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Mr. Monk and the Emotion-Reason Dilemma

E. DEIDRE PRIBRAM

Adrian Monk (Tony Shalhoub) belongs to a tradition of brilliant but personally flawed detectives. Like others in this tradition, including his television colleague, Dr. Gregory House (Hugh Laurie), Monk's genius resides in his exceptional, even excessive, rationality. Both Monk and House embody near-perfect detection or diagnostic skills. And, in both cases, the cause of their damaged personalities is excessive emotionality, represented by their respective emotional disorders. In their internal dynamics, emotion is almost always the 'problem,' and both shows suggest that troubled emotionality is the price Monk and House must pay for their intense brilliance.

Monk and *House, M.D.* explore the issue further by providing each lead with a male best-friend whose personality also encompasses aspects of emotion and reason, but in differing configurations than the main characters. In contrast to the series' leads, Police Captain Leland

Stottlemeyer (Ted Levine) and Dr. James Wilson (Robert Sean Leonard) achieve a more successful integration of the emotional and rational dimensions of their lives. The trade-off, however, is that neither can reach the level of intellectual genius that Monk and House exhibit on a weekly basis. Yet they function as important alternative models of how emotion and reason might be conceived.

The Rational Detective

Toby Miller notes that, within the framework of the classic television detective drama, “detection has meant the identification and defeat of wrongdoers, by applying reason to explain events that are irregular and socially undesirable.”[1] Further, detective shows as *rational* genres have typically *bracketed out* emotions. Emotional detachment and stoicism are among the greatest personal achievements in traditional masculine and rational codes of behavior.

Jason Mittell describes the 1950s series, *Dragnet,* as ideologically conservative but foundational to the development of the police drama.[2] Among its specific techniques, the flat and monotone acting style filtered out “most emotional nuances and dramatic pauses,” prioritizing “*systemic* over *emotional* realism” (p. 137). Here, emotional detachment is equated with the successful operation of the criminal justice system, in that chaos, crime, and emotions are identified with one another, and placed outside the realm of reason, justice, and correct police procedure. Lead detective Joe Friday (Jack Webb), is “detached, objective, reliable” with “no

[1] “The Action Series.” in *The Television Genre Book*, G. Creeber ed. (BFI, 2001): p. 18.
[2] *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture.* (Routledge, 2004): pp. 124, 127.

visible flaws, biases, or even emotions," again equating elements like flaws and biases with emotions (pp. 141, 140).

In an article on the 1990s British detective series *Cracker*, Glen Creeber argues that lead character, Fitz (Robbie Coltrane), is a compelling incorporation of the traditional or "old sleuth" and the "new man." As old sleuth, Fitz fits the "masculine archetype" of the hard-boiled detective, one component of which is his unemotional professional style.[3] He is "rugged, quick-witted and the embodiment of cool masculine power," "relying almost wholly on reason to understand and decode the world around him" (pp. 171, 173). In his considerable professional skills, if not in his more disastrous personal life, Fitz is a controlled individual, driven by reason, not emotionality.

What Mittell and Creeber describe are two traditions in the 'rational detective' formula. Joe Friday is meant to represent reason in its purity, with no emotions exhibited by the character or supposedly included in the narrative, as signaled by the show's catchphrase, "Just the facts, Ma'am." Being wholly professional in this formula means, first, that emotions do not intrude upon the business of crime-solving and, second, that the detective is represented as having no, or the most minimal, personal life. Personality, in the sense of feelings, quirks, desires, and aversions are largely absent, because they are perceived, like emotionality, as flaws and biases.

The second, more contemporary tradition in the rational detective formula is exemplified by *Cracker*. Here, a personal life and personality are a crucial part of the narrative.[4] Fitz is a forensic psychologist who provides criminal profiles for the Manchester Police Force and, in the process, solves cases through the intense psychological interrogation of suspects. He is a

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[3] Glen Creeber, "Old Sleuth or New Man? Investigations into Rape, Murder and Masculinity in *Cracker* (1993-1996)." *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 16.2 (2002): p. 171.

