Spring 5-19-2018

"I believe in Sherlock Holmes": Fans, Readers, and the Problem of Serial Character

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M. A. Seton Hall University, 2018

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts
In

The Department of English
Seton Hall University
May, 2018
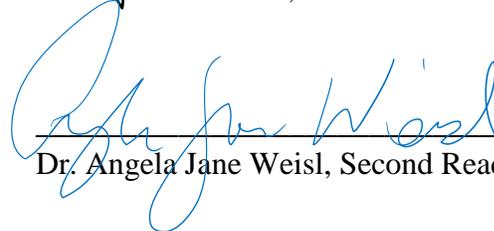
Seton Hall University

College of Arts and Sciences

Department of English

This Thesis, "I Believe in Sherlock Holmes": Fans, Readers, and the problem of Serial

Character, by Mary Katherine Evans has been approved for submission for the Degree of Master

of Arts in English—Literature by:

Approved by:

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Abstract

Through the connections between Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes short stories and Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat's series *Sherlock*, this thesis examines the phenomenon of fan fictions and fan works, which constitutes a type of seriality distinct from serial fictions and television series.The project pursues the phenomenon of Sherlock Holmes in order to better understand fan culture and the "virtual reality" created by original fans of the written works and fans of *Sherlock*. Sherlock Holmes represents a different model of characterization; he is presented across timelines, although he doesn't always bear the name "Sherlock Holmes," he is just as recognizable in whatever form he takes. Thus, the Phenomenon of Sherlock Holmes is not just this character; Holmes glimpses a different notion of modern subjectivity and a different notion of the philosophical Event. The following short stories will be analyzed in 3-4 sections: "The Final Problem," "The Musgrave Ritual," "The Empty House," and "His Last Bow" and interchapters featuring *Sherlock* episodes "The Great Game," "The Reichenbach Fall" "The Abominable Bride," and "The Empty Hearse." In addition to simply making the case that fan fiction and fan works are worthy of academic study, this paper creates a greater understanding of such works.

"You're Sherlock Holmes. Wear the Damn Hat": The "Look" of the Consulting Detective

"I'm a private detective," Sherlock says in "A Scandal in Belgravia" (2012),[1] "The last thing I need is a public image." Ironically, though, the one character in the Sherlock Holmes canon, or even the canon of detective fiction, who has a "public image" is Sherlock Holmes. The character is depicted with the deerstalker, holding a magnifying glass, and smoking a curved pipe. In *Sherlock* (2010), however, Sherlock's "public image" changes: he wears a long, grey coat and scarf, uses nicotine patches or smokes the occasional cigarette, and carries a slide-out magnifying lens. This extensive change begs the question: what makes Sherlock Holmes "Sherlock Holmes"? According to Lynette Porter, "newer iterations of Sherlock Holmes must be recognizable as the Conan Doyle character but unique in the way Holmes is appealing to audiences" (3). Porter's approach to modern interpretations of Sherlock Holmes is precisely how Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, the creators of *Sherlock*, view their interpretation of the character as they bring him from the page to the screen.

Most of the physical details that make Sherlock Holmes "Sherlock Holmes" are not canonical to the original Conan Doyle texts. Sidney Paget, the original illustrator for Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, put the detective in a deerstalker for "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" (1891) (Boström 67). Interestingly, he chose a hat used for hunting, and Sherlock Holmes was indeed hunting criminals (Boström 67). Conan Doyle, however, only provides the following description: "a cloth cap"; the deerstalker is a choice made by the illustrator (Boström 67). This illustrator's license exemplifies how outside forces contribute to the creation of serial characters in particular by filling voids made or left in previous texts. In this sense, Paget becomes an adapter, and "from the adapter's perspective, adaptation is an act of appropriating or

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[1] Note: When referring to "Watson" or "Holmes," I am discussing Conan Doyle's original creations. When referring "John" or "Sherlock," the characters from *Sherlock* are being referenced. Matthias Boström utilizes this method in *From Holmes to Sherlock: The Story of the Men and Women who Created an Icon*.

salvaging and this is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new"
(Hutcheon 20). This method of adaptation translates onto William Gillette as he adapts Sherlock
Holmes for the theater.

William Gillette, an American, was the first man to play Sherlock Holmes on the stage,
and on the radio (Boström 197). He clothes his version of Sherlock Holmes in the iconic
deerstalker for the entirety of the play, not just scenes out in the country as Paget did (Boström
102). Gillette even showed up to his initial meeting with Conan Doyle wearing his costume,
essentially cosplaying as Sherlock Holmes before dressing up as favorite popular culture icons in
public was the norm (Boström 103). Nearly every depiction of Sherlock Holmes from this point
forward, from book and magazine covers to advertisements, bears the image of the deerstalker-
clad detective. Gillette also originated the curved pipe, rather than the clay one marked out in
Conan Doyle's text because it would be easier for him to deliver his lines while holding the
curved pipe in his teeth (Boström 102). Conan Doyle, by omitting physical descriptions of
Sherlock Holmes, left the door open for Sidney Paget and William Gillette to step in as
illustrator and actor to fill the void and craft a consulting detective in the now iconic deerstalker.

Filling voids, accordingly, is an integral feature of what Deidre Lynch examines in *The
Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (1998) as
the "economy of character." Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Lynch notes, literary
critics "were eager to consign recognitions arising from telltale rings, scars, and other
distinguishing features to the debased category of popular entertainment" (26), whereas other
features became recognizable indexes of psychological depth. Sherlock Holmes certainly would
be confined to the "debased category of popular entertainment" through the items that make him
"Sherlock Holmes," like the deerstalker and curved pipe. Paul Booth makes a similar observation

about the position of Conan Doyle's works as art, noting that "the Holmesian oeuvre of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle sits in an uneasy position between popular and high culture" (80). However, the depth foregrounded by Lynch is not the only dimension of character; embodiment, clothing, eating preferences, and other habits also create character, particularly in the late Victorian period. This evolution in what it takes to create character becomes much more material as characters like Sherlock Holmes appear, particularly when there are lacking physical descriptors for fans and illustrators to fill. Modern readers want to ascribe depth to clothing, eating, and other details, even though these are the features that the Regency readers to which Lynch refers denigrated as "popular."

The void in Sherlock Holmes' appearance creates an area where creative minds, like Paget and Gillette, come in and create something that becomes the iconic image of the consulting detective. And, in turn, the character becomes subject not only to the limitations inscribed into him by his original creator, Conan Doyle, but also to the trappings accrued over time by these illustrators, actors, costume designers, and even lay readers. This void only appears *as a void* when the perpetuation of the Holmes character in other genres, like theater and illustration, demands a wider array of details than the genre of short detective fiction requires. Detective fiction does not necessitate the depth in the same way that realist romance does; it does not require full costume like drama does. And, in turn, the proliferation of diverse genres sharing the same characters ultimately leads readers and fans to demand fully-fleshed out roundness associated most strongly with domestic psychological realism. Thus, Holmes' "look" becomes revamped and incorporated into the modern Sherlock Holmes of *Sherlock*. In "The Abominable Bride" (2016), for example, *Sherlock* steps away from the twenty-first century, returning to its roots in Victorian England. Holmes dresses accurately for the period; at one point, he reaches for

a top hat as he is about to leave 221B, but John tells him "not that one, this one," handing the deerstalker to Sherlock ("The Abominable Bride"). On Sherlock's questioning of John's choice, John says, "You're Sherlock Holmes. Wear the damn hat" ("The Abominable Bride"). In essence, the object of the deerstalker becomes necessary for Sherlock Holmes; he truly "becomes Sherlock Holmes" as soon as he places it on his head.

Lack of the deerstalker does not diminish Sherlock Holmes as "Sherlock Holmes." The writers of *Sherlock* were, however, obviously aware of the importance of the deerstalker in the culture of Sherlock Holmes. In Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer's "The Culture Industry" (1947), such awareness is obviously not accidental. For Adorno and Horkheimer, "The individual trait is reduced to the ability of the universal so completely to mold the accidental that it can be recognized as accidental" (Adorno and Horkheimer). The situations in which Sherlock receives the deerstalker may seem happy accidents, but they are purposeful moments designed to encourage the audience to further recognize the character as an adapted being with iconic objects connected to him. The police give Sherlock his deerstalker in "The Reichenbach Fall" (2012), but the first time Sherlock wears a deerstalker, he chooses it himself; he pulls the deerstalker from a costume rack and wears it as he leaves a crime scene in an attempt to avoid the press ("A Scandal in Belgravia"). This scene pays homage to Gillette, because Gillette became synonymous with Sherlock Holmes. Unfortunately for Sherlock, the press photographs him in the deerstalker, and the photo becomes the standard photo of Sherlock Holmes in every press release on *Sherlock* featuring the detective, even John's blog. However, what initially seems like a tendency to caricature-- the necessary reduction of a character to a telltale signature object like the deerstalker-- here becomes occasion for the "depth" of an advanced sort broached by Lynch:

the choice to don the deerstalker or not now always appears a complex choice of director or writer.

The gap between each version of Sherlock Holmes and the "real" original Sherlock Holmes serves as the more traditional gaps in realist characters like Elizabeth Bennet or Dorothea Brooke, serving as entrees for readers to affect to "know" the character of Sherlock Holmes more intimately than the next fan. These opportunities only exist because "The promissory note of pleasure issued by plot and packaging is indefinitely prolonged: the promise, which actually comprises the entire show, disdainfully intimates that there is nothing more to come, that the diner must be satisfied with reading the menu" (Adorno and Horkheimer). The menu the creator provides is simply not enough; readers desire the entrees, and when they are not present, readers and creators pick from the menu and craft their own entrees to "know" characters more intimately than the unsatisfying menu provided by the "culture industry."

This paper takes Sherlock Holmes as a case study to analyze fanfiction as a phenomenon wedding generic hybridity and character reception. Through an examination of "The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual" (1893),[2] "The Adventure of the Final Problem" (1893),[3] "The Adventure of the Empty House" (1903),[4] "His Last Bow" (1917), and *Sherlock* episodes "The Great Game" (2010), "The Reichenbach Fall" (2012), "The Empty Hearse" (2014), and "The Abominable Bride" (2016), this paper examines "The Sherlock Holmes Phenomenon" and Sherlock Holmes' ability to hold audience attention in multiple forms. The character nostalgia, Conan Doyle's nearly static formulaic method for the stories, and the "unkillability" of Holmes all come together to create a fan base that has been standing for over a century. Conan Doyle uncannily anticipates how fan fiction as a phenomenon takes characters from genres outside of

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[2] From this point forward, I refer to the story in the paper as "The Musgrave Ritual."
[3] From this point forward, I refer to the story throughout this paper as "The Final Problem."
[4] From this point forward this story is referred to as "The Empty House."

domestic realism, like the professional detective mystery in which Conan Doyle works, that do not typically flesh out deep interiority, and appreciates them through the generic lens of the domestic psychological realism. Fanfiction treats its subjects all as subjects of high realist fiction. The Holmes stories actually thematize the generic hybridity of this process of reception by depicting Watson as surrogate reader, through their endless histrionic resurrections and revisions of Holmes, and through nostalgia and the projection of constitutive lack onto the reader.

In *As If: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality* (2012), fan reaction and fan culture of Sherlock Holmes is grounded in what Michael Saler calls "the larger cultural project of the West: that of re-enchanting an allegedly disenchanted world" (6). Jay Clayton argues that Charles Dickens begins virtual-reality world-building in *Charles Dickens in Cyberspace: The Afterlife of The Nineteenth Century in Postmodern Culture* (2003). For Clayton, Dickens is the equivalent of modern "gamers who imagine the inner spaces of the communications system in terms of knights and quests, bright halls and dark passageways" (4). Interestingly, Saler attributes the start of virtual reality to a fictional character, while Clayton suggests the origin point of virtual reality is a real person. Saler's work builds from Clayton, suggesting that detective fiction starring Sherlock Holmes, a character in the "virtual reality" of 221B Baker Street, is the true start of the modern notion of world-building and virtual reality, as opposed to Dickens. Where Dickens' writing creates the "communication systems," Conan Doyle creates and runs the message boards.

