

# **Transformative Works and Cultures, No. 23, special issue, Sherlock Holmes, Fandom, Sherlockiana, and the Great Game (March 15, 2017)**

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## Editorial

"In all my experience I cannot recall any more singular and interesting study"

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[0.1] *Abstract*—Editorial for "Sherlock Holmes Fandom, Sherlockiana, and the Great Game," edited by Betsy Rosenblatt and Roberta Pearson, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 23 (March 15, 2017).

[0.2] *Keywords*—Fan history; Gender; Sherlock Holmes; Sherlockians

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[0.3] In all my experience I cannot recall any more singular and interesting study.

—Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Valley of Fear* (1915)

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## 1. Introduction

[1.1] The two of us first met in a room of Sherlockians. It was probably 1985. In romantic memory, we each came in from the swirling snow to the annual January dinner of the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes, and we spent the evening in the warming company of fellow good-humored women. We dined and laughed and enjoyed Sherlockian mock-scholarly papers and skits.

[1.2] The group was consciously female. We came together not only out of love of Sherlock Holmes and his world but also out of an awareness that across town, the all-male Baker Street Irregulars (BSI) were having *their* annual dinner at the same time. We knew ours was more fun. We had evidence: at the end of their dinner, the men would make their way to catch the end of our festivities, which they described as superior. Yet we rankled at being excluded. We closed the evening singing Sherlockian lyrics to the tune of "The Wiffenpoof Song": "Lord

have mercy on B-S-I...Ha! Ha! Ha!"

[1.3] Those who first created an enduring Sherlock Holmes fandom did not think of themselves of fans. They were an exceedingly privileged collection of journalists and men of letters who were, as George Mills points out in his essay in this special issue, themselves engaged in romantic nostalgia for a particular kind of literary engagement with text. As Julia Rosenblatt points out in her Symposium piece, their exclusion of women from the ranks of the BSI likely had as much to do with wanting to avoid questions of who would pay for drinks as it did with any more malicious misogyny.

[1.4] That history, however, bred a legacy of elitism in gender, class, and cultural hierarchy that has made Sherlockian identity and boundary drawing awkward to this day. Several of this issue's Symposium pieces provide firsthand accounts of the gender struggles surrounding the BSI and the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH). The BSI began to admit women in 1991, but that occasion was far from the end of the story, which only became more complex when cultures of modern media fandom collided with Sherlockian traditions. Some members of the BSI and other Sherlockian societies approached fans who came to love Sherlock Holmes through television and film adaptations with derision that could not be separated from the Sherlockian societies' elitist roots or from the fact these newer fans were predominantly young and female (Pearson, forthcoming).

[1.5] Prevailing attitudes within Sherlockian societies have become vastly more gender inclusive, even enthusiastically so. Although there will surely always be holdouts, the cultural divisions between communities of Sherlockians have also begun to fade. The BSI has taken on many young female members, and the ASH has taken on many young male ones ([note 1](#)). *The Baker Street Journal*, the leading publisher of Sherlockian mock scholarship, has embraced the term "Sherlockian fandom" and eagerly publishes works from newcomers. By the same token, many who began their journeys in Sherlockian societies have come to revel in online fan culture.

[1.6] Terminology aside, are members of Sherlockian societies different from other fans? To the student of media fandom, Sherlockians' approach to celebrating the works of Arthur Conan Doyle seems at once idiosyncratic and familiar. Many Sherlockians produce mock scholarship based on the self-aware fiction of the Great Game (also known as the Grand Game), a tongue-in-cheek belief that Holmes and Watson were real people, that Watson wrote the stories of their exploits, and that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was Watson's literary agent. For example, a Sherlockian might seek to justify Watson's contradictory claims concerning the location of his war wound—as either in his shoulder or in his leg—by considering such factors as the weight, speed, and trajectories of the Jezail bullets shot by the Afghan fighters during the second Anglo-Afghan war.

Sherlockians term these lighthearted conjectures the "Writings upon the Writings." The Great Game has few analogs in fandom. At the same time, the other activities of those aficionados and devotees are strikingly similar to other fan activities: they write fan fiction, make fan art, perform cosplay, attend fan meet-ups, and so on, only by other names, and they have been doing so since the BSI was founded in the 1930s.

[1.7] Sherlock Holmes has become increasingly popular in the last decade, with a boom in screen adaptations—the two Guy Ritchie/Robert Downey Jr. Warner Bros. feature films, CBS's *Elementary* (2012–), BBC *Sherlock* (2010–), and the recently announced Finnish television program *Sherlock North* (Jensen 2017), which will portray the Great Detective during his enforced exile from London after the Reichenbach incident, to name a few. BBC *Sherlock* in particular attracted hordes of new fans to the Holmes franchise, who in turn attracted the attention of fan studies scholars (Hills 2012; Lamerichs 2012; Polasek 2012; McClellan 2014). But fan studies (with the exception of Pearson 1997, 2007) had largely ignored the long-established fandom that had formed around the Holmes canon: the original Conan Doyle 56 short stories and four novels. While fans have occupied an increasingly privileged position within media studies since the early 1990s, Sherlockian fandom remained obscure until the emergence of *Sherlock* fans who conformed to the field's assumptions about the constitution and nature of fandom.

[1.8] Fan studies began as a celebration of popular resistance to the hegemonic order. As Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington note, "The consumption of popular mass media was [seen as] a site of power struggles and fandom the guerrilla-style tactics of those with lesser resources to win this battle." This early work valorized those fans who engaged in such activities as "convention attendance, fan fiction writing, fanzine editing and collection, letter writing campaigns" (2012, 1–2, 3). As seen in Henry Jenkins's *Textual Poachers* (1992), the classic scholarly analysis of television science fiction and fantasy fans, there was an overlap between those engaging in those activities and those with lesser resources; this early work focused almost exclusively on female fans. Fan studies has broadened its remit since those days, but some of its initial assumptions still linger, as in a general preference for studying transformational rather than affirmational fans. While affirmational fandom is seen as respecting authorship and the text, transformational fandom is seen as reworking the text, as in slash fiction; it is seen as more semiotically resistant and also, once again, primarily composed of female fans active on sites such as Tumblr.

[1.9] BBC *Sherlock* fans, being predominantly female and young, as well as transformational in their fannish activities, conformed to fan studies' assumptions. Members of Sherlockian societies, by contrast, have historically been male,

middle-aged, middle to upper class, and affirmational. Even today many resist being labeled as fans—not surprising, given the overwhelmingly negative connotations of the term until the industry itself embraced fandom within the last two decades or so. Self-designated fan clubs like, say, the Frank Sinatra Fan Club, existed as early as the 1940s and probably before, but the BSI called itself a literary society rather than a fan club. Other US Sherlockian groups, founded under the BSI's auspices, such as Philadelphia's Sons of the Copper Beeches (dating from 1948) call themselves scion societies. Many Sherlockians of long standing, even some who have happily welcomed fan-oriented newbies into the Sherlockian fold, still eschew the term "fan." As Andrew Solberg and Robert Katz write in their Symposium piece, "'Seasoned (i.e., old) Sherlockians must swallow before we admit that what we do for/with our love of Sherlock Holmes fully fits in the fan domain.... We like to think of ourselves as aficionados or devotees."

[1.10] This issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures* seeks to address that perceived gap in the fan studies literature by extensively engaging with the Sherlockian fandom that dates back to the 1890s. The essays in this issue shed additional light on the explosion of the fandom by taking a look backward, examining Sherlock Holmes fandoms (for they are all fandoms) through the lens of historical context or with an eye to the fandoms' sometimes fraught cultural divisions. Collectively, the essays complicate the too-easy narrative that Sherlockian communities are all inherently the same or inherently different. They may also contribute to a new wave of fan studies that embraces highbrow and middlebrow culture as well as the avowedly popular.

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## 2. Theory and Praxis

[2.1] The issue begins by acknowledging that by the time organized Sherlockiana began in the 1930s, Holmes had been a popular character for more than four decades and had inspired a sort of individual fandom that seems familiar even today, in an age of transmedia promotion. Ann McClellan's "*Tit-Bits*, New Journalism, and Early Sherlock Holmes Fandom" traces the roots of participatory fandom to the participatory promotions and transmedia storytelling of the *Strand* magazine's sister publication, *Tit-Bits*, which contained cross-promotions for the *Strand*'s Sherlock Holmes offerings. McClellan's analysis provides both a theoretical and practical bridge between historical fandoms and contemporary fan cultures. Early fan precursors to later fan practices are also at the heart of Katharine Brombley's essay, "A Case Study of Early British Sherlockian Fandom." Brombley contextualizes the practice of writing to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle seeking Sherlock Holmes's autograph. Brombley argues that the practice both reflected its time in history and manifested the reality-blurring attitude that gave rise to the Great Game.

[2.2] The history of Sherlockian mock scholarship is doubtless inextricably related to the development of Sherlockian fan cultures. George Mills explores this relationship in "The Scholarly Rebellion of the Early Baker Street Irregulars." Mills analyzes the early institutional history of the BSI, shining a light on how the romanticism of the organization's founders and their relationships with emerging practices of literary criticism shaped Sherlockian practices even as they exist today. Kate Donley's "Early Sherlockian Scholarship: Non/fiction at Play" traces the history of Sherlockian mock scholarship, starting with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's playful relationship between fact and fiction in the Sherlock Holmes stories and developing into a series of interrelated textual forms with modernist and postmodernist elements that persist today across eras and types of Sherlockian fandom.

[2.3] A number of the issue's Theory and Praxis essays focus on the complicated nature of distinguishing among different kinds of Sherlockian fans and fan works. In "Authorship and Authenticity in Sherlock Holmes Pastiches," Sanna Nyqvist notes the idiosyncratic way in which the term "pastiche" has been used in Sherlockian fandom. Nyqvist conducts detailed analyses of three Sherlockian pastiches that fit the more traditional critical definition. Each reveals a tension between homage and criticism that might be analogized to the tensions between different modes of Sherlockian fandom. Ashley Polasek's "Traditional Transformations and Transmedial Affirmations: Blurring the Boundaries of Sherlockian Fan Practices" considers affirmational Sherlockians, who identify with a preexisting interpretation of the Sherlock Holmes canon, and transformational Sherlockians, who identify aspects of themselves in canonical source material and transform the material to highlight those aspects. She describes certain cultural differences between affirmational and transformational fans, and describes instances in which boundaries between the communities blur and overlap. Finally, Betsy Rosenblatt draws parallels between Sherlockians of two eras, identifying similarities in their respective rebellions against copyright owners' alleged control over the character of Sherlock Holmes. Her essay, "The Great Game and the Copyright Villain," demonstrates commonalities between fan communities that some have characterized as divergent and hypothesizes some historical roots of this fan-led resistance.

[2.4] Two essays explore the changing demographics of Sherlockian fandom. Timothy Johnson and Cheryl Fong's "The Expanding Universe of Sherlockian Fandom and Archival Collections" discuss the challenges faced by archivists as the universe of Sherlockians grows and Sherlockian fan production expands in type and medium. Their essay draws both parallels and distinctions between older and newer Sherlockian fan works to demonstrate how, as Sherlockian fan production grows to include (for example) more diverse voices, born-digital works, and pseudonymous creators, the role of archivists becomes more important, along

with the scope of their responsibility. In "'The Florals': Female Fans Over 50 in the *Sherlock* Fandom," Line Nybro Peterson explores attitudes toward age and gender among fans of BBC *Sherlock*. The fans in her study used *Sherlock* fandom to inspire a high level of productivity and creativity, experience a younger subjective age, and experience a positive view of older felt age.

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### 3. Symposium and Review

[3.1] While many of the Theory and Praxis pieces strive to draw parallels between types of Sherlockian communities, the Symposium pieces explore a variety of manifestations of Sherlockian fan practice, reminding us that, parallels or not, there are many different ways of being a Sherlockian. In "*Sherlock* (Holmes) in Japanese (Fan) Works," Lori Morimoto explains how commercially published BBC *Sherlock* pastiches written by Kitahara Naohiko typify a blurred line between fandom and commercial media production in the Japanese fan/producer cultural context. In "The Fan-Judges: Clues to a Jurisculture of Sherlockian Fandom," Ross Davies identifies circumstances in which US judges encourage their litigants to be Sherlockians. In "Fandom, Publishing, and Playing the Grand Game," Andrew Solberg and Robert Katz explore the mode of Sherlockian fan phenomenon of writing, editing, and publishing in the tradition of the Grand Game, telling their own stories of discovering publishing as a fan pursuit.

[3.2] Finally, a trio of personal accounts shed light on the history of women and the BSI. Peter Blau and Evelyn Herzog, in "A Duet: With an Occasional Chorus," recount the events of January 1968, when several ASH members picketed the annual dinner of the then all-male BSI. Both Julia Rosenblatt, in "From Outside to Inside," and Patricia Guy, in "GTOs (Girls Together Outrageously)," provide personal reflections regarding the BSI's shift from a male-only society to one that includes women.

[3.3] In the Reviews section, Anne-Charlotte Mecklenburg reviews *Twentieth-Century Victorian: Arthur Conan Doyle and the "Strand Magazine," 1891–1930*, by Jonathan Cranfield. Julia Knaus reviews *Sherlock Holmes: The Man Who Never Lived and Will Never Die*, edited by Alex Werner; *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes: Essays on Film and Television Adaptations since 2009*, edited by Nadine Farghaly; and *The Great Detective: The Amazing Rise and Immortal Life of Sherlock Holmes*. Finally, Ellen Burtin Harrington reviews *Fan Phenomena: Sherlock Holmes*, edited by Tom Ue and Jonathan Cranfield. The five books, in Knaus's words, "illustrate the breadth of recent engagement with Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes" (§5.1): they are a study of the relationship between Conan Doyle, the *Strand Magazine*, and their era; a companion to a Sherlock Holmes-themed exhibition that situates Holmes in Victorian history; a collection of essays

discussing gender and sexuality in contemporary Holmes adaptations; a first-person exploration of the Holmes canon and its fandom and history, respectively; and a wide-ranging collection of essays addressing Sherlock Holmes fan phenomena.

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[4.1] It is not possible to properly acknowledge the depth of appreciation we feel toward everyone who has helped make this issue of TWC possible. They have suffered hard deadlines, late nights, and short due dates. As always, we thank the authors in this issue, whose original work makes TWC possible; the peer reviewers, who freely provide their time and expertise; the editorial team members, whose engagement with and solicitation of material is so valuable; and the production team members, who transform rough manuscripts into publishable documents.

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## 5. Note

1. Each of us is a member of ASH, and Betsy Rosenblatt is a member of the BSI.

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# Theory

## *Tit-Bits*, New Journalism, and early Sherlock Holmes fandom

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[0.1] *Abstract*—The *Strand*'s more popular sister magazine, *Tit-Bits*, played a significant role in establishing Sherlock Holmes as a literary and cultural icon, particularly through its use of participatory practices, cross-promotion, and transmedia storytelling. I argue that *Tit-Bits*' late 19th-century New Journalism techniques like contests and prizes, inquiry columns, correspondence, and internal advertising fostered a corporately devised participatory fandom that directly contributed to Sherlock Holmes's popularity. *Tit-Bits* audiences were invited and encouraged to imagine new scenarios for their favorite character that were validated through publication. Such practices not only created a unique identity for Sherlock Holmes fandom but also directly contributed to the creation and maintenance of Holmes's fictional world. With fandom studies reaching more and more audiences—both academic and popular—historicizing early fan practices like the early publication and reception of the Sherlock Holmes stories provides important insight into how audiences have historically responded to, and interacted with, fictional characters, and how they helped sustain and expand those characters' fictional worlds.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Arthur Conan Doyle; Cross-promotion; George Newnes; *Strand Magazine*

McClellan, Ann K. 2017. "Tit-Bits, New Journalism, and Early Sherlock Holmes Fandom." In "Sherlock Holmes Fandom, Sherlockiana, and the Great Game," edited by Betsy Rosenblatt and Roberta Pearson, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2017.0816>.

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## 1. Introduction

[1.1] When scholars talk about the origins of Sherlock Holmes fandom, they usually start with the *Strand Magazine*, the periodical that first published Conan Doyle's short stories. However, the *Strand*'s more popular sister magazine, *Tit-Bits*, played a significant role in establishing Sherlock Holmes as a literary and cultural icon, particularly through its use of participatory practices, cross-promotion, and transmedia storytelling. I argue that late 19th-century New Journalism techniques like contests and prizes, inquiry columns, correspondence, and internal advertising fostered a corporately devised participatory fandom that directly contributed to Sherlock Holmes's popularity. By integrally linking the publication and advertising strategies of his two major periodicals, proprietor and editor George Newnes manufactured one of the most vibrant literary fandoms in history. Analyzing New Journalism's cross-promotional strategies provides contemporary scholars with one way to bridge "the fundamental problem facing fan studies"—the long gap between historical fandoms like 1800s Byromania and contemporary fan cultures (Cranfield 2014, 66) (note 1).

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## 2. The newness of George Newnes

[2.1] George Newnes was not brought up in a publishing family (note 2). The son of a Congregational minister, he was educated at boarding schools in Derbyshire, Birmingham, and London before beginning his professional career in a London fancy goods firm, where he quickly rose up the ranks to become chief bookkeeper and then a regional sales manager in the north of England. An entrepreneur at heart, he raised the capital to start his first magazine by opening a vegetarian restaurant in Manchester. The magazine, *Tit-Bits*, was an immediate success, and Newnes was offered £16,000 for the periodical by a London publishing firm just 6 weeks after its initial publication on October 22, 1881, and £30,000 six months later (Jackson 1996, 6). *Tit-Bits* was designed as a 16-page miscellany, a composite of various kinds of writings including correspondence, advice columns, contests, new fiction, advertisements, and general human interest stories. Newnes sought to bridge a perceived gendered gap in the market between sentimental women's magazines like *Reynold's Weekly* and the "racier" sporting papers aimed at men. Periodicals somewhere in the middle were often priced too high for working-class readers (Jackson 2001, 48), so Newnes set out to create a new kind of periodical, one that appealed to the often self-taught upper working and lower middle classes and that would "improve his readers' cultural health" (Pittard 2007, 1) (note 3). "An enormous class of superficial readers, who crave for light reading, would read the so-called sporting papers if there was no *Tit-Bits* to entertain them," Newnes wrote. "At least its contents are wholesome and many of those readers may be led to take an interest in higher forms of literature" (quoted in Pittard 2007, 1–2).

[2.2] In 1884, Newnes moved his publishing house to Burleigh Street in London, just a few doors down from

other popular London periodicals like the *Globe*, the *Guardian*, and the *Court Journal*, and within the decade *Tit-Bits*' circulation averaged 900,000 copies per week. Only Alfred Harmsworth's newspaper, the *Daily Mail*, had a higher circulation, at nearly one million copies per day (Jackson 2001, 48–49; Sumpter 2006, 240). No other magazine at the time, in Britain or the United States, ever reached comparable circulation numbers. Its cultural legacy was even farther reaching, as *Tit-Bits* was "transformed from printed text into embedded cultural reference," with mentions in several novels (including James Joyce's *Ulysses*), biographies, periodicals, and historical documents, even if it was sometimes being mentioned as a scathing indictment of what critics saw as Newnes's cheapening of journalism (Jackson 2001, 56).

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### 3. New Journalism, participatory culture, and celebrity

[3.1] *Tit-Bits* was so successful partly because of its publication model. Inaugurating what is known as "New Journalism," Newnes's editorial strategy included less political and parliamentary reporting, shortened news items, and more human interest stories, and he broke up large sections of text with images and photographs (Griffen-Foley 2004, 534) (note 4). Periodicals also changed from small-circulation efforts by an "editor-proprietor" to publications with massive readerships (Sumpter 2006, 240) (note 5). Newnes's strategy was also built on new conceptions of audience; rather than viewing the reading public as upper-class, male, and with solitary pursuits, he and other New Journalism magnates imagined a popular audience made up of the masses and with varied interests (note 6).

[3.2] At the heart of New Journalism was the concept of the periodical as an "open text." More traditional narrative forms, like the bound novel, have been described as "closed texts"—that is, texts that close off alternative interpretations, endings, and meanings, leaving only one dominant understanding of the text, the world, and the self (Beetham 1989, 98) (note 7). In contrast, because 19th-century periodicals like *Tit-Bits* comprised a variety of written genres, illustrations, and other visuals, they could be described as "open texts," ones that "refuse[d] the closed ending and allow[ed] for the possibility of alternative meanings" (Beetham 1989, 98). Such open-endedness gave readers the ability to disrupt and even subvert dominant readings by writing in to correspondence columns, sending letters to the editor, and even contributing original pieces for publication. Interestingly, the psychoanalysts on whom Beetham based her readings of Victorian periodicals aligned their definitions of "closed" and "open" texts with the gendered concepts of masculinity and femininity, respectively. Thus, closed texts were masculine, dominant, and authoritative, while open texts were feminine, disruptive, subversive, and creative. Such gendering becomes even more prescient when we look at Victorian periodicals and open texts in the context of recent discussion of fandom and celebrity culture. Contemporary fan fiction writers, for instance (many of whom are women), often view modern media texts like television shows, films, and novels as texts open to, and even in need of, revision and change, particularly in their approaches to marginalized audiences and to varieties of gender and sexual identities, and in their responses to and portrayals of people of color.

[3.3] The success of an "open" periodical like *Tit-Bits* rested on the editor's ability to identify and reproduce elements satisfying readers' desires to participate in the text's construction, and on the self-referential links between issues that could be found in contests, cross-promotions, serialized novels, and other features (Beetham 1989, 97). Because each issue directed readers to both previous and future issues, the text itself was never-ending and constantly open to new additions. Readers' familiarity with such formats, Andrew King argues, ended up creating a kind of "double reading," depending on the context within which the reader approached a particular publication. A "First Time Viewer" would relate a given issue of the periodical to "other products or cultural codes in general," while a "Constant Subscriber" (a pseudonym frequently adopted by *London Journal* correspondents) would read it in the context of previous issues (2000, 90). Thus, factors like time, space, and readers' identities and relationship with the magazine affected their interpretations of the text.

[3.4] *Tit-Bits*' openness and pragmatism can be seen in its dependence on contests, prizes, and promotional schemes, as well as in correspondence and advice columns that encouraged readers to actively engage with the text and to actively contribute to the construction of the periodical itself. Readers were even encouraged to submit their own work for publication. One of the earliest *Tit-Bits* writing competitions (ultimately won by novelist Grant Allen's "What's Bred in the Bone") garnered more than 22,000 submissions (note 8). Newnes's audience actively participated in creating the very text they consumed, and they "gained a sense of identity from the process" (Jackson 1997, 201). Ultimately, *Tit-Bits* and other periodicals functioned as a "social discourse," a method of cultural exchange "between the popular press and the popular mind (Jackson 2001, 54; Jackson 1997, 201).

[3.5] To those familiar with contemporary fan studies, such descriptions of openness, interactivity, and

discursivity sound surprisingly similar to recent descriptions of fandom and participatory culture. In their recent work *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture*, Henry Jenkins et al. define participatory culture as "a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices" (2009, xi). Contemporary forms of participatory culture include affiliations, memberships, and message boards. Together they promote collaboration and creative problem solving, and they produce new creative forms like fan fiction, fan videos, and mashups (Jenkins et al. 2009, xi–xii). Contemporary fan audiences interact with and participate in modern media in much the same ways George Newnes originally devised for *Tit-Bits*. In 2008, for instance, NBC's *Heroes* created a fan-based Web site where fans voted on character personalities and special attributes to create new heroes, which would then "come to life" in a live-action series aired on NBC.com; more recently, *Entertainment Weekly* (2015) ran a "Fanuary" contest offering to publish original fan fiction on its Web site. However, the majority of these contemporary practices depend upon modern technology and are grounded in convergence culture, and while their effects may be similar to those of New Journalism's techniques, the means used to achieve those effects in the 19th century were necessarily different. Thus, although historian Bridget Griffen-Foley describes the advent of New Journalism as the *origin* of "participatory media" (2004, 533), Matthew Freeman cautions that cross-promotion should more correctly be seen as "a lineal *ancestor* of today's participatory culture" (2014a, 2373; emphasis added).

[3.6] Freeman stresses the importance of understanding that the origins of participatory culture and transmedia storytelling, in particular, are rooted in early 20th-century advertising strategies and industrialized consumer culture (2014a, 2377) (note 9). At the turn of the century, Freeman explains, "consumption was promoted through mass culture, one established at this time through mass media such as magazines, which in turn encouraged notions of a mass culture by pronouncing a media text as itself a commodity" (2014b, 46). Cross-promotional practices like *Tit-Bits*' correspondence columns and contests were grounded in the rise of advertising and consumer culture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. According to Freeman, cross-promotional culture "[lures] the masses toward the purchase of multiple media texts and tie-in products through the use of narrative and visual content, all of which was placed upon various screens and windows" (2014a, 2376–77). Magazines (including *Tit-Bits*, I argue) were "an important step in the direction of creating an active, migratory audience which, for the first time, was being encouraged to participate in the culture around them—actively shaping that culture, traversing borders" (2014a, 2365). Thus fictional characters and narratives—like those of Sherlock Holmes—that could "sell and sustain the purchase of newspapers would become the most important" media at the turn of the century and beyond, and cross-promotion became the most popular means of advertising for more US and European newspaper chains (2014a, 2368). Such practices provided the historical framework for today's transmedia storytelling.

[3.7] More importantly, the rise of New Journalism also went hand in hand with the rise of celebrity culture. While many critics cite readers' obsession with George Gordon, Lord Byron, in the late 18th century as the origin of celebrity culture (Cranfield 2014, 66; Mole 2008, 345), such obsessions became much more commonplace at the end of the 19th century, when Newnes was beginning his editorial experiments. As early as the 1830s, magazines like *Fraser's* were publishing engraved portraits of famous authors, politicians, scientists, and explorers each month. "Fraser's Gallery of Illustrious Literary Characters" was accompanied by a page of text and was used to "unify" the often disparate elements of the magazine (Fisher 2006, 97). Advances in photographic technology and the subsequent growing interest in photography midcentury helped make evolutionary scientist Charles Darwin a cultural phenomenon; Darwin and other literati would include self-portraits, often with facsimiles of the sitter's signature, in their correspondence with fans (Gapps 2006, 348). By the end of the 19th century, celebrities, scientists, and writers increasingly depended on photos, gossip columns, and interviews to establish and enhance their reputations. Through this confluence of advertising, New Journalism, and photography, the life of the author became a commodity, something to be reproduced and sold to various audiences. Authors, as much as their characters, became "figures of public recognition," so much so that, for some critics, their celebrity seemed to "threaten the cultural distinction of authorship itself" (Salmon 1997, 159–60).

[3.8] In some cases, like that of Sherlock Holmes, the fictional characters became even more celebrated than their authors and might subsume their creators' reputations. Holmes, for example, granted an interview to the *National Observer* in 1892 ("The Real Sherlock Holmes"), criticizing his creator for being more interested in money than truth or artistry. Conan Doyle himself commented in his memoir, *Memories and Adventures* ([1924] 1988), that numerous people treated Sherlock Holmes as a real-life celebrity in his own right, sending him letters in care of Conan Doyle or offering to work as his housekeeper; a group of French schoolboys even wanted to visit his lodgings in Baker Street (108). Stories circulate of the Turks believing Holmes to be working for the Allies in World War I (Pound 1966, 90), of obituaries being published for Holmes after the 1893 publication of "The Final

Problem" (Saler 2003, 610), of Holmes giving a Paris newspaper an exclusive interview about a recent murder (Pound 1966, 92), and so on. The publishing industry often turned authors into celebrities, but George Newnes went further, deliberately forging his "loyal Tit-Bitites" into interactive Sherlock Holmes fan communities, and in so doing he directly contributed to Holmes's popularity at the turn of the century.

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#### 4. Fears of participatory culture: New Journalism and contemporary fandom

[4.1] Contemporary media portrayals of fandom reveal many fears of it, and there were similar fears of participatory culture in the late 19th century. Several late 19th-century critics feared that the New Journalistic models promoted by Newnes and Harmsworth oversimplified important political and economic issues for the lower classes and risked degrading the news and the general public. In particular, many felt that the 1870 Education Act contributed to the rise of New Journalism (Pound 1996, 11). Facing an increasing population and changing urban demographics in response to the industrial revolution, Britain desperately needed to revise its national education policies and to create more schools. The 1870 Education Act, the first national legislation in support of education, expanded the number of schools and determined that religious teaching in the state schools was to be nondenominational ("The 1870 Education Act"). More schools meant increased literacy rates, particularly among working-class children. Popular magazines like *Tit-Bits* were often vilified by cultural critics for pandering to these new, underdeveloped readers.