[4] There are also rationally brilliant but unfailingly warm, compassionate detectives. Examples are Jessica Fletcher (Angela Lansbury) of *Murder, She Wrote* and Mark Sloan (Dick Van Dyke) of *Diagnosis Murder.* And, of course, there are also emotional dynamics in otherwise rationally motivated buddy-cop characters or ensemble casts.

detective who uses "his own dark turmoil to 'crack' the mind of a murderer" (Creeber, p. 169). Along with "a deep-rooted moral compassion, a razor-sharp wit and a prodigious intellect" that he applies to his professional life, the show also explores "the troubled terrain of his personal life" (pp. 171, 169). Cracker is an alcoholic, chain-smoking, compulsive gambler. During the course of the series, he has an affair with a colleague causing his wife, Judith (Barbara Flynn), to leave him. When Fitz enters his own domestic arena, which involves a significant component of the program, he is "compelled to acknowledge the *personal* problems in his life and address areas of *private* experience not usually associated with his generic territory" (p. 176). The series' originality and appeal is located in its purposeful exploration of the contrast between Fitz's consummate professional skills and his disastrous social relationships, both professional and personal. As the brilliant forensic psychologist tells his wife, "My life's a mess. I've fouled up. Emotionally, I'm incompetent" (quoted in Creeber, p. 176).

This second tradition represented by *Cracker*—the tradition of the professionally brilliant but emotionally plagued detective—can be applied to Adrian Monk and Gregory House. Like *Cracker*, *Monk* and *House* deliberately explore the contradictions and conflicts between the main characters' rational genius and their disordered emotionality. Indeed, both shows are premised on this central character conflict, which is at least as important to the meanings and pleasures generated by the two series as any of the cases they solve.

As Creeber describes it, there is a clear-cut distinction between Fitz's professional actions and his personal and emotional behavior. This structures the narrative in an opposition in which the "flaws, biases, and emotions," in Mittell's terms, reside almost entirely in the character's personal realm—if 'personal' is understood to include both workplace and domestic *relationships*—but do not seem to affect his professional virtue: his brilliant rationality.

Emotion and reason are represented in *Monk* and *House* as distinctly separate tendencies within the lead characters. It is the struggle between emotion and reason that makes these characters both complex and fascinating; the source of their turmoil lies in their apparent inability to reconcile their rational and emotive selves. This aspect of their characters has much to tell us about how we, as a culture, currently understand emotion and reason.

Mr. Monk

Adrian Monk is an exceedingly brilliant detective with encyclopedic knowledge, unparalleled observational skills, and an ability to see patterns—or breaks in patterns—in crime scenes and other people's behavior. He also suffers from obsessive-compulsive disorder as well as numerous phobias; according to Monk, in the following order of magnitude: "germs, needles, milk, death, snakes, mushrooms, heights, crowds, elevators" ("Mr. Monk and the Very, Very Old Man").

In the words of series creator and executive producer Andy Breckman, "Monk can barely function in the world. He's a walking bundle of fears and neuroses and obsessive rituals."[5] Breckman points to the debilitating nature of severe OCD: the intense anxiety and fear it causes, the time and energy required for OCD-related activities, and the inability to function successfully in professional, social, and personal capacities.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder, classified in the DSM-IV under emotional pathologies as an anxiety disorder, displays symptoms that have been grouped into the following four

[5] Terry Erdmann and Paula Block, *Monk: The Official Episode Guide* (St. Martin's Griffin, 2006): pp. 5-6.

categories: obsessions and checking; symmetry and ordering; cleanliness and washing; and hoarding.[6] Monk exhibits the first three of these classes of symptoms, and his agoraphobic brother Ambrose exhibits the fourth. It is important to stress that the various mood and anxiety disturbances are emotional disorders, not illnesses of reason. They are not, in themselves, accompanied by visual or auditory hallucinations, or other symptoms that we associate with disconnection from a commonly shared 'reality'. Indeed, one of the more interesting aspects of those who suffer from OCD is that they are aware their behavior is abnormal or excessive but the accompanying anxiety compels them, nonetheless, to perform their OCD-related activities.