However, study of virtual reality and fan culture must step back to an assessment of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's "The Culture Industry," as they argue that capitalistic culture creates and recreates the same characters and stories for the sake of reproduction, with the end

result that "The culture industry endlessly cheats its consumers out of what it endlessly promises." Therefore, fans endlessly crave more of the same character, more of the same format, more of the repeated tropes, because "customers" are denied the satisfaction they crave. However, Adorno and Horkheimer's solution is not the only possibility as to why characters are repeated and adapted over and over; adaptation theory has another answer. Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) lays the theoretical groundwork for adaptation theory. She notes, "we retell-- and show again and interact anew with-- stories over and over; in the process, they change with each repetition, and yet they are recognizably the same" (Hutcheon 177). The idea of adaptation as "recognizably the same" focuses on a sense of nostalgia, and such nostalgia exists inherently in the Sherlock Holmes stories, and in adaptations of the character and his adventures. My exploration of nostalgia develops that of Nicholas Dames' *Amnesiac Selves: Nostalgia, Forgetting, and British Fiction, 1810-1870* (2001). I expand on Dames' work, describing how the nostalgic interiority of high realism becomes so pervasive an expectation of modern readers that it animates the reception of characters like Holmes, who is, in his original instantiations, formally a far cry from the characters Dames describes.

Garrett Stewart's *Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (1996), enhances a discussion of fan culture and characterization through an assessment of the reader's integration into Victorian literature. While Stewart relegates the relationship between the "dear reader" and the text as based in individualism, Lynch asserts the superiority of social experience of character. The social experience of character *is* fan culture, as illustrated by Paul Booth in *Crossing Fandoms: SuperWhoLock and the Contemporary Fan Audience* (2016). Booth recognizes, like Saler, that Sherlock Holmes is the origin point of what constitutes modern fandom; he argues "of all the cult fan texts that thrive today, it is Sherlock Holmes that reveals

the longevity and survival of fandom across decades, through multiple media representations, and with varied (and often surprising) portrayals" (Booth 80). Fandom, for Booth, is a "communal glue" (100), which harkens back to the social aspect of fandom and fan work.

Booth's work expands on the work by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (2006).[5] Hellekson and Busse address the early-internet days of fandom, recognizing it as "a community, one that continually shifts its boundaries and the roles assigned to reader, writer, and audience to permit, and even invite play" (31). They assert that the notion of fandom as "a work in progress" is essential to fan work, recognizing that "the source texts in many cases are serial in progress, and constantly changing" (Hellekson and Busse 7). I utilize Hellekson and Busse as a springboard for a new study of fandom, fanfiction, and fan communities. The landscape of fandom and fan communities has drastically changed in the 12 years since the book's publication, and new avenues of fan work deserve examination.

Cutting the "Red Tape": Character and Fanfiction in "The Musgrave Ritual"

"The Musgrave Ritual," one of Holmes' "pre-Watson" cases, depicts Holmes assisting a friend from university with a familial ritual that actually contains clues to the location of the original crown of the English monarchy. The fan culture of the so-called Sherlockians, particularly the New York City-based Baker Street Irregulars, the first fan society in America for the consulting detective, is steeped in the ritual of "The Musgrave Ritual." At their annual dinner, the members perform the Musgrave Ritual as it appears in the text. In a departure from many of the other stories, Watson does not narrate this story; he only introduces it. "The Musgrave Ritual" also provides readers with personal background on Holmes by filling some of

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[5] "Fan Fiction" and "fanfiction" are used for the same object: fan-created fictional works. However, "fanfiction" is the common term in vogue today in fan communities, and it is the one I will be using, even if more academic sources use "fan fiction."

the voids in Holmes' characterization. Because the story takes place during Holmes' university years, Holmes himself confirms that he has a past. The exposure of Holmes' life outside of his cases provides a greater intimacy with the character, which cuts the very same "red tape" with which he binds his own cases. This unbinding maps onto the same "unbinding" that interests fans and their works on the consulting detective.

There are, however, two competing versions of character influencing the void of Sherlock Holmes. The detective genre style of character-- the one Conan Doyle seems content with up until this point-- and the other, fuller character: one with personal history, personality, specific clothing, and quirks. Fanfiction culture relies on the disjunction between fan desire/expectation and the material they latch onto. The desire for psychological domestic realism meets the matter of formulaic bureaucratic detective fiction. The red tape binding Holmes' character is desirable precisely because we want to cut it: we want to elaborate the voids left by a story that comes in the form of a detective fiction rather than the domestic realism readers seem to want. The phenomenon of serial characterization emanates from this generic mismatch. The generic mismatching goes beyond the character into the entire world of Sherlock Holmes, one that is "at once untethered to mundane reality and empirically grounded. 221B Baker Street was of this world, yet also unworldly: Holmes' adventures were not allegorical, and his imaginary milieu was as cozily self-contained as a snow globe" (Saler 33).

Critically, "The Musgrave Ritual" is one of the lesser examined cases in the canon. In "Arthur Conan Doyle's Use of Restoration History in 'The Musgrave Ritual'," Frank Ardolino approaches the story through the lens of Conan Doyle's interest in history and historical fiction to argue that Conan Doyle's use of Restoration History (the missing crown of St. Edward) through connection to relics pays homage to Queen Victoria and the British Monarchy. Keaghan

Turner also focuses on relics and objects, arguing that Sherlock Holmes is emblematic of

Victorian Era collecting culture in "Collectors of Collections: Sherlock Holmes and Collecting

Culture." Turner suggests:

> Beyond simply providing narrative grist or piquant clues for mystery-solving, the
>
> recurrence of collectors, collecting, and collections throughout the Holmes tales,
>
> alongside the centrality and profusion of things, suggests something psychologically and
>
> culturally significant about the passion, if not pathology to collect, and about the figure of
>
> the collector at the turn of the twentieth century. (7)

For Turner, this drive to collect and how certain characters collect suggests their position as hero

or villain. Turner maps this collecting drive onto adaptations of Holmes, leading to the variety of

modern television shows that deal with collecting artifacts or finding collections people have as a

way to map the phenomenon, such as *Storage Wars*.[6] Turner takes collecting completely out of

the fictional narrative, but the motivation still exists in shows in fictional worlds, such as

Warehouse 13[7] or *The Librarians*.[8]

The substance of the actual events of this case are not important for what the story does

for the Sherlock Holmes Phenomenon.[9] The opening paragraphs of the story lay out a seemingly

oppositional quality to the clean-cut, intelligent consulting detective. Watson's initial assessment

of Holmes asserts that Holmes' character contains "an anomaly" (Conan Doyle 528). Watson

says, "although in his [Sherlock Holmes'] methods of thought he was the neatest and most

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[6] *Storage Wars* (2010) is reality show where people bid on a abandoned storage units with the hopes of finding something valuable in the unit that will produce a profit for the purchaser of the unit.

[7] *Warehouse 13* (2009-2014) is a science fiction television show where articles belonging to famous historical people are collected and kept safe from the public in the Warehouse, the world's biggest collection of historical supernatural objects.

[8] *The Librarians* (2014-2018) is a science fiction/fantasy drama that features hunting down magical artifacts and keeping them safe in the Library, the biggest collection of knowledge, both magical and ordinary in the world.

[9] Musgrave's butler, Richard Brunton, and the maid, Rachel Howells, get a copy of the ritual, and they discover that there is a purpose to the questions of the ritual, which results in finding the original crown of the English Monarchy, now reduced to worthless rusted metal.

methodical of mankind, and although he affected a certain quiet primness of dress, he was none the less in his personal habits one of the most untidy men that ever drove a fellow-lodger to distraction" (Conan Doyle 528). Watson reveals the dichotomy in Holmes' characterization: Holmes is organized in manner and dress but disorganized in living habit. This characterological anomaly thematizes the generic anomaly: rigid formal appearance at work (the detective fiction genre) meets disorganized domestic life (domestic realism that readers implicitly want/tacitly expect).

For fans of the consulting detective, Watson's frustration-tinged description is new information; until "The Musgrave Ritual," Conan Doyle does not reveal much of the climate in 221B Baker Street, other than that it is where Holmes and Watson meet their clients. By stating that Homes is "one of the most untidy men," Watson paints a picture of a detective who is not consistently "pulled together" in every aspect of his life, creating a much more human picture than the seemingly cold and nearly non-human character of the early stories. The creators of *Sherlock* perpetuate this realist portrayal characterized by generic disjunction between public and private lives: "the brain without a heart, the calculating machine" ("The Abominable Bride").

Watson continues, "there is a limit" when it comes to how much disorganization he will take (Conan Doyle 528). Watson provides several instances of Holmes and his disorganized behavior: "a man who keeps his cigars in the coal-scuttle, his tobacco in the toe end of a Persian slipper, and his unanswered correspondence transfixed by a jack-knife into the very center of his wooden mantlepiece" (Conan Doyle 528). The first two storage behaviors of Holmes are methods of concealment. However, the unanswered correspondence, something that would appear to be more confidential in nature, is on display on the center of the mantelpiece, pierced by a knife to keep it in place. Such a behavior seems out of place for a character who does much

of his detecting by himself; why leave seemingly important papers on display where anyone can see them, but hide tobacco in Persian slippers? These behaviors, too, add another layer of humanity to the character of Sherlock Holmes.

Papers are the most common "litter" in 221B Baker Street, and most of these papers are mementos of Holmes' past cases, making them inherently nostalgic. Watson notes, "his [Holmes'] papers were my great crux" (Conan Doyle 529). Papers fill their shared space, and Watson laments that Holmes was particularly attached to his papers, "especially those which were connected to his past cases" (Conan Doyle 529). The keeping of papers related to Holmes' past cases nods to a nostalgia about Holmes which reappears in "The Empty House" (1903) where he says "This is, indeed, like the old days" after he reconnects with Watson (Conan Doyle 791). Like a character out of *Bleak House*, Holmes keeps a "large tin box" containing "bundles of paper tied up with red tape into separate packages" (Conan Doyle 529). This retention of papers also speaks to the nostalgia that Holmes seems to have for his cases; he keeps them in a specific place all wrapped up separately. Even in the chaos that is 221B in terms of the volume of papers mixed in with the experiments and other evidence of life in the flat, Sherlock Holmes keeps his cases in separate packages to be reviewed at a later date. However, Ed Wilste in "'So Constant an Expectation': Sherlock Holmes and Seriality" (1998), notes that the papers connect Conan Doyle to Watson to Holmes, so Conan Doyle's professionalism transfers onto Watson, who then transfers it onto Holmes through the use of volumes of paper (117).

Such behavior engenders internal allusions in the Holmes canon, in that it provides a hook for Conan Doyle casually to refer readers to previous stories, thus reinforcing the cohesion of the Holmes stories; such behavior also anticipates modern fan behavior, particularly the cohesion fans create in their own fan communities with their own work. Fans maintain an

extremely organized existence of fan accounts for their fanfictions and other fan works, tied to other forms of social media, like Tumblr or Twitter. For example, certain users utilize the same online handle for all of their social media accounts, so their work can be found and associated with the same person across all forms of media. They can be reduced to squealing and tears at the image of the possibility of John and Sherlock sharing a kiss as fan reaction videos on Youtube indicate, but in their own "fan lives," fans maintain rigid organization and ownership of their work. Tumblr even has protocols in place for bloggers to complain if another member has taken his or her work without permission. Such rigidity that fans maintain over their fandom work creates the same internal allusions across their own work. Like Conan Doyle, well-known fans in the fandom reinforce the cohesion of their own stories and work so fans can follow their stories and work.

The use of red tape as a means of keeping the papers organized nods to Holmes' professionalism, but also to the official government uses of red tape.[10] These papers indicate the professional position Holmes has created for himself. In this period where the professional emerges in the modern world, Holmes takes the papers that are all of the gathered materials for his cases, and he bundles them up in the same way that a lawyer or politician's papers would be arranged. Red tape has been a joke since the mid-nineteenth century; however, it is a common trope in nineteenth-century fiction, most notably in the self-expanding and self-absorbing case of Jarndyce v. Jarndyce in Dickens' *Bleak House* (1853). Red tape became so common that it is inserted into adaptations of nineteenth-century works even when it is not present in the original work. Such a use of red tape in "The Musgrave Ritual" adds an additional layer to the trope by taking a public-professional trope and repurposing it to articulate Holmes' domestic habits, and

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[10] "Red tape" according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* is "woven red or pink tape used to secure legal documents and official papers" ("Red tape, n").

in turn, his interiority. Dickens' essay arguing against bureaucracy, "Red Tape" (1851), claims the purpose of red tape "is to tie up public questions, great and small, … to make the neatest possible parcels of them, ticket them, and carefully put them away on a top shelf out of human reach." This description, other than just applying to bundles of cases kept by Holmes, also serves as an apt description of the consulting detective himself. He literally ties up public inquiries in his cases, parcelling them up and keeping them out of human reach in his "large tin box."