[4.2] One of the biggest critics of the New Journalism was poet and essayist Matthew Arnold. Writing in the May 1887 issue of the *Nineteenth Century* in response to *Pall Mall Gazette* editor W. T. Stead, Arnold first coined the term "New Journalism" and lamented its effect on readers: "We have had opportunities of observing a new journalism which a clever and energetic man has lately invented...It has much to recommend it: it is full of ability, novelty, variety, sensation, sympathy, generous instincts; its one great fault is that it is *feather-brained*." He argued that New Journalism "offered information at the expense of knowledge" (Jackson 2001, 54) and risked the kind of anti-intellectual philistinism he had railed against in his previous famous essay, *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). Of the rising lower and middle classes, Arnold wrote,

[4.3] Consider these people, their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voices; look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come forth out of their mouths, the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds; would any amount of wealth be worth having with the condition that one was to become just like these people by having it? ([1869] 1932, 28–29)

[4.4] For Arnold, the rise in literacy rates meant decreases in the quality of literature and the national intellect. Caroline Sumpter has recently connected Arnold's paranoia about rising philistinism to the 1867 Second Reform Act, which enfranchised segments of the male urban working classes in England and Wales. She argues that disparaging the New Journalism allowed the educated elite to "cast doubt on the rationality of voters as well as readers. It could also be used to reignite a familiar debate: to once again raise the spectre of elite culture under siege" (2006, 241). Because periodicals like *Tit-Bits* were so popular with the upper working and lower middle classes, they were accused of undermining literary standards. *Tit-Bits* in particular "became synonymous with illiterate taste, a scapegoat for shrinking attention spans and narrow intellects" (Chan 2007, 10).

[4.5] Arnold's fear that these new active readers, who participated in the text rather than merely consuming it, threatened literary quality and even democracy sounds familiar when we read his critiques in the light of contemporary fan studies. Much of our contemporary understanding of fans, as seen in scholarship and research on fans and fan practices, originated in the United Kingdom at the same time as New Journalism: between the 1880s and the 1920s. In *Textual Poachers*, Henry Jenkins provides a helpful etymology of the word "fanatic." It comes from the Latin *fanaticus*, originally meaning "of or belonging to the temple, a temple servant, a devotee," and then later "of persons inspired by orgiastic rites and enthusiastic frenzy" (Jenkins 1992, 12). The abbreviated form "fan" came to be commonly used in reference to audiences of late 19th-century sports and early 20th-century films. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, cites an 1889 reference to "base-ball fans" in the *Kansas Times & Star*, as well as a 1914 reference to "First League football 'fans' in London" in the *Daily Express*.

[4.6] George Newnes himself was professionally invested in 19th-century fan culture, particularly as it related to spectator sports and celebrity culture. The inaugural issue of the *Strand Magazine* in 1891, for example, included a feature titled "Portraits of Celebrities" depicting important cultural figures of the 19th and 20th centuries, the first of whom was poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Newnes later added to his fan service such columns as "Illustrated Interviews," "Artists of the *Strand*," and "Celebrities at Play," all combining to celebrate celebrity culture and fan practices. In the early 20th century, when spectator sports were becoming popular, Newnes

published full-page studio portraits of "famous footballers" and "famous cricketers" in *C. B. Fry's Magazine* (Jackson 2001, 113). The fact that Sherlock Holmes rose to international prominence amidst such dramatic changes in advertising, mass publishing, and celebrity culture suggests that the rise of celebrity culture correlates with the origins of fandom.

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## 5. *Tit-Bits*, Sherlock Holmes, and cross-promotion

[5.1] Considering all of the cultural fears surrounding participatory culture during the late 19th century, it is surprising how effective George Newnes's new publishing practices were. He used his first periodical, *Tit-Bits*, to try out several different means to engage his readership, including prizes, correspondence columns, and writing competitions. Through these promotions, *Tit-Bits* readers became active writers and contributors to the magazine. After the success of the Sherlock Holmes stories in the *Strand*, however, Newnes sought out even more cross-promotional strategies to maximize his profits off both magazines and thus, indirectly, to build the first Sherlock Holmes fandom.

[5.2] Newnes created the *Strand Magazine* as a middle-class vehicle for educated readers. First launched in January 1891—just 10 years after the arrival of *Tit-Bits*—the *Strand's* 112 lavish pages included new fiction, articles, and colored prints from the previous year's Royal Academy art show, and was immediately popular. Its first issue sold over 300,000 copies, sales ultimately peaked at about half a million copies per month and were the highest when including a Sherlock Holmes story (Pound 1966, 32). Once Sherlock Holmes entered the scene in the July 1891 issue, the magazine had to be sent to press a month before publication in order to meet demand (Jackson 1996, 15). Holmes made the *Strand* so popular that the magazine could be found all over Europe and beyond. Pound records, "A traveler leaving Waterloo by boat train for Southampton noted that 'every other person on the train had a copy,'" and on arriving in Cape Town, South Africa, he saw "a pile of copies of the magazine on the railway bookstall...diminishing with rapidity." Even Conan Doyle himself reported, after returning from the Continent, "Foreigners used to recognize the English by their check suits. I think they will soon learn to do it by their *Strand Magazines*. Everyone on the Channel boat, except the man at the wheel, was clutching one" (quoted in Pound 1966, 63).

[5.3] Although Newnes ostensibly intended the *Strand* to appeal to a higher-class audience than *Tit-Bits*, recent scholars like Winnie Chan, Christopher Pittard, and Kate Jackson have raised questions about the periodicals' readerships. According to Chan, the middle-class *Strand* welcomed working-class *Tit-Bits* readers "as if they were graduating to more sophisticated reading," and *Tit-Bits* conversely welcomed readers of the *Strand* (2007, 11). In fact, Newnes's plan to build and sell Holmes's world could only work if he could use *Tit-Bits* to fuel readers' hunger for more Holmes stories in both periodicals. The late 19th- and early 20th-century consumer model meant that "readers, as consumers...became accustomed to this multiplication, demanding more and more story from their media texts" (2014b, 46).

[5.4] Newnes began promoting Sherlock Holmes in *Tit-Bits* soon after the character had grabbed the public's imagination in 1891, and he did so through three main New Journalistic participatory practices: inquiry columns, competitions, and Holmesian pastiches. The inquiry column published short questions sent in by readers with the answers following 2 weeks after. The magazine's cultural authority was partially grounded in its guarantee that every question would be considered with the utmost seriousness and answered with absolute accuracy. For instance, just a year after Sherlock Holmes first appeared in the *Strand's* "A Scandal in Bohemia," *Tit-Bits* published an inquiry regarding the character's real-life existence: "Buttons wishes to know whether Sherlock Holmes, the detective genius...is or is not an actual person. We cannot positively say. As a matter of fact, we have not made the personal acquaintance of Mr. Sherlock Holmes...If...we should find that no such person is in existence we shall then be very much disappointed indeed" (*Tit-Bits*, January 23, 1892). The question of Holmes's authenticity came up again in an 1894 query, in answer to which the editors had to make clear that "it is not true that Oliver Wendell Holmes was the father of Sherlock Holmes; as a matter of fact, they were not related at all" (*Tit-Bits*, October 27, 1894). Such editorial responses provided curious readers with tiny insights into the famed character's backstory, a popular element of contemporary transmedia storytelling, and thus expanded Conan Doyle's fictional world. Michael Saler (2003) describes such readers as "naïve believers," audiences who want to believe that the fiction of Sherlock Holmes is, in fact, real. Newnes does not deny Holmes's reality; rather, he uses the *Tit-Bits* inquiry column to cross-promote the *Strand* and to reinforce readers' fascination with the character and desire for even more details about his life and fictional world.

[5.5] When Conan Doyle tried to kill off Sherlock Holmes in "The Final Problem" (1893), the *Tit-Bits* mailroom was overwhelmed with readers' complaints and demands to bring Holmes back to life. As early as January 6, 1894, Newnes was responding to readers' questions about Holmes's death, the future of the character, and the



possibility of new Sherlock Holmes stories ever again appearing in the *Strand Magazine*:

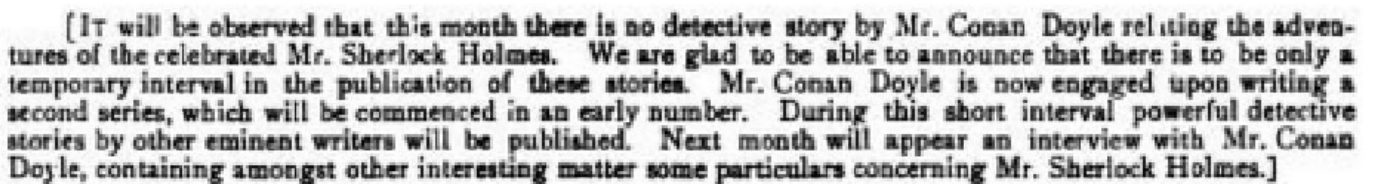
[5.6] G. and very many others—The news of the death of Sherlock Holmes has been received with most widespread regret, and readers have implored us to use our influence with Mr. Conan Doyle to prevent the tragedy being consummated. We can only reply that we pleaded for his life in the most urgent, earnest, and constant manner. Like hundreds of correspondents we feel as if we had lost an old friend whom we could ill spare. Mr. Doyle's feeling was that he did not desire Sherlock to out stay his welcome, and that the public had had enough of him. This is not our opinion, nor is it the opinion of the public; but it is, we regret to say, Mr. Doyle's. The author desires to turn his attention more to other paths of literature, and for a time, at any rate, to leave detective stories alone. He has, however, promised us that he will, at some future date, if opportunity may occur, give us the offer of some posthumous histories of the great detective, which offer we shall readily accept.

[5.7] Such demands for more Holmes continued over the next decade, particularly in the *Tit-Bits* inquiry columns, where readers pressed the editor for news about the future of their favorite detective. For example, in the April 1, 1899, issue, the editor reported,

[5.8] Three Castles comes along with another long-continued—shall we say?—chronic complaint against Mr. Conan Doyle, that he does not give us a new series of Sherlock Holmes. Three Castles does not employ any arguments, nor do any of our correspondents who desire the same thing, which we have not already put before Mr. Conan Doyle...We hope that he will continue the series at some time, but when—or if ever—we cannot at present say.

[5.9] Contemporary readers can easily identify the frustration Newnes must have felt at being caught between the demands of his readers and Conan Doyle's obstinate refusal to bring back a beloved character. Because the more upscale *Strand* did not publish letters to the editor or inquiry columns, readers were forced to turn to *Tit-Bits* for answers, thus reinforcing the synergistic relationship between Holmes's publication "home" and its cross-promotional companion.

[5.10] Newnes not only promoted *Tit-Bits* as an authority on the future of Sherlock Holmes, but also advertised new publications and reprints of the old Holmes stories to already-invested readers, sometimes to the detriment of other writers for his magazines. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, the *Strand* explicitly marketed new Conan Doyle stories on the backs of other popular detective stories (Chan 2007, 16). Figure 1 shows a promotion for upcoming Sherlock Holmes stories that was inserted into installments of J. E. P. Muddock's "Dick Donovan" stories in 1892.



[IT will be observed that this month there is no detective story by Mr. Conan Doyle relating the adventures of the celebrated Mr. Sherlock Holmes. We are glad to be able to announce that there is to be only a temporary interval in the publication of these stories. Mr. Conan Doyle is now engaged upon writing a second series, which will be commenced in an early number. During this short interval powerful detective stories by other eminent writers will be published. Next month will appear an interview with Mr. Conan Doyle, containing amongst other interesting matter some particulars concerning Mr. Sherlock Holmes.]

**Figure 1.** *The Strand*, *Dick Donovan* (*Strand* 4 [1892]: 82).

[5.11] Perhaps even more damaging, *Tit-Bits* often tacked such promotions onto the end of Muddock's stories, thus undermining their independent literary and cultural value. Such promotions implied that Dick Donovan stories might be satisfactory fillers while Conan Doyle was writing new stories, but they were no substitute for accounts of Sherlock Holmes himself.

[5.12] Not only did Newnes use Muddock's tales to promote new Sherlock Holmes stories, but he also used such "apologetic" prefaces to sell Holmesian reprints as well: "Admirers of that eminent detective are also informed that *The Sign of Four*, the story of the wonderful adventure by which he gained his reputation, can now be obtained at this office. Price 3s.6d." (*Strand* 4 [1892]: 470). In fact, *Tit-Bits* was advertising reprints of Conan Doyle's independently published novel, *The Sign of Four*, as early as 1892, just a year after Sherlock Holmes first appeared in short story form in the *Strand* (Answers to Correspondents, *Tit-Bits*, October 22, 1892). Conan Doyle's novels and collections, like *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, remained popular throughout the "hiatus" of the 1890s and were reprinted in 1899, with both volumes, of course, advertised in *Tit-Bits* (April 1, 1899, 15).

[5.13] During the hiatus, Newnes even used Sherlock Holmes to promote his own periodicals, as in an ad for *Woman's Life* (1895–1934) in the December 28, 1895, issue of *Tit-Bits*:

[5.14] Watson: "Have you noticed, my dear Holmes, how charmingly Mrs. Beauty dresses now; how well her house is managed, and how full of pleasant talk she is? She used to be such a dowdy creature you know."

Holmes: "Yes, I have observed."

Watson: "Her little dinners are now most excellent, and her home seems to be brighter and more charming than it used to be. And such lovely hats she wears! What is the reason?"

Holmes said not a word, but placing his hand in his overcoat pocket he pulled out No. 3 of "Woman's Life" and handed it to Watson, with a significant look as he turned the pages.

"Ah," said Watson, "now I understand how it has all come about."

—Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson, and Mrs. Beauty understood, and we wish all our lady readers to understand, that "Woman's Life" is the best illustrated penny paper for the home ever published. ("Sherlock Holmes Dialogue, with a Moral for Ladies")

[5.15] In preparation for Sherlock Holmes's return in 1901, *Tit-Bits* also spent a considerable amount of time announcing that new Sherlock Holmes stories would be published in the *Strand* (further indicating the overlap of the two magazines' audiences). In July of 1901, *Tit-Bits* began running regular ads for the serialization of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*; one particularly imaginative ad featured an image of a calling card with the message "At Home 1st day of each month: Sherlock Holmes. *Strand Magazine*" (*Tit-Bits*, September 21, 1901) (note 10). By advertising for its sister publication, *Tit-Bits* provided early Sherlock Holmes audiences with a form of fan service: material within a work of fiction that is added to please fan audiences. While Conan Doyle himself was not (as far as we know) including such elements in his stories, Newnes's cross-promotional practices enticed readers to several of his publications, providing them with information about Holmes's world and where they could purchase additional stories.

[5.16] In addition to advertising new reprints of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, over the next several decades *Tit-Bits* created and solicited promotional tie-in stories and advertisements as well. Some of the stories claimed to be factual accounts of actual events. The first of these, "Men Who Lead Double Lives," was published in 1892, in connection with Conan Doyle's publication of "The Man with the Twisted Lip" in the *Strand* (March 26, 1892). In September of that year, *Tit-Bits* ran another tie-in story, "A Female Sherlock Holmes," which it presented as an account of a real-life love triangle and murder mystery. By offering "real-life" tie-in stories, the magazine encouraged "naïve believers" and reinforced their belief that Sherlock Holmes was a real character. Perhaps more importantly, it created the perception that Holmes's world was ongoing, even if the character himself was dead. By linking Conan Doyle's stories to these supposedly real-life tales, Newnes reinforced the public's belief in Sherlock Holmes's reality and kept them interested in the Holmesian franchise, or world. Tie-in stories like these are common in modern transmedia platforms.

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## 6. Holmesian contests

[6.1] Another participatory technique *Tit-Bits* used to engage readers in Holmes's world was competitions. The periodical offered several different kinds of contests throughout its publication history, beginning as early as the 1880s. One of the most famous was an 1883 story-writing competition with a prize of a seven-room villa. Newnes was able to dedicate several issues to promoting the competition and the award ceremony; he reported receiving over 22,000 entries, some containing as many as 20 individual stories, and selling 100,000 commemorative souvenir photos of the ceremony, which was open to the public (Jackson 2001, 79–80). As a method of recruiting new writers, Newnes ran another contest in 1884, offering £100 and a 1-year position at *Tit-Bits* to the person who could answer 10 challenging trivia questions correctly. He presented this contest as a philanthropic enterprise to help the unemployed; similarly, in 1889 he promised to donate £10,000 to the local hospital fund if his readers would raise *Tit-Bits*' circulation to one million (Jackson 2001, 59). In another playful competition, readers deciphered a series of cryptic clues to determine the location of a buried treasure of 500 gold sovereigns; over £2,500 was offered as hidden prizes over the years (Jackson 2001, 68–69). Newnes clearly saw such activities as "advertisement investment(s)," commenting that "there is no philanthropy about the matter. It is simply prompted by the advertising instinct, and there is no more generosity about it than if we had spent hundreds of pounds on bill-posting" (Jackson 1997, 208). Perhaps the most famous was the morbidly



ingenious "Railway Life Assurance" competition of May 1885: "ONE HUNDRED POUNDS WILL BE PAID BY THE PROPRIETOR OF 'TIT-BITS' TO THE NEXT-OF-KIN OF ANY PERSON WHO IS KILLED IN A RAILWAY ACCIDENT, PROVIDED A COPY OF THE CURRENT ISSUE OF 'TIT-BITS' IS FOUND UPON THE DECEASED AT THE TIME OF THE CATASTROPHE"; by 1891, the periodical reported, 36 such claims had been paid to relatives of its loyal customers (Jackson 2000, 20–21).

[6.2] LeRoy Lad Panek argues it was no surprise that the same editor who devised a contest involving finding buried treasure would be the same man behind Sherlock Holmes's (indeed, much of detective fiction's) rise to popularity. According to Panek, "It is not a great leap from the clues in a prize contest to a detective story. And contemporary critics were quick to make the connection between the puzzle and the detective story. The success of the Sherlock Holmes stories in the early 1890s, in fact, demonstrated to publishers and writers that narratives showing someone cleverly solving an interesting and complicated puzzle" attracted a wide variety of active readers. (Panek 2014, 198)

[6.3] Most of the Holmes-themed contests that appeared in *Tit-Bits* involved competitions in storytelling, factual knowledge, and interest in the Holmes stories. For example, during the first run of Conan Doyle's stories in the *Strand*, *Tit-Bits* published a "Sherlock Holmes Examination Paper" (October 21, 1893), consisting of 12 questions about Holmes's methods; answers and winners were announced in the December 21 issue (first prize went to Adam R. Thompson for his "personal ingenuity") ("A Sherlock Holmes Competition" 1983, 318). Much as detectives piece together clues to solve a crime, *Tit-Bits'* readers applied their investigative skills to answering detailed trivia quizzes that subsequently (re)created the periodical text. After the publication of "The Final Problem" (1893), a sympathetic reader proposed the idea of a "Sherlock Holmes Memorial Prize" in honor of Holmes's alleged death, asking readers to

[6.4] state which they think to be the best of the series of "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," stating their reasons for so thinking. The "Adventure" receiving the greatest number of supporters to be considered the most popular, and the person sending in the best reasons for considering the successful one to be best to receive the prize. (*Tit-Bits*, January 6, 1894)

[6.5] The author of the winning essay, Mr. G. Douglas Buchanan, argued for "The Speckled Band"; he received £10 and the publication of his essay as reward.

[6.6] Conan Doyle recognized how effective Newnes's cross-promotional methods were and even came up with his own ideas for Holmesian contests later in his career. After the publication of "The Problem of Thor Bridge" in 1921, he wrote to the *Strand* editor, Herbert Greenhough Smith, about the possibility of a contest for new Holmesian plots: "I can write them if I have good ideas, but have rather exhausted my own stock. No wonder! I wonder if a competition for the best mystery idea would be possible—probably you would get no fish worth taking out of the net" (quoted in "A Sherlock Holmes Competition" 1983, 318–19). Greenhough Smith agreed it wasn't the best notion (and of course modern copyright law would have complicated such a project); however, they did agree to create a competition in the March 1927 *Strand Magazine* in which readers would list what they considered "the best Sherlock Holmes stories." "A prize of £100 and a signed copy of [Conan Doyle's] autobiography, *Memories and Adventures*, was offered to the person who sent a list which coincided most closely with his own, and there were to be a hundred signed copies of his autobiography for the runners-up" (quoted in "A Sherlock Holmes Competition" 1983, 317). Newnes's New Journalistic practices, including contests and prizes, changed the way writers like Conan Doyle thought about their audience and the relationship between author, text, and reader.

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## 7. Holmesian pastiches

[7.1] The most popular contests *Tit-Bits* ran were Holmesian pastiches—that is, competitions in which readers were invited to write original stories featuring Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson in the style of Conan Doyle. The appearance of such contests is not surprising, since audience-produced articles were a major part of *Tit-Bits'* original format. *Tit-Bits* frequently solicited new fiction writers (just as it solicited new journalists in contests like the ones described earlier). Issues often included an ad: "TO LITTERATEURS: The price we pay for original contributions specially written for *Tit Bits* is ONE GUINEA PER COLUMN" (quoted in Jackson 2001, 60). And audiences were keen to participate; in 1890, a contest for a 40- to 50-chapter serial novel (later to be published in book form) garnered more than 22,000 submissions (Griffen-Foley 534) (note 11).

[7.2] Pastiches can be considered a form of narrative-fronted promotional content similar to newspaper comic strips. Such content "may or may not possess its own in-built revenue stream...yet operates primarily as a cross-promotional mechanism for the subsequent sale of other texts or products belonging to or extending from the

same intellectual property. Such promotional content typically exploits a serialized narratological structure [like the Sherlock Holmes stories] as that which itself points audiences to the consumption of additional iterations" (Freeman 2014a, 2371–72). Interestingly, *Tit-Bits* began advertising Sherlock Holmes pastiche contests while Conan Doyle's original stories were still being published in the *Strand*; that is, Newnes's cross-promotional strategies were building upon and expanding Holmes's world even while it was still being created. As early as December 3, 1892, *Tit-Bits* published the prize-winning "The Adventure of Shylock Oams: The Sign of Gore," a clear play on Conan Doyle's 1889 novella, *The Sign of Four*: "The prize of two guineas which we recently offered to the best detective story in the manner of Sherlock Holmes, introducing certain incidents, has been awarded to Mr. F. W. Freeman" for penning a tale about a man whose moustache was shaved off in his sleep by a romantic rival.

[7.3] Notably, most of *Tit-Bits*' pastiches were published during Holmes's hiatus between 1893 and 1901. In "Sherlock in Love" (October 17, 1896), for example, Holmes visits America and falls in love with the beautiful Miss Snugger. "A Visit from the Ghost of Sherlock Homes" (Christmas 1897) explains that Holmes is "policing" the "Shades" in "Shadowland." Other winning entries in such contests included "A Student of Sherlock Holmes" (December 29, 1894), "Mrs. Dr. Sherlock Holmes" (January 8, 1895), "A Disciple of Sherlock Holmes" (January 1, 1898), "A Rural Sherlock Holmes" (March 11, 1899), and "Sherlock's Rival" (October 24, 1903)—a Sherlock Holmes pastiche was published almost every year the character was away. Other original stories were written in the style of Conan Doyle, and some, like "A Female Sherlock" (September 26, 1903), made specific reference to Holmes and his methods. Much like the Holmesian societies of the 1930s and beyond, *Tit-Bits* and its readers were "keeping Holmes alive" through their own writings and by expanding Sherlock's world. Most of these pastiches—today we would call them fan fiction—were the result of competitions created by the *Tit-Bits* editorial staff. Newnes actively encouraged his readers to obtain in the *Strand* the "original" Sherlock Holmes adventures they were missing, especially during the 1893–1901 hiatus.

[7.4] By publishing these fan productions, Newnes blurred the line between "author" and "fan," "authority" and "amateur," just as that line is contested in postmodern fandom. By using his periodical to solicit and publish Sherlock Holmes fan fiction, Newnes provided an alternative transmedia model in which the publisher and fans worked together to expand and promote the transmedia world. Not only do transmedia stories "unfold across multiple platforms, with each medium making distinctive contributions to our understanding of the storyworld" (Jenkins 2006, 334), they also extend the world. They offer new perspectives on the characters and the complex world of the text—what scholar Matt Hills has labeled its "hyper-diegesis" (Evans 2011, 30; Hills 2002, 137). Some threads may offer backstory for specific characters or the world itself (as we saw in the *Tit-Bits* inquiry columns), while others may lay out the chronologies, myths and lore, and even geography of the narrative world. They can provide alternative perspectives on key events, and also on tangential ones that may directly impact or parallel the world's main characters and events. Transmedia storytelling is another extension of cross-promotion, particularly brand extension, which Jenkins defines as "the idea that successful brands are built by exploiting multiple contacts between the brand and the consumer" (2006, 69). Thus, "each media text in a transmedia narrative is thus in a sense an advertisement for all the others" (Freeman 2014a, 2369). While 19th-century New Journalism did not have access to the distribution models available in contemporary convergence culture, analyzing the cross-promotional practices we see in *Tit-Bits* and the *Strand* provides a nuanced understanding of the historical development of literary fandoms and transmedia storytelling.

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## 8. Conclusion

[8.1] Such cross-promotional practices during Newnes's tenure as editor of *Tit-Bits* and the *Strand Magazine* provide an important historical foundation for contemporary fan practices connected to Holmesian adaptations. Nowadays, fans must wait up to 2 years between seasons of the BBC's *Sherlock*, and more than 5 years have passed since the second Robert Downey Jr. Sherlock Holmes film, *Game of Shadows* (2011). Facing their own version of the Sherlockian hiatus, audiences once again turn to pastiches and contests to fill in the narrative gaps. Just as 19th-century Conan Doyle fans speculated about whether Watson had been twice married, where Holmes had gone to university, and what Holmes had been doing after Moriarty's death at the Reichenbach Falls, contemporary audiences publish fan fiction across a wide range of genres, including slash, alternate universe, and "fix-it" stories that alter the canon. They create "challenges" and contests to meet specific criteria (a "221b" story, for example, is a story in just 221 words, with the final word beginning with the letter b) or to explore a specific trope, event, or theme. Media-savvy creators make fan art and videos articulating new storylines and imagining alternate endings to season-ending cliffhangers; others design and sell Sherlock Holmes-themed crafts on Web sites like Etsy and Cafe Press. All of these actions articulate different ways contemporary fans participate in the consumption and promotion of Sherlock Holmes's world—whether that of Conan Doyle or Stephen Moffat.

For over 100 years, "the rise of 'Sherlock chic'" has been "historically rooted in the perpetual belief that reading the text alone will not satisfy a voracious and obsessive readership" (Cranfield 2014, 69). Similarly, as Michael Saler has noted, "the cult of Holmes focuses not just on a single character, but on his entire world; fans of the 'canon' obsess about every detail of the fictional universe Doyle created, mentally inhabiting this 'geography of the imagination' in a way that was never true for the partisans of earlier characters" (2003, 601). No one seemed to understand this better than *Tit-Bits'* editor, George Newnes.

[8.2] Perhaps the secret to Sherlock Holmes's early and long-running success lies in the cross-promotional practices used by *Tit-Bits* and the *Strand Magazine*. Through *Tit-Bits'* correspondence columns, contests, and pastiches, George Newnes created a corporately supported and maintained fandom that both solicited and rewarded audience participation in the world of Sherlock Holmes. In the absence of new Sherlock Holmes stories in the late 1890s, in particular, *Tit-Bits* provided audiences with a place where they could get more Sherlock Holmes—more reprints, more Holmesian advertising, and more pastiches. In the latter, audiences were invited to imagine new scenarios for their favorite character that were not only encouraged by the publisher but were actually validated through publication. In early Sherlock Holmes fandom, these practices not only created a unique fandom identity, but also directly contributed to the maintenance and expansion of Holmes's fictional world, especially when Conan Doyle was not publishing new stories. With fandom studies reaching more and more audiences—both academic and popular—historicizing early fan practices like the publication and reception of the Sherlock Holmes stories provides important insight into how audiences have historically responded to and interacted with fictional characters, and how they helped formulate and extend those characters' fictional worlds.