Monk's OCD produces fear, paranoia, isolation from others, and selfishness. Not only does he have an emotional disorder but it creates emotional disorder in his relationships with other people. The series repeatedly stresses Monk's genius and his illness, *simultaneously*. His brilliance and the resulting fame and admiration he receives are immediately linked with his 'problem'. Near the beginning of "Mr. Monk Goes to the Circus," a number of officials are gathered at a crime scene. An Officer Myers explains to Lieutenant Disher (Jason Gray-Stanford) his delight in watching the celebrated Monk at work:

> "We really lucked out. That's Adrian Monk . . . He's the best crime scene investigator in the department. We studied all his cases at the Academy . . . I can't believe he's here. It's like meeting Mick Jagger."

Inevitably, moments later Captain Stottlemeyer, Monk's boss and friend, approaches Myers to inform him that he must leave the crime scene because his socks, although both black, aren't an identical match, and are interfering with Monk's ability to concentrate.

[6] David Watson, "Rethinking the Mood and Anxiety Disorders: A Quantitative Hierarchical Model for DSM-V." *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 114.4 (November 2005): pp. 521-532.

The two-hour series pilot depicts at least twenty instances of compulsions and phobias.[7] What is significant about these depictions, unlike the mismatched socks incident, is that many of them are anxieties and fears with which audience members can understand and sympathize. Early on, Monk's compulsions and phobias were intended to evoke empathy as much as humor, although, as the series progresses OCD-related behaviors are increasingly played for their comedic value. Initially, however, the series represented a strikingly original development for American television by placing the audience in the position of someone who lives with such fears. For instance, we share in Monk's horror when he must descend into the city sewers in order to rescue Sharona (Bitty Schram) in the series pilot. We relate to his terror and how difficult this must be for him.

At the end of the first scene of the pilot ("Mr. Monk and the Candidate"), three police officers, having just witnessed Monk's formidable abilities in analyzing a crime scene interspersed with his gnawing anxiety that he has left the gas stove on at home, sum up the situation:

> First Officer: So that's the famous Adrian Monk?
> Second Officer: Yeah, the living legend.
> Third Officer: If you call that living.

In three brief lines of dialogue, the officers summarize both the central conflict in Monk's character and the premise of the series.

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[7] When out, he is anxious that he left his gas stove on; at home he counts strokes as he brushes his teeth and reaches into his closet of identical clothing; straightens objects (pillows, flowers) in his therapist's office; panics when Sharona, his nurse-assistant, drives; cleans his hand with a sanitizing wipe immediately after shaking Stottlemeyer's hand; twice indicates his fear of heights; avoids being touched; moves mixed-colored push pins on a map to solid blocks of color, then puts them all back as they were by memory; panics that he has lost his keys; is terrified by a classroom full of coughing schoolchildren; won't go down the hill to a crime scene because it involves stepping in mud; eats the same food on specific days; counts each pea that goes into his chicken potpie; straightens the objects on a restaurant table; uses the TV remote only when inside a baggie; throws away a can of food because it has an imperceptible dent; counts and touches each parking meter as he walks along the street; takes shredded documents out of the garbage and resequences the strips of paper; is immobilized on a fire escape ladder due to his fear of heights; wraps his walkie-talkie in plastic; and is understandably horrified when he must descend into a sewer filled with human waste and rats.

Although we realize that Monk's genius and disorder are linked, how that actually occurs is never fully explored. The series builds on a long-standing tradition in Western culture that links genius (most commonly, artistic) to emotional disorders or other forms of mental illness. Yet, precisely how his emotional disorder might enhance his rational brilliance is more presumed than explained in *Monk.* The OCD-related attribute that comes closest to achieving such a link is the concern with symmetry and ordering. Monk's striking ability to see patterns, or breaks in patterns, in crime scenes or in other people's behavior is enhanced, perhaps, by his compulsion for symmetry and order, allowing him to meticulously and rapidly assess what has been added, what is missing, or what is out of place—his keen observation of the incongruous. However, it is less clear how obsessions and checking, cleanliness and washing, or any of his specific phobias (heights, crowds, physical contact) might enhance rather than diminish his intellectual acumen.

The USA Network website indicates that Monk's professional expertise exists *in spite of* his disorder: "Yet despite his condition, Monk remains a brilliant detective."[8] More often, however, series episodes link the two aspects of Monk's personality as if they were *necessary corollaries*, in which he cannot have one (intellectual genius) without the other (emotional torment). We see this link in his simultaneous performance of crime scene analysis and personal obsession, a recurring element of the show, as displayed in the opening scene of the pilot when Monk juggles his acute insight of the evidence with the acute anxiety that he has left his gas stove on.