The attention drawn to the unknown (like the bundles of red-taped cases fans will never be privy to) is an important element of what becomes fan culture in later adaptations of the Holmes stories, notably *Sherlock*. Fanfiction writers latch on to scenes that they believe are unfinished, or lines that act as a springboard for a fictional work based on the "canon" of the show. These bundles of Holmes' cases that readers never see are on display in the box; they are the "public questions" Dickens discusses. The bundles, then, speak to Holmes' putative emotional attachments to and investments in his work and also generate the specter of a locked up oeuvre or trove of unread matters, a plenitude of Holmes' stories alluded to but unread (unwritten), and yet still somehow contained in the original canon. The bundles are metaphors for the whole project: they contain even the unwritten histories of cases of Holmes that the bundles simultaneously refuse to recognize.

The case of "The Musgrave Ritual," however, is remembered through items rather than papers. Watson describes Holmes finding the items relevant to the case in the following way:

> He [Holmes] dived his arm down to the bottom of the chest, and brought up a small wooden box, with a sliding lid, such as children's toys are kept in. From within he produced a crumpled piece of paper, an old-fashioned brass key, a peg of wood with a ball of string attached to it, and three rusty old discs of metal. (Conan Doyle 530)

These items are markedly separate from the bundles of papers tied with red tape. Layers of boxes, like Russian Nesting Dolls, contain the case. The objects contained in the box, Turner asserts "are neither functional nor commodified, but rather symbolic, metonyms for the history, for the story" (14). Furthermore, the box containing the case is a box "such as children's toys are kept in." Since this case is one of the "pre-Watson" cases, it is in a sense the "childhood" of Holmes' career; he is entering into the professional phase of his life, so it makes sense that it would be kept in a box for children's toys. The items themselves seem unrelated, further marking their difference from the rest of the bundles of paper.

Watson asks, "these relics have a history, then?" Watson's "relic" connotes the importance of the case in terms of Holmes' development as a professional, but also the importance of the case in terms of the fan culture surrounding the detective. "Relic," connotes "an object or artefact held sacred by some other religion or culture," and "something kept as a remembrance, souvenir, or memorial; a historical object relating to a particular person, place, or thing; a memento" ("Relic, n."). These objects are clearly held sacred by Holmes, because they are in a box kept in his box of past cases. "Relic" also has a meta-textual connotation as well, because for fans of Holmes, these objects are held sacred by the fan culture that surrounds the character of Sherlock Holmes. These objects are "proof" of Sherlock Holmes' past; they provide evidence for his growth and development as a person, which encourages the fan societies to treat Holmes as a real person. However, history is exactly what Holmes utilizes in his response to Watson's question. Thus, Watson here seems to personify popular readers' response to Holmes, as if Watson were a surrogate fan, arguably the first fan character.

Holmes replies that indeed, the relics have a history, "so much so that they are history" (Conan Doyle 530). Holmes reinforces the relics as important historical artifacts which are

sacred to a culture, the culture of Sherlock Holmes. Holmes' words indicate that the mementos from "The Musgrave Ritual" *are* history as opposed to just being historical. Turner notes, "objects function as active agents in narrating the past" (15). These mementos actively tell the story of "The Musgrave Ritual," both in Watson's narrative and in the driving force of Holmes' narration. However, Holmes' own cases also serve as history, and a revered one at that. As he takes the cases out of the box, Watson notes that Holmes "lifted each bundle in a tender, caressing sort of way" (Conan Doyle 529), indicating "he [Sherlock Holmes] alone knows the true worth of his materials, comes alive in them, and has a more intimate relationship with them than he has with most human beings" (Turner 14). These cases are the Holmes Archive: treasured artifacts preserving his history as a detective.

Holmes contains these cases in much the same way that he keeps the tobacco and his cigars: they are concealed in a safe place, a "Sherlockian treasure chest for his chronicler Watson as well as for the reader" (Turner 14). Also, Holmes treats the texts of his cases in a reverent way; they are almost sacred, much like the texts of the Sherlock Holmes stories are to fans of the detective. The foundation canon of Sherlock Holmes (affectionately known as the ACD canon) gave rise to *Sherlock*, which has its own strong fan base, that in turn spurred others on to create new stories and artwork tied to the original stories, which then ties back to the original fans of Sherlock Holmes.

For fans of Sherlock Holmes, this case formulates and creates social ritual. The use of the Musgrave Ritual in the story becomes a ritual of almost religious significance, with further reinforces Watson's use of the word "relic." All of the Sherlock Holmes stories serve as "relics" for fans; each one provides information for the culture of Sherlockians. Ardolino says, "Moreover, just as Holmes becomes the instrument of restoring the lost crown of England, the

reader can rival Holmes by recovering the subtext. In essence, the reader becomes a literary detective participating in the deciphering of the text by uncovering its hidden historical meanings" (155). Readers examine and deduce the "relic" put in front of them: the box of old cases, the cases tied with red tape, the artifacts from the case of the Musgrave Ritual, and then they decipher the information within. Readers and fans literally get to cut the red tape.

While the reader of domestic realism has often been portrayed-- like Jane Eyre in her curtained bow window-- as a private self, character reading has had a public, communal cast since at least the eighteenth century. As Lynch asserts, "our transactions with characters remain, … profoundly social experiences" (20). Fan works and fan experiences are indeed social, but also communal. Michael Saler notes, "Contact with fellow readers could alter individual opinion, even character" (23). It is this contact with fellow readers that eventually alters the character. Readers have continual contact with Conan Doyle, and fans of *Sherlock* have interactions with each other and with the shows actors and creators. Such repeated contact continues to change the character in later adaptations, and "The Musgrave Ritual" thematizes the communal aspect of reading and its collective work of characterization as a ritual. Because the ritual is performed at the annual dinner of the Baker Street Irregulars, Sherlockian culture relies on its "sacred texts" ("The Musgrave Ritual" in particular) for such a ritual. These questions in the ritual are nonsensical within the case of "The Musgrave Ritual," until the very end of the story, where Holmes finds the treasure and explains the true meaning of the questions. However, for the Baker Street Irregulars, the importance of the questions is inherent in the ritual they perform, at the same time of year, at the same communal gathering, much like a religious ceremony. In fact, the tagline for the Baker Street Irregulars Trust, the archival and fundraising branch of the Baker Street Irregulars, is simply, "For the sake of the trust," the final line that completes the ritual.

Incidentally, T.S. Eliot even adapts this ritual into his own play, *Murder in the Cathedral* (Klinger 541).

"The Musgrave Ritual," as a case, is one of these red taped bundles in Sherlock Holmes' box; however, it also opens a red taped bundle in terms of Holmes' personality. In a sense, the story allows readers to have a more intimate connection to the character through Watson's description of more intimate details of Holmes' daily behavior when he rests in 221B, to the box of old cases all tied up. Essentially, readers-- embodied in Watson-- can imagine themselves "cutting the red tape" around Holmes; cutting the red tape provides a more intimate connection to the character--because it translates him from one genre (the red-tape genre of juridico-detective mystery) to another (domestic psychological realism)-- that readers crave and seek out through fan communities on Tumblr or Twitter. Sherlock Holmes still maintains his popularity through the reveal of his interiority, lending itself to the domestic realism that Victorian readers recognized and enjoyed. Readers are literally unbundling Holmes, learning the intimate secret behind-closed-doors secrets that, until now, Watson had only been privy to. This cutting of red tape is ritual-as-ritual, a translation of genres.

Lynch asserts that "A real character who comes packaged as a quiz cannot be figured out" (79). Sherlock Holmes is not a quiz, but he is bundled paper tied with red tape and waiting to be unwrapped through the "great game" played by Sherlockians, and through Conan Doyle providing readers with an occasional unwrapped bundle of Holmes' personality. This unwrapping of Holmes speaks to the interest in the fan community of knowing the interior secrets of characters, leading to a "communal (albeit contentious and contradictory) interpretation in which a large number of potential meanings, directions, and outcomes co-reside" (Hellekson and Busse 7). Holmes is an individual; he does not represent a flat type. He

holds up to Lynch's goal to "demonstrate that this story does something besides reflect the history of the forms of (non-imaginary) selfhood" (4). Lynch also says, "the meanings saturating a character are at once generic *and* individual" (47). Holmes seems to be both: he treads the line between being a generic type that can easily be changed and adapted with changing years and generations, while also being an individual so iconic that he could not possibly be changed.

"I'm a Storyteller. I Know When I'm in One": Fanfiction and Canonical Rewriting

The *Sherlock* episode "The Abominable Bride" operates in two planes of existence: the past in Victorian London, where the characters exist in Sherlock's mind palace, and the 2014 "real" versions of Sherlock and John. In the previous episode, "His Last Vow," Moriarty seems to return from the dead, even though present-Sherlock witnessed Moriarty shoot himself in the head. Present-Sherlock utilizes his mind palace to attempt to solve a similar case from 1895 in a metatextual period piece that superimposes the past over the present. The episode illustrates the element of fan culture where fanfiction and fan work rewrites history and certain moments in the canonical texts that fans find unsatisfying, because fanfiction recognizes "the valuable innovations that occur in the process of repetition: one scene can be rewritten in fifty or five hundred different ways, with each repetition elucidating some different aspect or dynamic of the scene" (Derecho 76).

Linda Hutcheon notes that adapters of works "not only interpret that work, but in so doing they take a position on it" (92). Hutcheon's notion of adaptation directly converses with Derecho's assertion that "fic authors posit the question 'what if' to every possible facet of a source text" (76). The question Moffat and Gatiss asked themselves as they rewrote the Reichenbach Fall scene was: "what if Holmes never went over the falls?," and "what if Watson was there with Holmes at the Falls?" Moffat and Gatiss also take a position in adapting the

Reichenbach Fall scene; they rewrote it in a way that would have provided the original fans with an ending that did not result in the ten-year cliffhanger they received as a result of Arthur Conan Doyle's attempt to kill his creation. In Sherlock's mind palace, he has gone too deep; he takes various drugs in order to reach this deep point of his mind. In his mind, Sherlock stands at the Reichenbach Falls with Professor Moriarty. Moriarty says "This is how we end, you and I. Always here, always together" ("The Abominable Bride"). Most people who know of Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty, but especially fans, know that the pair goes over the Reichenbach Falls together; this moment of the episode begins the "rewrite."

In the original text of "The Final Problem," John is nowhere to be found; he does not even see Moriarty at any point of the story. However, in "The Abominable Bride" (2016), the story is rewritten, creating an answer to the fanfiction writers' "what if" question. As Sherlock and Moriarty struggle at the edge of the falls, John Watson appears. Moriarty says, "That's not fair; there's two of you," to which John replies, "There's always two of us. Don't you read *The Strand*?" ("The Abominable Bride"). This metatextual moment rewrites history; it does not make sense for these two characters to be apart in such an important moment like the final showdown with Professor Moriarty. Therefore, fans of the original text, and fans of *Sherlock* expect Sherlock and John to be together; in every other major encounter with Moriarty, the pair is always together, so it makes sense that the rewrite of this pivotal moment would requires the presence both halves of the partnership.

One line of the Reichenbach Fall sequence encapsulates the historical rewrite: before Sherlock jumps over the falls to bring himself out of his mind palace, Sherlock and John have the following exchange:

Sherlock: Between you and me, John, I always survive the fall.

John: But how?

Sherlock: Elementary, my dear Watson.

Had this exchange existed in the original text, fans would have known that their favorite detective would have survived. Also, this moment is the first time that the non-canonical-yet-iconic line "Elementary, my dear Watson" appears in the show. Fans would have been aware of this line, since actor William Gillette originates the line in the Sherlock Holmes play in which he had the starring role (Boström 183). "The Abominable Bride" episode encompasses Garrett Stewart's apostrophizing and disciplining of the reader, while also incorporating Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation as "an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art" (170), like "The Final Problem."