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[9.1] I would like to thank Dr. Michael Gunton and the staff at the Sherlock Holmes Collection, Richard Lancelyn Green Bequest, Portsmouth City Library, Portsmouth, UK, for their help and support during a research visit in summer 2014. I would also like to thank Plymouth State University for generously providing the grant funding that made this research possible.

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## 10. Notes

1. Many issues of the *Strand Magazine* can be read on the Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/details/thestrandmagazine>). I consulted *Tit-Bits* in the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, Richard Lancelyn Green Bequest, Portsmouth City Library, Portsmouth, UK.
2. Kate Jackson has published several authoritative works on the life and career of George Newnes, and much of my work here is indebted to her excellent research.
3. Even *Tit-Bits'* contests indicated a clear class identity. As Kate Jackson explains, "Payments offered in *Tit-Bits* were expressed in guineas, a fact which implied a class of reader in possession of a salary (middle class or professional) as opposed to a wage (always expressed in pounds, shilling, and pence)" (2001, 57).
4. Newnes is credited with the creation of New Journalism in a series of articles titled "The Leading Publishers" appearing in 1904 (Jackson 1996, 3); however, poet and critic Matthew Arnold is credited with coining the term "New Journalism," in a May 1887 article for *Nineteenth Century*.
5. Kate Jackson, along with Joel Weiner, maintains that "New" Journalism was not entirely new. Many of the changes attributed to New Journalism magnates like Newnes and Harmsworth actually originated earlier in the century. Jackson mentions the "success of the Sunday papers from the 1840s onwards,...the influence of sub-literary forms (chapbooks, almanacs, broadsheets) and of cheap fiction upon popular culture, and...a general expansion of the press resulting from the repeal of the taxes on knowledge." While "the so-called 'bohemian journalism' of journalists such as George Augustus Sala, Frederick Greenwood and Edmund Yates in the decades after 1850 laid the foundations for the New Journalism," Newnes's focus on participatory activities, on making readers part of a community of readers and contributors, is a notable advancement, and even more illuminating in the light of contemporary research on participatory culture (Jackson 2001, 45).
6. For more information on George Newnes's role in creating new audiences, see Kate Jackson's "George Newnes and the Loyal 'Tit-Bitites'" (2000). Jackson argues that "the creation of reading communities, defined as 'categories of readers linked together by a common experience or expectation of reading, and by common social, political, ideological or cultural objectives or binds rather than by physical proximity' was at the heart of Newnes's publishing enterprise. *Tit-Bits'* success was largely due to "Newnes's creation of a relationship between himself as paternal editor and the readership of the magazine (Pittard 2007, 1).

7. Beetham argues that bound copies or microfilm versions of Victorian periodicals are texts as "closed" as bound novels, finite publications, and the like. Publishers often cut off the covers and ancillary advertising materials when binding multiple issues of a periodical into a single volume, which changed the periodical's format. Similarly, by placing several issues together in one bound volume, we change the boundaries of the text itself. No longer do we read a given issue as finite, one that both stands alone and refers to previous and future issues of the same title, but rather it becomes part of a single, larger text, thus creating the impression that the volume is a finite text, published at a singular moment in time and space.
8. Interestingly, before he became famous, Conan Doyle himself once submitted a story to *Tit-Bits* and was reportedly offended by its rejection, although not so offended as to refrain from purchasing shares in the periodical (Gibson and Green 1981, 11).
9. While Freeman's research on cross-promotion primarily focuses on early 20th-century American fiction by L. Frank Baum and Edgar Rice Burroughs, one can identify similar practices even earlier, in late 19th-century British New Journalism.
10. Michael Saler (2003, 610) and Winnie Chan (2007, 16) also discuss Newnes's "internal advertisements" (e.g., cross-promotional strategies) and the role both *Tit-Bits* and the *Strand* played in promoting Sherlock Holmes's popularity.
11. Contemporary magazines similarly solicit content from readers. Pop culture magazines like *Entertainment Weekly* have tapped into fan culture by publishing articles about, and excerpts from, fan fic and fan art, such as in *Entertainment Weekly's* (2015) recent fandom contest. And of course citizen and grassroots journalism rely on contributions from readers.
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# Theory

## Authorship and authenticity in Sherlock Holmes pastiches

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[0.1] *Abstract*—Rewritings and adaptations of the Sherlock Holmes stories are traditionally called pastiches among fandom. This article juxtaposes that established use with the literary critical notion of pastiche as imitation of style, and shows how stylistic affinity to the originals produces complex effects in the imitations. The article identifies two main strands in the pastiches: one that aims to correct the mistakes and fill in the gaps in the original stories, and one that supplements the canon with stories Watson left untold. Balancing among homage, criticism, and usurpation, the pastiches comment on the original story world and its cultural context, and engage in fictions of authorship to account for the apparent inauthenticity of the retellings.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Canon; John Dickson Carr; Detective fiction; Michael Dibdin; Adrian Conan Doyle; Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; Fan fiction; Imitation; Nicholas Meyer; Pastiche

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### 1. Introduction

[1.1] The original 56 short stories and four novels about Sherlock Holmes, written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle between 1887 and 1917, hold a special position in literary history as one of the inaugural and certainly one of the most influential text corpora of detective fiction. The memorable characters of Sherlock Holmes and his companion Dr. Watson have inspired a vast number of imitations, adaptations, spin-offs, and so forth. The earliest rewritings appeared in the 19th century, making Sherlock Holmes rewriters "the first fanwriting community" (Jamison 2013, loc. 906). By 1980, an international Sherlock Holmes bibliography listed over a thousand parodies and pastiches (De Waal 1980). Today, the number of printed Sherlock Holmes stories has multiplied: the success of Nicolas Meyer's novel *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* (1974) and its subsequent film adaptation, together with the easing of the Conan Doyle estate's copyright vigilance, exploded the number of publication in late 20th and early 21st century (Boström 2012), and Internet sites devoted to fan fiction have added thousands of new Sherlock Holmes adventures to the corpus. Probably no other modern



writer has attracted imitators in the same scale.

[1.2] In the Sherlock Holmes fandom, the literary rewritings of the original canon (the corpus of Conan Doyle's Holmes stories) have traditionally been called pastiches (e.g., De Waal 1980; Jamison 2013, loc. 286 passim; Gray 2014). The emergence, however, of Internet-based fan fiction has introduced new divisions: the term pastiche is now usually restricted to rewritings published in print form (e.g., Polasek 2012, loc. 812), while the fan fiction writers of the Internet prefer their own, highly specialized generic terminology in categorizing their texts. The distinction highlights the differences between these two modes of fan writing: published pastiches appear as solitary achievements and closed in form, while Web-based fan fiction is processual and communal. Moreover, pastiches tend to adhere to world of the originals, while contemporary fan fiction favors crossovers and is increasingly inspired by film and TV adaptations rather than the original novels and stories (Stein and Busse 2012).

[1.3] Contrasted to the Web-based fan fiction, the pastiches published in book format have consequently assumed connotations that are unusual in the tradition of derivative literature. Pastiches in print are now associated with prestige and power and seen as partaking in the same establishment of taste and economic credit as the originals (Jamison 2013). Or, they might be disparaged as commercial pro fic, a conservative and uninventive form distinct from the startling variety of Web-based fan fiction, often interpreted as subversive subculture or even as a mode of contemporary avant-garde (Grossman 2013).

[1.4] The current situation calls for a closer analysis of the more traditional print form of pastiche fan writing that has been marginalized in the current academic discussions on fan fiction, despite the fact that the print form still exists and very much prospers alongside the newer forms of fan culture. This article evokes the literary critical concept of pastiche to highlight and analyze the complex dynamics between the source text and its imitation. It should be noted that the fandom use of pastiche differs from the more precise literary critical meaning of the term. Since the late 18th century, pastiche in literature has meant consistent imitation of the style of another writer—or, by extension, school or period (Nyqvist 2010; Albertsen 1971; Dyer 2007; Genette 1992). It is therefore a specialized type of rewriting that engages first and foremost with the expression of the source text and the values and notions embedded in its stylistic choices (note 1). From this perspective, most of the versions produced within the Sherlock Holmes fandom are not pastiches, but rewritings that adapt the characters and plot patterns of the original stories without much consideration for stylistic proximity to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Yet there exist a significant number of post-Conan Doylean Sherlock Holmes stories that closely resemble the style of the originals. These hardcore imitations form a unique corpus of literary pastiches where it is possible

to trace textual and thematic similarities and differences among texts that imitate a common source text. In the present article, the term *pastiche* will be reserved for those sustained imitations of the style of the originals ([note 2](#)).

[1.5] The literary critical concept of pastiche contributes to a more nuanced understanding of stylistic imitation that is often dismissed as mere repetition. By rewriting their source texts, as it were, from within, pastiches reveal the limitations and potential of the originals, as well as the cultural context that forms them. Moreover, pastiches question the particular status of their prominent originals and challenge the notions of authenticity and originality that remain central to the ways in which the literature institution classifies and sanctions literary works. Fandom use of pastiche to designate Sherlock Holmes stories in print form is appropriate in the sense that pastiches approach their source texts primarily as literary works, not merely as story worlds to be appropriated. Thus, the pastiches may not appear as transformative as many Web-based works of fan fiction, but their metafictiveness and playfulness indicate complexity that merits closer analysis. Even the most reverent imitations bear traces of radical subversion in a manner that is typical to pastiche as a double-edged literary form.

[1.6] In this article, I apply the interpretative frames derived from the theoretical discussions around the concept of pastiche to three prominent 20th-century Sherlock Holmes pastiches that remain benchmarks even for contemporary fan writers. Two of the analyzed texts hail from the 1970s, which marked the beginning of a new phase in the Sherlock Holmes fandom. Billy Wilder's unorthodox rendering of the famous sleuth in the film *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1970) inspired others to depart from the respectful and humorous mode that characterized the majority of earlier rewritings and adaptations. In literature, Nicholas Meyer's *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* set the tone for many subsequent rewritings. When published in 1974, it became a worldwide bestseller, followed by a film adaptation (1976), two sequels (*The West-End Horror* [1976] and *The Canary Trainer* [1993]), a comics version (2014), and a play (2015). *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* introduces the famous detective to Sigmund Freud, and together the two solve a mystery that threatens international peace. In a similar vein, in *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story* (1978) by Michael Dibdin, Holmes encounters a prominent contemporary figure, Jack the Ripper ([note 3](#)). In contrast to many other rewritings, Meyer's and Dibdin's 1970s novels have been translated to many languages and remained in print (or made available as digital editions and audio books), attesting to their prominence and popularity among Sherlock Holmes rewritings.

[1.7] Meyer's and Dibdin's novels represent the type of rewriting that openly challenges its originals. The other main strand of rewriting, by contrast, aims to reproduce the atmosphere of the originals without any noticeable changes. Of this



variety, *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* (1952), coauthored by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's son, Adrian Conan Doyle, and American mystery writer John Dickson Carr, is of particular interest. Collaboration between the son of the original author and a prominent mystery writer was meant to provide an authoritative sequel to the originals. The estate of Conan Doyle has in recent years again produced new Sherlock Holmes stories in order to benefit economically from the popularity of the detective even after the expiration of the copyright (of these authorized versions, the Young Sherlock Holmes series by Andrew Lane doesn't imitate the style of the originals, whereas the novels by Anthony Horowitz can be categorized as pastiches). While the 1952 pastiche is empathically framed as a tribute to the original canon, it too exhibits the characteristic, problematical dynamics of stylistic imitation as homage and blasphemy.

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## 2. Corrective and complementary pastiches

[2.1] Duality is elemental to literary pastiche: while pastiche resurrects an earlier style, it also tends to question or undermine the status and value of that style, even in cases where that isn't necessarily the intention of the pasticheur (Nyqvist 2010). By disconnecting a style from its context of origin, pastiche calls into question the received notion of authorship based on the problematic conflation of originality, stylistic unity, and authority. One of its earliest specific uses has been literary criticism (du Roure 1828). By recreating the style of another writer, the pasticheur not only shows his or her appreciation of that style, but is also able to highlight the mannerisms and tics of the source text or flaws in the worldview it seeks to convey.

[2.2] In detective fiction pastiches, the object of imitation is not style in abstract, as that would hardly satisfy the reading audience, but the entire story world of the original. It would be difficult to imagine a convincing and recognizable pastiche of Arthur Conan Doyle without the characters of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. Stylistic imitation is therefore first and foremost a vehicle to engage with the universe of the originals: to fill in the gaps in the canon and produce new adventures. The Sherlock Holmes pastiches can therefore be divided into two main groups according to their relationship and attitude to the source texts.

[2.3] Corrective pastiches, such as the novels of Meyer and Dibdin, return to the world of the originals in order to account for the inconsistencies and mistakes in the originals. Favorite targets are the short stories "The Final Problem" and its sequel "The Empty House," in which versions of the death and reappearance of Holmes are presented as hoaxes. The original stories and their improbable solutions to the disappearance and return of Holmes become the mystery to be solved in the pastiches, in which the gaps and gaffes function as clues to the

fuller narrative behind the unsatisfactory account provided by Watson/Conan Doyle. The pasticheurs thus use Holmes's ratiocinative method to account for the improbabilities in the source texts. Yet the unity and order they seek to establish in the narrative of Sherlock Holmes will in some sense always fail: they can neither completely eradicate the source texts—the "wrong" versions—nor account for their existence (why did Watson/Conan Doyle write these bogus stories)?

[2.4] The other type of pastiches continues the original series in a straightforward manner. These complementary pastiches—for instance, *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* or June Thomson's Sherlock Holmes series—often draw their inspiration from the many stories Watson refers to but does not recount in full. These references point out the absence of texts from the canon, a gap complementary pastiches aim to fill. Unlike corrective pastiches, they do not aim to criticize and contest the existing stories. Some complementary pastiches, like *The House of Silk* (2011) by Anthony Horowitz, supplement the cultural context of the originals by introducing new phenomena, such as organized pedophilia, but they don't identify particular gaps or mistakes in the originals in the manner of corrective pastiches.

[2.5] The distinction between complementary and corrective pastiches overlaps to a degree with the distinction between affirmational and transformational fandom, introduced by a fan under the alias *obsession\_inc* and summarized by Stein and Busse (2012, loc. 322) as follows: "whereas the former analyzes and interprets the source text, creating shared meaning and characterizations, the latter aggressively alters and transforms the source, changing and manipulating it to the fans' own desires." Yet the pastiches usually refrain from the more intrusive interventions and alterations, such as crossovers between two different source texts, as that would be difficult to balance with the requirement of stylistic proximity.

[2.6] Regardless of the orientation, a common feature in the Sherlock Holmes pastiches is their pseudoacademic appearance: they are furnished with prefaces, explanatory notes, and epilogues. Detective fiction is a bookish genre—letters, ciphers, literary quotations are common—and the habit of Conan Doyle of investing his novels with subtitles such as "Being a reprint from the reminiscences of John H. Watson MD, late of the Army Medical Department" (in *A Study in Scarlet* [1887]) or "Extract from the diary of Dr. Watson" (chapter 10 in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* [1902]) may function as an inspiration for the paratexts framing the pastiches, but their excesses call for further interpretation. Moreover, some of the stories in Conan Doyle's corpus, such as the prominent "The Final Problem" and "The Speckled Band," are in fact presented as corrective rewritings to begin with. At the beginning of the former, Conan Doyle's narrator Dr. Watson writes:

[2.7] My hand has been forced, however, by the recent letters in which Colonel James Moriarty defends the memory of his brother, and I have no choice but to lay the facts before the public exactly as they occurred. I alone know the absolute truth of the matter, and I am satisfied that the time has come when no good purpose is to be served by its suppression. (Conan Doyle 2000, 421)

[2.8] He then goes on to review three earlier accounts of the death of Sherlock Holmes that are all dismissed as inadequate. Corrective pasticheurs in particular have benefited from this acknowledgment, which illustrates the power of rewritings or fictions of rewritings. Textual lineage—whether imagined or real—gives the text a special kind of credibility. The fact that so many Sherlock Holmes pastiches are also presented as rewritings where Watson returns to an enigmatic case and offers a more satisfactory account of it underlines the commentary relationship the pastiches have to their source texts. They participate in the construction of a canon within the canon by referring frequently to certain stories and castigating others, and draw attention to the central elements as well as the gaps in the source texts. The pseudoacademic apparatus also functions as a commentary on the pastiches: the notes and prefaces justify the imitation and establish its connection to the source texts. Metafictiveness is thus an element of realism both in the source texts and the pastiches.

[2.9] Finally, the Sherlock Holmes pastiches are—despite their varying aims—fundamentally homages. This is of course a common effect in pastiches, but the perspective of narration in the original Sherlock Holmes stories markedly enhances the effect. Conan Doyle's Watson depicts his friend as an admirable character, and it would be hard to pastiche the originals in a convincing way if one wanted to alter this emotional undercurrent of the narration. Watson's admiration, devotion, and unfailing friendship reflect a common pasticheurs' attitude toward the texts they imitate. None of the three pastiches under investigation radically destroys Holmes or turns Watson against him. All of them even quote Watson's verdict of his supposedly dead friend at the end of "The Final Problem": "He was the best and wisest man I have ever known" (Dibdin 1996, 165, 190; Conan Doyle and Carr [1952] 1999, 338; Meyer 1976, 38).

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### 3. Deceptive appearances: *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* by Nicholas Meyer

[3.1] The pastiches of the Sherlock Holmes stories abound with iconic paraphernalia. It is apparently impossible to imitate Conan Doyle without referring to the central imagery of Holmes and his surroundings: the Persian slipper (where he keeps his tobacco), his Stradivarius, or the smoke-filled atmosphere of the bachelor pad at 221b Baker Street where the ring of the

doorbell or hasty steps on the stairs announce the appearance of a new client. But to create an illusion of Conan Doyle's style and to justify the paratextual claims of authenticity, a pasticheur must do something other than merely recycle the famous props. Much of the source text's power lies in the dramatic, detailed prose that guides the reader toward the climax and solution of the mystery. The following scene from the famous story "The Speckled Band" (1892) offers a condensed and effective example of some of the common stylistic means used by Conan Doyle. Watson and Holmes are discussing the preceding visit of a client when they are suddenly interrupted:

[3.2] "But what, in the name of the devil!"

[3.3] The ejaculation had been drawn from my companion by the fact that our door had been suddenly dashed open, and that a huge man framed himself in the aperture. His costume was a peculiar mixture of the professional and of the agricultural, having a black top-hat, a long frock-coat, and a pair of high gaiters, with a hunting-crop swinging in his hand. So tall was he that his hat actually brushed the cross-bar of the doorway, and his breadth seemed to span it across from side to side. A large face, seared with a thousand wrinkles, burned yellow with the sun, and marked with every evil passion, was turned from one to the other of us, while his deep-set, bile-shot eyes, and the high thin fleshless nose, gave him somewhat the resemblance to a fierce old bird of prey.

[3.4] "Which of you is Holmes?" asked this apparition. (Conan Doyle 2000, 145)

[3.5] Even though the readers remain at this point unaware of the identity of the intruder (Dr. Grimesby Roylott of Stoke Moran), there is no doubt that they have encountered the villain of the story. Watson's description of him is in accordance with Holmes's method of investigation, in which special attention is given to the interpretation of details. Instead of a list of pure facts, Watson offers us a dramatic presentation that immediately makes us grasp the nature of the character. The scene is carefully constructed with suggestive details: Holmes's instinctive exclamation "in the name of the devil" foregrounds the devilishness of Roylott, and the surroundings seem to shrink in comparison to the powerful presence of the man—the door is narrowed into an aperture, and Roylott's hat brushes against its cross-bar. The hunting crop implies a violent character but also alludes to the means of the murder (Roylott uses a whip to control his "weapon," a poisonous snake). The sentences are fairly complex, and the description proceeds in an organized manner from the overall appearance to the man's eyes and beaklike nose, which prompts a typically Conan Doylean animal comparison that captures the essence of the man. The picture of Dr. Roylott as a

bird of prey complements the description given earlier of his intended victim as a "hunted animal" (138). The style of the passage is in accordance with the "fair play" rule of classic detective fiction: the reader has access to the relevant information and can compete with the detective in figuring out the puzzle.

[3.6] The unexpected or otherwise dramatic entrance of a significant character is a trademark scene of Conan Doyle's and a common subject of imitation in the pastiches. The following passage from Nicholas Meyer's *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* offers a subtler but still recognizable variant of the situation:

[3.7] I was on the point of asking Holmes to explain his remark when the door was opened and into the room stepped a bearded man of medium height and stooped shoulders. I took him to be in his early forties though I subsequently learned he was only thirty-five. Through his faint smile I saw an expression of infinite sadness, coupled, as it seemed to me, with infinite wisdom. His eyes were more remarkable than anything else in his face. They were not particularly large, but they were dark and deep-set, shadowed by an over-hanging brow and piercing in their intensity. He wore a dark suit with a gold chain peeping under his jacket and stretched across his waistcoat. (Meyer 1976, 89–90)

[3.8] The gentleman greets Holmes and Watson politely but gets an agitated response from (the cocaine-ridden) Holmes:

[3.9] "You may remove that ludicrous beard," he [Holmes] said..."And kindly refrain from employing that ridiculous comic opera accent. I warn you, you'd best confess or it will go hard with you. That game is up, Professor Moriarty!"

[3.10] Our host turned slowly to him, allowing for the full effect of his piercing gaze, and said, in a soft voice: "My name is Sigmund Freud." (ibid. 90)

[3.11] Some stylistic differences are evident in this passage: the sentences are less complex, Holmes sounds like a cross between the Victorian detective and an action film hero, the description does not conclude in a suggestive trope, and Watson's point of view ("I took him to be," "I saw," "it seemed to me") is more explicit than in the extract from "The Speckled Band." The introduction of Freud may strike us as less effective than that of Dr. Roylott, but the difference is justified, since the description reflects the character of the person in question and, unlike his brutal colleague, Dr. Freud appears to be a calm yet compassionate scientist. Both descriptions note the same features: the man's posture, his clothing and the social status they imply, the expression on his face—

in short, his overall appearance. This kind of style invites a straightforward interpretation: the person is as he looks. Royslott is a brute, Freud a deeply perceptive scientist.

[3.12] Appearances can, however, be deceptive. In Conan Doyle's stories, Sherlock Holmes turns this to his advantage by performing investigations in disguise. The disguise motif is often repeated in pastiches, and in Meyer's novel (e.g., Meyer 1976, 67–69), where the overt, material disguises, such as false beards, are juxtaposed with the more complex psychological roles and masks studied by Freud. The novel seeks to supplement the world of the source texts with an understanding of the unconscious and brings together the two great turn-of-the-century methodologies: psychoanalysis in its nascent state and Holmes's method of rational detection. The choice of the pastiche form proves problematic for the presentation of the former: the realistic style of the source texts does not allow for the exploration of the unconscious except fairly superficially. (Meyer is especially fond of the therapeutic cliché of hypnosis, hinted at in the description above by the mention of Freud's fob watch.) The similarities and differences between psychoanalysis and the science of detection are used instead to ignite a personal competition between Holmes and Freud. Unlike Dr. Royslott, who poses a physical threat, Dr. Freud offers an intellectual challenge to Holmes. In the above scene, Freud clearly has the upper hand: he calmly evaluates the situation while the cocaine-ridden Holmes makes himself a fool since he cannot read the signs correctly. Meyer supplants Professor Moriarty with Dr. Freud and reverses the traditional roles: now Watson is the one in the know, and Holmes is the client in need of professional help. Although Holmes later exhibits the powers of his mind by solving a mystery relating to one of Freud's patients, it is Freud who in the end manages to discover the root cause of Holmes's depression—a discovery that elicits from Watson the praise: "You are the greatest detective of all" (Meyer 1976, 231).

[3.13] *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* is a corrective pastiche because it purports to offer a true account of the case that led Watson to write the bogus story "The Final Problem," but also because it offers a psychoanalytical interpretation of many of Holmes's stranger habits. His cocaine addiction, aversion to women, and obsession with "wickedness" and "injustice" are shown to derive from the childhood trauma of witnessing his mother's infidelity being punished by the father (227–28). Thus, the novel offers a larger context for the original Sherlock Holmes stories, to which it frequently refers. The notable popularity of Meyer's novel is in part due to its relationship with the canon, which it introduced to a new readership: the frequent references to the source text and explanations of details serve as a helpful résumé of the canon. *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* updated the corpus of Conan Doyle's stories by bringing it into interaction with one of the most notable figures of the era, thus linking the famously ahistorical stories to a

cultural context. Moreover, the psychoanalytic criticism of detective fiction had, ever since the 1950s, established a connection between psychoanalysis and detection, based on the central roles that gaps, inconsistencies, and interpretations have in both phenomena. Meyer's novel thus illustrates how pastiches often arise from a cultural context larger than their immediate source texts and how they comment on the reception history of the originals. Corrective and contextualizing, *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* has subsequently become established as a "canonical" pastiche of the Sherlock Holmes stories, and has served as a source of inspiration to many subsequent rewriters.

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#### 4. Reichenbach revisited: *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story* (1978) by Michael Dibdin

[4.1] Michael Dibdin's *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story* begins with the key question of detective fiction—whodunit—but in this case the question applies first to the narrative itself. Who is its author? The fictitious editors of the preface claim to have found a manuscript purporting to be the true account of the death of Sherlock Holmes, written by Dr. Watson. Convincing evidence is offered to support its authenticity. The "manuscript" itself begins with a familiar scene—Watson describing yet another quiet morning at the Baker Street lodgings, interrupted by hasty steps on the stairs. At this point, the narrative comes to a halt and Watson confesses that he was not the author of the original stories, which were written by his "friend A.C.D." on the basis of his notes (Dibdin 1996, 14–17). Here we have Watson writing a story for the first time and discouraged by the example of A.C.D. after only half a page: "No, this really won't do. I thought I might give my story a little more conviction if I at least tried to echo A.C.D., but I cannot even manage that" (13). *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story* thus opens with a negative pastiche contract (note 4)—here Watson/Dibdin is not imitating Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—that simultaneously affirms the source text and gives the pasticheur more freedom with details than a claim to faithfulness would give. Yet Watson's report reads very much like the stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose style is evoked both in imitation and quotation. Readers familiar with the canon will recognize extensive quotations from and variations of "The Final Problem" and "The Empty House" as well as the novel *The Sign of Four* (1890). The negative pastiche contract proves to be one of the false clues typical of the detective fiction genre, and as such is indicative of the playful metafictionalness that characterizes Dibdin's novel as a whole.

[4.2] In the fictive world of *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story*, the whodunit question pertains to the famous Whitechapel murders investigated by Holmes. Holmes identifies Professor Moriarty as Jack the Ripper and chases him to the Reichenbach Falls, where the Professor dies, and Holmes returns to England.

Watson, however, becomes gradually aware of the inconsistencies in this alleged solution to the abominable murders and discovers, to his horror, that Jack the Ripper is none other than Holmes himself. Another chase to the Reichenbach Falls follows, ending with a final moment of insight when the mentally disturbed Holmes realizes the consequences of his crimes and commits suicide by plunging into the depths of the falls. The novel takes its cue from the historical fact that at the time of the Whitechapel murders, the police received a number of letters—written in different styles—where "Jack the Ripper" confessed the murders. Published in the newspapers, the letters produced what could be called pastiche effects: they brought about hoax letters signed as by the Ripper—and possibly also led to copycat murders. As the story evolves, the novel gradually constructs an analogy between the acts of the pasticheur and the acts of the murderer. Both involve a play of identity—Holmes acting as Ripper/Moriarty and Dibdin acting as Conan Doyle/Watson—but the novel also suggests an affinity between their respective deeds. Holmes kills, mutilates, and dismembers his victims, while Dibdin cuts pieces from the source text, imitating it in a deliberately subversive manner and creating a new story that attacks the "truths" of the source text. In the end, Dibdin finally does away with Holmes, letting him plunge once again into the Reichenbach Falls—this time haunted by an inner demon.