In "Mr. Monk and the Very, Very Old Man," Stottlemeyer tells Monk, "I don't mind living in your shadow, Monk. You're a freak of nature." Stottlemeyer suggests that he must live in Monk's shadow because of the latter's crime-solving virtuosity but that Monk's abilities, in turn, are tied directly to his emotional oddities. In "Mr. Monk Takes His Medicine,"

[8] USA Network. www.usanetwork.com/series/monk/theshow/characterprofiles

Stottlemeyer's premise is borne out when Monk takes a medication that alleviates his OCD but also eliminates both his desire and aptitude for crime-solving.

As mentioned above, the series builds on a longstanding Western motif that links emotional disorders with enhanced creativity. In Monk's case, the series indicates repeatedly that his OCD fuels or somehow purifies his intellectual powers of reason. His excessive rationality is matched by his excessive emotionality, represented by his OCD. Monk's extreme emotionality is essential to his exquisite powers of reason, in a relationship in which emotion serves as a kind of punishment for the reward of intellectual brilliance.

Dr. House

Gregory House is an exceedingly brilliant diagnostician with encyclopedic medical knowledge, the ability to provoke ideas and debate among collaborators beyond any single individual's potential, and a dogged determination to analyze clue-like symptoms until the pieces fall into place and the truth is revealed. Echoing Monk, a fan website describes the doctor "as an observational genius with the ability to see a pattern in small things and draw conclusions from that," providing a definition of both House and the rational process.[9]

House also has an unspecified, presumably undiagnosed, mood or personality disorder. Additionally, he is addicted to Vicodin. Substance abuse is considered an externalizing dimension of a psychopathological condition, accompanying the emotional, internalizing dimension of mood or personality disorders (Watson, pp. 529-530).

[9] House M.D. Guide. www.housemd-guide.com

House's disorder results in cruelty to others, social isolation, and extreme self-absorption. As Wilson, his colleague and best friend, tells House, "They could build monuments to your self-centeredness" ("House vs. God"). He is disdainful and misanthropic, seeing virtually no good in people. Socially and interpersonally immature, House is either coldly indifferent or overtly hurtful to his patients. He is a miserable person in both senses of the term—how he treats others and what his existence is like.

House's one redeeming quality is his intellectual brilliance. A patient's family member observes, "I assume House is a great doctor." Chase (Jesse Spencer), a member of House's medical team, asks, "Why would you assume that?" The family member answers, "Because when you're that big a jerk, you're either great or unemployed" ("Sex Kills").

Deborah Kirklin notes, "Fear and pity are not emotions that Dr. Gregory House acknowledges or accommodates in either his professional or personal life. He is arrogant, rude and considers all patients lying idiots."[10] At the same time, "He will do anything, illegal or otherwise, to ensure that his patients—passive objects of his expert attentions—get the investigations and treatments he knows they need" (p. 57).

In "The Afterbirth of the Clinic: A Foucauldian Perspective on *House*," the authors focus on the notion of House treating patients "as passive objects of his expert attentions."[11] They argue that House represents a modernist approach to medicine that emerged in the U.S. in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and which coincides with Foucault's analysis in *Birth of the Clinic*. Like Foucault's modern clinician, House "subtracts" the patient as "deceptive

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[10] Deborah Kirklin. "Lessons in Pity and Caring from Dickens to Melville," *Medical Humanities* 34, (2008): p. 57.
[11] Leigh Rich, Jack Simmons, David Adams, Scott Thorp, and Michael Mink. "The Afterbirth of the Clinic: A Foucauldian Perspective on *House, M.D.* and American Medicine in the 21st Century," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 51.2 (Spring 2008): 1-12. muse.jhu.edu/journals/perspectives_in_biology_and_medicine

background noise" in order to deal directly with the disease (pp. 2-3). The patient becomes interference in the physician's "distanced, authoritarian scientific style" (p. 7).