"A Lie That's Preferable to the Truth": Problems of Finality in "The Final Problem"

"The Final Problem," Conan Doyle's initial planned end for the Consulting Detective, obviously speaks to the problems of finality created by Conan Doyle in the events of the story. One possible connotation of "problem" sheds light on this issue: "with qualifying noun or adjective: a seemingly insoluble quandary affecting a specified group of people or a nation; (also) a long standing personal difficulty" ("Problem, n."). The "qualifying noun or adjective" in the title is "final"; the title, then, could literally mean, "the problem of finality." The form the story takes in terms of Watson's narration and the story's plot add to the question of whether or not this story is the end of the Holmes stories. Present-day readers of this story obviously know that Sherlock Holmes did not really die in "The Final Problem"; however, the first readers of "The Final Problem" in the *Strand* magazine had no such foreknowledge. To them, this may well have appeared to be the end of Sherlock Holmes. Conan Doyle, however, seems to have left clues to readers that this story was not the end after all.

Critics continually question Conan Doyle's motivations for "The Final Problem," pairing such concerns with issues of author authority. Michael Atkinson argues that Conan Doyle creates "an intricate aesthetic of absence in order to pluck his hero [Sherlock Holmes] from the scene" (140). Through moments unseen and the character of Moriarty as a mirror of Holmes, Conan Doyle completely departs from the form of the typical detective story. For Atkinson, the only way to kill Sherlock Holmes is to abandon the form of the detective story (146). In "The Final Problem: Constructing Coherence in the Holmesian Canon," Camilla Ulleland Hoel argues that "the clear separation of the canon from apocrypha, with the attendant reinforced author function, may have laid the ground not only for the acceptance of contrarian reading, but also for the creation of apocryphal writings like pastiche and fan fiction" (1). These critics approach "The Final Problem" through its form and concern for the reader in the text. "The Final Problem," then, questions the real "owner" of the narrative.

Watson opens "The Final Problem" with a spoiler for readers: "It is with a heavy heart that I take up my pen to write the last words in which I shall ever record the singular gifts by which my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes was distinguished" (Conan Doyle 713). The story is immediately marked as the last Sherlock Holmes story before the text even moves into the case covered in "The Final Problem." This disclosure departs from the more typical stories that open with a client or mysterious circumstances that set up the case. "The Empty House," for example, which tells of Sherlock Holmes' return to the land of the living, opens with a line about the murder of Lord Adair, rather than opening with a line about the return of Sherlock Holmes, or Watson telling readers that Sherlock Holmes is actually alive (Conan Doyle 781). However, "The Final Problem" breaks from the norm of the Sherlock Holmes Story's opening lines. Giving away endings like Watson does is a conventional feature of nineteenth-century realism.

Consider Dickens' revelation midway through *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) that John Rokesmith is the presumed dead John Harmon, or Anthony Trollope's pronouncement that Lily Dale will never marry Johnny Eames in the midst of wooing that extends beyond the *Small House at Allington* (1864) into *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867). These disclosures constitute apostrophes to the reader of the sort Garrett Stewart implicates in the history of the novel. Stewart writes, "the trope of the invoked 'dear reader' fabricates an entirely one-sided conversation; however dear or gently predisposed, the reader can never talk back" (Stewart 13). It is this "one-sided conversation" that Watson has with the reader through the course of "The Final Problem," beginning with its opening line.

"The Final Problem" apostrophizes the reader as if to assert its unique authority over the story of Holmes in a culture of unauthorized reproduction that rivalled even that of Dickens, whose novels often competed with concurrently serialized pirated alternatives like *The Life and Times of Oliver Twiss, the Workhouse Boy* (1839) and *David Copperful* (approximately 1839).[11] Watson says, "It lies with me to tell for the first time what really took place between Professor Moriarty and Mr. Sherlock Holmes" (Conan Doyle 714), as if others had already been telling what did not actually take place and stood in need of his correction. Watson sets up a meta-textual moment through the need to tell the "truth" of what happened between Holmes and his arch nemesis. By the time of this story's publication, there were many reproductions of Sherlock Holmes stories in the "real world" outside of Watson's world. J.M. Barrie, creator of Peter Pan, wrote an anonymous parody of Sherlock Holmes, "My Evening with Sherlock Holmes" (1891) (Boström 72-74). Conan Doyle, upon learning that Barrie wrote the parody, completely approved of it because he admired Barrie, and Conan Doyle approved of many parodies of Sherlock

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[11] Thomas Peckett Prest, a prominent writer of penny dreadfuls is the author of these pirated alternative Dickens novels.

Holmes, even those not written by friends (Boström 75). However, by the early 1900s, Europe

began producing cheap knock offs of Sherlock Holmes with titles like "The Moneylender's

Daughter" (1907), "The Blood-Stained Jewels" (1907), and "Interred with the Infernal Machine"

(1907), and Conan Doyle no longer approved (Boström 135-136).

Conan Doyle and Watson are both in the position of claiming authority over the tales of

Sherlock Holmes, which indicates an awareness of audience appropriation of the character of

Sherlock Holmes. Watson references a letter that was written by Colonel James Moriarty in

defense of his brother, Professor James Moriarty (Conan Doyle 714).[12] Therefore, Watson's need

to "tell for the first time what really took place" between Sherlock Holmes and Moriarty

references the cheap knock offs of the Sherlock Holmes stories that have not been sanctioned by

Conan Doyle. Watson and Conan Doyle nod to the reader here; Conan Doyle reminds them that

he, meaning both Watson and Conan Doyle, and he alone, are the authorities of what happened

to Sherlock Holmes. Laying claim to the true and real story or true story amongst fake others

works best when there is a robust pool of fake others to push off against, and the volume of

knock-off penny dreadful Sherlock Holmes tales create this robust pool of fake others for Conan

Doyle to work against. This arrogation of authority, like any other, speaks to an awareness that

Holmes had somehow been appropriated by his audience.

Holmes becomes what Deidre Lynch describes as a "known face," indicating possession

of not just the character, but of his physical features as well. Lynch says, "In this way of

explicating character and how it matters, it is the face's singularity-- and, by extension, its part in

upholding a foundational sort of private property-- that are crucial" (Lynch 33). The face acting

as private property speaks to the ownership fans have over characters, even characters they did

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[12] The names of the Moriarty men are the same, which has been a point of contention for critics as to if these men are really the same man, or if there is a reason these men share the same first name, as Leslie Klinger indicates (714).

not create. Members of the *Doctor Who* fandom, for example, all have "their doctor," that is, the

Doctor at the given moment that said fan became interested in the fandom. That face becomes

"owned" by the fans who hold that Doctor as "theirs"; when the Doctor changes, fans are still

loyal, but that new face becomes "owned" by a new generation of fans. The Doctor is still the

same, simply bearing a different face; as The Moment, in the form of the Doctor's companion

Rose Tyler, says, "same software, different case" ("The Day of the Doctor"). So it is with

Sherlock Holmes. For a generation of fans, William Gillette was "their Sherlock Holmes"; he

portrayed the character on stage, film, and radio. For others, Basil Rathbone or Robert Downey

Jr. is "their Sherlock Holmes." However, for *Sherlock* fans, Benedict Cumberbatch is "their

Sherlock Holmes."

Watson takes ownership of the truth in terms of Sherlock Holmes, adding an

epistemological frame of truth to the narrative. The letters Watson references, and feels the need

to refute, are "an absolute perversion of the facts" (Conan Doyle 714). He says that he reports

the actual events, but he also accuses those who wrote about the events surrounding Holmes and

Moriarty of perverting the facts. Mobilizing the epistemological thrust of the detective fictions

into the narrative frame of their telling, Watson says "I alone know the absolute truth of the

matter" (Conan Doyle 714). Through use of the personal pronoun "I," Watson takes ownership

of "the absolute truth." By taking ownership in this way so early in the story, Watson reminds

readers that he is the keeper of Sherlock Holmes' stories. No one else has the right, or ability, to

accurately tell any story about his friend, not even Conan Doyle. The Holmesian Great Game

(fan assessments of the Holmes Canon's inconsistencies) "claims to reject the authorship of

Conan Doyle, accepting him only as the conduit, the literary agent, of Dr. John H. Watson"

(Hoel 11). By eliminating Conan Doyle from the equation, audiences can more easily reconcile

issues of authorial inattention, while also crafting their own readings of the texts in question. Saler also notes, "Holmes was the first character in modern literature to be widely treated as if he were real and his creator fictitious" (106). The audience gives authorship, and therefore ownership, of the narrative to Watson, rejecting Conan Doyle's contributions entirely. Saler attributes this trend to the newly developing concept of celebrity culture (114). However, Saler also names a category of fan, whom he coins, "the ironic believer, who pretended that Holmes was real-- but for whom this pretense was so earnest that the uninitiated might not recognize it as pretense" (115). In both cases, Conan Doyle is rejected as author; he becomes relegated to the position of editor or distributor of author Watson's work. Watson's ownership also indicates that he also has a right to Sherlock Holmes, not just his stories.

But "The Final Problem" flirts with both senses of "final," as if killing off Holmes could ensure that he belongs to Conan Doyle alone. Holmes looks sickly throughout the course of the story, and his sickness appears to uphold the finality of "The Final Problem" as the "last" Sherlock Holmes story. At the beginning of the events of the story, Holmes goes to visit his companion at home. Watson says, "it struck me that he [Holmes] was looking even paler and thinner than usual" (Conan Doyle 716). Because this moment is the first mention of Sherlock Holmes in his "final" story, the text foreshadows that the beloved detective is going to meet an unfortunate end in some way. This pale, sickly depiction of Holmes evokes Atkinson's idea that "the single most important inversion [in "The Final Problem"] is the shift from Holmes as investigator to Holmes as victim" (146). Holmes becomes the victim by mimicking the scared,

pale, and sickly appearance his clients usually possess. In two pages, Watson uses the word "pale" to describe Holmes twice.[13]

The word choice of "pale" indicates Conan Doyle's character fatigue with Sherlock Holmes, which results in Conan Doyle's desire to kill his creation. "Pale" connotes "something luminous or illuminated: lacking in brightness or brilliancy; faint in lustre, dim" ("Pale, adj."). Holmes is typically the most "illuminated" at any given moment, so for Holmes to be "pale," he must no longer be the brightest in the room. By physical proximity, then, Watson must be the brightest in the room, positioning himself later in the story to take on the role of Holmes in solving the case of his friend's apparent death. Another connotation of "pale" contrasts with the intense, vigorous Holmes of the earlier stories.[14] Through such descriptions of Holmes, Conan Doyle perhaps indicates that he is tired of writing about Holmes; Holmes, to him, is dim, "lacking intensity," and "without spirit" ("Pale, adj."). By this point, indeed, Conan Doyle wanted to focus on writing historical novels, so "His [Conan Doyle's] decision was final. Sherlock Holmes must die" (Boström 84). Holmes was merely in his way. The time of Holmes is over. The physical description of Holmes in "The Final Problem" is a kind of character fatigue, speaking to both Holmes' physical appearance and the fatigue Conan Doyle has in continuing to write this character.

Watson speaks of the events of the Reichenbach Falls as "that event which has created a void in my life which the lapse of two years has done little to fill" (Conan Doyle 713). Ironically, "voids" are essential to nineteenth century character. Voids-- in the form of objects of desire, ineffable unconsciousness, or other constitutive lacks--define modern subjectivity. Watson's

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[13] The other mention of "pale" is where Holmes invites Watson to go on holiday, about which Watson notes, "it was not in Holmes's nature to take an aimless holiday, and something about his pale face told me that his nerves were at their highest tension" (Conan Doyle 717).

[14] "Feeble, weak, faint; lacking intensity, vigour or robustness; timorous, without spirit" ("Pale, adj.").

writing of this story is a need, something that must be done in order to address the feelings he has at this point. This line speaks directly to fans of the *Sherlock* television show. The show typically has two-year gaps between seasons, leaving the fans with nothing to fill the void of unanswered questions. What fans do to fill the void is create; they write fanfiction, they create fan art, they craft montages of their favorite scenes from the show set to music, and they join fan forums to speculate about the direction of the show and unanswered questions that fans have as they re-watch the seasons. This method is the one that Watson employs in his writing of "The Final Problem." In addition to addressing the lies surrounding the other previously published accounts of the incident of the Reichenbach, Watson feels the need to create in order to address his feelings and to fill the void that the absence of Sherlock Holmes created in his life. Production of these adaptations cultivates the lack it simultaneously affects to fill.