[4.3] The rather grim analogy between the murderer and the pasticheur is reinforced with the final piece of evidence that compels Watson to accept the fact that his beloved friend is indeed the cruel murderer. It is a pastiche poem attached to a jar containing the womb and fetus of one of the victims. Based on the Christmas carol "Once in Royal David's City," the poem celebrates the brutal killing of the prostitute:

[4.4] Once in Royal Victoria's City

stood a lowly courtyard shed

Where a Mother took a stranger

He took her, and now she's dead:

Kelly was that Mother wild

In this jar her little child. (Dibdin 1996, 165)

[4.5] This is the final blow that turns Watson against Holmes, despite their friendship: "How dangerously demoralizing it was...to confront a man capable of brutally murdering a young mother, bottling her gravid womb, and then celebrating this infamy with a diabolical pastiche of one of our finest Christmas hymns!" (172). Identified explicitly as a pastiche (although it could also be termed a travesty), the poem has a similar function to the historical letters sent to the



police by (or in the name of) Jack the Ripper, being both a confession ("this novel is a pastiche") and a challenge to the readers whose task it is to detect and decide on the motivation of the imitation. If pastiche is a crime, as Dibdin's novel suggests, wherein lays its target and what precisely makes it illicit?

[4.6] Dibdin's pastiche novel destroys Holmes as an ideal and ideological figure, the defender of justice and champion of rational deduction. Unlike Meyer, who uses a rival figure (Freud) to challenge Holmes, Dibdin turns Holmes into Moriarty, his worst adversary, by transferring the battle between good and evil to the inside of Holmes's head. Thus he only internalizes what was already apparent in Conan Doyle's stories. He highlights the dark side of Holmes—the misogyny that aligns him with the historical Ripper, his cocaine addiction, and his Übermensch beliefs. *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story* is a corrective pastiche in the sense that it claims to offer the true version of Holmes's death, but also in the sense that it seeks to alert its readers to the darker elements of the source text. Like the pastiche hymn written by Holmes/Ripper, Dibdin's novel blasphemes by imitating a "holy" text, the canon of the original stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

[4.7] Yet the novel also preserves the source text and its values. The story is engaging and full of details, and Watson is ever the faithful friend and companion. Holmes is defeated but yet glorified in the final sober moments before he commits suicide at the Reichenbach Falls. A.C.D. is discredited yet indirectly celebrated as the author of the source text. The famous stories "The Final Problem" and "The Empty House" are deconstructed, only to be reconstructed. A double-edged literary form, pastiche adds another metafictional layer to the Holmesian story world without compromising the necessary reality effect, and turns the blasphemous treatment of the source texts into an ambiguous act of homage.

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## 5. Anxiety of authenticity: *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* (1952) by Conan Doyle and Carr

[5.1] Like *The Last Sherlock Holmes Story*, *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* by Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr begins with a quest for the author. It differs, however, from Dibdin's novel, as well as from the works of, for example, Nicholas Meyer and June Thomson, in that its preface is not a part of the fictive world where manuscripts are found and authenticated. Signed by anonymous "editors," the preface seeks to explain and justify the origin of the pastiche stories and thus direct the way in which the stories are read. It begins as a protracted eulogy to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, always titled "Sir Arthur," who is straightforwardly identified with the hero of the stories: "the chivalry of Holmes, his penetrating mind, his erudition, his physical feats and his entire character are

really and truly those of the genius who created him" (vii). This claim suggests that the pastiche collection offers a normative, sanitized version of the originals, for the Holmes of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is perhaps more famous for misogynist prejudice than chivalry (which is Watson's cup of tea), and his education is found sorely lacking in *A Study in Scarlet* (Conan Doyle [1887] 2001, 18). The identification of the author with his protagonist (which is never suggested in the source texts) is a means of reinforcing Conan Doyle's authority as it places the origin of the stories in the author's unique life experiences. The preface to *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* thus suppresses the original fiction of authorship, whereby Watson is the author of the stories and Conan Doyle merely his publisher or agent. Furthermore, it replaces that authorship with another fiction by constructing an autobiographical relation as a guarantee of authenticity. This significant relationship is, claim the editors, inherited by his son, Adrian Conan Doyle:

[5.2] Adrian Conan Doyle, the author of *Heaven Has Claws* (a personal-experience book about his deep-sea fishing expeditions), was brought up in the tradition of the Victorian era and in close contact with his father. Like the elder Doyle, Adrian developed a lust for adventure, for relics of the past, and the same sense of chivalry that so completely characterized his father—or should we say Holmes?

[5.3] Adrian Conan Doyle used the very same desk on which his father wrote. Surrounded by the same objects that his father handled, he in every way endeavored, in his new Holmes tales, to recreate each particle of atmosphere that formed Sir Arthur's environment. (Conan Doyle and Carr [1952] 1999, ix)

[5.4] It is not uncommon for pasticheurs also to be presented as authors of their own (and therefore authentic) works, since it proves them to be something more than mere epigones. But in this case, the writer's own merits are inconsequential when juxtaposed with the more important source of authority, his similarity to his father: both men have the same upbringing (although Adrian was born in 1910 and grew up in Edwardian, not Victorian, England) and have worked at the same desk. By twisting facts and highlighting suggestive details, the editors of the preface weave together the father and his two "sons," the literal and literary son. Together the father, the son, and the great detective are meant to form a unity (or rather a trinity) that guarantees the authenticity of the pastiches in *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes*.

[5.5] Where does the almost compulsive need to assert the authenticity (both of the originals and the pastiches) stem from? *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* was published in 1952, when it was already obvious that Holmes had secured a position in the imagination of an ever-growing readership. The characters and

style of the original stories were still protected by national and international copyright laws (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle having died in 1930), which made it necessary to distinguish authoritative sequels from the illegitimate ones that were sprouting everywhere. The preface furnishes the pastiches of *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* with the same pedigree as the source texts in an effort to open the canon to further authentic adventures, but also to close it from other appropriators. Like Dibdin's "last" Holmes story, *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* seeks to preempt other rewritings (note 5) but, unlike Dibdin, who ironically acknowledges the impossibility of the task, the editors of *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* are more earnest in their attempt. The family connection proves an apparently indisputable argument: if the son is an image—an imitation—of the father, it is natural that he should be allowed to pastiche his father's work. The contribution of the eminent detective fiction writer John Dickson Carr is understandably toned down in the preface.

[5.6] As to the stories themselves, the preface claims them to be "painstaking reproductions of the originals" although they nevertheless have "new plots" (Conan Doyle and Carr [1952] 1999, x). Each of them is based on a specific case Watson alludes to in the original stories, but which are, for one reason or another, left untold. Unlike most pastiches, which indicate the source text they are based on, the pastiches of *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* therefore refer to stories that do not exist. Thus the apparent contradiction in the claims of the preface—how can a story be a faithful reproduction and yet new at the same time?—is further complicated by the virtual absence of the originals, which gives them an aura of the paradox of the simulacrum, a copy for which there is no original (see Nyqvist 2010, 182–83).

[5.7] As it turns out, however, the stories of *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* are in fact concoctions of elements from the existing stories. For instance, "The Red Widow" begins with a scene which repeats the beginning of "The Cardboard Box," where Holmes seems to be reading Watson's thoughts, and the ingenious solution—the murderer is hiding inside the wall of an ancient house—is taken directly from "The Norwood Builder." "The Seven Clocks," where the sanity of a nobleman is in doubt because he smashes all the clocks that he sees, draws its inspiration from the peculiar mystery of "The Six Napoleons" where busts of the emperor incite similar acts of vandalism. The revenge of a foreign secret society provides a puzzle for Sherlock Holmes both in "The Five Orange Pips" (by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle) and "The Dark Angels" (by Adrian Conan Doyle). Thus on closer inspection the exploits turn out to be exploitation, rather straightforward selection and variation of plot patterns or themes from existing stories.

[5.8] Nowhere is this as evident as in the story of "The Deptford Horror" (written by Adrian Conan Doyle alone), which repeats, in minute detail, the plot

of one of the most famous Holmes stories, "The Speckled Band." Although the pastiche is set in urban London, and the original mostly in rural Surrey, both recount a story about an eccentric Englishman who, after many years abroad, settles in England and attempts to murder his niece/protégée in the hope of securing the girl's inheritance. Both stories focus on the unusual vehicle the murderers have chosen: poisonous exotic animals. In "The Speckled Band," Dr. Roylott (whose description was quoted above) ushers a poisonous swamp adder into the girl's room through the ventilator and then calls the trained snake back with a whistle, leaving no trace of the murder weapon. In "The Deptford Horror," the singing of the specially trained canaries attracts giant Cuban spiders to the victim through the ventilation channels on an old house. Both perpetrators have killed before, although only Dr. Roylott looks the part. Wilson the canary trainer is by contrast described as a harmless fellow, which draws attention to the only significant change that Adrian Conan Doyle had made to the plot of its source text: unlike "The Speckled Band," in "The Deptford Horror," the murderer and his motive are revealed only toward the end. The focus of the story is thus more ambiguous than in the source text, where Dr. Roylott is from the beginning suggested as the murderer, and the puzzle pertains only to the method used. In all other respects, "The Deptford Horror" repeats the stages of the plot, from the introduction of the case to the interval of uncertainty, to Holmes's sudden realization, the rescue of the intended victim, the encounter with the beast, and the death of the murderer. The anxiety of authenticity is manifested in the unwillingness of the pasticheur to part from the plot and the organization of the famous source text. As a consequence, the fantastic murder plot of the source text is rendered generic: after "The Deptford Horror," it is possible to imagine endless variations of the plot featuring a greedy uncle and poisonous animals that leave no traces. The pastiche thus undermines the particular status of "The Speckled Band," introduced by Watson as the most "singular" case (Conan Doyle 2000, 137).

[5.9] One of the formulaic stylistic features of the stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is the proverb or quotation uttered by Holmes at the end, when he is contemplating the closed case. This feature is reproduced at the end of "The Deptford Horror":

[5.10] "It is the wise man who keeps bees," remarked Sherlock Holmes when he had read the report [about the death of the murderer, Wilson the canary trainer]. "You know where you are with them and at least they do not attempt to represent themselves as something that they are not." (Conan Doyle and Carr [1952] 1999, 310)

[5.11] On the surface, the comparison seems to be straightforward. Bees, as is well known, are organized and useful animals, and the threat their stings pose is

easily avoided. Canaries, by contrast, are presented in "The Deptford Horror" as pets for the sickly and insomniac, and they possess the dubious talent of imitation that is exploited by Wilson in his terrible scheme. Wilson has taught the canaries to sing like the tropical bird that is prey for the poisonous spider, and by positioning the birdcage in the room of his niece, he ensures that the spiders will find their intended victim.

[5.12] Does it not seem a bit odd, however, that in the final, weighty sentence of the story, Holmes comments neither on the criminal nor on the primary means of murder (the spiders)? The canaries are, in fact, an addition to the plot of "The Speckled Band," where the murderer needs no mediator to lure the snake to the room of the heiress. Bees, in their turn, derive from "His Last Bow," where Holmes retires to become a beekeeper. The choice of animals is not arbitrary; in fact, the comparison reads as a complex commentary on the pasticheur's art. Bees have ever since antiquity been the stock metaphor for good and useful imitation (Pigman, 4–9), while canaries imitating the songs of others refers to another, negative, metaphor of imitation; namely, the bird in the plumes of others. By evoking the question of the value of imitation, the second to last story of the collection undermines the carefully constructed authenticity effect of the pastiches. Holmes's seemingly innocent proverb lets out the repressed truth: the stories of *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* aspire to be perfect imitations, but instead turn out to be deceptive reproductions that may even have a darker side. The pastiches may deceive with their "mesmeric" repetition (Conan Doyle and Carr [1952] 1999, 304), but when we take into consideration the elements of Wilson's crime—canaries used as mediators in crimes within a family, over an inheritance—it is possible to detect another sinister plot: pastiches as mediators that bring about a potentially fatal threat to the source texts, the "inheritance" of which they seek to benefit from. Although not criminal in themselves, they are implicated in morally and aesthetically dubious activity. In "The Deptford Horror," the mother and brother of Janet Wilson actually die from a natural cause—heart failure—but the event is triggered by the sight of the terrible spiders. In a similar manner, pastiche can use the flaws of the source text to "attack" it, as critics have pointed out since the 19th century (e.g., du Roure 1828).

[5.13] "The Deptford Horror" in fact refers to a flaw in the source text in a way that resonates with the interpretation of the role of pastiche given here. All the stories of *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* end with a quotation from the source texts in which Watson refers to the untold tale that the pasticheurs have just provided for the readers. In "The Deptford Horror," the relation between the canonical reference and the pastiche story is more complicated than in the case of the other exploits. While "The Deptford Horror" gets its inspiration from "The Black Peter," where Watson mentions "the arrest of Wilson the notorious canary-trainer which removed a plague-spot from the East End of London" (Conan Doyle

2000, 539; Conan Doyle and Carr [1952] 1999, 310), this is not what happens in the pastiche. In "The Deptford Horror," Wilson drowns in the Thames while fleeing from Holmes (Conan Doyle and Carr [1952] 1999, 307, 310), his fate thus mirroring that of Dr. Roylott of "The Speckled Band," who likewise dies as a consequence of his own evil plot. In order to explain the contradiction, a footnote is added to the quotation from "The Black Peter" in *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes*, explaining that "in the Wilson case, Holmes did not actually arrest Wilson as Wilson was drowned. This was a typical Watson error in his hurried reference to the case in 'Black Peter.'" (Conan Doyle and Carr [1952] 1999, 310). Ironically, for once Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Watson ought not to be blamed, since the pasticheur's choices make his reference retroactively flawed. The pastiche is so reverential that in order to point toward a common problem in the source text (the many gaffes of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle), it has to manufacture an instance of the same problem.

[5.14] The ambiguous and seemingly unmotivated reference to the deceptive canaries at the end thus activates the question of the status and consequences of imitations. The apparent wisdom of the adage—those who imitate instead of being true to themselves are potentially dangerous—draws attention to the difficult position of the pastiches as simultaneously authentic and reproductions, and to the element of deception and usurpation inherent in unauthentic imitations that *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* seeks to elbow out of the market. While reading so much into the details of the story might seem somewhat contrived, it ought to be remembered that in the source text of the pastiche, "The Speckled Band," the mystery in fact centers on a question of interpretation: what does the dying young woman mean by the enigmatic words "speckled band"? As John A. Hodgson points out, the question of interpretation penetrates the whole story:

[5.15] Holmes solves the case when he sees through the figuratively innocuous disguises of these accessories to discern their deadly actual uses. We, in turn, in order to discover the deeper, satisfactory resolution of this apparently flawed story, must read its literal clues figuratively, recognizing them as features not of an actual scene, but of a textual one. (Hodgson 1992, 317)

[5.16] In "The Deptford Horror," a different kind of textual puzzle underlies the apparently straightforward adventures; namely, the puzzle of its complicated, double-edged relationship to the source texts.

[5.17] When read in this light, other instances can be found in *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* in which the carefully crafted authenticity effect of the pastiches is about to backfire. A conflict between father and son, involving a case of forgery, is the topic of "The Two Women" (one of the stories written by Adrian Conan Doyle alone). "The Two Women" is a conflation of three existing stories: "A

Scandal in Bohemia," where the actress Irene Adler threatens the king of Bohemia with a compromising photograph of herself and the monarch; "Charles Augustus Milverton," in which the eponymous blackmailer meets his end by a bullet fired by an enigmatic noblewoman; and "The Three Gables," where the mystery revolves around a manuscript that would ruin the life of a cunning international beauty. Ostensibly a story of a conflict between two women, the blackmailer and spy Edith von Lammerain and her helpless victim, the Duchess of Carringford, "The Two Women" in fact focuses on the question of the authenticity of a dead man's signature, which determines the fate of his child. If authentic, the signature reveals the man as a bigamist and destroys the life of his daughter, who is engaged to be married to a man in a high position. Although two of the source stories deal with a written document—the manuscript of a novel in "The Three Gables" and a bundle of love letters in "Charles Augustus Milverton"—the question of the authenticity of the document as well as the setting of the conflict within a family are new developments introduced in the pastiche. Thus, the themes of "The Two Women" seem to allude to the dilemma at the heart of *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes*: how should the father's signature be adopted and repeated? How should imitation and authenticity be balanced?

[5.18] At the end of "The Two Women," the signature turns out to be forged, which absolves the father and saves the child from disgrace. There is a gap in this solution, however. Holmes discovers that the original signature has been scratched away and replaced by a forged one. He is content with this in some sense superficial observation and does not pursue the quest to find out whose name has been erased from the document. That man's identity is not worth investigating—he has been wiped out, scratched away. In a similar manner, the preface of *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* blots out both the real-life model and the literary ancestors of Sherlock Holmes and replaces them with the figure of the author, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who is affirmed as the only source and origin for both the stories and Holmes himself. Another interesting aspect of the solution to "The Two Women" is that Holmes lets the forger go unpunished at the end, despite the heavy charges of "provocation of forgery, attempted blackmail and... espionage" (Conan Doyle and Carr [1952] 1999, 280). The story ends ominously with the forger's threat: "We shall meet again, Mr. Sherlock Holmes" (282). The cycle of repetition and recontextualization expands.

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## 6. Conclusion

[6.1] In their Sherlock Holmes novels, Michael Dibdin and Nicholas Meyer rewrite the conflict between the rational and irrational tendencies in the source texts by offering alternative explanations to the infamous death and return of Sherlock Holmes. In so doing, they explore the stylistic constraints of the source

texts and speculate about what lies beneath the illusion of transparency in the classical solution-oriented detective story. The pastiche collection of Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr in its turn appears to be a paradigmatic case of reverential homage, but its almost obsessive circulation around issues of authenticity, imitation, and inheritance reveals a subplot hinting at the literary "crime" of usurping the style of another writer. While the three cases analyzed here as examples of literary pastiche apparently concentrate on the figure of Holmes, a central concern lies in the ways in which the narrative is framed (and deconstructed) as authentic. This is an element of the realism of the source texts that were presented as Watson's documents of their adventures, but its prominence in the pastiches also questions the justification of authenticity as one of the core values of literary creation in our society.

[6.2] The Sherlock Holmes stories analyzed here are part of a long-established fandom in which they now enjoy a canonical status in their own right. Reading them as pastiches in the literary critical sense situates them in a slightly different literary tradition and provides tools for analyzing both their complex relationships to the originals and the tensions that arise from there. The fandom and its academic research have highly sophisticated and specialized terminology and interpretive models for discussing the variety of contemporary fan fiction, but contributions from more mainstream literary criticism and cultural analysis can be valuable in relating fan writing to the other literary or cultural traditions of which they partake. The continuing popularity of print forms of fan fiction calls for a comparative perspective that takes into consideration their status as products of fandom and as literary works in a wider cultural perspective. There, concepts like pastiche, which have been adapted to special uses within fandom, may provide useful points of departure for a more comprehensive comparative analysis of the different aspects of works that have their origin in fan culture but aim for wider audiences.

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## 7. Notes

1. The other meaning of pastiche, as compilation of different elements, surfaced in the debates about postmodernism and historicity (Jameson 1984; Hoesterey 2001). For a conceptual analysis of these two meanings and their critical relevance, see Nyqvist 2010, 129–73.
2. By making this distinction between the fandom use of the term and its more precise literary critical meaning, my aim is not to imply that the fandom use is somehow misguided. The application of pastiche to all Sherlock Holmes rewritings (in print) has its own logic and history, and is therefore a part of the "travelling" nature of the critical concept (see Bal 2002). Yet, as this article seeks to illustrate, it is worthwhile to bring these different meanings into interaction, as it



is in such encounters that critical concepts retain and regain their significance and usefulness as tools for analysis.

3. Their confrontation has become a stock topic for Sherlock Holmes rewritings; see, for instance, *The West-End Horror* (1976) by Meyer, *The Whitechapel Horrors* (1992) by Edward B. Hanna, *Dust and Shadows* (2009) by Lyndsay Faye, or *Chapel Noir* (2001) by Carole Nelson Douglas. Freud and Holmes have also met again, for instance in *The Case of Emily V.* (1994) by Keith Oatley.

4. Gérard Genette has introduced the concept of pastiche contract to designate a feature of the text that informs the reader of its imitative status: "This is a text where x imitates y" (Genette 1992, 86). The contract, which is a necessary component in pastiches, also has a juridical and moral relevance: pastiche can be distinguished from plagiarism or forgery only if it acknowledges its source text. In the case of Sherlock Holmes pastiches, the pastiche contract is often evident on the cover of the book: while the title refers to Sherlock Holmes (and/or Watson), the name of the author suggests that we are dealing with an imitation rather than a story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

5. This strategy predates copyright legislature: Cervantes wrote the second part of *Don Quixote* to elbow from the market spurious sequels to his successful novel.

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# Theory

## The Great Game and the copyright villain

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[0.1] *Abstract*—This essay explores the reactions of Sherlock Holmes fans and enthusiasts to assertions of intellectual property ownership and infringement by putative rights holders in two eras of Sherlockian history. In both the 1946–47 and 2013–15 eras, Sherlock Holmes devotees villainized the entities claiming ownership of intellectual property in Holmes, distancing those entities from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and casting them as greedy and morally bankrupt. Throughout each era, Sherlockians did not shy away from creating transformative works based on the Holmes canon over the objections of putative rights holders. This complicates the usual expectation that copyright assertions against fans are likely to chill fan production. The essay explores possible reasons why Sherlockian fandom might differ from other fandoms in this respect, including the role of the Great Game form of Sherlockian fandom in shaping fan attitudes toward their subject.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Copyright law; Grand Game; History; Intellectual property law; Law and society; Sherlock Holmes

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## 1. Introduction

[1.1] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle famously relinquished narrative control of Sherlock when William Gillette was writing a licensed stage adaptation of Conan Doyle's Holmes stories. Gillette cabled Conan Doyle to ask whether his version could include a plot in which the notoriously unromantic Holmes got married. "You may marry him, murder him or do what you like with him," Conan Doyle cabled back (note 1). For generations since, commercial and noncommercial adapters have engaged in narrative transformation of Holmes, from Gillette's relatively faithful stage adaptation to commercial blockbusters like Warner Brothers' *Sherlock Holmes* films and the BBC's *Sherlock* series to boldly transformative fan creations like Tuna!Lock (note 2). But relinquishing narrative control is a far cry from relinquishing legal control, and legal control of Holmes has been bitterly disputed in and out of US courts since the days of Conan Doyle himself (note 3). In a few instances, this legal wrangling has taken direct aim at fans or fan works, but even

when it hasn't, Holmes fans have actively engaged with questions of intellectual property ownership (note 4).

[1.2] Some legal scholars, including myself, have suggested that legal uncertainty regarding the ownership of source texts and the legality of transformative creation is likely to chill fan activity, particularly generative fan activity such as the creation of fan works (note 5). This article seeks to complicate that assertion by highlighting fan reactions to legal challenge in two eras of Sherlock Holmes fan history: 1945–47 and 2013–15 (note 6). In each of these instances, Holmes fans have become active participants in the intellectual property debate, have treated legal challengers as villains, and have persisted in creation of fan works even over the (implied or explicit) objection of rights holders. This stands in contrast to the dominant discourse regarding the relationship between fandom and intellectual property law, namely that fans and fan work hosts have refrained from creating or hosting fan works based on certain works out of fear of legal reprisals or respect for copyright holders' opposition to fan work creation (note 7).

[1.3] This essay does not propose that Sherlock Holmes fans are unique in their resistance or opposition to copyright claims. Certainly, fans in many fandoms create despite source-authors' expressed objections to fan works. There are hundreds of fan works in the Archive of Our Own based on Anne Rice's work, for example, although perhaps fewer than one might expect considering her works' popularity (note 8). Likewise, although it is no doubt true that some fans refrain from creating out of fear of litigation—or at least refrain from sharing their fan works outside trusted circles—others take a more rebellious approach. In 1997, Barbie fans created a Pink Tidal Wave of protest when Mattel took legal action against Barbie fanzines (note 9). More recently, the creators of the *Star Trek* fan film *Axanar* have persisted in the face of litigation (Whitley 2016). Nevertheless, Sherlock Holmes fans have been conspicuously vehement in their opposition to copyright claims and therefore may provide insight into circumstances in which copyright claims are less likely to chill fan activity than common wisdom might suggest (note 10). This essay therefore provides a case study that may shed light on reasons why some fans may be more prone than others to resist copyright or quasi-copyright claims.

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## 2. The years 1945–1947

[2.1] In the 1930s, one group of American Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts coalesced as a literary society, calling itself the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI). A thorough discussion of the BSI is beyond the scope of this essay, but the BSI have been credited with originating or popularizing some elements of modern media fandom, and their practice of creating "writings on the writings"—essays

and pastiches that now would be described as fan works—was an early example of organized generative fandom and transformative work creation ([note 11](#)). The BSI of the time did not (and, as the group persists today, many still do not) describe themselves as fans, although the BSI and its activities were and are in most ways indistinguishable from other examples of media fandom.

[2.2] The BSI and their writings reveled in the Great Game (sometimes called the Grand Game), a self-aware fiction that proceeded from the premise that Holmes and Watson were real, that Watson wrote the canonical stories, and that Arthur Conan Doyle was merely Watson's literary agent (Polasek 2012, 43). As Edgar W. Smith, one of the BSI's early leaders, described it in a letter to the author (and later BSI member) Rex Stout,

[2.3] We are a very heterodox group in the B.S.I., some of us, like Christopher Morley and Alexander Woollcott, possessing certain literary pretensions, and others being engaged prosaically in mere affairs of commerce. There is only one common trait we possess, perhaps, and that is a grim determination to deny to the whole world that any such fellow as Conan Doyle ever existed: the Sacred Writings were, of course, the product, in all but four instances, of the pen of John H. Watson, M.D., late of Her Majesty's Indian Army. ([note 12](#))

[2.4] Stout responded, tongue planted firmly in cheek: "your mention of an object called Conan Doyle puzzles me; never heard of the chap" (Lellenberg 1991, 12).

[2.5] In 1946, the Baker Street Irregulars began regular publication of the *Baker Street Journal* (BSJ) which might later have been described as a very sophisticated fanzine. The BSJ included commentary from its editor Edgar W. Smith and essays by Sherlockians, generally engaged in the Great Game.

[2.6] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's sons Adrian and Denis, who at that time owned the copyright in his works, had from the start asserted copyright objections to the BSJ. Smith, who had also corresponded with Adrian and Denis regarding the possibility of publishing a portable edition of Conan Doyle's works with a US publisher, clearly objected on a moral level to Adrian and Denis's assertions of control over the characters. He expressed this moral objection in the style of the Great Game in his editorial introduction to the July 1946 issue of the BSJ:

[2.7] Sherlock Holmes belongs to all the world. Like any other man who ever lived, the very fact of his existence has put him, in the best and broadest meaning of the term, securely in the public domain. And since he is, in consequence, the unalienable property of our minds and our affections, we feel a sense of wonderment and something else close

to pity in the presence of those unperceiving souls who would check us in our urge to think and talk and write about him as we please. For think and talk and write we will: there is no such thing, in ethics or in morals, as a copyright on reality. (Smith 1946, 243–44)

[2.8] Smith continued with an oblique critique of the commercial adaptations that Adrian and Denis had authorized and explained that those who had licensed the character for what Smith saw as crass and inauthentic commercial adaptation would be held to account: "The plaintiff in the case, when it is brought, will naturally be Sherlock Holmes himself; the defendants will be that unenlightened coterie who seek his exploitation for their selfish ends [and] have knavishly betrayed him" (244).

[2.9] Shortly thereafter, Denis wrote to Smith stating that he would not authorize publication of the portable Conan Doyle edition in the United States "until we are assured that the matter of the Baker Street Journal, which has caused us great distress and indignation, has been settled satisfactorily"—namely, that the journal be "discontinued" (quoted in Lellenberg 1995, 289). In a lengthy response dated July 25, 1946, Smith explained that the BSJ was a labor of love undertaken at a great financial loss to its (fan) creators, but that it nonetheless likely helped drive sales of Conan Doyle's original works. Smith explained to Denis that the Great Game was, in Smith's view, the ultimate expression of admiration for Conan Doyle's work: "it is, I think, the finest tribute that any author ever had, in that it sublimates his creations to the resemblance of a living reality—which is something, as I have told you in our personal conversations that has never happened in the world before" (quoted in Lellenberg 1995, 291). Smith explained that if he had to choose between being paid to edit a portable edition of Conan Doyle and continuing to edit the BSJ at a financial loss, he would "continue to perform the labor of love involved in editing the Journal," and so he did (quoted in Lellenberg 1995, 291).

