

Given in December 2021 by Karen Ellery for the Norwegian Explorers Annual Dinner.

I think most of us here have enjoyed some fictional characters so much that we want more of them than the writers provided. Now, those who are talented, or obsessed, or possibly both, may write their own pastiches featuring these characters; but if we are lucky, we find someone has done the hard work for us. And if we are REALLY fortunate, the person will be a good writer whose breadth of imagination for our beloved character matches or even surpasses our own. One such writer was Carole Nelson Douglas, who passed quite recently, and who had become one of the best-known and most respected biographers of a particular Sherlockian character beloved by me and, I think, many others here—Irene Adler. Through Douglas' books, I got to spend more time with and learn so much more about Adler, and Adler was given a fuller life of friendships, love, and adventures. I know some Sherlockians have little time or interest in pastiches, and I admit they are not all created equal. However, some characters simply demand to have their stories told, and I am glad Ms. Douglas was called to tell Adler's. So now, regardless of whether we toast the Irene Adler of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Carole Nelson Douglas, or our own imaginations, I give you THE Woman.