While I agree with the authors' description of House's central character conflict, the show's premise is based precisely in exploring and critiquing House's lack of 'humanity', another signature modernist concept. When Foreman (Omar Epps), another member of House's medical team, poses the question, "Isn't treating patients why we became doctors?", House asserts: "No, treating illnesses is why we became doctors, treating patients is what makes most doctors miserable . . . If you don't talk to them they can't lie to us, and we can't lie to them. Humanity is overrated" ("Pilot").

While this may be a fair representation of House's position, the series itself repeatedly questions modernity's scientific, rational approach by evaluating it against modern humanism, with its emphasis on the rights and uniqueness of the individual. The contradiction between the goals of science and the values of humanism is exactly where House's (and perhaps modernity's) deficiencies and internal conflict reside.

The Emotion-Reason Dilemma in Western Thought

A common Western motif is to position emotionality against rationality, thereby structuring emotion and reason as oppositional categories. Contemporary theorists, including feminist scholars, have challenged the idea that modern Western thought and practice is dispassionate and wholly rational. In this view, reason has been regarded as the faculty most essential to the production of objective, reliable, and universal understandings of reality. Philosopher Alison

Jaggar has argued that, while a distinction between reason and emotion has a long history in Western thought, the extreme polarization of the two developed only with the rise of modern science in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[12] As part of this development, emotion became accepted as the inverse of reason, dangerous because it subverted scientific inquiry.

The logic of this approach rests on a series of conceptual dichotomies—culture-nature, mind-body, reason-emotion—in which culture, mind, and reason dominate the inferior categories of nature, body, and emotion.[13] While scientific and rational thought have been understood as largely masculine, emotions have been associated with the feminine, nature, the body, and the private. Women have been one of the main social groups aligned with emotions and, as such, inevitably regarded as more 'subjective', biased, and irrational (Jaggar, p. 158).

Medical historian Fay Bound Alberti, describes how "men of science" sought to master their emotions "in order to convey an image of detached investigation in the scientific process," because it was believed, from the eighteenth century on, that medical practice required being unemotional "as a necessary precondition for an objective diagnosis."[14] Instead, she claims that medical diagnoses are "culturally situated," and that the emotions of the investigator are key to understanding how diagnoses are "socially and politically generated" (p. xiv). We can take as examples the widespread nineteenth century phenomenon of hysteria, diagnosed almost solely in women, or twentieth-century beliefs that the mood shifts associated with female menstrual hormones made women unsuitable for top political positions. In Alberti's argument, these illnesses tell us more about the gendered values and attitudes of the medical professionals

[12] Alison Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," in *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, A. M. Jaggar and S. R. Bordo eds. (Rutgers University Press, 1989): p. 145.
[13] Harding, Sandra, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Open University, 1986): p. 23.
[14] Fay Bound Alberti, "Introduction: Medical History and Emotion Theory." In *Medicine, Emotion and Disease, 1700-1950,* F.B. Alberti ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): pp. xxi, xiii

making the diagnoses, the result of the cultural contexts in which they existed, than in describing the illness or condition itself.

Emotions, because they have been perceived as occurring predominantly at the level of private, individual experience, have been dismissed as a disturbance: irrational and unreliable. The attribution of emotions as 'personal' evokes models in which emotions originate within and leak or burst out to affect the external social world. They overtake the individual, "rather as a storm sweeps over the land" (Jaggar p.146), posing a threat to both the feeling individual and the social world he or she occupies. Emotions are firmly located in a private sphere, their 'control' left to the individual, while reason is public, understood to be shared collectively. In contrast, this chapter considers emotions as social practices that infuse cultural discourses, institutions, and activities with meanings.[15]

Conflicted Characters

In keeping with the traditional Western view, both *Monk* and *House* treat emotion and reason in their main characters as incompatible categories. Although both characters are unusual for U.S. television in their combining of heroic and anti-heroic elements, House is substantially the darker of the two. Where Monk is irritating and insensitive, House is deliberately cruel and unapologetic. Monk is in therapy, attempting recovery. House is in denial.