[2.10] A historian of the BSI, Jon Lellenberg, describes an "anecdote from this time" about the publisher of the BSJ receiving a threatening letter from Adrian and Denis's London lawyers, "a firm with the intimidating name of Churcher Son & Vertue," and the publisher, an avid Sherlockian and BSI member himself, "writing back suggesting that they contact his lawyers, Bagels & Lox" (1995, 287).

[2.11] Christopher Morley, founder of the BSI, also cast Adrian and Denis's challenges as villainous but did so obliquely enough that only a studied eye would notice. In the October 1946 issue of the BSJ, Morley wrote:

[2.12] I can't help noticing that some of the correspondence that has frowned upon the publication of the Journal as an invasion of

proprietary prerogatives, or something or other, has emanated from Minstead (near Lyndhurst), Hants. Do you remember the Socman of Minstead, the villain and ruffian of *The White Company*, the wicked uncle? (1946, 408)

[2.13] With this, Morley clearly intended not only to compare Adrian (whose address for correspondence was Minstead, near Lyndhurst, Hants) (Lellenberg 1995, 284) to one of his father's literary villains but also to belittle Adrian's moral claim to copyright. Under the US law of the time, copyright fair use existed, although it was not enshrined in statute until 1976, and although Adrian could likely have made out a nonfrivolous claim for statutory copyright damages against the BSJ ([note 13](#)), the BSJ could have counterargued that its use of any copyrighted material was fair. But whether Adrian's claim sounded in law or not was less important to Morley than whether Adrian's claim was morally defensible. The moral attack on Adrian and Denis continued the following year: in the second volume of the BSJ, Smith quoted an excerpt from Conan Doyle's autobiography in which he praised a parodist, explaining that it was a pleasant "antidote for the barbs leveled at the JOURNAL for daring to foster the production of certain writings having to do more or less intimately with Sherlock Holmes, that all members of the Conan Doyle family did not feel about such things as some of them do today" (1947a, 62). In the following issue, Smith wrote of certain Holmes stories about to enter the copyright public domain:

[2.14] Thus is what the Impossible Scions [Adrian and Denis] have called their "diminishing asset" still further whittled away. The attitude of these Socmen of Minstead ("Double, double, Doyle and trouble!") toward the said asset is, as time goes on, becoming curiouser and curiouser. Not content with suppressing *The Man Who Was Wanted*, and aborting the Limited Editions Club's long-awaited five-volume omnibus, and putting every bother in the way of Viking's projected *Portable Conan Doyle*, and decrying the JOURNAL itself as a monstrous perpetration on their prerogatives or something, these myopic conservators have now mysteriously withdrawn from Doubleday the rights to the *Case-Book*—without which, for all that the Tales it contains are not of the first order of merit, the publication of *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, as such, is clearly impossible. It must be true, as the biologists assert, that genius has a genius for skipping a generation. (1947b, 158)

[2.15] Smith and his colleagues eventually backed away from publishing a portable Conan Doyle edition containing anything other than works in the public domain, but Smith pursued a public-domain-focused edition, noting that he "would take a double joy in presenting the public with a volume brought out



despite [Adrian & Denis's] recalcitrance" (quoted in Lellenberg 1995, 317–18). Nevertheless, it never seemed to occur to them that copyright law should— notwithstanding Adrian and Denis's manifest objections and even (possibly apocryphal) direct threats—be an impediment to continuing the BSJ, pastiche, or other writings on the writings. In fact, although it has not been published continuously since the 1940s, the BSJ continues to be published quarterly even today.

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### 3. The years 2013–2015

[3.1] After a great many twists and turns of ownership, the few remaining slivers of US copyright in the Sherlock Holmes canon now appear to be owned by an entity known as the Conan Doyle Estate, Ltd. (CDE) (note 14). The CDE claims a combination of copyright and trademark rights in the character of Sherlock Holmes; in a legal document filed on July 3, 2014, it describes its business as "manag[ing] the fully developed [Sherlock Holmes] character's further promotion and development through licensing agreements" (Klinger v. CDE, 755 F.3d 496 [7th Cir. 2014] No. 1:13-CV-14-1128). But many fans describe the CDE's business as extortion (Thomas 2014). The CDE has demanded licenses from several commercial fan enterprises as well as larger-scale commercial endeavors, even for projects that do not draw at all from the few remaining copyrighted stories (note 15). Rumors abound that the CDE has hassled the BSI and BSJ, although if they have done so, there is no public documentation of it. But they have made life difficult for fans: Amy Thomas, a member of the Baker Street Babes, a group of female Sherlockians who host a podcast and organize fan gatherings, described their business model thus on her blog in 2014: "the Estate had, for years, been extorting and attempting to extort money from authors....(I have personal friends and acquaintances who were harassed, either personally or through their publishers, and there are myriads more, many of whom paid up just to avoid a legal fight.)" On September 4, 2015, when the CDE settled a pending lawsuit, @IHearOfSherlock, the Twitter handle of Baker Street Irregulars Scott Monty and Bert Wolder, tweeted: "Another successful extortion effort from the Conan Doyle Estate, Ltd."

[3.2] The newer fans' language is perhaps less measured (and certainly more concise) than that of early Sherlockians, but it carries the same fundamental sentiment: that, regardless of the legal merits (or lack thereof) of their claims, those asserting legal objections to fandom are morally wrong.

[3.3] Although the CDE had, as Amy Thomas noted, been asserting its ownership of copyrights in the Holmes canon since it purchased those rights, fans began to pay attention to the CDE when the CDE wrote a cease-and-desist letter to Leslie Klinger, a Sherlockian annotator and anthologist and a member of the

Baker Street Irregulars. Klinger, with coeditor Laurie R. King, had published one anthology of Holmes canon-inspired stories by popular authors. Against Klinger's wishes, the publisher of that first anthology, Harper Collins, had responded to the CDE's assertion of rights by paying a licensing fee. When Klinger and King prepared to publish another, the CDE wrote a letter threatening that unless the new publisher, Pegasus Books, paid a licensing fee, the CDE would ensure that the book never saw distribution in major outlets such as Amazon. In response to this threat, Klinger sought a declaration that seemed self-evident to fans and copyright experts alike: that the contents of the Sherlock Holmes stories and novels first published in the United States before 1923, like all works first published in the United States before 1923, fall into the copyright public domain (note 16). The case captured the attention of the press and public, prompting articles in the *New York Times*, the *Hollywood Reporter*, the *Economist*, *Smithsonian*, *Boing Boing*, and many others (note 17).

[3.4] Fans got involved online, characterizing the CDE as bullies and worse. On February 14, 2013, @BakerStreetJournal (the official account of the Baker Street Journal) and @LyndsayFaye (Lyndsay Faye, mystery author and member of the Baker Street Babes and BSI) introduced the #FreeSherlock hashtag for discussion about the dispute, and for a time the hashtag trended on Twitter. On February 14, 2013, Baker Street Irregular @ScottMonty (Scott Monty) tweeted a quote from the Holmes story "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton": "'Don't Imagine That You Can Bully Me' [CHAS] <http://shar.es/YAqxq> via #FreeSherlock." The next day, February 15, 2013, @pchop (Mark Wardecker) described Klinger's challenge to the CDE as "long overdue." On February 19, 2013, in response to a fellow fan's musing about what Conan Doyle would think of the lawsuit, @LyndsayFaye (Lyndsay Faye) opined that since the CDE "aren't direct heirs," he would think that fans should be able to "marry, murder, or do what you like with him." Even literary celebrities like Neil Gaiman and Stephen Fry voiced their support for Klinger's suit. On March 15, 2013, Gaiman (@neilhimself) tweeted "@lklinger is the man." On March 26, 2013, Fry (@stephenfry) tweeted, "The characters of Sherlock Holmes & Dr. Watson should belong to the world! Support the #FreeSherlock case! [bit.ly/YcSnGR](http://bit.ly/YcSnGR)."

[3.5] After a year and a half of litigation, Klinger ultimately won the case. The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals held that despite the CDE's argument to the contrary, the first 50 stories and novels, as well as the characters of Holmes and Watson as they existed in those stories, were in the public domain and free to use without permission from the CDE. The court described the CDE's argument to the contrary as "bordering on the quixotic" (Klinger v. CDE, 755 F.3d 496 [7th Cir. 2014] No. 1:13-CV-14-1128). Nevertheless, the CDE still maintains that it owns both copyright and trademark rights in the character of Holmes. It has issued press releases claiming that it retains copyright in the "complete"

character of Sherlock Holmes and making clear that "the [CDE]'s trademark rights in the SHERLOCK HOLMES name and image were not at issue in Mr. Klinger's lawsuit and remain unaffected" (Conan Doyle Estate 2014) ([note 18](#)).

[3.6] On May 22, 2015, the CDE proved that it was willing and able to pursue claims founded on those alleged rights by filing a lawsuit alleging copyright and trademark infringement by Mitch Cullin, the author of *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, and Miramax Films, the distributor of the film *Mr. Holmes*, based on Cullin's book. In response to news of the Cullin/Miramax suit, @BakerStBabes tweeted on May 22, 2015: "I'd like to kindly ask the Arthur Conan Doyle Estate to die in a fire. Seriously, what a corrupt bunch of money grabbers. #FreeSherlock." Many others shared their outrage. In a blog entry dated May 23, 2015, Scott Monty, a member of the Baker Street Irregulars who cohosts the I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere podcast and Web site, wrote that "the business entity that represents what is left of Conan Doyle's estate is doing irreparable damage to his reputation" and that "this kind of legal wrangling and greed represents a last gasp for relevance and income for individuals who aren't even direct descendants." Sherlockian Chris Redmond, tweeting as @DarkGreenDesk, observed on May 22, 2015, that it was "interesting, in fact, to see the comments that come from so many quarters with such unanimity. #estate #freesherlock #pickone."

[3.7] The CDE is not the only entity that has claimed to own rights in the characters of Holmes and Watson in recent years. One purported owner, a socialite named Andrea Plunket who claimed rights through a complicated chain of purchases and bequests but almost certainly owned no actual rights, litigated against commercial adapters of Sherlock Holmes a number of times ([note 19](#)). She lost each time, but that did not stop her from continuing to level threats. In 2013 and 2014, news outlets reported that Plunket planned to assert copyright and trademark claims against both the BBC (for *Sherlock*) and CBS (for *Elementary*), explaining: "I have the rights, that is clear...No one has asked permission to use my trademarks and I am confident that, if and when I go to court, I will be able to prevent the BBC making any more '*Sherlocks*'" (World Trademark Blog 2014; Kay 2013). In December 2014, members of Plunket's extended family took over administration of her purported copyright holdings, which they call the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Literary Estate. They persist in asserting that they own "the remaining US copyrights of Arthur Conan Doyle's stories" and that the CDE owns nothing ("History of the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Copyrights" n.d.).

[3.8] Plunket and her administrators have thus far refrained from challenging noncommercial fan works—one may surmise that their interest is primarily pecuniary in nature—but have nonetheless been villainized in fan circles. On Twitter, fans responded to Plunket's 2013–14 rights assertions with disdain. The

following tweets are typical of the online response. On January 12, 2014, @abij11 wrote: "Ms. Plunket, unimportant heiress with too much time on her hands, can piss off trying to stop further production of Sherlock." The same day, @adamlewisware wrote: "ANDREA PLUNKET WOULD YOU KINDLY DO WHAT SHERLOCK FAILED TO SUCCEED IN AND JUMP OFF THE TOP OF A BUILDING." Also on January 12, @teaxcupcake wrote: "who's this Andrea Plunket & why the heck some1 even listening to her? If #BBC will have2 close #Sherlock bc of her I'll personally [sic] sue her ><." Or this Filipino tweet of January 15, 2014 from @kbdaenlle, whose sentiments are apparent even without translation: "Badtrip ako dun sa Andrea Plunket na yan. Shit sya, gold digger. Gusto lang nya pagkakitaan ang Sherlock Holmes!" A Twitter search for "plunket sherlock" yields scores of tweets along the same lines, as does Tumblr.

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## 4. Villainizing as alternative to chilling

[4.1] Notwithstanding challenges from copyright claimants in each era, fan activity continues, publicly and apparently unabated. The snippets of protest above, the continued existence of the BSJ, and the many scores of fan works available on the Internet collectively indicate that a substantial number of Sherlock Holmes fans view creation of transformative fan works as their right and something for which they need neither permission nor approval from copyright owners.

[4.2] What accounts for the difference in behavior between the chilling effect that some have predicted and observed in other fandoms, on one hand, and the resistance and persistence of these Sherlock Holmes fans, on the other? The expiration of copyright may have played a significant role in modern fans' outrage regarding the CDE's and Plunket's challenges to Sherlockian adaptation—after all, the claimants base their claims on copyright that, for the most part, no longer exists. But while that certainly lends powerful legal backing to the fans' outrage, it cannot explain earlier Sherlockians' equally vehement resistance to Adrian and Denis, who did in fact own the copyrights they were asserting. Likewise, relatively recent educational and advocacy efforts by groups like the Organization for Transformative Works, which have educated fans to understand that the creation of noncommercial fan works is legal as a matter of US copyright law, may be a very significant factor in fueling rebellion among modern-day fans. Among fans and scholars of James Joyce, Joyce's grandson was long despised much as Sherlockians despised Adrian, Denis, the CDE, and Plunket, but Joyce fans rarely fought against him until recent developments in copyright fair use law and pro bono representation made such rebellion more appealing (Spoo 2009). However, considering Sherlockians' early open objections to Adrian and Denis, recent developments in legal advocacy cannot tell the whole story. So what might account for Sherlockians' opposition to copyright and quasi-copyright claims

across eras? I suggest that a number of circumstances may combine to fuel their rebellion.

[4.3] To some extent, it may be chalked up to cultural happenstance. Although current-day generative fandom is sometimes associated with women and marginalized communities who may not have a sense of political efficacy or the financial wherewithal to stand up to threats, that was not the case for the organized Sherlockians of the 1940s. Edgar Smith, Christopher Morley, and their ilk were almost exclusively wealthy white men, captains of letters and industry, with ample personal and political resources. (Indeed, Presidents F. D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman were each members of the BSI during this era [Lellenberg 1995, 224–25].) They were not the sort to be cowed by threats. Their resistance set the tone for the many decades to come. Thus, by the time the CDE began challenging new fans and adapters in the 2010s, fans had the weight and momentum of nearly a century of transformative fandom pushing them along toward the same kind of indignant resistance of their forbears. This momentum joined with other emboldening forces like the education and advocacy efforts described above to fuel the ire of modern Sherlockians.

[4.4] Another significant difference is that the Sherlockians are resisting challenges from people other than the authors themselves. It is one thing for a fan to heed Anne Rice herself when she asks her fans not to create fan works and quite another to heed a third cousin once removed who purchased the rights rather than inheriting them. This is the story of the CDE: it is a collection of distant Conan Doyle relatives (and nonrelatives) who purchased the rights from the Royal National Institute of Blind People after Dame Jean Conan Doyle (the author's daughter) bequeathed them to the Royal National Institute upon her death in 1997. It is also the story of Andrea Plunket, who claims the rights by a complicated set of transfers from Denis's widow to a holding company called Baskerville Investments Ltd., to the Royal Bank of Scotland, to Plunket's ex-husband, Sheldon Reynolds (Rosenblatt 2015, 614–16; Conan Doyle Estate 2013).

[4.5] Adrian and Denis Conan Doyle may have been closer genetically to the revered author himself and their ownership the result of inheritance rather than purchase, but they were still subject to claims of inauthenticity. The narrative of illegitimacy and inauthenticity flows throughout the fans' condemnations in both eras. In both of the 1947 volumes of the BSJ quoted above, Smith reminded readers that Adrian and Denis held views different from their father's. In the recent CDE and Plunket instances, fans described the claimants as a "business entity" of "individuals who aren't even direct descendants" and an "unimportant heiress with too much time on her hands."

[4.6] Likewise, in both eras, fans condemned the claimants for what they perceived as money-driven greed, portraying them as placing financial interest over loyalty to source. In 1946, for example, Smith condemned Adrian and Denis for licensing crass pastiches (which generated royalties) but objecting to the BSJ (which did not), describing Adrian and Denis as having sought Holmes's "exploitation for their selfish ends [and having] knavishly betrayed him." Likewise, fans have condemned the CDE and Plunket for being "money grabbers" and a "gold digger." For many creators of noncommercial transformative works—as the early Sherlockians were, and as countless Holmes fans are today—the idea of financially capitalizing on the work of others is ethically suspect. For them, fandom is a labor of love, not something to make money on, and they expect the same moral purity from the author's heirs or assigns.

[4.7] The final piece of the puzzle, I contend, is the legacy of the Great Game. One reason that the copyright villain is so villainous for Sherlockians—and perhaps not as much for fans without an equivalent fictional frame for their fandom—is that it shatters the fiction of the Great Game, forcing fans into a world in which Conan Doyle was an author rather than a literary agent. The correspondence of the Sherlockians in the 1940s, including Smith's July 25, 1946 letter to Denis, clearly indicates that they saw the Great Game as an homage to Conan Doyle rather than an attempt to disrespect or erase the author. But it was an homage that by its nature gave Holmes a sort of autonomous life of his own, of which the Sherlockians believed themselves stewards. Assertions of ownership over Holmes therefore may have read to those early Sherlockians as metaphorical enslavement. By authorizing commercialized pastiches of what the Sherlockians believed to be inferior quality, Adrian and Denis did not treat the autonomous Holmes with the sense of stewardship and respect that the Sherlockians would have; instead, they exploited him for financial gain.

[4.8] The themes of greed and illegitimacy intertwine with a Great Game analog in the modern fans' outrage as well. Although the Great Game per se is not a dominant discourse among Holmes fans outside the BSI and associated societies, the modern fandom has found an analog contemporaneous to the vocal opposition to copyright claimants discussed above. It began after the end of the second series of the BBC program *Sherlock* in which Holmes had, in an echo of the canonical Holmes's tumble over the Reichenbach Falls, tumbled from the top of a building to his apparent (and, fans hoped, equally temporary) death. A Swedish fan of the show, Mika Hallor (then known as Earl Foolish) posted a call to arms on Tumblr, urging fans to announce in graffiti that they "Believe in Sherlock Holmes" (Foolish 2012). Before long, tags of "I Believe in Sherlock Holmes" and "Moriarty Was Real" appeared around the world; sites can be seen on this map: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=zGkHwLIJ2Hdw.kbMa9nomCDbQ&msa=0&ll=56.559482%2C->

[4.9] While the "I Believe in Sherlock/Moriarty Was Real" campaign may not have generated the same sort of historical-fictional mock scholarship as the Great Game, it may be read to reflect the same sort of sentiment among fans: that they considered Sherlock Holmes (in this case, the Holmes of the BBC series) to be worthy of independent celebration apart from his creators. They were, after all, not writing "I Believe in the Character Brought to Life by Steven Moffatt" (the show's creator) or the even more attenuated "I Believe in the Character Originated by Arthur Conan Doyle." In this sense, the newer fans, like Smith and Morley before them, implicitly expressed the view that it was the fans' responsibility to keep Holmes alive in the absence of fresh canonical material. And like the players of the Great Game before them, they may have experienced legal intrusion upon that fictional life support as an all-too-sharp reminder that Holmes was not, in fact, the real, autonomous being in whom they avidly pretended to believe.

[4.10] Given the fact that each of these fan communities built their identities around the conscious fiction of a character's realness, legal assertions of ownership and control present a greater contradiction of the community's self-definition than it would in other situations in which the fandom community defines itself by reference to something it expressly acknowledges as created by another. In many communities, it is common for fan fiction writers to open their works with a disclaimer explaining that they did not create the characters and that their work is intended as homage to the original creators (for a discussion of traditional fan work disclaimers, credit-giving, and copyright, see Tushnet 2007, 70). The disclaimer approach stands in stark contrast to these two manifestations of Holmes fandom, in which the homage—while surely intended—is sublimated to a surface fiction that the creator does not even exist. To these realness-based communities, legal challenge creates a moment of cognitive dissonance, reminding fans that their fiction is false and posing not only a threat to their fan activity but also to their fan identity.

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## 5. Conclusion

[5.1] In both the 1940s and 2010s, Sherlock Holmes devotees villainized the entities claiming ownership of intellectual property in Holmes. Although the fans' styles differed considerably, their themes overlapped: those seeking to use copyright law to silence fandom or assert copyright claims against new works featuring Sherlock Holmes were inauthentic, greedy, and morally bankrupt. Throughout each era, Sherlockians did not shy away from creating transformative works based on the Holmes canon over the objections of putative rights holders. This complicates the usual expectation that copyright assertions against fans are



likely to chill fan production.

[5.2] I contend that several factors may account for this difference: the elevated socioeconomic and political status of early Sherlockians; the fact that every entity asserting intellectual property rights over Sherlock Holmes in these eras was an entity other than Sir Arthur Conan Doyle himself; and the legacy of Great Game-style fandom. Specifically, I suggest that because (some) Sherlockian communities actively adopt a form of fandom built around the conscious fiction of Sherlock Holmes's realness, legal assertions of ownership and control present a greater contradiction of the community's self-definition than it would in other situations in which the fandom community defines itself by reference to something it expressly acknowledges as created by another.

[5.3] From this example of one, it may be unwise to make sweeping generalizations regarding circumstances in which fans are likely to rebel against copyright or quasi-copyright claims rather than acceding to them or going underground. However, one may hypothesize that such rebellion is more likely in circumstances under which fans are particularly affluent or privileged in terms of race, gender, sexuality, or ability; can identify moral or ideological distance between the original creator and the copyright holder; can make claims to moral purity; or may treat the fictional objects of their fandom as real (note 20). But while such fans are more likely to rebel—to express their fandom openly in the face of objections from putative rights holders—there is little reason to think that fans in these circumstances are any more or less entitled to make transformative fan works than other fans, from a moral or legal standpoint. The fact that some fans are more likely than others to rebel may serve as further evidence that intellectual property laws that make fan creation risky or expensive are likely to have a disparate impact on fan creation, discouraging some but not others. The fact that the difference may be couched in socioeconomic or other privileges is particularly notable from a legal policy perspective and merits further study.

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## 6. Notes

1. Deposition of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, April 12, 1923, p. 7:2–3. The passage is taken from a deposition given by Conan Doyle under oath that is on file with the author.
2. Tuna!Lock stories posit an alternative universe in which Sherlock Holmes is an anthropomorphic tuna fish. Several Tuna!Lock stories can be found on the Archive of Our Own under the tag "Tuna Sherlock." See <http://archiveofourown.org/tags/Tuna%20Sherlock/works>.
3. Throughout this article, I describe intellectual property claims in predominantly copyright-focused terms, but it bears noting that since the beginning, disputes



regarding intellectual property ownership of Sherlock Holmes have not been limited to copyright claims. Trademark and quasi-trademark claims have existed since the beginning, and recent challenges to Sherlock Holmes adaptation have increasingly involved trademark claims as well as or instead of copyright claims, in significant part as an attempt to make an end run around the expiration of copyright. For ease of discussion, however, I focus here predominantly on copyright and quasi-copyright challenges. For extensive discussion of US litigation concerning intellectual property rights in Sherlock Holmes, see generally Elizabeth L. Rosenblatt (2015).

4. In the interest of disclosure, the author has been personally involved in such engagement as Legal Chair of the Organization for Transformative Works, a lifelong Sherlock Holmes enthusiast, and a pro bono consultant on behalf of Leslie Klinger in litigation discussed in this article.

5. See, for example, Rosenblatt (2015); Schuster (2014); Fiesler (2008, 2013); Lipton (2010); and Rebecca Tushnet (2008) who notes that "If people have to pay \$100 before writing 500 words about Harry Potter, they will make other plans" (514).

6. I pick these windows of time because they feature particularly active periods both of legal challenge to Sherlock Holmes-based works and of vocal fan opposition to legal claimants. Neither of these periods is unique in Sherlockian history, however; were one to look a few years earlier or later to each window, one would find similar attitudes, if sparser activity.

7. See, for example, FanFiction.net Community Guidelines <https://www.fanfiction.net/guidelines/>, in particular the statement that "FanFiction respects the expressed wishes of the following authors/publishers and will not archive entries based on their work," and the statement by elfwreck (2015) on Fandom First Friday <http://transformativeworks.tumblr.com/post/106965587671/transformativeworks-welcome-to-fandom-first>, discussing a fan work creator's decision not to record filk songs based on works by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro.

8. Notably, at the time of this writing, there is only one work in the entire Archive of Our Own based on the works of Chelsea Quinn Yarbro.

9. It seems that Mattel's claims were principally founded on trademark, not on copyright, and most of the fan works that Mattel opposed were reviews rather than fiction or art, but the fan response is at least analogous to the Sherlockian responses described herein. See the discussion of a protest and attendant boycott by Denise Gellene (1997).

10. Nor do I intend to suggest that all members of a particular fandom will inevitably share the same reaction to copyright claims. On the contrary, as discussed in more detail later in the essay, intellectual property claims likely chill fan creativity differently for different fans, with a disproportionately chilling effect on fans who belong to disadvantaged populations. Rebecca Tushnet (2013) notes that "People who are most likely to create noncommercial remix are disproportionately women, disproportionately minorities of various kinds, and they already feel unwelcome in the larger system, and I can see this in my own practice. When a guy who makes a Stargate remix gets a takedown from YouTube, he writes me, even though we've never met. You know, he finds me, and he says I'm just going to counter-notice. This is fair use. Women, if they find me, then we call—I have a long conversation with them, we talk it over in great detail, and hopefully I convince them that they can counter-notify when they have a valid fair use defense, which by the way is often" (192–93). As discussed below, Sherlockian fandom's early culture of resistance may reflect the powerful socioeconomic status of those early resisters.

11. Natasha Simonova (2012) describes Sherlock Holmes fandom as among fan fiction's "origin stories"; Nancy Reagin and Anne Rubenstein (2011) describe readers' interactions with Conan Doyle's works as an early model for fandom and fandom's interaction with text; Francesca Coppa (2006) draws connections between early Sherlockians and later development of media fandom.

12. Jon Lellenberg (1991). I include the first sentence of the quotation here to note its irony, as the group was in fact quite homogeneous by modern standards, being comprised entirely of white men. It expressly excluded women until 1991 although some had qualified for membership upon its formation in 1934. Albert M. Rosenblatt and Julia Carlson Rosenblatt (1985) explain that the BSI's founder, Christopher Morley, had decreed that membership would be granted to those who solved a crossword puzzle printed in the May 13, 1934, *Saturday Review of Literature*; however, although several women submitted suitably correct answers, they were not invited to full membership in the BSI or invited to the group's annual dinners.

13. Although the BSJ was created as a labor of love and ultimately lost money for its publisher, it was not distributed for free. In the beginning, a subscription cost \$5 (Lellenberg 1995, 155–56). Statutory damages would likely have been available to a copyright claimant against the BSJ, if its contents did not constitute fair use. For a description of the use of statutory damages in this era, see Pamela Samuelson and Tara Wheatland (2009, 449–50).

14. For a thorough discussion of those twists and turns, see generally Rosenblatt (2015).

15. For example, the iPad adventure book *Steampunk Holmes: Legacy of the Nautilus* is an adaptation of the public-domain story "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans." See Martin (2012).
16. See Complaint for Declaratory Judgment <https://freeshherlock.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/klinger-file-stamped-complaint.pdf>; Peter Hirtle (2017) charts the expiration dates of copyrighted works using factors including publication date, registration, and renewal, concluding that copyright protection has expired for all works first published in the United States before 1923.
17. The Web site Free Sherlock's page "Opinions" <https://freeshherlock.wordpress.com/opinions/> lists a number of resources to follow.
18. See also Allison (2013) (written by lead counsel for the Conan Doyle Estate).
19. See *Pannonia Farms, Inc. v. USA Cable*, No. 03 Civ. 7841(NRB), 2004 WL 1276842, at \*2 (S.D.N.Y. June 8, 2004) and *Plunket v. Doyle*, No. 99 Civ. 11006(KMW), 2001 WL 175252, at \*1 (S.D.N.Y. February 22, 2001) for court opinions establishing that Plunket owns no rights; an article in the *New York Times* by Dave Itzkoff (2010) discusses Plunket's assertions of rights. According to Richard Turley (2016) reporting on April 20, 2016, on *Orbmagazine.com*, Plunket passed away on April 15, 2016. Plunket's Web site, which styles itself "The Official Site of the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Literary Estate," states that she became "gravely ill" in December 2014 and that "the remaining family of Lady Etelka Duncan took over the management of the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Literary Estate" but does not mention Plunket's death. Her death has not been reported in sources other than Turley's but has been confirmed by the funeral home director. Plunket's successors in administering the Web site staunchly maintain their ownership of the rights.
20. A comparison of Sherlockian fandom with real person fandom is beyond the scope of this essay, but I note here some interesting comparisons between the Great Game (in which fans treat a fictional character as real) and real person fandom (in which, in a sense, fans treat a real person as fictional). One might compare the Great Game to a real person fandom in which the real person is unable to express opinions other than those ascribed to him by fans. Real person fans may be likely to accede to legal or moral objections by the objects of their fandom themselves, but, like Sherlockians, their rebellion against third-party challenges may be fueled by disappointment at the reminder that the object of their fandom is autonomous and therefore, in a sense, can be owned or controlled by someone other than fans.