"The Final Problem," is essentially backwards in terms of the client-detective relationship. Holmes becomes the client, and Watson, the detective. Holmes is the pale, sick looking individual who shows up at 221B Baker Street with the case of a criminal mastermind that has set said client on edge. The client then proceeds to tell Sherlock Holmes the problem at hand, and then Holmes goes out to solve the case, providing an explanation only at the end of the narrative. In "The Final Problem," however, Holmes functions as client, not detective. Atkinson points out that there is only one explanation of such a change in form: "If the goal of the tale is to eliminate Holmes, that means stopping the endless repetition of the familiar formula" (146). Atkinson's remarks about Conan Doyle's goals for the story are the first of a long list of reversals in "The Final Problem" that end with Holmes going over the Reichenbach Falls. The client does not come to 221B Baker Street; Holmes goes to Watson, and "putting his fingers together and his elbows upon his knees, he explained the situation" (Conan Doyle 717).

Watson is in the Holmes position, so to speak; this role reversal begins here, not at the Reichenbach Falls, where Atkinson argues readers are to start trusting Watson's deductions (146). Holmes sits across from him, explaining Moriarty, "the Napoleon of crime" (Conan Doyle 719), and his veiled involvement in several cases the pair has worked together, and the vast network and resources at his fingertips. The pair then go together to attempt to catch Moriarty, and at the end of the story, Watson provides deductions for readers. The basic form of the story, then, appears preserved, even though it is also flipped on its head. Because the form has been so altered when it comes to Holmes' involvement in the case, Conan Doyle appears to leave open the possibility that this is not actually the final tale from Watson concerning the first consulting detective. In the *Sherlock* episode "The Empty Hearse," John tells Sherlock, "admit it, you love it… Being Sherlock Holmes" ("The Empty Hearse"). Apparently, John Watson also enjoys getting to be "Sherlock Holmes" in "The Final Problem."

Watson writes that he sees Holmes "with his back against a rock and his arms folded, gazing down at the rush of the waters. It was the last that I was ever destined to see him in this world" (Conan Doyle 738). Watson's "in this world," rather than the more common, or expected, "in this lifetime" implies there is another world where he will see Sherlock Holmes again. Conan Doyle seems careful here to give the appearance of an ending without actually telling readers that the story is over. And, to be sure, over a decade later, Conan Doyle returns to writing about Sherlock Holmes with "The Empty House," the first story in the collection, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. This collection, and the following stories until the true chronological end of Holmes, "His Last Bow," or the final published story, "The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place" (1927), constitutes a new world, a world without Holmes' nemesis, Moriarty.

As Watson leaves Holmes at the Reichenbach, he walks away, looking back, but "it was impossible, from that position, to see the fall" (Conan Doyle 739). This missed observation already creates problems for the finality of Sherlock Holmes. Watson cannot see the Falls, therefore, he cannot confirm that Sherlock Holmes is really dead. Watson notes that

> An examination by experts leaves little doubt that a personal context between the two men ended, as it could hardly fail to end in such a situation, in their reeling over, locked in each other's arms. Any attempt at recovering the bodies was absolutely hopeless, and there, deep down in that dreadful cauldron of swirling water and seething foam, will lie for all time the most dangerous criminal and the foremost champion of the law of their generation. (Conan Doyle 744)

However, there were no witnesses to these events; the only "proof" is what the so-called experts have determined, and Holmes has mocked experts and their theories from his first entrance into the literary world in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). Time and time again, Holmes has proven the experts of Scotland Yard inept and easily mislead, even by his own hand. Therefore, the possibility that they could be correct about Sherlock Holmes' death is questionable at best. Furthermore, no bodies have been found, and any attempt to search for them is ill-advised. In this moment, Conan Doyle once again leaves open the possibility that Holmes is not really dead; he just wants readers to assume that Holmes and Moriarty went over the falls, "locked in each other's arms." Why would the experts assume that the pair would be locked together this way? In contrast to the typical Holmes story, no one, not even Watson, provides evidence for these deductions. Granted, proof of deductions is typically provided by Holmes when he solves the case, but Watson appears to step into that position in this story, attempting to explain the incident as best he can.

The description of Holmes as the "foremost champion of the law of their generation" is a figurative expression of formal laws that govern the reproduction of these stories, and, by extension, the adaptation of these stories and modifications created by fan work. In "His Last Bow," Holmes describes Watson as "the one fixed point in a changing age" (Conan Doyle 1443), but this description essentially evokes the same authority as Holmes being "the law of their generation." Existing as a "fixed point" himself, Holmes sets the tone for what a detective is supposed to look like for generations to come; he is the authority on who or what is "Holmes-like."

Watson's stepping into Holmes' shoes for the remaining pages of "The Final Problem" illustrates the problems of finality created in the story's form. Watson says, once he calls out to Holmes and receives no response, that "Who was to tell us what had happened then?" (Conan Doyle 740). This question is telling, as is the pronoun usage. Because there are no witnesses to confirm that Holmes and Moriarty went over the falls, Watson's ability to tell the story with any sort of credibility is compromised. Anything from this question forward is pure conjecture. Watson uses the first person plural objective pronoun "us" in his question, as he counts himself among those who need to be told what happened to Sherlock Holmes. Conan Doyle further highlights the gap in Watson's storytelling through the use of "us," since it reminds readers that their narrator also does not know what happened to the consulting detective.

Watson is apparently the one "to tell us what happened," saying, "I began to think of Holmes's own methods and to try to practise them in reading this tragedy" (Conan Doyle 740). Watson clearly steps into the Holmes position from this point forward, attempting to deduce what happened to his friend and companion. He answers the question he posed moments earlier. The method keeps true to the form of the other stories, where Holmes steps in to tell the reader

how he solved the case. However, the departure from the form is clear, as it is Watson telling the story, but also because the ending of the story has no concrete proof or confession; the only evidence is Holmes' letter and the hypothesis of the experts Holmes has so often discredited. Watson follows up his volunteering to use the methods of Sherlock Holmes, by telling readers, "it was, alas, only too easy to do" (Conan Doyle 740). If it were truly too easy to do, Watson would have been correctly solving Holmes' cases all along, meaning there would have been no need for Holmes. Because this is not the case, readers are left questioning the validity of such a statement. However, this statement also mimics the moves Sherlock Holmes himself makes when solving cases, by reminding experts or those around him that for him, solving the case in question was all too easy.

"Between You and Me, I always Survive the Fall":
"The Reichenbach Fall" and Creating Fan Hype for Iconic Moments

Like "The Final Problem," the Conan Doyle's original "death" of Sherlock Holmes, *Sherlock*'s "The Reichenbach Fall" (2012) gives away the ending (mostly). John starts the episode in a therapist's office choking out, "my best friend, Sherlock Holmes, is dead" ("The Reichenbach Fall"). However, "The Reichenbach Fall" episode of *Sherlock* addresses Sherlock's characterization and popularity while also demonstrating an awareness on the part of the creators of the various theories surrounding the consulting detective's death. In order to keep things interesting for fans who already know that Sherlock survived the fall, focus shifts to Sherlock's perspective, rather than John's perspective.

After Sherlock jumps from the roof of St. Bart's, rather than the Reichenbach Falls, John returns to 221B briefly, and as he sits in his chair, he looks across to the chair usually occupied by Sherlock. This is cinematic evidence of the void that Watson speaks of in "The Empty

House." John refuses to let go of his friend. As he later stands by Sherlock's graveside, John says, "I was so alone, and I owe you so much. Please, there's just one more thing, one more thing, one more miracle, Sherlock, for me. Don't be dead" ("The Reichenbach Fall"). This sentiment is one that original fans of Sherlock Holmes must have felt reading "The Final Problem." They wanted Holmes not to be dead, and it was this pressure that they put on Conan Doyle which led to Conan Doyle resurrecting the character in "The Empty House."

However, *Sherlock*'s creators knew that their fans would already be aware that Sherlock Holmes does not die; they needed to come up with a new way to create the same hype that original fans experienced. In the Introduction to *Who is Sherlock?: Essays on Identity in Modern Holmes Adaptations* (2016), Lynnette Porter writes that "fans, too, are involved in the identity-creation processes" of Sherlock Holmes (1). Fans' influence on the characters demonstrates the intimate connection that people have with fictional characters, illustrating the notion that "Character is some readers' means to distinguish their own deep-feeling reception of texts from other readers' mindless consumption" (Lynch 19). Fans and their knowledge of the Conan Doyle canon influences the way writers of *Sherlock* create the "death" of Sherlock Holmes. Rather than just fans influencing the identity-creation process of characters, they influence the identity-creation of the entire show, particularly its iconic moments. In order to tide themselves over to the next series of *Sherlock*, fans theorized and wrote fan works about how Sherlock survived the Fall. This theme plays heavily into the opening episode of the following season, where multiple theories of "how he did it" are dramatized, further demonstrating how fan theorizing affects the identity-creation process of *Sherlock* and Sherlock Holmes.

"Holmes Sickness": Nostalgia and the Form of Fan Fiction

The short story, "The Adventure of the Empty House," is just as much about Sherlock Holmes' return as it is about the case contained within its pages. Serial narratives, like the Sherlock Holmes stories, are innately nostalgic to the extent that their aesthetic relies on attachment to characters from prior works. "The Empty House" thematizes this nostalgia, as it is the first short story in the collection *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. As with every Sherlock Holmes story, the devil is not in the details, however much Holmes solicits readers to fetishize them; the way the story is written suggests that readers ought not to be interested in the actual case being solved, but in the repeated narrative present or frame in nearly every Sherlock Holmes story. The form of these stories creates a nostalgia that causes readers to desire more works of the same kind. These stories follow the same basic plot: Holmes and Watson have a mysterious client at 221B Baker Street; Holmes pursues leads on his own; Holmes returns proclaiming he has solved the case; the bad guy is caught; Holmes explains how he solved the case.

Examination of "The Empty House" is lacking in general, with preference given to more popular stories, like "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892), which is commonly anthologized, or "The Final Problem," which is typically assessed for its departure from the typical form of the Sherlock Holmes story. Furthermore, "The Empty House" features Watson much more prominently than some of the other stories, and criticism on the narration of Watson, or even Watson himself is almost nonexistent; most of the critical focus, obviously, is on the consulting detective. Ed Wiltse's "'So Constant an Expectation': Sherlock Holmes and Seriality" argues that "the narrative seriality of the Holmes stories' form mirrors a set of serial phenomena within the texts that significantly complicate their ideological work" (106). Essentially, Wiltse asserts that since the Holmes stories could be infinite since each one is inherently separate, the lack of an ending creates expectation "among the marketplace, the author, the reader, and the

addict" (106). Regarding "The Empty House" specifically, Irving Kamil's "Sherlock Holmes and the Locked-Room Mystery" reminds readers that the case in question is a so-called "locked-room mystery," one that is "treated almost as a subsidiary to the return of Sherlock Holmes" (143). The murder's importance as one of a set of similar "locked-room mysteries," solved by the likes of Poe's Dupin among others, is forgotten, and Kamil places blame on Watson's literary prowess, but also on Holmes' own skills and desire to take out an enemy.

Fanfiction relies on nostalgia for its form as well. In "Writing Bodies in Space: Media Fan Fiction as Theatrical Performance," Francesca Coppa asserts that "fan fiction develops in response to dramatic rather than literary modes of storytelling and can therefore seem to fulfill performative rather than literary criteria" (226). This assertion latches on to the theatricality of fanfiction. However, she further asserts that theater, like in television, "there's a value in revising the same text in order to explore different aspects and play out different behavioral strips" (Coppa 236). It is this desire for repetition of the same text that drives fandom and fanfiction because "fanfiction is an amateur production accountable to no market forces, it allows for radical reimaginings: plots, themes, and endings that would never be permitted on network television" (237). Repetition that leads to endless reimaginings is inherently nostalgic. The appeal of the same characters over and over again, in any form, appeals to the innate nostalgia of its form.