By playing Monk's OCD for its comedic opportunities, rather than for shock value as is more often the case with *House*, the former series achieves a lighter tone. This may explain the

[15] For more on this, see Jennifer Harding and E. Deidre Pribram, "Introduction," E*motions: A Cultural Studies Reader*, J. Harding and E.D. Pribram eds. (Routledge, 2009): pp. 12-47.

program's motivation in shifting increasingly to comedy. The move has softened the edges of the show's hero-antihero, making Monk a more likable character, tending toward the endearingly eccentric rather than the insufferable. The hero-antihero mix is based on each character's potential for redemption. Redemption for Monk appears distantly possible; the prognosis for House is hopeless. In the hero to anti-hero equation, the two characters are different in degree, if not in kind.

Additionally, although both series are built around a similar premise—how the lead characters manage the emotion-reason dichotomy—*House* more overtly acknowledges this subject matter. Perhaps nowhere is this made more explicit than in an episode titled, "One Day, One Room," written by series creator and executive producer, David Shore. Based entirely on clinic duty rounds, House's usual justification for his behavior is absent in this episode: the solving of a life-threatening medical mystery. Instead, his attention is occupied with a rape victim whose physical condition, an STD, is easily solved with a simple prescription. Far less easily resolved, however, is her emotional and psychological state.

For no rational reason, Eve (Katheryn Winnick) insists that she will talk only with House. At the same time, she adamantly refuses to discuss her 'condition' or 'problem': the rape. When she demands that they talk about other subjects, like the weather, House responds in frustration:

> House: That's not rational!
> Eve: Nothing's rational.
> House: Everything is rational.
> Eve: I was raped. Explain how that makes sense.

Eve forces House to deal with her as a person, not as an illness, disease, or pathological condition.

It is evident that Eve understands the logical arguments House makes to her (the rape wasn't her fault, it doesn't have to destroy her life) but that is not what she is looking for from

him. For his part, House can't come to terms with what she wants or needs. To others, he admits that he's "useless at this."

House seeks advice from his hospital colleagues on the best way to interact with Eve. Yet when Chase tells him, "There is no wrong answer because there is no right answer," House denies the possibility that there are no objective certainties. House: "Wrong. We just don't know what the right answer is." Similarly, when House frames his discussion with Eve as a dialectic debate, she adamantly stops him: "I don't want to chat about philosophy." House responds, "This is the type of conversation I do well."

> Eve: But the other type? The personal stuff?
> House: There are no answers. If there are no answers, why talk about it?

In House's logic, if there are no clear, scientific answers to the "personal stuff" it must be, in effect, non-existent. He is not simply arguing for the pointlessness of such a discussion. Taking it one step further, in order to believe that the terms of his world make sense, the rationally inexplicable, of necessity, must be *absent*. House's emotional difficulties, particularly his anti-social behaviors, permit him to work, think, and exist in an illusory world of rational purity.

Emotion and reason must be portrayed as irreconcilable. Not because, as Monk maintains in the mismatched socks incident, the emotional poses a distraction. On the contrary, for both Monk and House, their emotional disorders, which represent an extreme or excessive form of emotionality, are important assets that somehow enable their exceptional powers of reason.

As we saw, *Cracker's* Fitz moves between two separate realms: the world of his successful professional performance, and the arena of his disastrous social and personal life. Monk and House, too, exist in dual fantasy-domains, in which their emotional disorders do not diminish or undermine their rational brilliance. In the first rational detective formula, represented

by *Dragnet*, emotion is purportedly absent in the main character and in the narrative. In the second formula, exemplified by *Cracker, Monk,* and *House*, both emotion and reason are embedded within the person of the lead detective, but only as contradictory, ever-warring parts of the self. In the narrative model represented by *Cracker, Monk,* and *House*, the detectives represent a desire for an imagined uncorrupted rationality, attainable only in opposition to a creative but dangerous emotionality.

Best Friends

In "The Man of Passion: Emotion, Philosophy and Sexual Difference," Christine Battersby argues that the Western philosophical tradition of an extreme opposition between reason and emotion is not the whole story.[16] Although reason has been associated with the masculine, "emotions that have been deemed philosophically useful or valuable have also been assigned to the male sex" (p. 140).

In the work of Hume, Nietzsche, Spinoza, and others, Battersby points out that pivotal emotions, such as sympathy, courage, and joy, are defined as masculine attributes. Instead of a polarized opposition between male reason and female emotion, Battersby finds a gendered hierarchy of emotions, in which those deemed useful are likely to be associated with men while those considered less productive become linked to women.