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# Theory

## Early Sherlockian scholarship: Non/fiction at play

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[0.1] *Abstract*—Sherlockian scholarship is a display of intellect, wit, and canonical expertise that requires a cunning manipulation of a story world and of nonfiction. This playful style of writing defies easy classification in the terminology of fan and literary studies. Emerging in the early 20th century, Sherlockian scholarship had a tremendous surge in popularity in the late 1920s and early '30s in articles by renowned British and American authors, including Dorothy L. Sayers, Christopher Morley, Sir Desmond MacCarthy, Sir Sydney Castle Roberts, and Ronald A. Knox. The sustained popularity of Sherlockian scholarship owes much to these initial players, whose sparkling prose conjures a bygone era of repartee. In this study, I present a chronological survey of two early periods in Sherlockian scholarship to understand its poetics, popularity, generic identity, and contemporary relevance.

[0.2] *Keyword*—Arthur Conan Doyle; Fan fiction; The Grand Game; Mock-biography; Modernism studies; Dorothy L. Sayers; Sherlock Holmes

Donley, Kate M. 2017. "Early Sherlockian Scholarship: Non/fiction at Play." In "Sherlock Holmes Fandom, Sherlockiana, and the Great Game," edited by Betsy Rosenblatt and Roberta Pearson, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2017.0837>.

[0.3] This essay is not intended for those who have never read or heard of Sherlock Holmes...But for those who have at least a nodding acquaintance with Dr. Watson's writings, it is hoped that the following pages may prove acceptable.

—T. S. Blakeney, *Sherlock Holmes: Fact or Fiction?* (1932)

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## 1. Introduction

[1.1] Crack open an issue of the *Baker Street Journal* and you will find wide-ranging fare for enthusiasts of Sherlock Holmes, who are generally known as Sherlockians in North America and Holmesians in Britain. A special highlight of the journal for many Sherlockians is the plentiful analysis of the canon, the preferred term for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 56 short stories and four novels that feature Holmes and Doctor Watson ([note 1](#)). Sherlockians' diverse approaches to canonical investigations may be organized into two general types. The first, called Doylean, considers the Sherlock Holmes stories as created by the author Conan



Doyle. The Sherlockian approach, however, which is highly specialized and beloved, does not present itself as an analysis of fiction. Sherlockian scholarship considers the canon as the writings of Doctor John H. Watson, whose nonfictional accounts constitute memoirs or biography of Sherlock Holmes.

[1.2] Within a Sherlockian framework (also known as the higher criticism, the writings about the writings, and the Grand Game), Watson and Holmes are people, not characters, whose lives and activities are the subject of formal study. Expository essays and book-length treatments investigate topics within the Sherlock Holmes stories, particularly contradictory, implausible, or missing details. Sherlockian scholars inquire into the curious milk-drinking snake of "The Adventure of the Speckled Band," explain why Dr. Watson's wife calls her husband by the wrong first name in "The Man with the Twisted Lip," and consider whether Holmes attended Oxford or Cambridge. Opposing theories accumulate in "the literature" as authors archly discredit prior claims on major controversies, such as the number of Watson's wives. Despite its formal trappings, scholarly investigations in the Sherlockian tradition playfully contort the conventions of nonfiction in serious demonstrations of whimsy.

[1.3] As a long-standing genre within a thriving international fan community (note 2), this Sherlockian style has produced perhaps thousands of "scholarly papers" that have been delivered orally at meetings or printed in Sherlockian periodicals. Longer investigations have appeared as monographs by niche publishers as well as books for general readers. Scholarship has been featured in numerous Sherlockian retrospectives from specialty and mainstream publishers: *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes* (Vincent Starrett, 1940), *Profile by Gaslight* (Edgar W. Smith, 1944), *The Incunabular Sherlock Holmes* (Edgar W. Smith, 1958), *Seventeen Steps to 221B* (James Edward Holroyd, 1967), *The Baker Street Reader* (Philip A. Shreffler, 1984), *Sherlock Holmes by Gas-Lamp* (Philip A. Shreffler, 1989), and most recently the two-volume set *The Grand Game* (Laurie R. King and Leslie S. Klinger, 2011–12). Annotated editions of the Sherlock Holmes stories are filled with gems from more than a century of Sherlockian commentary. William S. Baring-Gould's 1967 annotated edition of the canon is considered a Sherlockian treasure. The annotator for this new millennium is Leslie S. Klinger, who has compiled *The Sherlock Holmes Reference Library* (10 volumes, Wessex Press, 1998–2009) and *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (3 volumes, W. W. Norton, 2005–6).

[1.4] In 1947, mystery writer Dorothy L. Sayers observed that this "thing" had become "a hobby among a select set of jesters [in Britain] and in America" (vi). As a neophyte Sherlockian, I was somewhat surprised to find an author of Sayers's reputation frequently referenced in discussions of what I perceived to be a contemporary fan genre. I later learned that Sayers was typical of these

"select" early scholars, who were predominantly successful British and American authors, journalists, literary critics, and academics. Taking Baring-Gould's definitive introduction to this "highly specialized form of literary criticism" as a point of departure (1967, 23), I concluded that the early writings fall roughly within two periods: an initial decade from 1902 to 1911, and a resurgence in the late 1920s and early '30s. This second period included four books and dozens of articles, an avalanche of materials in the popular press that has not been repeated since. In a chronological survey of these two early periods, I now explore the form and poetics of early Sherlockian scholarship, hoping to clarify its identity within literary studies, fan studies, and Sherlockiana (the community of Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts).

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## 2. The early decade: Ironic, parodic, and satirical literary criticism

[2.1] In 1901, Conan Doyle was writing in a hurry, sending off his manuscript chapters of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* without keeping reference copies (Veld 2013, 38). The plot was complex, and, unable to refer to his notes, he lost track of some details. By 1902, readers noticed. A headline article in the *Cambridge Review* started this way: "DEAR DR. WATSON, —Before the appearance of the February number of the *Strand Magazine*, it is my desire to draw your attention to one or two points in your story." Its author was Frank Sidgwick, a recent graduate and future publisher, and he addressed not Conan Doyle, but rather Watson, the putative writer of the adventure. Purposefully misreading the signals of genre, pretending Watson was a real author of nonfiction, Sidgwick charged him with "inconsistency" in his dating that was an issue of "literary morality" (1902, 137). Sidgwick's use of "literary" is a wonderfully ironic element because "literature" can indicate fiction or nonfiction, which his essay blended.

[2.2] Sidgwick's discussion of fiction as pretended fact generates irony, a multifaceted literary device that creates a rhetorical effect through contrasts in language, situation, and actuality in either a real or a fictional world. As parody, Sidgwick's essay simultaneously mimics and transforms a particular nonfictional genre, the critical letter to an editor. Sidgwick's parody incorporates satire, humor that is "tendentious" in advocating a point of view (Genette 1997, 86), here that Conan Doyle should pay more attention to his plot. The result is an ironic paradox: Despite its fictionality in addressing Watson, Sidgwick's essay offers real criticism.

[2.3] This creative literary approach blends a factual form and a fictional realm. Watson is neither a historical figure nor the product of Sidgwick's own imagination; he exists within a fictional world developed by Conan Doyle. The connection between the Sherlock Holmes stories and Sidgwick's essay is

transtextual. Transtextuality, which Gérard Genette defines as "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts," comprises more specific concepts, including metatextuality, architextuality, hypertextuality, paratextuality, and intertextuality (1997, 1–7), all of which play a role in the parody. Sidgwick's essay illustrates the writerly response to text theorized by Roland Barthes, in which a reader becomes "no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text" (1974, 4). Instead of transforming an individual story, the essay evokes and manipulates the story world created within the Sherlock Holmes series as it existed in 1902. Sidgwick implies the existence of a Doctor Watson who can receive critical feedback from the *Cambridge Review*—a delightful absurdity. Sherlockians would nod along with Genette's assertion that "the pleasure" of this kind of textual transformation "is also a *game*," that manipulating a text like the Sherlock Holmes canon is "a way of playing with it, of having fun with it and making fun of it" (1997, 399).

[2.4] During the decade that followed, at least two more nonfictionally styled articles appeared, written as though Watson were the author of accounts of real adventures with Sherlock Holmes. In July 1904, literary critic Andrew Lang, in his regular column "At the Sign of the Ship" for *Longman's Magazine*, analyzed how Watson "overrates the acuteness of his friend and hero" in Conan Doyle's recently published "The Adventure of the Three Students." Lang concludes that Holmes was duped, a "victim of a college don and an undergraduate," though he evenhandedly concedes that "the mistakes may be Dr. Watson's" (269, 271). This article is humorous and ironic—obviously Watson did not write his own adventures—and Lang's subtle humor does not rely on common parodic signals like Sidgwick's exaggerated styling. Lang's essay does not imitate literary criticism; it is criticism—of Watson's story. Lang's whimsy here sharply contrasts with another article he published in the same month, a comprehensive retrospective for *Quarterly Review* titled "The Novels of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle."

[2.5] The best-known early essay to discuss the Sherlock Holmes tales as if they had been written by Watson was Ronald Knox's 1911 "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes," which he presented at meetings of college societies; it was published in Oxford's *Blue Book* in 1912 and again in *Blackfriars* in 1920. Like Sidgwick, Knox toys with various meanings of the word "literature." Because Conan Doyle was published in a mass-market periodical intended for commuters, intellectual snobs would have tittered at Knox's suggestion that the Sherlock Holmes adventures were literature. Further, Knox's essay purportedly analyzes the scholarly literature of an imaginary disciplinary community, that of experts in the writings of Doctor Watson. This faux review details the theories of invented experts who spout ridiculous nonsense, like Monsieur Piff-Pouf's *Psychologie de Watson*, which notes "very remarkable parallels to the *Dialogues of Plato*" (1928, 109) in Watson's writings. Knox's scathing satire takes aim at "the

modern scholar" and recent developments in literary analysis of Aristophanes, Shakespeare, and the Gospels (98). In the persona of a serious Watsonian, Knox jests that "to write fully on this subject would need two terms' lectures at least. Some time, when leisure and enterprise allow, I hope to deliver them" (120).

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### 3. A canonical origin story

[3.1] Although it seems like we "hear of Sherlock everywhere" these days (see <http://www.ihearofsherlock.com>), Sherlock Holmes also had a tremendous media presence during Conan Doyle's lifetime and in the years just after his death. Cursory searches of indexes of British and American newspapers (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov> and <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>) turn up over 36,000 articles mentioning the character. This immense popularity, along with aspects of Conan Doyle's narrative style, enabled Sherlockian scholarship.

[3.2] Between 1902 and 1911, references to the Sherlock Holmes story world proliferated in print media, especially in pastiches, parodies, author interviews, literary criticism, and advertising. Sales of the *Strand* had surged when *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was serialized in 1901–2, and shortly afterward Holmes was resurrected from the bottom of the Reichenbach Fall to star in more adventures. Also, Conan Doyle's growing body of work was subjected to increased scrutiny. In their reviews, critics experimented with a range of literary forms, as Lang did in his two articles in July 1904. Knox reportedly chose to write about the Holmes stories because of their fame (Waugh 1959, 122).

[3.3] Two elements of Conan Doyle's stories supported Sherlockian scholarship: their disorganized narrative arc and their pretense of nonfiction. Conan Doyle wrote his stories out of sequence and without much attention to narrative continuity. The inconsistencies that so amused Sidgwick, Lang, and Knox in the early years snowballed over nearly 40 years. Sherlockian scholarship not only attempted to account for gaps, implausibilities, and errors but also sought to establish a chronology.

[3.4] Like other authors of new romance (cf. Saler 2012), Conan Doyle cultivated a playful relationship between fact and fiction within the stories. Consider this compliment paid to Holmes by Mr. Trevor in "The *Gloria Scott*": "I don't know how you manage this, Mr. Holmes, but it seems to me that all the detectives of fact and of fancy would be children in your hands" (1930, 376). This praise is not only a tidy turn of phrase; it humorously promotes an ironic awareness of fictionality. Conan Doyle teases the reader—is Holmes real or fictional?

[3.5] Numerous Sherlock Holmes stories begin with Watson or Holmes mulling

over case files, a formulaic scene-setting exposition that frames the short stories. Holmes uses Watson's role as his "chronicler" or "biographer" as a source of friendly banter: "I am lost without my Boswell" (Conan Doyle 1930, 164). And if Watson is a biographer, then his writings would be nonfiction. *A Study in Scarlet*, the first Sherlock Holmes story published, presents itself as a nonfictional memoir, "a reprint from the reminiscences of John H. Watson, M.D." (15). Readers of the next novel, *The Sign of Four*, would have chuckled at Holmes's commentary on Watson's first literary effort: "Honestly, I cannot congratulate you upon it" (90). Seemingly nonfictional sources are frequently integrated into the stories through fictionalized newspaper articles and descriptions of reference materials consulted by Holmes or Watson. Conan Doyle also writes with obvious gusto about his characters' compositions, including Holmes's weighty commonplace books, disarrayed papers, and monographs on tobacco and beekeeping.

[3.6] Located within a fictional context, nonfictional cues are implausible and foster an ironic "ambivalent suspense of two meanings" (Burke 1994, 42). Readers thus perceive "factual" framing scenarios as "fictional nonfiction" or "fake real." The instability of the fact/fiction paradox invites readers to scrutinize the familiar, treasured Sherlock Holmes canon at the most basic level: its identity as fiction. Sidgwick, Lang, and Knox took the bait and engaged with the stories as though they were nonfiction. They established a precedent in their literary criticism: pretend Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson are (or, later, were) real people, consider the Sherlock Holmes stories as Watson's nonfictional accounts, and analyze Watson's writings using expository genres that are associated with nonfiction.

[3.7] One major difference between the Sherlockian scholarship of the first period and that of today is a shared conceit called the Game, the Sherlockian pretense of a historical Holmes and Watson. Within fan studies, the Game would be considered part of a "collective strategy, a communal effort to form interpretive communities" (Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington, 2007, 2). Verbal and written conversation can also be part of the Game, which nowadays is visible in text form on the Internet, on e-mail lists (Pearson [1997] 2014), Web sites, blogs, and microblogging platforms such as Twitter. Sherlockians communicate in many styles, not just within the Game, but contemporary Sherlockian scholarship arises from this pretense and is understood within it. These initial works of the first period reference Holmes's prominence in popular culture rather than connecting it to a specific interpretive community.

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## 4. The second period: A golden age

[4.1] In contrast, authors in the second period, from 1927 to 1934, were linked

through networks that promoted the development of an interpretive community. "Golden age" seems an appropriate name for this rich epoch (Guilielmo 2013, 3), acknowledging the contributions to Sherlockian scholarship by authors such as Sayers, Helen Simpson, Knox, and A. G. Macdonell, who wrote their own detective fiction during that genre's golden age. Several Sherlockian writers belonged to the Detection Club, an exclusive professional and social society (Edwards 2015). It is impossible to discuss this golden age of Sherlockian scholarship without crediting the influence of numerous professional, social, and familial networks that connected authors: the Detection Club, the Double Crown Club for publishers, the Bloomsbury Group, the Morley brothers, the Knox brothers, and Christopher Morley's various informal luncheon and cocktail clubs in the early 1930s. Morley's clubs were the forerunners of the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI), an influential Sherlockian society that met for the first time in 1934. Morley was a literary celebrity and best-selling author, but these days he is better remembered as the founder of the legendary BSI. His regular column "The Bowling Green" in the *Saturday Review of Literature* became a bully pulpit for the nascent Sherlockian community.

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## 5. Golden age scholarship: Literary reviews, narrative exploration, and biography

[5.1] The golden age of the late 1920s and early 1930s began with a few key articles by Sir Desmond MacCarthy, A. G. Macdonell, and Sir Sydney Castle Roberts; books by H. W. Bell, T. S. Blakeney, and Vincent Starrett; a volume of essays edited by Bell; and dozens of articles in the popular press on both sides of the Atlantic. In the 1930s, Sherlockian scholarship appeared in the *Bookman*, the *Cambridge Review*, the *Colophon*, *Real Detective*, the *Cornhill Magazine*, the *New Statesman*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *Lancet*, the *American Journal of Surgery*, the *Oxford Magazine*, *Guy's Hospital Gazette*, and the *Saturday Review of Literature*. I developed my collection of golden age scholarship with the assistance of Baring-Gould, citations in *The Universal Sherlock Holmes* online (De Waal and Vanderburgh 1994), reprints of several articles by MacCarthy in a Sherlockian publication (Guilielmo 2013), and by following citations within the texts themselves. Because of space limitations, I discuss here only the first few articles and books of the golden age, but they are enough to demonstrate new trends and document the important influence on them of modernist fiction.

[5.2] Between 1927 and 1931, British authors MacCarthy, Roberts, and Macdonell used the Sherlockian pretense in critical reviews of Conan Doyle's works and experimented with biographical writing about the characters. In 1927, the pseudonymous *New Statesman* columnist Affable Hawk mulled over issues of chronology in the Sherlock Holmes stories (Guilielmo 2013). Hawk's column

appears under the heading "Current Literature," and thus it is likely positioned as a review of *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* even though it does not mention the book. Hawk explains that he has been "re-reading those books in which are recorded all we know of the adventures and achievements of Sherlock Holmes" (5), and he seeks to address chronological "perplexities." Alas, the insurmountable task has "not increased [his] confidence in [himself] as a researcher." Hawk's review is affable indeed, a parody of formal scholarship without the bite of satire.

[5.3] One of the most fanciful elements is Hawk's pretension of scholarly limitations. In particular, he is stymied by the dating of Watson's marriages, and he states that "the biographer of Dr. Watson will no doubt clear this matter up...I confess I am looking forward with some curiosity—there is a small mystery here—to Mr. Desmond MacCarthy's life of Dr. Watson." This hint of a forthcoming biography is intriguing, because "Affable Hawk" is a pseudonym for MacCarthy himself, a popular columnist, drama critic, and literary editor of the *New Statesman*.

[5.4] Three months later, the *New Statesman* printed a humorous letter to the editor addressing problems in Affable Hawk's column (Guilielmo 2013, 6). Reader Cyril Asquith's letter is full of humorous grandstanding about Affable Hawk's "sloppy Watsonology" (7), including a recommendation that he refer to the third volume of a fictitious book titled, in French, *The Love Life of Doctor Watson* (6). The format of a letter to the editor is similar to Sidgwick's earlier work, and the reference to a fictitious book is reminiscent of Knox. The Asquith family knew MacCarthy well and were perhaps aware of his identity as Hawk. MacCarthy responded to Asquith's criticism in a subsequent column with a chronological study of Watson's marriage to Mary Morstan. Again, MacCarthy (as Affable Hawk) brings up his fictional *Life of Watson*. He writes, "I am sure that no one awaits more impatiently and respectfully the publication of that book than I do" (7). In 1928, MacCarthy left the *New Statesman* to begin a new literary magazine, *Life and Letters*. In a few short years, MacCarthy would publish a Watsonian biography by a different author in this periodical.

[5.5] New releases of other books connected to Sherlock Holmes prompted a landmark review in the Sherlockian style by Sydney Castle (S. C.) Roberts. Like MacCarthy, Roberts was hooked into the literary scene. In his role as a publisher at Cambridge University Press, Roberts was acquainted with a wide array of writers, publishers, and visiting scholars. Fascinated by Samuel Johnson and his own university, Roberts authored numerous books of history and biography on these two subjects. In 1928, the editor of the *Cambridge Review* passed S. C. Roberts two books, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes Stories* and Ronald Knox's *Essays in Satire*, a collection that included his 1911 "Studies in the Literature of

Sherlock Holmes." Rather than discuss Knox's mock-scholarly approach, Roberts imitated it. His review "A Note on the Watson Problem" (1929) satirically criticizes Knox's analysis and adopts Knox's own practice of citing fabricated experts. The enthusiastic response to this brief review encouraged Roberts to develop his inquiries into the Sherlock Holmes stories in a "more methodical" way (1966, 228) and in the biographical style that had also intrigued MacCarthy.

[5.6] Another Sherlockian thesis came from A. G. Macdonell, a Scottish journalist, detective novelist, and humorist. His article "The Truth about Professor Moriarty" ran in the *New Statesman* in late 1929 in the column "Miscellany" and is not a literary review. After an initial description of Moriarty, Macdonell cites evidence from the tales to examine Holmes's Period of Stagnation, his Period of Minimum Intellectual Activity, and his Period of Maximum Activity. Macdonell concludes that Moriarty was created by Holmes as an excuse, a fiction that would allow him to get some rest after his Period of Maximum Activity (1929, 776–77). This ponderous term reflects Macdonell's gentle parody of academic "inquiry."

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## 6. MacCarthy, Roberts, and modern biography

[6.1] In 1927, just as MacCarthy resurrected Sherlockian scholarship in what would become its golden age, Virginia Woolf wrote a critical essay called "The New Biography" that praised innovative biographies that borrowed techniques from fiction. In particular, Woolf singled out accomplishments of the prominent English biographer Lytton Strachey, the French biographer André Maurois, and Harold Nicolson, whose new book *Some People* defied traditional genres by blending elements of fiction, biography, and autobiography. Woolf was connected to MacCarthy through their association with the Bloomsbury Group of modernist intellectuals. Nicolson and MacCarthy were also regular broadcasters on the BBC, both discussing literature, modernist fiction, and contemporary issues on the air (Avery 2006). In 1929, Woolf, Nicolson, and MacCarthy contributed to a BBC radio series called "Miniature Biographies"; transcripts were printed in the BBC circular *The Listener* (cf. Davison, forthcoming). Nicolson and Woolf each chose quirky historical figures for their installments. MacCarthy's subject was more peculiar: a fictional character, Doctor Watson.

[6.2] Biography is a thematic element in MacCarthy's essay and is mentioned multiple times. In his first paragraph, he explains that "old-fashioned" methods of biography are inadequate for "writ[ing] the life of the most representative Englishman of the latter end of the nineteenth century—I mean, of course, Dr. Watson." MacCarthy alludes to his own "forthcoming and profusely illustrated" (and nonexistent) biography of the character, giving an extract from it in the style of the new "*incognito* method." His satire of modern biography is just as damning as Knox's satire of literary and biblical criticism; as he reviews the path



of Watson's life, speculating on a childhood in Australia and on his marriages, he skewers the modern biographer's "privilege of recording conversations which did not take place," looseness with facts, penchant for setting a tone, and ponderous persona (see Donley 2017 for a close reading of this essay).

[6.3] MacCarthy's interest in biography and his new literary magazine *Life and Letters* attracted the attention of S. C. Roberts, who was working on another cutting-edge project in biography. In 1928, the famous biographer André Maurois had given a series of lectures on biography at Cambridge. The university press aimed to publish the lecture series, but Maurois had prepared his manuscript notes in French. The translator was none other than S. C. Roberts. Maurois's *Aspects of Biography* (1929) is significant in biography studies and remains in print. Soon after translating Maurois's treatise, Roberts combined his own expertise in biographical form with the Sherlock Holmes canon. His first attempt, the impressively titled "Prolegomena to the Life of Doctor Watson," was published in 1930 by MacCarthy's *Life and Letters* and was later included in Argonaut Press's anthology *Essays of the Year (1929-30)*.

[6.4] One publisher who noted Roberts's parodic biography of Watson was Frank V. Morley (Christopher Morley's brother) of Faber & Faber, who invited Roberts to expand his essay into an appropriate length for the *Criterion Miscellany* monograph series (Roberts 1966, 228). Morley's editorship of the *Miscellany* was supervised by T. S. Eliot, the modernist poet, critic, and editor of the quarterly literary journal *Criterion*. In 1931, *Criterion Miscellany* also published works by James Joyce and Eliot; like MacCarthy's satire, Roberts's *Doctor Watson* (1931) was in elevated literary company.

[6.5] *Doctor Watson* establishes itself as a parody from the first page with its overly ponderous subtitle, "Prolegomena to the study of a biographical problem, with a bibliography of Sherlock Holmes." It opens with an appropriately literary quote from Carlyle and then invokes Roberts's own favorite biographer: "to render manifest the whole circumstances of Watson's first appearance in [*sic*] this planet is a task before which Boswell himself might well have quailed" (Roberts 1931, 7). The reference to Boswell is highly transtextual, linking Boswell (the most famous practitioner of the genre of biography), Watson (called "Boswell" in the canon), and Roberts himself (a specialist in Samuel Johnson, Boswell's famous subject). The 22-page essay consisted of two parts, portraits of Watson's life before and after his first marriage. Roberts's biographer persona strives for academic responsibility, emphasizing the need to "give proper consideration," "clear one's mind of sentiment," "endeavor to do justice," and "review our data." The text's style is heavily academic: "To claim definite certainty for such a solution would be extravagant; but as a working hypothesis it has claims which cannot be lightly dismissed" (18).

[6.6] This monograph introduced what has become a hallmark of Sherlockian scholarship: citation of the members of a discourse community. Fabricated experts are absent; instead, plentiful footnotes cite a range of sources and experts including the Sherlock Holmes stories, prior articles by Knox and MacCarthy, nonfictional sources such as histories of the Afghan war and the Northumberland Fusiliers, and personal communications from a network of acquaintances pursuing their own canonical research. An appendix presents a bibliography of Sherlock Holmes's own writings, under the headings "Reminiscences," "Publications," and "Projected or Unfinished Works," those that Holmes had given "serious thoughts" to writing (32). The amusing idea of Sherlock Holmes having a forthcoming publication matches the overall tone, which is parodic but not satirical. *Doctor Watson* was the first to feature several of the numerous playful paratextual elements that are highlights of book-length Sherlockian scholarship, such as ironic subtitles, prefatory notes, dedications, introductions, and footnotes (discussed more fully in Donley 2016).

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## 7. Golden age books

[7.1] Four full-length books quickly followed Roberts's monograph. While previous biographers had focused on Watson, T. S. Blakeney contributed *Sherlock Holmes: Fact or Fiction* (1932). The book includes a spirited introduction in the persona of a researcher intent on "breaking new ground" (v). Blakeney has great praise for Roberts's *Doctor Watson*, saying that "no work on the Holmes-Watson association reaches a higher level as literature" and that, if he must contradict Roberts, "such differences in no way detract from [his] admiration for this excellent piece of work" (46). He cites liberally from Roberts, Knox, and others, in both text and footnotes, as he discusses Holmes's life, career, and relationship with Scotland Yard. Appearing concerned about the numerous "blunders" in the later collections of Sherlock Holmes stories (39), Blakeney advances an amusing theory that Watson's authentic records have been the victim of "a third hand," an editor (40–41).

[7.2] Archaeologist H. W. Bell displayed an academic's eye for detail in *Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson: The Chronology of Their Adventures* (1932), the most ambitious effort to order the stories. The book's plentiful footnotes cite Roberts, previous Sherlockian scholars, the Sherlock Holmes stories, and information from historical and reference works that support his conjectures. In its ludic introduction, Bell explains that "some lurking demon tempted me in an idle moment to test one of Watson's dates," with predictably infuriating results; his struggle to establish a chronology has meant that "for months I have been a hagridden wretch" (v). In the acknowledgment, he honors Roberts and other enthusiasts who have assisted him (ix). Bell's chronology divides Holmes and

Watson's cases into seven periods. The appendix lists cases that he could not date, in the "[hope] that other students will be successful in tracking them down and dating them, so that the world may at last possess a complete chronological record of all the known cases which brought into play the 'flame-like' genius of Sherlock Holmes" (128).