After Holmes revives Watson (who faints upon seeing Sherlock Holmes, alive, standing in Watson's study after Holmes removes his disguise), the pair discuss what Sherlock was doing during what critics call The Great Hiatus. This revival becomes ironic, considering that Watson is the surrogate reader. Holmes then asks Watson to accompany him to assist with the Adair case. When Watson agrees, Holmes replies, "This is, indeed, like the old days" (Conan Doyle

791). The phrase "the old days" evokes the nostalgia of Sherlock Holmes and his cases. The phrase is repeated again as the pair begins their adventure. Watson remarks, "It was indeed like old times when, at that hour, I found myself seated beside him [Holmes] in a hansom, my revolver in my pocket, and the thrill of adventure in my heart" (Conan Doyle 798). This sentence reflects the entire canon of Sherlock Holmes. "It was indeed like old times" winks at the reader, who waited ten years for a return of their favorite detective. The readers are once again transported; they are sitting beside Holmes in the hansom, revolver in hand, and the thrill of adventure in their hearts. It is as if they never left. The nostalgia of the cases and the stories of Sherlock Holmes remain the same; the plot is recognizable, and fans easily fall back into the pattern of the Sherlock Holmes tales.

Watson writes these narratives; if anyone were to recognize the nostalgia of rejoining Holmes, it would be Watson. However, Holmes, who comes across as condescending much of the time, mentions the nostalgia first. Furthermore, Holmes says "This is, indeed, like the old days" (Conan Doyle 791). He speaks in present tense to Watson in dialogue. Watson, on the other hand, gives his version as narration: "It was indeed like old times" (Conan Doyle 798). Watson's statement is past tense; he speaks from a time much further away from the story's setting, so his statement is much more reflective of the competing temporalities generate the tension that domestic realism typically produces with a first-person past-tense autobiographical character (like Jane Eyre), or a third-person narrator and character (like *Pride and Prejudice*). It calls readers back to "old times," when Sherlock Holmes and Watson are solving cases, Holmes never went over the Reichenbach, and their story was uninterrupted by the passage of time. The slight shift in time frame is interesting; Holmes uses the word "days," and Watson uses the word "times." Watson truly felt the time that Holmes was gone; he feels much further removed from

his friend. Holmes on the other hand, is much closer to the time frame. In Holmes' mind, he was only gone for a few days, not the three years that Watson tells readers. Holmes does not seem to realize that Watson had a life during the Great Hiatus, a sentiment repeated in *Sherlock*'s "The Empty Hearse" as Sherlock says, "What life? I've been away."

Before Watson tells readers that Sherlock Holmes is, indeed, back, readers are introduced to the murder victim of "The Empty House," The Honorable Ronald Adair. Watson opens "The Empty House" saying, "It was in the spring of the year 1894 that all London was interested, and the fashionable world dismayed, by the murder of the Honourable Ronald Adair under most unusual and inexplicable circumstances" (Conan Doyle 781). This first sentence of the entire story mentions the victim; instead of the opening sentence of the story saying something about Holmes being alive, as Watson did in "The Final Problem" with Sherlock's "death," Watson opens mentioning the case. This choice to open focused on a murder creates the same standard setup of the Sherlock Holmes stories, the opening lines present a case without much mention of Sherlock Holmes.

The alternative lives of Sherlock Holmes are metaphorically depicted through the use of wax doubles utilized by Holmes. In order to catch the murderer, Colonel Sebastian Moran, Holmes and Watson set up a ruse in 221B Baker Street. Holmes and Watson take a position across the street from 221B, in Camden House (Conan Doyle 799). As they take their positions, Watson looks across the street and sees "the shadow of a man who was seated in a chair within was thrown in hard, black outline upon the luminous screen of the window. There was no mistaking the poise of the head, the squareness of the shoulders, the sharpness of the features. … It was a perfect reproduction of Holmes" (Conan Doyle 799). Holmes tells Watson that he had a wax bust of himself made to sit in the window and act as decoy for Colonel Moran (Conan Doyle

799). The goal was to draw out Moran to attack the pseudo-Holmes across the street, shooting the wax bust in the head (Conan Doyle 805). However, in order for the ruse to work, Holmes and Watson lurk in the shadows, the silent partnership in full effect.[15] The wax double is yet another metaphoric depiction of the afterlives or alternative lives of the canonical Holmes, for whom readers and adapters alike create all sorts of "wax doubles" as conceits, not so much to fool and catch the criminals as to keep going "home to Holmes." This endless repetition and appeal speaks to Coppa's doubling and repetition in fanfiction, or Hutcheon's assertion that "in the workings of the human imagination, adaptation is the norm, not the exception" (177).

Other than just the recognizable silhouette of Holmes creating nostalgia in the scene, Watson creates nostalgia for his readers through the language he uses to describe the silhouette. He says, "the effect [of the wax bust of Sherlock Holmes in the lighted window] was that of those black silhouettes which our grandparents loved to frame" (Conan Doyle 799). Watson's mention of something that grandparents would frame recalls an earlier era. The earliest readers of Sherlock Holmes were readers in the 1880s; "The Empty House" was published in 1903. Initial readers of Sherlock Holmes, who would presumably be fans of the new story, would remember their grandparents framing silhouettes, and they may even own a few themselves. "The Empty House" is set in 1894, so Watson's statement, and the time period of the case itself, calls back to an even earlier period of time, one that current grandparents would remember. Even Conan Doyle is cognizant of the generations of readers, as he remarks in his preface to *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, "Thus it would be true to say that those who first read of him [Sherlock Holmes], as young men, have lived to see their own grown-up children following the same adventures in the same magazine" (1448). Watson and Conan Doyle create layers of

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[15] The "silent partnership" references the game of whist in its partnered form. Whist is the card game that the murder victim, Ronald Adair was fond of playing (Conan Doyle 783).

nostalgia, crafting a layered fan base for this character that produces a generational following for the detective.

Watson describes "The Empty House" as "the greatest shock and surprise of any event in my adventurous life" (Conan Doyle 781). This description appears hyperbolic, as John Watson has been on many adventures with Sherlock Holmes. Of course, there's nothing shocking about this event at all, in the strict sense of the term, but this exclamation captures the generic effect of the Holmes Phenomenon by reiterating the nostalgia encompassing Holmes rather than his cases. Watson is again excited by the very silhouette of Holmes in the window of 221B Baker Street, saying that upon seeing it, he "gave a gasp and a cry of amazement" (Conan Doyle 799). Watson stands in for the reader; he becomes a "fan character," a character who reacts like fans would on popular television shows. *Doctor Who*'s Osgood, for example, dresses like previous regenerations of the Doctor, and wheezes when the Doctor complements her outfit ("The Day of the Doctor"). Watson, too, seems to wheeze and swoon with excitement through the course of the story, even at the very silhouette of his partner.

Book collection, and book collecting joins Watson and Conan Doyle in a metatextual example of the extrapolated narrative. In order to alert Watson to the fact that he actually lives, Holmes disguises himself as "some poor bibliophile" (Conan Doyle 786). However, Watson initially describes the man as an "elderly, deformed man… some poor bibliophile" upon first viewing, then moving to describe the man as "my strange old book collector, his sharp, wizened face peering out from a frame of white hair" (Conan Doyle 787-788). The use of the word "my" is interesting, as it indicates ownership. Watson does not yet know he is talking about Sherlock Holmes, but the irony is not lost that he is calling Holmes "my strange old book collector," which is reminiscent of Holmes' often-repeated phrase "My dear Watson." What is also key is

Holmes' choice of disguise; why choose a bookseller? This choice, on Conan Doyle's part, seems to be a meta-textual reminder to the audience that Watson is actually the book collector. He writes Holmes' story which allows him to use the possessive pronoun "my" to describe the book collector. Furthermore, Watson's narratives come from some of the red-taped bundles Holmes has in "The Musgrave Ritual," or from Watson's own collections of notes, it is from these notes that Watson extrapolates his narrative, making him a collector of books as well.

Broadening out of the text, anyone who was a fan of Sherlock Holmes would have owned Watson's collected works on Holmes, so they, too, become the "book collector" of whom Watson speaks. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle clearly winks at his reading public, since they are his book collectors; the possessive pronoun Watson uses reinforces the possession Conan Doyle has of fans of Holmes. Ironically, the possession licenses many Holmeses: if Watson has his "Dear Holmes," then, much like the Doctors of *Doctor Who*, everyone gets "their" Holmes as well. Lynch notes that "Literary character's history thus converges in particular, unpredictable ways with the history that sees imports of luxury goods into Britain" (Lynch 5). The import of luxury goods affirms Adorno and Horkheimer's assertion that "Culture is infecting everything with sameness." The increase in luxury goods and trade leads to the "culture industry," which "culture industry endlessly cheats its consumers out of what it endlessly promises" (Adorno and Horkheimer). Thus, capitalist culture enables all of us to author and appropriate our own special Holmes for ourselves without any genuine regard to any universal, "true" Holmes, regardless of how much we may lay claim to the actual "true" "real" one.

To a degree, "The Empty House" thematizes how Holmes's character was not modelled on those Victorians that had become accustomed to in psychological realism, but that Conan Doyle had created a different kind of character that he no longer had control over. This character

is subject to the nostalgia that is innate to modern serial imperative. This character is not bound by death, originary motivations/intentions of the author, but is tied to some sort of drive in the people. This drive is not merely a capitalist desire for more, but a remark on the social nature of the character. Deidre Lynch points out, "A face indexed character: in one sense of that word, then, it indexed a social norm, a determinate place on the moral map where every person had a proper place and where distinction was contained within limits" (33). This indexing embodies Sherlock Holmes adaptation. Every time Sherlock Holmes is adapted anew, he gets a new face; each new face reflects the new "determinate place on the moral map" in a morally changed world. As Coppa notes, "there's a value to revising the same text in order to explore different aspects and play out different behavioral strips" (236). Its value becomes, in some cases, the ability to change and adapt to the new moral map through adaptation. Adaptation, according to Hutcheon, "can obviously be used to engage in a larger social or cultural critique" (94). This engagement in cultural critique latches onto the changing "moral map" that Lynch describes. Such moral mapping and adapting also tracks with fanfiction writing, particularly with fans that write fanfiction portraying a homosexual relationship between Holmes and Watson. Such rewriting and "face changing" demonstrates the changed morality that said fans want to portray and create.

Rather than just rooted in capitalistic drives, like Adorno and Horkheimer suggest, nostalgia is the source of this recurring interest in Sherlock Holmes and his adventures. The nostalgia within the character of Sherlock Holmes draws us back again and again rather than creating a new character to suit the present. As Dames asserts, "The nostalgia that we learn from the nineteenth-century novel is the very nostalgia that strengthens our desire for these narratives-- the continual allure of a past that we remember only as forever gone from us" (242). This

"continual lure of the past" is the appeal of Sherlock Holmes: he is always forever gone from us, and his continual allure is a past that we know is forever gone from us. Dames says, "reading nostalgia means, in other words, studying nostalgic reading-- a form of reading, and reception, that does not perish with the nineteenth century and that lives on today in the continuing interaction between reader and novel" (237). Readers of the canonical texts, like *Sherlock* creators Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat, interact with the canonical stories and sought to create that same feeling on screen. Viewers, then, become readers of new, film-based texts, and their interaction with these texts takes form on online message boards and Tumblr posts and fan art and fanfiction.

"You Overdid It, You and Your Little Fan Club":

"The Empty Hearse" and Fan Theorizing

John's line, "I wanted you not to be dead" indicates the fan attitude towards Sherlock Holmes in the 1890s ("The Empty Hearse"). However, *Sherlock* fans were already aware that Sherlock had lived, as the penultimate episode of the second season, "The Reichenbach Fall," shows Sherlock Holmes watching John looking at Sherlock's grave; only the characters in the world of *Sherlock* were unaware of Sherlock's survival. This audience awareness of Holmes' survival speaks to the "virtual reality" aspect of Sherlock Holmes that Michael Saler discusses in his analysis of fan behavior.

The club formed by Anderson to attempt to figure out if Sherlock Holmes was really dead is called "The Empty Hearse." However, it also references the fan societies that formed after Holmes' "death" and then formed in force in the 1930s and 1940s for the very same purpose. These societies, located around the world, examine the various stories for any clues about Sherlock's activities. Anderson's fans theorize how Sherlock could have possibly survived

his leap from St. Bart's Hospital. They also attempt to attract the attention of Sherlock to prompt

his return by setting up a skeleton with the following book: *How I Did It by Jack the Ripper*

("The Empty Hearse"). Ironically, "How I did it" is the one question that fans want the answer to

when it comes to Sherlock Holmes, and it's the one answer he never gives.