Despite their disorders, Monk and House are surrounded by a cadre of co-workers who also serve as friends. Although they are often mistreated by the series' leads, the supporting

[16] Christine Battersby, "The Man of Passion: Emotion, Philosophy and Sexual Difference," *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music and Medicine*, Penelope Gouk and Helen Hills eds. (Ashgate 2005): pp. 139-153.

characters' loyalty appears to be based on their deep admiration of his consummate powers of reason and, perhaps more importantly, on their *own* superior *emotional* skills, particularly their compassion.

One of the interesting aspects about *Monk* and *House* is that in their efforts to represent the oppositional nature of emotion and reason in their main characters, and to critique emotion as their 'problem', both shows also have alternative models in which emotion and reason are more successfully integrated. And in both programs, the alternative models are embodied by the main characters' best friends: Captain Leland Stottlemeyer and Dr. James Wilson. In keeping with Battersby's arguments, the friends allow us to see emotions represented in male characters when they are useful.

Stottlemeyer is more reasonable, more focused on the task at hand, and much more aware of others' feelings than his employee, Monk. Where House is brash, childish, and vindictive, Wilson is kind, sensitive and emotionally ethical. Usually, it is left to Stottlemeyer and Wilson to point out the hurtful effects of his respective colleague's mistreatment of others.

Both Stottlemeyer's and Wilson's professions and personalities require that they operate as highly rational individuals which, unlike Monk and House, they manage to do while maintaining a measure of emotional steadiness. Crucially, the friendships exist in both realms. Monk and Stottlemeyer are connected through a mutual interest in crime-solving; they also share an emotional bond developed over a long, complex history of interaction. House and Wilson are linked through elaborate rational debates on medical issues, other people's motivations, and each other's self-justifications. They also share an emotional bond developed over a long, complex history.

The defining attribute that makes Stottlemeyer and Wilson such good friends is their impeccable loyalty. Both, on occasion, have placed their professional careers on the line because of their unshakable belief in their colleague's rational capacities. The responsibility for reining in their friend's worst social and personal missteps also most often falls to them.

However, loyalty does not mean being naïve, foolhardy, or dishonest. Stottlemeyer is the person who originally suspends Monk from the police force and then refuses to support his reinstatement appeal because he believes Monk's disorder makes him unreliable in a dangerous situation ("Mr. Monk and the Candidate;" "Mr. Monk Goes to the Carnival"). Stottlemeyer points out other forms of damage caused by Monk's condition. For instance, in "Mr. Monk on Wheels," Stottlemeyer warns Monk that his selfish mistreatment of his assistant, Natalie (Traylor Howard), will cause Monk to lose her. Stottlemeyer says he knows this because he lost his wife through a similar taking for granted. In this sense, Stottlemeyer is capable of learning from emotional experience, while Monk is not.

Like Stottlemeyer, Wilson is the person most capable of speaking bluntly and directly, with the highest chance among those who surround House of being listened to. And like Stottlemeyer, Wilson's version of loyalty is not based on infinite kindness and concession. Essential to the maintenance of Wilson's relationship with House, for instance, is their ongoing game of one-upmanship in which Wilson gives almost as good as he gets. These competitions can take the form of intellectually driven debates ('the type of conversation' House 'does well') or cleverly planned pranks, as long as they involve one friend attempting to outmaneuver the other. This is the only type of relationship House can sustain or enjoy, an insight that Wilson grasps. Towards the end of "Safe," following a succession of House-generated stunts with Wilson as the recipient, House's cane breaks in half and he topples to the ground. Wilson filed

through the cane that House depends on, setting up the accident. While some viewers may have found this to be a cruel action on Wilson's part,[17] the important point is that House does not. We realize this when, still humiliatingly slumped on the floor, a smile spreads across House's face—an indication that he continues to be engaged by the friendship.