[7.3] Chicago author and literary columnist Vincent Starrett revealed his preoccupation with biography in an article for the *Bookman* called "Sherlock Holmes: Notes for a Biography" (1933) in which he foretells that "the day will come, one fancies, when Sherlock Holmes will be assumed to have left this mortal life behind" (166). Starrett ruminates on the available materials for researching Holmes's life and then appends a list of Holmes's own publications, exhorting readers, "Look well, then, for all these rare and difficult titles, Bookmen, for your own shelves" (171). This article (retitled as "Ave Sherlock Morituri et Cetera") found a home in *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, a collection of essays by Starrett published later in the year (1933). Within the book, Starrett teasingly moves in and out of the Sherlockian style: some chapters are written in a Sherlockian pretense, while others describe Conan Doyle in depth.

[7.4] In 1934, H. W. Bell produced the first edited volume of Sherlockian scholarship, *Baker Street Studies*. It contained essays by a number of well-known writers, including Sayers, Helen Simpson, Vernon Rendall, Starrett, Knox, Macdonell, and Roberts. Bell was a demanding editor, insisting on editorial consistency and academic rigor. Thus Knox had to restrain himself from inventing new, cleverly named experts in his contribution, "The Mystery of Mycroft," and offered instead two citations of Bell. In this watershed volume, Bell assembled a group of real authors engaged in Watsonian debate, making real what Knox had satirically imagined in 1911.

[7.5] Several of the authors who were united in Bell's *Baker Street Studies* attended significant parties in New York and London that were milestones in the history of the Sherlockian fan community. In 1934, A. G. Macdonell gathered a group of Holmesians at a "sherry party" (Roberts 1966, 229). Other attendees included Bell, Frank V. Morley, Roberts, Sayers, and Simpson (Gunn 1990, 97). S. C. Roberts recalls that "those present declared themselves to be the Sherlock Holmes Society" (1966, 229). At this spirited event, guests drank a wine of which Watson would have approved, acted out scenes from the canon, engaged in canonical disputations, and enjoyed the arrival of a hansom cab (Gunn 1990). This group celebrated annually for 3 years and then disbanded (Roberts 1966, 230). In 1951 Roberts became the first president of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, a subsequent group that became more organized and still exists today (<http://www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/about-the-society/past-presidents-and-chairmen/>). Desmond MacCarthy supported this society as an honorary member

(Guilielmo 2013, 3). Also in 1934, Christopher Morley hosted several Holmes-themed dinners in New York as he developed the Baker Street Irregulars. A sort of annual meeting was held in December that year, with approximately 20 celebrants, including Sherlockian authors Starrett, Elmer Davis, Bell, and Macdonell, along with famed Sherlock Holmes actor William Gillette and illustrator Frederic Dorr Steele (Leavitt 1989, 373–74). Thus, authors of Sherlockian scholarship were involved in the most prominent Sherlockian societies in the United States and Britain from their inception.

[7.6] Blakeney's, Bell's, and Starrett's books triggered a flood of Sherlockian articles in British and American periodicals by stimulating critics to write their own Sherlockian-styled book reviews and cultivating the audience for new Sherlockian scholarship. In 1932, the *Times Literary Supplement* presented a book review by an anonymous author (widely believed to be MacCarthy) in the Sherlockian style. In the same year Knox reviewed Bell's and Blakeney's works in the *New Statesman and Nation*, with references to Sherlockian scholarly contributors both real (Roberts and MacCarthy) and fictitious (M. Papier Mâché). In addition to these reviews, other authors published original theses in the popular press, such as Sayers's "The Dates in the Red-Headed League" in the *Colophon* (1934) and Christopher Morley's "Was Sherlock Holmes an American?" in the *Saturday Review* (1934).

[7.7] During the golden age, the ambit of Sherlockian scholarship expanded. In addition to offering literary criticism, authors used it to investigate narrative by exploring the fascinating borderland of what I will call "non/fictionality." Sherlockians' ironic, parodic, or satirical Barthian rewritings of the Holmesian story world were aimed at both general readers and other enthusiasts who were familiar with the style. Contemporary Sherlockian scholarship also functions primarily as narrative exploration intended for aficionados.

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## 8. A case of identity

[8.1] In the nearly 70 years since Sayers first referred to this "thing," not much progress has been made in identifying the genre of Sherlockian scholarship. Applying a label is challenging because its prose seems simultaneously fictional and nonfictional, making Sherlockian scholarship difficult to place in the usual taxonomy of literary species. Varying interpretations of this style demonstrate the shifting identities of mediated texts for authors and readers in different theoretical frameworks (Hellekson and Busse 2014, 19–25). My survey leads me to describe Sherlockian scholarship's identity from three perspectives: those of literary studies, fan studies, and Sherlockiana.

[8.2] Most categorizations of Sherlockian scholarship privilege its style as either

nonfiction or fiction. The label "pseudo-scholarship" emphasizes its nonfictional aspect, and it has been applied by Sherlockians, by academics who study the genre, and also by the genre's critics. Sayers may have drawn attention to this term by warning that criticism or biography produced in the manner of Sherlockian scholarship would yield "unscrupulous pseudo-scholarship...and not as a game" (1947, vi). As Sayers points out, true pseudo-scholarship is harmful, completely contrary to the spirit and practice of Sherlockian scholarship. A connection to a prominent trend in modernist fiction has yielded a new term that I prefer: mock-scholarship.

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## 9. Literary studies

[9.1] The link between Watsonian biography, Maurois, and the hybrid genres of Woolf and Nicolson locates Sherlockian scholarship in 20th-century modernist fiction. Modernism was a massive philosophical movement lasting roughly from the late Victorian era through the 1940s, overlapping Conan Doyle's writing career. It has been associated with numerous elements of the Sherlock Holmes stories, such as their emphasis on rationality, deduction, evidence, technology, and the British colonial empire. Historian Michael Saler has discerned an appetite for literary enchantment among readers of the 1920s and 1930s, which he considers to be a response to modernism. This appetite, he believes, accounts for the widespread popularity of imaginary worlds in these decades, and in "Clap If You Believe in Sherlock Holmes," chapter 3 of his *As If: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality* (2012), he captures the zeitgeist of the developing fan community. Saler's view of enchantment and ironic imagination broadly connects modernism to the early enthusiasts who wrote Sherlockian scholarship. However, MacCarthy's and Roberts's ironic biographies and their collaborations with prominent figures in modern biography (such as Woolf, Nicolson, and Maurois) establish a strong relationship to a specific movement within literary modernism, one that blended fictional realms with nonfictional forms.

[9.2] Max Saunders, in *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (2010), mentions Woolf in connection with mock-biography, a manipulation of the biographical form "for satiric or parodic purposes, which can include satire or parody of the auto/biographic subject, the biographer, or the form." Saunders considers Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) "the best, and best-known," example of mock-biography (218), which intertwines fictional and biographical forms. He explains that autobiografiction developed as a result of modernists' engagement with "im/personality," in which "the relation between autobiographical subjectivity and aesthetic objectivity is being reinvented" (23). Sherlockian scholarship can be understood similarly as "non/fictionality," a critical engagement with both fictional and nonfictional discourse. In this view,

Sherlockian scholarship could be classified as mock-scholarship, a playful use of nonfictional genres to investigate a fictional story world.

[9.3] The literary territory of *Orlando* and *Some People* was trendy during the late 1920s and '30s. This period saw not only biography blended with fiction but also popular experiments with ironic autobiographies (Saunders 2010). Notable works include the 1927 rerelease of James Weldon Johnson's formerly anonymous *Autobiography of an Ex-colored Man*; Woolf's *Flush* (1933), a biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's pet spaniel; the infamous *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, by Gertrude Stein (1933); and the sensational success of Robert Graves's historical mockery *I, Claudius* (1934). A later Sherlockian mock-autobiography references that classic: Michael Harrison's *I, Sherlock Holmes* (1977).

[9.4] Knox, Morley, Sayers, Simpson, and Macdonell contributed to this fad of non/fictionality outside their writings about Sherlock Holmes. *Memories of the Future, 1915–1972* (1923), a mock-autobiography set in the future, was "edited by" Knox but narrated by the fictitious Opal, Lady Porstock. Christopher Morley's *Human Being: A Story* (1932) is a metabiography—a biography of a biography—and was so successful it was reissued in a Modern Library edition in 1940. A. G. Macdonell's romp *The Autobiography of a Cad* (1938) is still available in paperback. Sayers, Simpson, Knox, and other members of the Detection Club experimented with form and media beyond detective fiction through innovative BBC broadcasts and collaboratively written book fund-raisers (Edwards 2015). Their nonfiction anthology *The Anatomy of Murder* (1936) addressed fiction and fact as its contributors analyzed real crime from the perspective of mystery writers.

[9.5] The alignment of Sherlockian scholarship with commercially successful modernist-era experiments in non/fictionality may partially account for Sherlockian scholarship's burst of popularity during the 1930s. At this moment, elements in literary culture coincided with milestones in the life and publications of Conan Doyle. The appearance of the final Sherlock Holmes stories in the *Strand* magazine (1926–27), the publication of *The Complete Sherlock Holmes Stories* (1928) and *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (1930), the publication of Conan Doyle's last stories and his Spiritualist works, his death in 1930, and memorials of him in the press, along with popular Sherlock Holmes adaptations in theater and film, created a vast public awareness of the fictional world of Sherlock Holmes. This media context occurred at a time when literary publishers were receptive to blended genres.

[9.6] *Orlando* does not possess the same transtextuality as MacCarthy's and Roberts's Watsonian biographies, yet they are all easily recognizable as experiments with fictional subjects and biographical form. Sherlockian scholarship

interacts with Conan Doyle's narrative despite its lack of plot. Scholarly theories manipulate characters and events from the Sherlock Holmes stories, filling in the gaps in the canon, ordering and reordering its chronology, and altering characters and the relationships between them. As they substantiate their claims, scholars sometimes create crossovers by citing fiction from outside the Sherlock Holmes story world. Blakeney does this when he references an event from Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) as historical record (1932, 22). Scholarly assertions about a character might permanently transform the view of a character in a way Conan Doyle never envisioned—for example, that Watson spent his childhood in Australia (MacCarthy 1929) or that Mrs. Hudson's first name is Martha (Starrett [1934] 1995). Scholars' numerous and contradictory claims ripple through the story world of Sherlock Holmes and can be incorporated into adaptations, pastiche, and fan fiction.

[9.7] The pretense that Watson is the actual author of the Sherlock Holmes stories opens up fascinatingly varied possibilities concerning the existence of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In an interesting practical demonstration of Roland Barthes's "death of the author," early Sherlockian texts generally ignored Conan Doyle. Later, Sherlockian scholarship and pastiche developed a natural fictional role for him as Watson's literary agent, who has at times been blamed, tongue in cheek, for the quirks in the canon. Any representation of Conan Doyle in which he is not the creator of Sherlock Holmes is necessarily fictional and involves characterization. Knox was the first to hint at an alternative identity for Conan Doyle in "Studies." Through a clever aside, Knox implies that Conan Doyle has expertise in the publication (not the creation) of the tales (1928, 100). MacCarthy also included a clever nod to Conan Doyle by naming him a "Sherlock Holmes scholar" along with Knox and Sidgwick (Guilielmo 2013, 5). In "Notes for a Biography," Starrett portrays Conan Doyle as a close acquaintance of Holmes's, one who could forward his mail (1933, 167). These early papers hint at the fanciful, fictional ways future Sherlockians would honor Conan Doyle within a conceit that denied him the role of author.

[9.8] Other poetic elements tie Sherlockian scholarship to fiction, including authorial persona, point of view, and setting. Authors write as though they inhabit a version of Conan Doyle's story world that exists in their own time, and they investigate the people and events of the Sherlock Holmes stories as history. The persona of the researcher/author is thus a character in the story world just as much as Holmes and Watson are. The fictive addressee of the Sherlockian scholar also exists within the story world, which creates an ironic identity for the actual reader.

[9.9] The Sherlockian scholar's investigations of the Holmes canon serve to confirm the existence of Sherlock Holmes. Scholarly discourse immerses the

reader in a fictional world that has been authenticated by citation and an academic tone. Authors who are cited in text must also live within this fictional realm where Holmes and Watson exist, and so the totality of the discourse community of Sherlockian scholarship is displaced into Conan Doyle's story world. This subtle collision of the real and fictional worlds within the discourse of nonfiction is a massive paradox and may be responsible for the transgressive nature of Sherlockian scholarship, which toys with nonfiction's fundamental precepts.

[9.10] In foregrounding non/fictionality, Sherlockian scholarship finds kindred spirits in Jorge Luis Borges's delicate fantasies of impossible books (such as "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*" [1939] and "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" [1940]) and in later non/fictional scholarship, including Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962) and Hildesheimer's *Marbot* (1983). From a literary perspective, these two early periods of Sherlockian scholarship presage postmodernism and offer fascinating documentation of modernist-era experiments with transtextuality and non/fictionality.

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## 10. Fan studies

[10.1] As transtextual critical or exploratory non/fictional investigations of a story world, Sherlockian scholarship easily falls into the category of transformative work, a term that is handily neutral about genre, authorial identity, and media. However, it is surprisingly difficult to pin down Sherlockian scholarship within a fan studies framework. Descriptions of fan discourse typically identify two types of literary style: fan fiction and meta. Contemporary Sherlockian scholarship could potentially be classified as either, yet neither truly suits these older works.

[10.2] Sherlockian scholarship in the *Baker Street Journal* has been associated with fan fiction (Laredo 2012). Hellekson and Busse (2014, 5) explain that the term "fan fiction" is evolving and that it is sometimes used to mean "imaginative interpolations and extrapolations...of existing literary worlds," which certainly describes what Sherlockian authors accomplish with their papers. Jeanette Laredo observes the effect of the author's and the readers' intradiegetic point of view within the story world, noting, "As fan fiction, [writings in the *Baker Street Journal*] reify a connection to the fictional world by making the reader/fan an active participant in creating that world" (2012). However, two further aspects of fan fiction make the term an awkward fit. Hellekson and Busse note that "if [fan fiction] requires an actual community of fans who share an interest, then Sherlock Holmes would easily qualify as the first fandom" (2014, 6). Yet the earliest authors of mock-scholarship about Sherlock Holmes predate an organized fan community. Another description of fan fiction, as "derivative amateur writing" (5),



does not apply to early works written by professional authors and published for general readership. Early Sherlockian scholarship also challenges common assumptions about the typical gender of fan fic authors (female) and that their writing is a means of resisting marginalizing social structures (Derecho 2006).

[10.3] Fans' analytical "meta" texts are critical explorations of "meaning and historical, conceptual, and theoretical issues in fandom" (Derecho 2006, 61–62). Sherlockian Lyndsay Faye has referred to Sherlockian scholarship as "meta-scholarship" and suggests that it is connected to fictional yet nonnarrative writings in other fandoms, including fan-created reference works about Middle-earth or the Klingon language (2012). Recently I corresponded with Kizzia, the author of "Meta: A Timeline for *Sherlock* Series 3" (2014). Kizzia's chronology of events in the BBC program *Sherlock* (2010–) relies on the dates shown on the BBC's online tie-in *The Personal Blog of Dr. John H. Watson* (<http://www.johnwatsonblog.co.uk/>) and reflects Kizzia's version of the Sherlockian Game: the pretense that the *Sherlock* episodes are documentary records of real events. Kizzia's time line is evidence for Faye's argument that Sherlockian inquiries are forms of metascholarship.

[10.4] Faye raises an important point: meta exists in numerous fan communities. There is a link between fan meta and the distinction between Doylean and Sherlockian perspectives of textual analysis. These approaches have been influential beyond Sherlockiana. The terms "Watsonian" (in-universe) and "Doylist" (extradiegetic) have been adopted by other fandoms to describe different kinds of fan analysis. My investigations, though brief, indicate that fan meta uses both intra- and extradiegetic perspectives, suggesting that more specific terms are needed to differentiate the two.

[10.5] Blended genres like mock-biography and non/fictional parody are typically discussed only within specialized niches of literary studies rather than in general overviews of fiction. This tendency may have affected the perception of fiction within fan studies. Nonfictionally styled fiction has not been specifically identified as a type of fan fiction (Hellekson and Busse 2006, 2014), although it has been mentioned in connection to certain domains of fan expository writing, especially wikis. Karen Hellekson (2008) discusses wikis as a prominent genre of fictional reference that "have at their core the idea of *fact*." She presents one Star Trek wiki, Memory Alpha, that contains articles from several perspectives, some written as though the site is a real archive on a Federation library planet. This pretense is similar to Sherlockian scholars' intradiegetic point of view within the Holmes story world and the non/fictional texts they produce from that perspective. Hellekson concludes that "we ought to seek fiction in all wikis through the creation of a set of bits of information presented factually."

[10.6] Like Sherlockians, other fans are engaging with nonfiction through

fictional universes. Fans have varying opinions about the appropriateness of intradiegetic content and how it should be labeled, as is demonstrated by Jason Mittell's 2009 "Sites of Participation: Wiki Fandom and the Case of Lostpedia." Paul Booth considers narratology, non/fictionality, and extra- and intradiegetic points of view in *Digital Fandom* (2010), his discussion of fan genres. Further research using this approach may develop a theoretical basis for assigning Sherlockian scholarship to the category of either fan fiction or meta. Meanwhile, I will defer to Louisa Ellen Stein and Kristina Busse, who observe, "Regardless of terminology and self-understanding, diverse Sherlock fans share many key impulses, investments, and practices" (2012, 15). One Sherlockian practice, the documentation and exploration of a story world through non/fictionality, is vibrant and diverse across fandoms.

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## 11. Sherlockiana

[11.1] Sherlockians demonstrate their intellect, wit, and knowledge of the canon through publishing or presenting Sherlockian papers. Knowledge of the "writings on the writings" indicates that one is a dedicated collector of Sherlockian lore. Because of the Game, Sherlockians can be coy about acknowledging the fictionality of Sherlockian scholarship. As a result of its nonfictional form, Sherlockian scholarship is distinguished from plot-driven fictional texts—pastiche, parody, and fan fiction—and associated with research, which is divided into two types, Doylean (nonfictional) and Sherlockian (fictional). This classification demonstrates a nuanced awareness of fictionality and nonfictional form.

[11.2] However, the term "Sherlockian" is polysemous, indicating variously the content of a text about Sherlock Holmes, use of the pretense of the Game, or personal identification. The convenience of the term creates ambiguity: is a particular text Sherlockian because of its content or because the author is affiliated with a fan community? What about the work of Andrew Lang, for example? If I label his text "Sherlockian scholarship," am I indicating that he is part of an interpretive community? This labeling issue is particularly interesting as it applies to Knox, a writer and satirist of enormous talent and productivity who wrote several "Sherlockian" essays and pastiches as well as numerous other satires and pastiches, detective fiction, literary criticism, radio broadcasts, and biblical translations. Knox's relationship to Sherlockiana is complex. He commented later, "I can't *bear* books about Sherlock Homes...It is so depressing that my one permanent achievement is to have started a bad joke. If I did start it" (Waugh 1959, 122).

[11.3] Within the community, debates about the history of Sherlockian scholarship can have high stakes (cf. Lellenberg, n.d.). Because of the prominent role of early Sherlockian writers in developing the legendary societies, a

contemporary fan's preference for Knox, MacCarthy, Morley, or Roberts is significant. Lang's and Sidgwick's early texts are widely known but less discussed than Knox's "Studies." The status of Knox's essay as "the cornerstone" text of Sherlockian scholarship is controversial. Its centennial in 2011 was celebrated by several publications within the Sherlockian community: King and Klinger's two-volume anthology *The Grand Game; Ronald Knox and Sherlock Holmes: The Origin of Sherlockian Studies* (Ronald A. Knox and Michael J. Crowe, 2011); and a special Christmas edition of the *Baker Street Journal*, "From Piff-Pouff to Backnecke: Ronald Knox and 100 Years of 'Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes'" (Nicholas Utechin, 2010). These works offered close readings of "Studies," additional historical material, and distinguished opinions about the value of Knox's contributions. In the *Sherlock Holmes Journal*, on the other hand, Jon Lellenberg (2011) debunked Knox's influence and endorsed Roberts as the originator of Sherlockian scholarship in the contemporary style.

[11.4] Enthusiasm for Knox's essay within the Sherlockian circle has misled some readers outside of it. "Ways of Reading Sherlock Holmes: The Entrenchment of Discourse Blends," by Vera Tobin (2006), is one of a few academic articles that include a discussion of Sherlockian scholarship. Within a larger investigation of reader responses to Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, Tobin compared Sherlockian scholarship in the early years to a few contemporary examples in the *Baker Street Journal*. The fame of Knox's text led her to select it as her only example of early scholarship. Not surprisingly, Tobin observed a change in tone between the two periods, remarking that there were "no striking formal indices of non-seriousness" in the *Baker Street Journal* articles, while Knox's work was "patently humorous." She concluded that this change was a result of the genre's becoming conventionalized within Sherlockiana (86). However, Lang's 1904 essay also avoids satire; together with Knox and Sidgwick, a range of tone and style exists from the very first examples. Contemporary texts, such as the outrageous *Ms. Holmes of Baker Street* (C. Alan Bradley and William A. S. Sarjeant, 1989) and the hoaxical parody "The Case of J" (by Donald K. Pollock and Andrew Solberg in the *Baker Street Journal*, 2003), also illustrate diverse approaches and tone. Tobin's groundbreaking study identifies important linguistic features of Sherlockian scholarship yet also illustrates the importance of sampling methodology.

[11.5] Sherlockians' fascination with the past influences the community's aesthetic judgment of its long-standing traditions. Gender, generational differences, new media, fan identity, queer readings of the canon, and affiliation with specific media adaptations at times divide Sherlockians, who are notoriously concerned with legitimacy (Redmond 2016). Some Sherlockians would not recognize Kizzia's time line as scholarship, especially because it concerns *Sherlock* rather than Conan Doyle's stories and is published on a fan Web site.

[11.6] In this community that looks back at 1934 nearly as often as it does to 1895, the early history of Sherlockian scholarship is relevant and can be controversial. Does Sherlockian scholarship begin with Sidgwick, who was the first to put this pretense into print? Or with Knox's "Studies," which was by far the most popular early work? Or with Roberts's style of scholarship using genuine sources, which is still followed today? Or in the 1930s, with Christopher Morley and the new fan societies? By considering these options and others, Sherlockians further define their shared history and vision of their interpretive community.

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## 12. Conclusion

[12.1] Through Sherlockian scholarship, authors and readers investigate the lives that Christopher Morley claimed were "too real to be fiction" (1936). The pretense of an authorial Watson creates a dynamic realm for non/fictional play. The initial player was Conan Doyle himself through the teasing simulation of nonfiction in the Sherlock Holmes tales. In the first decade, isolated instances of the Sherlockian pretense appeared in literary criticism that creatively incorporated irony, parody, and satire. Golden age texts reflected experiments in literary form as much as fandom, thriving off a synergy of popular culture, modernist literature, and the new interpretive community. In 1932, T. S. Blakeney declared that "there is still ample room for further investigations about Sherlock Holmes" (viii); this claim certainly holds true today for Sherlockian scholarship.

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## 14. Notes

1. Lellenberg (2011) describes the use of "Canon" and "canon" by early Sherlockians and mentions that the term is often misattributed to Ronald A. Knox's early essay "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes" (1911), which does not actually include the word. *Transformative Works and Cultures* presents literary terms in lowercase as a matter of house style.

2. The label "fan" is anachronistic for the authors I am discussing here, and some Sherlockians find it distasteful, preferring to be known as "devotees" (cf. Pearson 2007). "Enthusiast" was S. C. Roberts's term of choice. Personally, I consider myself a novice Sherlockian fan, just a few years into the Game that many play for a lifetime, and I am most familiar with the North American fan community. In

this essay, I will at times use the terms "interpretive community" and "Sherlockiana" for Sherlockian fandom. The label "Sherlockian" is easily applied to all the texts I mention because of its ambiguity, a feature I discuss in section 11.

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# Praxis

## A case study of early British Sherlockian fandom

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[0.1] *Abstract*—Previous studies of Sherlock Holmes fandom have concentrated on fan letters as being exemplary of the early beginnings of the Great Game: a fantasy played by fans that acts upon the belief that Sherlock Holmes exists. Fans, while fully comprehending that it is indeed a fantasy or a game, perform fan activities such as historical and literary analysis as if Holmes were real. This paper shifts the focus away from letter writing as the central means of the expression of this ironic belief and looks at the example of collecting autographs as a means of celebration of the canon. It places the autograph in its historical context of being the meeting point between the remnants of the Romantic theory of genius, the development of pseudosciences such as the interpretation of handwriting, and the literary, cultural, and commercial landscape in which Holmes appeared.

[0.2] *Keyword*—Autographs; Celebrity; Collecting; Fan letters; Graphology; The Great Game; Sherlock Holmes; *The Strand Magazine*

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## 1. Introduction

[1.1] When Sherlock Holmes first appeared in the pages of *The Strand Magazine*, the immediacy of his popularity with readers prompted a number of visible consequences: the circulation of *The Strand Magazine* grew as a result (and conversely, it shrunk by 20,000 subscribers when Holmes was killed in 1893); libraries were forced to stay open longer on publication days to meet the demand of readers (Pound 1966, 92); and writings about Holmes began to appear in newspapers and periodicals from all kinds of sources. These included fan letters to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Holmes, and Watson; "interviews" with Sherlock Holmes, the first being in *The Observer* in 1892; and essays and letters critiquing the canon, an early example of which was written by Frank Sidgwick in his open letter to Dr. Watson for the *Cambridge Review* in 1902 that questioned Watson's consistency.

[1.2] These are historic instances of actions we recognize as being fan activity, which Cornel Sandvoss defines as "regular, emotionally involved consumption of a

given popular narrative or text in the form of books, television shows, films or music, as well as popular texts in the broader sense" (2005, 8). The fans of Sherlock Holmes of the 1890s demonstrated a high level of emotional involvement in the text—most famously, the outcry at Holmes's death led many to write to Conan Doyle to plead for his return (Conan Doyle [1924] 1989). These readers were invested in the life of Sherlock Holmes and consumed all manner of texts about him, interacting with them in a variety of ways, such as collecting postcards, writing letters, and reading pastiches and parodies. However, a Sherlock Holmes fandom did not emerge fully formed and so it is important to bear in mind the historical context in which it developed. The Sherlock Holmes canon was written at a time when fans were able to interact with the canon through a much larger number of texts due to an influx of mass media. Kate Jackson has pointed out that this was the result of a number of factors, including the development of New Journalism, print technology, and a "consumer revolution" (2001, 33), all of which aimed to extend the readership of periodicals and other print media to include the lower and middle classes.

[1.3] As far as we know, Sherlock Holmes fans in the 1890s interacted with the canon as individuals rather than in formal communities or groups, and readers showed much of the same enthusiasm and behavior toward Holmes as other readers did for texts such as *Trilby* (1894) by George du Maurier, writing letters to the author and buying *Trilby* merchandise (Ormond 1969). However, unlike the readers of *Trilby*, fans of Sherlock Holmes became more coordinated over time, forming official organizations such as the Sherlock Holmes Society of London (established in its early form in 1934 (Green 1986, 38)). The fans of Sherlock Holmes in the 1890s were not a cohesive community, but there is evidence of a community that echoes Benedict Anderson's conception of imagined communities (2006). Sandvoss has further applied Anderson's theory to fandom and describes fan communities as being "imagined in terms not only of *structure* but also of *content*, not only in terms of who the other members of such communities are, but also in terms of what such communities stand for" (2005, 57). We see this in the way that fan letters place their authors as part of an imagined community and in the way that the editor of *The Strand Magazine*, George Newnes, cultivated a community among readers (Jackson 2001, 95).

[1.4] What the Sherlock Holmes fandom stood for in its early conception was based upon immersion in the canon: Michael Saler has established that "some actually believed that Holmes existed—'naïve believers'—but most were 'ironic believers,' who were not so much willingly suspending their disbelief in a fictional character as willingly believing in him with the double-minded awareness that they were engaged in pretense" (2003, 603). This would later become known as the Great Game, where fans of Sherlock Holmes maintain a knowing belief that Holmes was (or is) real and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was Watson's literary agent.

In this way, the early fans foreshadowed the ironic belief in Sherlock Holmes's reality that became the oft-taken stance of the official organizations such as Baker Street Irregulars (United States) and the Sherlock Holmes Society of London (United Kingdom).