Fan theorizing among the fan communities online was rampant in the gap between

seasons of *Sherlock*. Moffat and Gatiss have denied looking at online theories online for the

creation of "The Empty Hearse." Actually, Gatiss said "one of the most extraordinary reviews

[of "The Empty Hearse"] suggested that we'd clearly been harvesting theories from online,

which we genuinely have not" (Plumb). This comment probably references the review of the

episode posted by *The Guardian*. Gatiss remarks that the reviews they have been getting about

"The Empty Hearse" match up with reviews that Arthur Conan Doyle got for "The Empty

House." Moffat says "In both cases, in both 'The Empty Hearse' and 'The Empty House,' you

are dependent on Sherlock Holmes' own account of how he survived. Now, keep in mind that

he's been lying for two years. Who's to say any version of Sherlock Holmes has told the truth

about how he did it" (Plumb).

"The Empty Hearse" proposes three different possibilities for Sherlock's survival.

Interestingly, the entire time he stands on the hospital roof talking to John, he continually repeats

"It's just a magic trick" ("The Empty Hearse"). Clearly, Sherlock attempts to tell John that his

jump is fake; he is only playing a trick on John, but John does not get the message. However, the

multiple theories of "how he did it" reference the fan culture surrounding the very same method:

theorizing how Sherlock survived. Ironically, such theorizing about Sherlock's survival is itself

what enables Sherlock to survive the fall. He survives in the accumulating theories, not in some

ontological reality outside of the theories and adaptations. Even Conan Doyle recognizes the

theorizing as part of how Sherlock Holmes survives; he says, "I did the deed [killed Holmes],

but, fortunately, no coroner had pronounced the remains, and so, after a long interval, it was not

difficult for me to respond to the flattering demand and to explain my rash act [of killing

Holmes] away" (Conan Doyle 1448). As long as the fans continue to believe Holmes was alive

and keep theorizing about how he survived, "#SherlockLives" ("The Empty Hearse").

"You are the One Fixed Point in a Changing Age": The "Series Finale" of Sherlock Holmes

"His Last Bow" is the penultimate story in the short story collection of the same name.

Yet, this collection is not the final collection of Sherlock Holmes stories; the final set, *The Case-*

Book of Sherlock Holmes, completes what literary scholars and fans call the canon of Sherlock

Holmes' original works. What makes "His Last Bow" noteworthy is its position as a "series

finale" of sorts. Conan Doyle plays with the words "his last bow" to create a metatextual

moment for his readers: it is both the last bow for Sherlock Holmes chronologically, as it is the

last bow in the collection. As Conan Doyle says in the Preface to *The Case-Book of Sherlock*

Holmes, "I fear that Mr. Sherlock Holmes may become like one of those popular tenors who,

having outlived their time, are still tempted to make repeated farewell bows to their indulgent

audiences" (1447). Through "His Last Bow," Sir Arthur Conan Doyle seems to lay the

groundwork for the conventions of the "series finale" of a television show or any other serial

work.

Laurie Langbauer discusses seriality in *Novels of Everyday Life: The Series in English*

Fiction, 1850-1930 (1999). She says "What the series impulse suggests to me is the ways we just

keep telling different versions of the same story until our particular series finally has its run" (6).

Conan Doyle works in this vein; in "His Last Bow," Conan Doyle decides that it is time to end

Sherlock Holmes, at least chronologically. However, Wiltse suggests that "Unlike even the

longest-running serial publications, which could be eventually counted upon to *end*, the Holmes stories, the individual, self-contained 'adventures' within a continuous diegetic frame, were potentially infinite" (106). Conan Doyle does not truly end Sherlock Holmes with this story; a whole other collection of 12 stories, *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* was released after it, so the infinite nature of the character lives beyond the chronological end Conan Doyle created for Sherlock Holmes. Conan Doyle's stories, Wiltse asserts, creates the formula for the television series, "which enabled readers to join in at any point during the series" (108). Wiltse's suggestion cements the position of Conan Doyle's writing as an anachronistic television series, enabling Conan Doyle to change the formula to set up the "series finale."

"His Last Bow" differs from many of the other texts in the canon in multiple ways, with the most obvious being in its narration. This story is only one of a handful of narratives about Sherlock Holmes narrated in the third-person. Scholars argue over who the narrator of the story is; some believe it to be Mycroft Holmes, since this is a story of espionage and intrigue in World War I, which is the assertion of Edgar W. Smith in "The Adventure of the Veiled Author," while others believe it to be a wife of Dr. John Watson telling the story. However, the standard that Watson is the narrator, just narrating second-hand information in third-person, remains a popular option. When Watson narrates, he intimately involves himself with the action; he runs beside Holmes, revolver in hand, following a lead.

A third-person narrator, like the one in "His Last Bow," demonstrates both a removal from the action and a lurking interest in the realist paradigm of character that readers seem to have wanted to squeeze Holmes into. This removal takes audiences further away from the action, diluting and weakening the connection to Sherlock Holmes, since, unlike Watson's narration, audiences are not working side-by-side with the detective. This authoring becomes more

detached from Conan Doyle than when Watson narrates, since Watson is also Conan Doyle's narrative product. The reader is now another layer away from the text. This layering mirrors the method of fanfiction, albeit anachronistically. Even if he or she narrates the story as Watson, the author is still a departure from the original creator. There are a multitude of Sherlock Holmes stories written by authors other than Conan Doyle, particularly recently: Neil Gaiman wrote "A Study in Emerald" (2003) for a collection of short stories combining Conan Doyle's world with that of H.P. Lovecraft, *Shadows over Baker Street* (2003); Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat created and wrote *Sherlock* (2010); author Brittany Cavallaro penned a series about later generations of the Holmes family, chronicling the life of Charlotte Holmes and James "Jamie" Watson, beginning with *A Study in Charlotte* (2016); Laurie R. King and Leslie Klinger edited a collection of stories inspired by the consulting detective, *Echoes of Sherlock Holmes: Stories Inspired by the Holmes Canon* (2016); and G.S. Denning writes *Warlock Holmes-- A Study in Brimstone* (2016), the first of a series, narrated by Watson, but following his adventures with a sorcerer, rather than a detective. Such writings about Sherlock Holmes are in the same vein as fanfiction. Fanfiction is "creative material featuring characters that have previously appeared in works whose copyright is held by others" (Coppa 226).[16] Coppa's definition does not include those who write about characters outside of copyright, and those who write for profit, since she concludes that fanfiction is a sort of apprenticeship to the world of writing fiction professionally (227).

"His Last Bow" does not open in a way that fans expect from a story about their favorite consulting detective, similarl to the non-traditional beginning of "The Final Problem." The opening lines are description: "It was nine o'clock at night upon the second of August-- the most

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[16] Sherlock Holmes, at least as Arthur Conan Doyle's creation, is out of copyright, so anyone can use the character now without fear of lawsuit. *Sherlock* however, is under copyright, so any fanfiction about the television show would fall under Coppa's definition.

terrible August in the History of the world" (Conan Doyle 1424). Granted, this story is set in 1914, just as World War I is dawning on the horizon. The opening pages contain an exchange between "two famous Germans" (Conan Doyle 1424), Von Bork and Baron Von Herling. These men discuss business related to their plan to take down Britain as a world power, which further highlights the conflict between Britain and Germany. However, the narrator continues: "One might have thought already that God's curse hung heavy over a degenerate world, for there was an awesome hush and a feeling of vague expectancy in the sultry and stagnant air" (Conan Doyle 1424). This opening reads more like the beginnings of a *Casablanca* style film noir, rather than the opening of a Sherlock Holmes case.

The biggest difference marking "His Last Bow" as separate from the other stories in the canon is its theatricality. The story creates anticipation for the one character we know is supposed to be in this story: Sherlock Holmes. We are over halfway through the story before the narrator describes the character Altamont, a "real bitter Irish-American" (Conan Doyle 1430). Von Bork describes the man in terms of his speech, but when the man in question enters the room, he "stretched his long limbs from the armchair. He was a tall gaunt man of sixty, with clear-cut features and a small goatee beard which gave him a general resemblance to the caricatures of Uncle Sam" (Conan Doyle 1432). Excluding the goatee, the image created by Conan Doyle evokes the iconic illustrations by Paget of Sherlock Holmes sitting in his chair by the fire at 221B Baker Street, but Conan Doyle has taken great pains to make sure that his audience is not yet completely sure that this Altamont is who the audience expects. Conan Doyle always describes Holmes as tall and gaunt, and in the course of the other works, he is in his fifties. This text is set later than all of the others, and in terms of chronology, this text is the last, so his age matches the timeline. Part of this story's importance is its ability to create anticipation

for the "star of the show"; Sherlock Holmes is not mentioned by name until the final pages of the story.

Conan Doyle here is clearly not interested in the plot of cases anymore; the interest lies in the phenomenon of the character. He knows that readers want to see Sherlock Holmes, so Conan Doyle plays to that anticipation to keep readers engaged. Thus, where the original stories treat Holmes as a device through which to actuate detective cases whose surprising solution evoked the generic pleasurable shock for which the stories were known, "His Last Bow" subordinates the detective case as a device through which to offer the now generic and histrionic resurrection and fake ending of the Holmes character, a histrionic resurrection and fake finishing that would become as constitutive of the many variants of Holmes remakes as the pipe, the deerstalker and "elementary, my dear Watson." Like his fans and successors, Conan Doyle can step away from absorbing us in the plot to instead focus on Holmes: audiences picked up the magazines for this phenomenon in the first place. Like a seasoned television script writer, Conan Doyle creates the element of surprise and building anticipation before Holmes' mask finally comes off.

"'Another glass, Watson!' said Mr. Sherlock Holmes" (Conan Doyle 1436), marks the story's return to its "original programming"; Holmes and Watson are having a drink sitting across from each other once again, just like nearly every other narrative in the canon. Holmes' remark is the first time in "His Last Bow" that the names "Sherlock Holmes" and "Watson" are mentioned, and the story is nearly over. However, this shift to the "normal" track of the story begins the set up for the end of the tale and the end of Sherlock Holmes as the consulting detective. As in the series finale of a television show (that is, when the show gets to write its own ending, as opposed to a sudden cancellation), characters from across the series make

reappearances. In this way, the series finale functions rewards the fans that have stuck with the show; once again, they get to see their favorites return for "one last bow."

As Van Bork comes to, he says to Holmes "if it takes me all my life I shall get level with you" (Conan Doyle 1440). Holmes responds with "How often have I heard it in days gone by. It was a favorite ditty of the late lamented Professor Moriarty. Colonel Sebastian Moran has also been known to warble it. And yet I live and keep bees in the South Downs" (Conan Doyle 1440). Holmes mentions two villains from an extremely poignant part of his past: Moriarty and Moran. Moriarty was the reason Holmes faked his own death; he was, in a sense, the last villain Holmes faced before "death." Moran, on the other hand, was the villain dealt with in "The Empty House," the first story of Holmes' return; Moran, then, is the first villain Holmes faces in his "new era," post-resurrection.

The delayed introduction of Holmes into the story seems, that is, to formally reinstantiate the long wait between stories. These two villains are bookends in a history of a character that, according to Sherlockians, changes post-fall-over-the-Reichenbach. Now, as with a series finale, as the curtain starts to come down, important moments in the lives of characters return, either in moments of flashback, or in dialogue. Moriarty, too, is an iconic villain in Sherlock Holmes canon that only appears in one story, but Watson never sees him, and yet, Moriarty is in nearly every Sherlock Holmes adaptation as a major part of a complicated story-line web. Furthermore, use of the pronoun "it" creates a reference that can be applied to a broad base of works, leaving it free from the confines of a particular temporal or spatial moment.

Van Bork, however, has a much more intimate connection to Holmes' past than just saying something other villains have said. At this point in the narrative, Von Bork still does not know who bested him in the espionage game; Holmes, in his irritation says, "It is really

immaterial who I am, but since the matter seems to interest you, Mr. Van Bork, I may say that this is not my first acquaintance with members of your family. I have done a good deal of business in Germany in the past and my name is probably familiar to you" (Conan Doyle 1440-1441). When Van Book remains confused, Holmes finally comes clean: "It was I who brought about the separation between Irene Adler and the late King of Bohemia when your cousin Heinrich was the Imperial Envoy. It was I also who saved from murder, by the Nihilist Klopman, Count Von and Zu Grafenstein, who was your mother's elder brother" and Holmes could still go on (Conan Doyle 1441). Irene Adler features in the very first Sherlock Holmes short story, "A Scandal in Bohemia," so Sherlock Holmes harkens back to his "series premiere." In this way, the two novels introducing Sherlock Holmes to the world function like the TV movies that inspire a television show; the short stories, in turn, become individual episodes.[17] Like a series finale harkening back to its pilot episode, Sherlock Holmes calls his audience back to their original short story. Holmes also openly acknowledges the immateriality of the content of his character and reinforces that only its form matters.

