Hound of the Baskervilles” he had Holmes and Watson (played by Roger Rees and Crawford Logan), “walk off into the audio sunset” singing “one of the more rumpty-tumpty choruses” from *Les Huguenots*. Coules describes, “After a short while, a recording of the piece faded up under them and slowly took over, to become the closing signature. It took a good deal of fiddling, both in the studio and in post-production, to get it right, but I'm very glad that we did. However, for various reasons, I decided not to duplicate the moment in the later Merrison/Williams version” (Personal communication, 20th February 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. This piece is also used to begin the ‘Talking Classics’ “Hound of the Baskervilles” audio book, read by Peter Egan. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. The same happens in “Silver Blaze” incidentally (“If you ask me it’s those damned gypsies”). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Coules claims, however: “I've never shared the general Sherlockian fanbase opinion that the flashback sequences are a problem. As a reader I've always enjoyed them and for a dramatiser they present both a challenge and some splendid opportunities” (personal communication 19th February, 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. This technique has been referred to as “supradiegetic” by Rick Altman (1987), based on the suspension of belief we experience in musical theatre, when a diegetic sound source such as a person singing is accompanied by an orchestra that lies outside. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. The final published story was “The Retired Colourman” (1926) but “His Last Bow” (1917) was set during Holmes’ retirement years. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Verma opens his book with this anecdote, retold from radio-dramatist, della-Cioppa. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)