At the same time, Stottlemeyer's and Wilson's emotional capacities are far from idealized. Stottlemeyer is depicted as unsuccessful in some of his personal relationships, particularly in the story arc concerning his separation and divorce. He can be gruff, impatient, and demanding. Similarly, Wilson can be sanctimonious, overly protective, and too acquiescent. During season two, his third marriage fails.[18] Rather than a perfectly resolved solution to the emotion-reason dilemma, Stottlemeyer and Wilson simply represent a more workable, less miserable arrangement. In doing so, they offer a model that moves towards the integration of emotion and reason. The attribute of integration, instead of opposition, is precisely what enables them to tolerate their colleague's irritating or offensive behavior. By combining comprehension with compassion, they go one step further: they occasionally succeed in bringing out the best their flawed best friends can summon.

The Emotion-Reason Dilemma, Part II

Stottlemeyer and Wilson serve an important narrative function in offering a way of imagining a more balanced version of the emotion-reason impasse embodied by Monk and House. Much of

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[17] Barbara Barnett, "*House, MD's* House and Wilson: A Fine Bromance," (September 3, 2008). www.blogcritics.org/video/article/house-mds-house-and-wilson

[18] In fact, we learn much about Stottlemeyer's and Wilson's personal limitations in parallel subplots when, due to marital difficulties, they each temporarily move in with their ordinarily more troubled friend ("Mr. Monk and the Very, Very Old Man"; "Safe").

their social and interpersonal practices are productive rather than destructive, to themselves and to others. While the leads depict brilliant rationality joined to damaging emotionality, their best friends indicate more successful ways of incorporating emotion and reason. In keeping with Battersby's argument, Stottlemeyer and Wilson personify certain emotions, such as loyalty and compassion, in a manner that is not equated with flaws or disorder.

Of course, there is a price to pay for their abilities of integration. The USA Network website makes clear Stottlemeyer's limitations: "although it can drive Stottlemeyer crazy to know that he'll never be quite as brilliant a detective as Monk, the divorced father of two remains a loyal friend." Stottlemeyer repeatedly is faced with evidence that he is not, and never will be, as superior a detective as Monk. To his credit, although Stottlemeyer frequently feels envious of Monk and doubtful of his own abilities, he is never petty enough to let his jealousies or self-doubts stop the better detective from solving a crime or allowing his feelings to hurt their friendship. As series creator Breckman notes, Stottlemeyer is "a smart cop, but not *the* smartest cop. He has to feel a little embarrassed that he always has to call in Monk. He still has to have his pride" (Erdmann and Block, p. 10).

Wilson's relationship to rationality is somewhat bewildering. We are frequently reminded that House is the more brilliant doctor. Dr. Cuddy (Lisa Edelstein), the Dean of Medicine, repeatedly (and implausibly) refuses to fire House because of his outstanding diagnostic skills, voicing some version of: "the son of a bitch is the best doctor we have" ("Pilot"). Yet, as head of the hospital's Oncology Department, Wilson clearly holds considerable medical credibility. House often calls on Wilson's medical knowledge when working on a case, and we occasionally see Wilson with one of his cancer patients, whom he invariably treats with both reason and empathy (for instance, "House vs. God"). Still, as far as brilliant physicians go, Wilson remains

in the background. The series assumes House's greater intellectual and medical genius without raising the possibility that Wilson's balance of knowledge and empathy may make him more ideally suited and, therefore, more successful a doctor than someone like House for the particular medical field in which Wilson practices.

Paradoxically, Stottlemeyer and Wilson offer a more successful integration of the emotion-reason dynamic, but a less successful rational outcome. The penalty they pay is the sacrifice of glory. Both Stottlemeyer and Wilson quietly toil away at their respective professions with little fanfare or acknowledgement. Despite their significant service to others, they are not exceptional but merely ordinary.

In this common although questionable equation, polarization equals greatness while integration signals the mundane. For Monk and House, their reason is exceptional, their emotions dysfunctional, and integration impossible. But they achieve a level of virtuosity. For Stottlemeyer and Wilson, their intellectual skills are as strong as their loyalty and compassion, they succeed at a productive integration of emotion and reason, but they remain ordinary. This understanding of the relationship between emotion and reason is historically specific but culturally widespread. In outlining these dilemmas, *Monk* and *House* activate the question of whether it is possible to conceive of the emotion-reason dynamic in less limited terms.[19]

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[19] My thanks to Danielle Holewa for her insightful assistance on this chapter.