As Holmes and Watson talk, the pair turns to discussing the past and how time has treated them. Watson says, "'I feel twenty years younger, Holmes. I have seldom felt so happy as when I got your wire asking me to meet you" (Conan Doyle 1437). Working with Holmes again is good for Watson; he does not feel the years the same way as he would alone. In this way, Holmes and Watson are truly timeless. The years are kinder to them than other works that fall away into the void of time; Holmes and Watson are preserved in this moment in time, and they always will be. Their perpetual reiterations of them in films, television shows, novels and fanfiction demonstrate this exact preservation. As Vincent Starrett, founding member of the

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[17] This method is the one employed by *The Librarians*; three movies, *The Librarian: Quest for the Spear* (2004), *The Librarian: Return to King Solomon's Mines* (2006), and *The Librarian:The Curse of the Judas Chalice* (2008) all lead to the creation of *The Librarians*.

Baker Street Irregulars, notes in his poem "221B" (1942), "Here, though the world explode, these two survive, / And it is always eighteen ninety-five" (lines 13-14). Holmes and Watson are forever in stasis in 1895; Starrett's poem preserves them in the yellow fog of London. Furthermore, Watson's sentiment repeats multiple times across the short stories and even into the *Sherlock* series. When Holmes calls, Watson answers.

In the story, there is no actual purpose for Watson being there, other than as a moment for the fans to have their favorite detective and his companion sitting side by side once again. Strangely, the narrator describes Watson as "the thickset chauffeur" (Conan Doyle 1436). This description of Watson differs from every other mention of Watson before. Granted the "chauffeur" indicates that he was part of the disguise Holmes uses, but Watson later asks Holmes why he came out of retirement, suggesting that he was not part of Holmes' mission, or he was called in specifically for the mission, and he was not able to communicate with Holmes beforehand. Conan Doyle seems to indulge in the already changing perception of Watson; Watson begins shifting into the inconsequential bumbling idiot in some of the early silent film adaptations, and this trend continues into the films of the 1930s. This shift explains why Watson is so nonessential to "His Last Bow"; because Watson becomes the bumbling idiot, he is no longer necessary to the narrative. Conan Doyle's awareness of the new treatment of Watson leads Watson to take on this form in Conan Doyle's canonical work, a form with which fans are familiar and to which they are attached.

Holmes tells Watson, "You are the one fixed point in a changing age" (Conan Doyle 1443). This quotation encapsulates the Sherlock Holmes phenomenon: the relationship between Holmes and Watson is indeed a fixed point in a changing age. "His Last Bow" is set in 1914, but the very early stories are set in the 1890s, so fans have been able to follow these characters for

decades, and the format of the stories has essentially stayed static. Society drastically changes by

"His Last Bow." Sherlock Holmes prompts his "readers to conceive of them [him] as beings who

take on lives of their own and who thereby escape their social as well as their textual contexts"

(Lynch 8). Holmes takes on a life of his own; Conan Doyle loses control of him early, and this

life Holmes takes on somehow relates to but also separates from the changing age of which he is

a part. Homes escapes his social and textual contexts through the perception that he is real. In

"'Yes Virginia, There is a Sherlock Holmes'," Julian Wolff asserts "there is a Sherlock Holmes"

(25). Wolff makes this assertion in 1961, decades after the final writings of Sir Arthur Conan

Doyle grace the literary magazines of America and Britain; Holmes stepped off the page and

took on a life of his own early in his "life" as a character, and the effects last well into the

twenty-first century in adaptation and fan fiction.

The character of Sherlock Holmes has been adapted and reworked across the generations

in a variety of media, whether or not he is wearing the deerstalker does not mean he is no longer

Sherlock Holmes. The name "Sherlock Holmes" evokes the image of the deerstalker wearing

detective to viewers across generations. This cultural phenomenon cements an idea of Sherlock

Holmes and Doctor John Watson in the consciousness of the global mind. If Holmes and Watson

are the "fixed point in a changing age," Conan Doyle latches on to the inherent nostalgia within

their characterization to bring their story to a close, and this nostalgia even carries into their other

adapted forms across the ages. All of Holmes and Watson could be stripped away, from their

names, to their clothing, to their temporal period, to their gender,[18] and they are still "Holmes

and Watson." This nostalgia created by Conan Doyle in "His Last Bow" solidifies Holmes and

Watson's position as cultural ports in the storm for their characterization and the genre of

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[18] *Elementary* (2012), a CBS drama, depicts Watson as female. Also, the forthcoming Japanese adaptation, *Miss Sherlock* (2018) depicts both Holmes and Watson as women.

detective fiction. Through referencing different, previous parts of the canon, Conan Doyle crafts a story in "His Last Bow" that is a series finale.

This story formalizes as generic the delayed introduction of Holmes, the feigned humility of the universally known character, the iconic villains and adversaries-- all tropes that become essential qualities in later adaptations of Holmes and in popular television series. In "A Study in Pink," the first episode of *Sherlock*, Sherlock is introduced later in the episode, not immediately; he is reintroduced to audiences as though he is a new character, not one universally known by name alone. Adaptations of Holmes work in the same manner, for the most part. The groundwork laid out by Conan Doyle becomes the standard for how to reintroduce audiences to Sherlock Holmes.

<div align="center">

"The Game Continues": "The Great Game" and Fan Communities

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"The Great Game" is the term given to the game played by the original fan communities like the Baker Street Irregulars. In this "game," Sherlockians attempt to figure out various plot holes, solve problems in the canonical texts, and work through the ever popular "how he did it" question when it comes to Sherlock Holmes' survival when he faked his own death at the Reichenbach Falls. In the modern incarnation of Sherlock Holmes on *Sherlock*, the creators have also joined the "Great Game" by calling the episode that introduces viewers to Jim Moriarty "The Great Game." In fact, it is the only episode that does not make a pun out of an already existing canonical story about the consulting detective. In it, the creators layer in multiple stories into one overarching game that Jim wants Sherlock to play, combining stories like "The Five Orange Pips" (1891) and "The Bruce-Partington Plans" (1908), among other, modified stories.

In "The Great Game" (2010), Sherlock finally steps into the fan community, albeit a fan community that will help him solve a case of a murdered makeover reality television show host.

Sherlock relies on fan theories to get a motive for the murder of the television show's hostess, who is poisoned using her botox injections. Sherlock, when responding to Mrs. Hudson, says "I'm having a very fruitful chat with people who love this show. Fan sites. Indispensable for gossip" ("The Great Game"). This gossip is precisely what is important for the fan communities on Tumblr and Twitter; they thrive on it. Any hint that a new series of *Sherlock* is about to be announced has fans scrambling to social media to discuss.

Sherlock delves into the world of virtual reality, which is ironically where his fans are now, theorizing away and continuing to share any gossip that comes across one member of the fandom's social media pages. Sherlock Holmes' fan base indulges in the virtual reality of his entire world, as Michael Saler notes, "The cult of Holmes focuses not just on a singular character, but on his entire world: fans of the 'canon' obsess about every detail of the fictional universe Conan Doyle created, mentally inhabiting this geography of the imagination in a way that was never true for partisans of earlier characters" (Saler 98). Sherlock is already a member of the world of virtual reality, and here he is, entering virtuality from his own virtual world. This world is one created by fans and one continually changed and modified as long as fans continue to partake in the world of Sherlock Holmes.

Welcome "Holmes": Where Do We Go From Here?

The Sherlock Holmes phenomenon uncannily anticipates and thematizes the experience of fan culture, and it seems to be the most dominant case of such pronounced social experience. Fanfiction clearly extends beyond "Sherlock Holmes," and any of his adaptations, like Alternate Universe fanfiction creating Sherlock as a wedding planner planning John and Mary's wedding,[19] fanfiction set in the Victorian era and utilizing the narration style of Watson are some

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[19] This fanfiction is "The Craving in Between" on *Archive of Our Own*. URL: https://archiveofourown.org/works/12951483/chapters/29605029.

examples of fanfiction present on fanfiction websites like *Archive of Our Own* or

Fanfiction.net.[20] And yet, published works on Sherlock Holmes, like "A Study in Emerald" or

the Charlotte Holmes series, are also fanfiction of a more capitalistic sort, flirting with the line of

adaptation and Adorno and Horkheimer's "culture industry." Abigail Derecho asserts, however,

that fanfiction is "philosophically opposed to hierarchy, property, and the dominance of one

variant of a series over another variant" (77). Derecho's assessment defies Adorno and

Horkheimer's assertion that reproduction is linked to capitalistic tendencies.

  Sherlock surely exceeds the character of Sherlock Holmes, further highlighting this

phenomenon. Everything about Sherlock and Watson is different, yet somehow the same no

matter where or when they are placed. This "different-yet-same" scenario for Holmes and

Watson maps on to fanfiction, which "ensure[s] the [source] text is never solidified, calcified or

at rest, but is in continuous play, its characters, stories, and meanings all varying through the

various fics written about it" (Dechero 77). Fanfiction takes the adaptation of *Sherlock* even

further, creating and recreating scenarios fans want to see, like a television show producing new

episodes every week. Fanfiction continues the theatrical trends and pursuits Coppa outlines, like

repetition and endless remakes, and these trends fill the hiatuses of *Sherlock* with endless

possibilities for character development.

  Sherlock Holmes fanfiction today is mostly grounded in queer theory; fans are currently

obsessed with Johnlock, the couples name for the homosexual relationship between John and

Sherlock. Despite our more modern desires and we are more open to varying sexualities, what

drives this "shipping" is still the need for domestic realism, our obsession with interiority and

domestic moments. The large quantity of so-called "slash" fanfiction-- fanfiction depicting a

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[20]There are 4756 fanfictions on *Archive of Our Own* that are specifically based in the Sherlock Holmes Arthur Conan Doyle Canon. URL: https://archiveofourown.org/tags/Sherlock%20Holmes%20-%20Arthur%20Conan%20Doyle/works.

homosexual relationship-- is proof of a voyeuristic interest in the interior lives of characters. Domestic realism of the Jane Austen sort typically results in a wedding between the two characters readers follow through the novel; John and Sherlock are the only two characters explored in any depth. Domestic realism conventions indicate that these characters are meant to be together, so fans ship them together.

Many fanfictions create "fluff" pieces, purely domestic moments, like John cooking dinner for Sherlock, or Sherlock and John taking care of John's daughter-- the day-to-day experiences that Laurie Langbauer illustrates in *Novels of Everyday Life* as endlessly desirable. And, with each new adaptation or changing age, new opportunities for domesticity appear for fans to recreate with their favorite characters. The almost-voyeuristic interest in the interior lives of characters lends itself to exploration of the domestic moments that the canon works do not portray and many adaptations gloss over. However, "voyeurism" also translates on to the desire for "fluff" fanfiction. *Sherlock* or the Conan Doyle canon does not portray such interiority, so fans step in to create their idealized interior fantasy.

The character of Sherlock Holmes is timeless purely because of the response from fans; this character is not bound to the Victorian era, endlessly sipping his tea or taking his seven percent solution of drugs. As Sherlock says in "The Abominable Bride," "I've always known I was a man out of my time." If the fans ensure his survival of the Reichenbach Falls, then the fans ensure his timelessness. The fans maintain his nostalgia precisely because we know his creator is gone; all we have left is the adaptations and fanfictions. Now, our favorite consulting detective is only a trip to Tumblr away; fan culture is so prevalent that a simple Google search or social media interaction resurrects the detective from the graves of time, over and over.

Even though Sherlock Holmes exists in multiple television shows, films, radio programs, and plays, none of them exist without the fan base that Conan Doyle created. Sherlock Holmes of the Conan Doyle canon is the origin point for what becomes the Sherlock Holmes fandom, a fandom encompassing all adaptations and welcoming new members with each new incarnation of the consulting detective. Conan Doyle writes, "Perhaps in some humble corner of such a Valhalla [one for fictional characters], Sherlock and his Watson may for a time find a place, while some more astute sleuth with some even less astute comrade may fill the stage which they have vacated" (1447). And here we are, still waiting for Holmes and Watson to vacate the stage.

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