[1.5] The aim of this article is to explore the history of Sherlock Holmes fans in Britain through the example of autograph collecting as a form of fan practice. As Lincoln Geraghty argues, "collecting is an active and discerning process that relies on many of the same strategies and processes fans employ in poaching and creating new texts. The collection can and should be read as a text" (2014a, 14). This article will look at the collecting of autographs as a historically transitional activity, which was founded on an increased interest in collecting (Belk 2001). On the one hand, autographs encapsulate a historic fascination with the mark and the imprint of personality on writing, which was influenced by the Romantic notion of the genius, and it is also a well-established fan practice that has survived to the modern day. The hunt for Sherlock Holmes's autograph in particular is a unique example of how familiar collecting practices were played upon by early Sherlock Holmes fans through their ironic belief in his reality and their pursuit of immersion in the world of the text.

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## 2. Handwriting as sign

[2.1] Autograph collecting was a popular activity in the late 19th century (Morgan 2012), and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle received requests from fans for Sherlock Holmes's signature, despite Holmes being fictional. Autograph collecting had its roots in the idea that handwriting was a sign of character. Gerard Curtis calls it the "sense of a hand" (2002, 26), and asserts that "the increase in autograph collecting provides further evidence of the value placed on the 'original' line in the nineteenth century... Autograph albums became the popular register of a homeowner's guests, while children had their own special volumes, all in a celebration of the fixity of the line over the transience of life" (24). The permanent nature of the written line allowed a person's character to be kept as a souvenir beyond the existence of the person, which as Susan Stewart argues, "temporally...moves history into private time" (1993, 138). Collecting autographs was a personal endeavor, and most of the autographs collected at this time were of friends and family, not celebrities, in order to demonstrate the reach of one's social circle (Morgan 2011). Autograph books temporally encapsulated an account of a person's life through the collecting of a series of souvenirs; thus, they had a greater meaning to the collector than the handwriting alone: they represented memory and nostalgia.

[2.2] Despite autograph collecting having its origins in personal circles, by the Victorian era there were many who were collecting the autographs of celebrities;

some of the collectors did so to show an association to renowned circles, but others requested autographs with no prior connection (Morgan 2011). This behavior was a sign of the commodification of well-known figures, as the collecting of all kind of ephemera related to celebrities became popular. Publications were closing the gap between the private and public lives of famous people through a surge of interviews, photographs, and features investigating how they lived. These included articles such as the *Tit-Bits* feature "Recreations of Great Authors" in 1897 (volume 32), which divulged the various sports famous authors played, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's interest in cycling. In the pursuit of biographical information of celebrities, the handwriting of public figures became a popular image to sample, present, and write about in the periodical press in the 1890s, fulfilling the fascination with the sense of hand through reproductions of manuscripts, letters, and signatures. Such articles included Marie Corelli's "My First Book" in *The Idler* (Vol. 4, 1894), which exhibited a facsimile of Corelli's manuscript, and "The Handwriting of Our Kings and Queens" by W. J. Hardy in *The Leisure Hour* (1891) that presented facsimiles of letters and signatures written by royals.

[2.3] It was claimed that handwriting could reveal character through a particular kind of reading based upon a mode of scientific inquiry similar to that of phrenology, another rising pseudoscience in the study of personality. J. H. Schooling, for example, wrote an article called "Written Gesture" for *The Nineteenth Century*, which argued that gesture, of which handwriting is a part, could be subjected to accurate analysis to reveal character because "all expression of mental conditions manifests itself only by physical movement" (1895, 478), and so the body, gesture, and handwriting could be read for evidence of these mental conditions. Schooling brought this analysis to a number of articles for *The Strand Magazine*, presenting reproductions of the handwriting of past and present public figures such as Napoleon and Tennyson. In these articles, Schooling predominately works on the assumption that his readers can read the characteristics of handwriting as easily as text because the genius and originality displayed is obvious to everyone. For example, in "The Handwriting of Alfred Lord Tennyson," Schooling's language is rife with value-based assumptions, such as "note how pretty a specimen is No. 4—which gives its mute evidence against the popular and mistaken notion that talented men write in a bad 'hand'" (1894, 600). The article concentrates on Tennyson's qualities, such as his talent, which are assumed to be read from his handwriting, but the reader is not given any particular methodology or explicit explanation. Articles such as this, which presented handwriting with little commentary, demonstrated through pictorial representation the belief that handwriting had a hieroglyphic function, as it was ostensibly text but also presented a graphic image that signified a person's character and mental state.

[2.4] The article implicitly emphasizes the Romantic belief that genius could be "discovered and comprehended through examining appearance, personal habits, and private manners of authors" (Higgins 2005, 46). It presents handwriting as an original line that allows the onlooker to peer into the creative process, which is purportedly inspired, and suppresses the reality of the writing process, such as editing and revision, by honoring handwriting as an ideal form that forcibly reveals the genius of the author. However, there is an internal contradiction in Schooling's reliance on the Romantic notion of genius, because it is clear that even within the framework of handwriting analysis, handwriting is affected by the fluctuations in personality over time. This is exemplified in Schooling's article "Signatures of Napoleon" (*The Strand Magazine*, Vol. X), where he tracks the changes in handwriting throughout Napoleon's life. Despite presenting these samples as archetypal, it becomes clear that the desire for a person's autograph can never truly be fulfilled, as no single autograph is truly representative of the totality of a person. This was rarely acknowledged in the description of celebrities' handwriting, which was offered as fully representational of their character and relied upon the Romantic notion that their nature was inspired and therefore constant.

[2.5] Articles such as Schooling's do, however, encourage the collecting of handwriting samples as a form of biographical record or souvenirs of a point in time. Susan Stewart argues that all souvenirs are objects that serve as "traces of authentic experience" (1993, 135) and evoke memories, either of the collector's personal history or of a historical moment they wish to encapsulate, and through these collections "the past is constructed from a set of presently existing pieces. There is no continuous identity between these objects and their referents. Only the act of memory constitutes their resemblance. And it is in this gap between resemblance and identity that nostalgic desire arises" (1993, 145). Nostalgia is evoked through separating an object from the time or place it belongs and placing it into a personal collection. Autographs allowed collectors to capture a moment in time that could never be regained, both in terms of their own biography and that of the celebrity whose autograph they collected, which made the autographs of famous people a desirable thing to collect.

[2.6] Additionally, by collecting the autographs of famous people, collectors were able to establish a hierarchy of collecting through the rarity of certain signatures. For example, Tennyson's autograph was notoriously hard to obtain, as he disliked the custom and therefore rarely responded to requests; nor did he write many letters (Schooling 1894, 599–600). Being able to attain autographs that were scarce demonstrated a collector's influence, showing off who they knew and who they were socially connected to. Schooling, for example, shows off his privileged access by stating that the accumulation of the samples for the article "The Handwriting of Alfred Lord Tennyson" was difficult and often thwarted by

other collectors who were reluctant to share their collection. He was successful only due to "valuable assistance" (1894, 599) from those who were willing to help him. The article establishes that autograph collecting was a competitive activity, as some collectors desired to keep their valued objects private, being unwilling to share information and therefore protecting their status. Schooling proves his status as a collector, overcoming such obstacles, and eventually building his own collection in the form of an article.

[2.7] There are two disparate, yet overlapping, branches of fandom at work here. On the one hand, Belk points out that competitiveness is an important characteristic of collecting: it "brings the collector heightened status...and feelings of pride and accomplishment" (2001, 68). Competition establishes a form of hierarchy within a community of collectors, where the rarity of a signature and the status of the celebrity makes certain autographs more desirable, and the acquisition of such items establishes dominance. It is a "shallower," more commercialized and social fan practice. On the other hand, hierarchy can also be dependent on the acquisition of knowledge as theorized by Jancovich (2002) and Hills (2002). Hills argues that "any given fan culture [should be viewed] not simply as a community but also as a social hierarchy where fans share a common interest while also competing over fan knowledge, access to the object of fandom, and status" (2002, 20). The way in which fans compete for knowledge and access echoes the kinds of competitive behaviors seen among autograph collectors. The pursuit of Sherlock Holmes's autograph, the rarest of autographs because of its nonexistence, established some fans as more dedicated to their object of fandom and to the fantasy of Holmes's reality.

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### 3. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle versus Sherlock Holmes

[3.1] In 1899, *The Strand Magazine* published an article by Gertrude Bacon called "Pigs of Celebrities." This article displayed numerous drawings of pigs sketched by various public figures, alongside their autograph. It was a light-hearted attempt to replicate the "old drawing-room game" (1899, 338) where individuals were tasked to draw a pig while blindfolded. The title "Pigs of Celebrities" plays on the name of the regular feature of *The Strand Magazine* called "Portraits of Celebrities at Different Times of their Lives," a biographical commentary that exhibited photographs of celebrities as children or young adults alongside a more recent photograph. The feature was popular, and ran continuously for the first seven years of the magazine's publication. "Pigs of Celebrities," on the other hand, represented renowned figures through their drawings of a pig; these drawings are, Bacon argues, demonstrative of the "genius and strong personality" of the celebrities as "every action, however slight...will bear the unmistakable imprint of his great characteristic" (1899, 338). The juxtaposition of drawing and autograph emphasizes how handwriting

supposedly revealed the celebrity's genius, and the similarities between the titles of the two features reinforces the biographical nature of autograph collecting and the desire for privileged access.

[3.2] Many celebrities complied with Bacon's "audacious request" (1899, 338) for their participation, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The example given by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is a notable case study in the development of the ironic belief in Sherlock Holmes in the way that Bacon treats the drawing of a pig by Conan Doyle as an indexical representation of Sherlock Holmes, not his creator. She says of the drawing, "he must be wanting in imagination indeed who fails to trace in Dr. Conan Doyle's spirited little sketch the resemblance to the immortal Sherlock Holmes. That pig is evidently 'on the scent' of some baffling mystery. Note the quick and penetrating snout, the alert ears, thrown back in the act of listening, the nervous, sensitive tail, and the expectant, eager attitude. The spirit of the great detective breathes in every line and animates the whole" (1899, 341). She suppresses Conan Doyle's biography in favor of Holmes, and in doing so implies an ironic belief in Holmes's existence. Her claim that Conan Doyle is the sum of his creation markedly contradicts her treatment of the handwriting of the other celebrities whose writing reveals their own character, not that of their inventions. Despite himself, it seems that Conan Doyle could only reveal his creation, and lacked a personality of his own. Holmes, on the other hand, ostensibly could not help but appear through Conan Doyle, and so Holmes became, of a fashion, more real than the author.

[3.3] For those readers who were familiar with the Sherlock Holmes canon, Bacon's description provided additional evidence of Holmes's presence through her purposeful echoing of Holmesian tropes. Compare her statement to Watson's description of Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet*: Holmes appears like "a pure-blooded, well-trained foxhound, as it dashes backwards and forward through the covert, whining in its eagerness, until it comes across the lost scent" (Conan Doyle 2009, 31). It is unknown whether Bacon here is drawing on her own Sherlock Holmes knowledge or the popular characteristics associated with Holmes, but more knowing fans would have made a direct connection between her analysis and the Holmes canon. By referencing *A Study in Scarlet*, which had never appeared in the pages of *The Strand Magazine* (though it was published serially in its sister magazine *Tit-Bits* in 1893), her words nod to the Sherlock Holmes fan and call upon wider knowledge of the Holmes canon. When it was published in 1887, *A Study in Scarlet* was not an immediately popular book; it had little commercial success compared to other detective fiction published in the same year, such as *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* by Fergus Hume (Pittard 2011, 28); and so the relative obscurity of *A Study in Scarlet* therefore meant that only the more studious of readers would have understood the intertextual implications of Bacon's explanation. It marked a re-return by fans to the original story of

Sherlock Holmes and demonstrated a hierarchy between fans: those who had knowledge of and access to *A Study in Scarlet* and those who did not.

[3.4] Bacon's gesture to the fans of Sherlock Holmes hints that she was aware of a tradition of treating Holmes as real, and contributes to it, fueling the game as well as responding to it by purposefully writing to appeal to the dedicated reader. By doing so, she evidences Michael Saler's claim that a belief in Holmes and his methods allowed imagination and reason to come together in such a way that one could "actively believe, albeit ironically, in fictions" (2003, 606). Her article serves to continue the blurring of the line between fiction and reality, between Holmes and his creator. It also provides evidence of a Sherlockian readership who were desirous of additional texts outside of the canon, had an in-depth knowledge of the canon, and who ironically believed in Holmes's existence. It demonstrates the way the manifestations of fandom overlap, drawing on the commercial interest in autographs (autographs are a commodity to be sold), but also on the fans' immersion in the canon that is not so easily commodified. The article does much in a very small passage of text; after all, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's pig drawing was not the only one to be analyzed in this article. There are 12 other examples exhibited, such as Henry Irving's and Walter Besant's (1899). Her reference to Holmes is but a fleeting comment in among others that were also of interest to the readers of *The Strand Magazine*. Yet this is what makes her handling of it all the more significant: it shows that the treatment of Holmes as real had, as early as 1899, permeated all kinds of writing, including periodicals. It had become common to discuss Holmes in a knowing way, talking of him as if he were real, yet also acknowledging an author. It also confirms a knowledge of Sherlock Holmes fans' methods of picking up on trivial links to the canon; they were creating a tradition of "treating the ephemeral with the utmost seriousness" (Cranfield 2014, 68).

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## 4. Asking for Sherlock Holmes's autograph

[4.1] The ironic belief Bacon exhibits in her writing is one of the many ways Sherlock Holmes fans were visible in the late 19th century. Another was through fan letters, which have been theorized by such critics as Jonathan Cranfield, who builds on Michael Saler's discussion of ironic and naïve believers in his chapter "Sherlock Holmes, Fan Culture and Fan Letters" (2014) and uses the example of letters to Holmes as a case study of early fandom. He places the tradition of an ironic belief in Holmes within a historical context and points to letter writing as an example of early Sherlock Holmes fan culture that "established a basic pattern for the ways in which later phenomena would function in the future" (2014, 75). Cranfield's work on fan letters has been influential in my research on autograph collecting as fan activity as the two are closely related: it was a common practice within fan letters to ask for Holmes's autograph.



[4.2] It was in these requests for Holmes's autograph that the ironic belief in his reality and autograph collecting converged and imposed the fan's desire for immersion in the text onto the recipient (who was often Conan Doyle) in the full knowledge that the request was futile because the "true" autograph of Holmes was unobtainable. Some, of course, may have been naïve believers in Holmes who misunderstood Holmes's fictionality, but many were double-minded: knowing that Holmes could never reply, but choosing to write nevertheless. Cranfield argues that even while using the most ironic of language, "the intimate phantasies, dreams and fears of the players are still at stake" (2014, 73). So, one has to wonder, what is at stake for early fans in asking Holmes for his autograph? Did senders want a response or would they have been disappointed if Conan Doyle had provided Holmes's autograph for them? After all, as Bacon's description of Conan Doyle's pig drawing shows, the personality of Holmes was supposedly revealed through the writing of Conan Doyle, indicating that his autograph may have been acceptable; but we must also consider that the requests for Holmes's autograph are addressed to Holmes directly, not to Conan Doyle, and are therefore predicated on Holmes's reality.

[4.3] One such letter of request is reproduced in Richard Lancelyn Green's book *Letters to Sherlock Holmes*:

[4.4] 9 Erswell Road, Worthing

18 November 1904

Dear Sir,

I trust I am not trespassing too much on your time and kindness by asking for the favour of your autograph to add to my collection.

I have derived very much pleasure from reading your Memoirs, and should very highly value the possession of your famous signature.

Trusting that you will see your way to thus honour me, and venturing to thank you very much in anticipation.

I am, Sir, Your obedient Servant.

Charles Wright

P.S. Not being aware of your present address, I am taking the liberty of sending this letter to Sir A. Conan Doyle, asking him to be good enough to forward it to you.

Sherlock Holmes Esq. (1985, 16)

[4.5] Charles Wright is professedly a collector of autographs, and it is his intention to attain Holmes's signature to "add to my collection" (1985, 16). His identification of himself as a collector is significant because it discloses that Holmes's signature is not the only one he wants to possess—he wants the autograph to be placed alongside others (in what form is unknown, although scrapbooks and illustrated volumes were common); these other autographs may have included other public figures, celebrities, and people of note, which depletes the significance of Holmes's autograph as a singular object. Possession is important to him, yet knowing that his request is impossible to fulfill, raises questions about what Wright hoped to achieve and what he did achieve through writing to Holmes.

[4.6] Wright's collecting habits appear to fulfill two of the three types of collecting Susan Pearce identifies: he collects autographs as souvenirs but also in fetishistic way (1992). Pearce argues that souvenirs are "intrinsic parts of a past experience" (1992, 72), which Wright demonstrates when he says: "I have derived very much pleasure from reading your Memoirs, and should very highly value the possession of your famous signature" (1985, 16). The possession of the autograph would be a physical representation of his desire for proximity to a text that is not his own. He is playing out a similar nostalgic desire to that which Lincoln Geraghty argues can be seen at fan conventions: "fans bought things because they meant something, it brought them closer to that very text they were remembering and celebrating" (2014a, 93–94). The act of requesting Holmes's autograph brings Wright closer to the text he enjoys, despite the physical commodity being impossible to obtain. Geraghty refers to tangible commodities; and for Wright, it appears that the closest he can get to Holmes's autograph is an autograph from Conan Doyle. However, the reference to Conan Doyle in the postscript suggests that Wright is aware of the author's role and is writing ironically, in a double-minded state, simultaneously confirming and denying Holmes as a creation of Conan Doyle. As Wright maintains an ironic belief in Holmes, it indicates that only Holmes's signature will do; it is Holmes's signature he wants.

[4.7] One possible motivation for Wright's letter is that he is more concerned with the thrill of the hunt than with the actual acquisition of the autograph. Russell Belk suggests that the hunt is as important to the collector as the object itself; for example, he states that one collector, Mickey, "finds some dilution of her pleasure when she receives nutcrackers as gifts rather than finding them herself" (2001, 93). The joy of collecting comes from tracking down the object and overcoming challenges along the way, reinforcing the satisfaction of possession with feelings of accomplishment. We see this played out in Schooling's article "The Handwriting of Alfred Lord Tennyson," where he describes the difficulty of attaining the sample for the feature and he establishes his superiority

as a collector through overcoming such obstacles. For Wright, by writing his letter to Holmes he is engaging in the hunt, and the rarity of Holmes's signature (because it does not exist) makes the hunt all the more enjoyable.

[4.8] Were Wright able to attain the autograph, it would establish his superiority as a collector, and so Wright's collecting becomes a means to define his identity, which makes his collecting fetishistic. As Pearce says: "the collection plays the crucial role in defining the personality of the collector, who maintains a possessive but worshipful attitude towards his objects" (Pearce 1992, 84). Wright's identity is very much entangled in the way he pursues Holmes's autograph; he seems to want Conan Doyle's affirmation of Holmes's reality and for Conan Doyle to engage in the ironic belief he is exhibiting. This anticipates the behavior of recipients in later years, as fans "increasingly found willing recipients... who were ready to 'play' along and reinforce the security of the fantasy" (Cranfield 2014, 70). Wright is seeking the security of his fantasy and a confirmation that his world view, albeit ironic, is acceptable. By imagining Holmes to be real and pursuing Holmes's autograph in light of that, Wright is connecting himself to the character.

[4.9] There is something especially personal about the request for an autograph in the building of the collector's identity, for as Simon Morgan states: "as handwriting could be seen as both expressive of character and a physical trace of the author's presence, letters and autographs carried an emotional charge far beyond the person to whom they were actually addressed" (2012, 143) and could "act to facilitate real or imagine relationships with politicians and other public figures" (145). Wright is facilitating not only his relationship with the text, but also his imagined relationship with Holmes. Wright's collecting is an exercise in playfulness: he writes the letter with an ironic belief in Holmes, but collecting itself is also an exercise in "indulgence and playfulness" (Belk 2001, 76). Paul Booth defines play as an action that occurs within a structure and is a reaction to rules put in place within that structure; it is through play that humans (and fans) can "enact imaginative freedom" (2015, 16). Wright's pursuit of Holmes's autograph is an acting out of a fantasy; it is a futile effort that will have no physical reward, as Holmes's autograph can never be given. Instead, Wright seeks the reassurance of his fantasy that will allow him to continue to play with the conventions of belief systems and systems of collecting. It may be that Wright's letter acts as an invitation for Conan Doyle to join in the fantasy, and is an homage to Conan Doyle's talent that he has created such a real character.

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## 5. The historical belief in fan pathology

[5.1] Through writing to Holmes, Wright is playfully fantasizing a relationship that is based upon what he has read of Holmes's character; but in doing so, he

appears to reinforce Cranfield's observation that these kinds of letters were seen by contemporaries as "psychological curiosities that largely conformed to the Freudian theory of underdevelopment, or worse, plain imbecility" (2014, 70). However, though there was a popular belief that treating Holmes as real was a regressive characteristic, it is important to bear in mind that Sherlock Holmes fans were not the only group of people to be dismissed in this way. Wright also classifies himself as a collector, a category of society whose members were also subject to much mistrust and judgment for their "underdevelopment" (Joline 1902). Despite collecting being an increasingly more popular pastime, there was a paradoxical treatment of collectors in the press. On the one hand, magazines like *The Strand Magazine* sought to perpetuate the interest in popular things and in commodities, such as celebrity's autographs, but on the other, collectors were often portrayed as pathological or diseased. See, for example, Harry Furniss's article "The Autograph Hunter" for *The Strand Magazine* in 1902, where he calls autograph collecting "autograph fever" and a "disease," yet finds the request for his autograph "flattering" (1902, 542) and presents facsimiles of autographs for viewing. Others also perpetuated the image of collecting as pathological, including collectors themselves, whom Belk reports as using "the medical vocabulary of disease" in order to "justify the self-indulgence of collecting" (2001, 80).

[5.2] The imagery of mental degeneracy and the fears that collectors collected in bad taste recur repeatedly in articles on both collecting generally, and autograph collecting more specifically, which foregrounded the pathology that later came to be seen in academic and popular theorizing of fans more widely. Matt Hills has explored how the cultural identity of the fan is tied up within dichotomies of "us" and "them," which "imply different moral dualisms" (2002, 42) and he argues that "academic practice...typically transforms fandom into an absolute Other" (21). Fans have therefore been subject to readings that sees their behavior as childish or pathological. As Joli Jensen has pointed out, "dark assumptions underlie the two images of fan pathology [obsessed loner and frenzied fan in a crowd], and they haunt the literature on fans and fandom...Fans are seen as displaying symptoms of a wider social dysfunction—modernity—that threatens all of 'us'" (1992, 15–16). Her analysis is of late-20th-century fandom, but there is a striking resemblance to the social commentary surrounding collecting in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

[5.3] Of course, collecting was not limited to personal collections alone, and it must be delineated here that institutional collecting was also on the rise in the late 19th century, and was seen as being a civic benefit. It stemmed from a "conviction of progress towards superior understanding, both created museums and was created by them" (Pearce 1992, 109). Autograph collecting, therefore, represented a very different kind of collecting that was based upon the collecting of things more mundane in their physicality. They were mementoes of personal

history and demonstrated a desire to establish the limits of one's social circle. Collecting is and was a leisure-time activity and was inextricably linked with the rise of the popular press that helped make personal collecting more popular. Pearce argues that "collections lend themselves to make-believe and the construction of fantasies" (51) and those who pursued Sherlock Holmes's autograph did so on a number of levels: they immersed themselves in the world of the text through the ironic belief in Holmes's reality and attempted to "make other times and other places open" (51) to them by collecting the hand of Holmes. Yet they did so in the knowledge that this was not possible and, as such, fans played on the conventions of collecting, pursuing an object for the thrill of the hunt, and they established themselves within a hierarchy of ironic believers, actively demonstrating how far they were willing to go to live out the fantasy.

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## 6. Conclusion

[6.1] Early Sherlock Holmes fans were visible from the moment the stories were published in *The Strand Magazine*. These visible readers provide ample opportunity for academics to explore the ways current fan theory can be retrospectively applied to early example of fans or fan activity, and plotting how fandom developed out of the historical context of the rise in celebrity, a growing commodity culture, and an increased interest in collecting. It is essential to be nuanced and culturally and historically sensitive when applying theory back, for as Lincoln Geraghty has argued: "if fandom and collecting are about formations of the self, then they are also products of the cultural environment—how we are influenced by culture and what parts of culture we take into our own lives" (2014b). This is equally true of those fans and collectors of the 1890s whose culture and motivations would have been greatly different from our modern understanding of celebrity.

[6.2] This case study has attempted to understand how the desire for Sherlock Holmes's autograph developed out of a context of a developing celebrity and collecting culture, as well as the lasting belief in handwriting analysis, which influenced the increased interest in the collecting of the autograph of public figures. The example of Sherlock Holmes presents a particularly unique case in that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's fame was purposefully suppressed by journalists and fans alike in favor of his creation. Letters to Holmes demonstrate an early ironic belief in his reality, which has been explored by other critics like Cranfield and Saler, but whose theory has not yet been applied to the example of autograph collecting. The theoretical and historical emphasis so far has been concentrated on writing, such as pastiches, parodies, and letter writing, giving these types of creative fan activity a greater preeminence. Case studies such as this one demonstrate the greater need to utilize archives in the application of fan theory to historical fandoms. Archives such as the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection,

Richard Lancelyn Green Bequest, Portsmouth; the Sherlock Holmes Collections, University of Minnesota; the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, Toronto; and others that may become available in the future are an invaluable resource in opening up further discussions and investigations.

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# Praxis

## The expanding universe of Sherlockian fandom and archival collections

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[0.1] *Abstract*—Since 1887, in sometimes cosmic fashion, nearly every medium and format has been used in sharing the original 60 Sherlock Holmes adventures along with their pastiche and parodying offspring. Such creative energy is evidence of a literary big bang, and an expanding universe of creative possibilities, many of them now born digital or residing on digital platforms. We trace older and newer Sherlockian enthusiasms; their points of entry; the creative manifestations of these fandoms over time and through various media; and the emerging challenges and opportunities presented to library and archival professionals by the explosive growth of creative works, especially those produced during the last decade. Curatorial actions involving acquisition, preservation, description, and user discovery of these materials are considered alongside the relationship building necessary between curator and fan in acquiring evolving, dynamic new Sherlockian expressions and insights.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Archives; Born digital; Canon; Collection development; Conventions; Film; Libraries; Literary societies; Mass media; Parody; Pastiche; Sherlock Holmes; Social media; Television; Translation

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### 1. Introduction

[1.1] Long ago, on cheaply printed and paperback-bound pages, readers first encountered Sherlock Holmes, along with his friend and confidant, Dr. John H. Watson. Over time, the *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for November 1887—identified as the original space-time singularity for Sherlockian bibliomania—became "a rare collectible and considered the most expensive magazine in the world" (Stock 2012). Since 1887, in cosmic fashion, nearly every medium and format has been used in sharing the original 60 stories in addition to their pastiche and parody offspring. This explosive growth, especially in the past decade, and with a new generation of Holmes fans, presents archival challenges unlike anything seen before by professional librarians, curators, or archivists working in a Sherlockian context (note 1). These challenges are part of a larger, complex agenda facing

information professionals in the 21st century that also includes managing electronic content such as research data (data sets, big data), e-mail, faculty papers, theses, dissertations, portfolios, streaming video, and other creative works. These information management scenarios also require modified work flows, digital/electronic infrastructure, and robust metadata creation. This newly created electronic material—fan fiction, podcasts, videos, artwork—and the people creating it intertwine or fall outside earlier norms. Something like the Grand Game or Great Game may or may not be known to this new generation. New fan communities and cultures move beyond prior models or understandings of literary or scion society structures, bypassing traditional hierarchies. From a curatorial perspective, what we are witnessing is a different ordering of the world, both real and creative. Creative works in this new universe are often anonymous and fugitive; they are generated on an order three to four times greater, and in a much shorter time span, than experienced with traditional Sherlockiana. Ronald B. De Waal's (1994) magisterial bibliography, documenting creative output from 1887 to 1994 and listing nearly 25,000 items, pales in comparison to the 90,000+ works found in Archive of Our Own (AO3; <https://archiveofourown.org/>) concerning Sherlock Holmes and related fandoms, all produced in less than a decade.

[1.2] If Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 1887 Portsmouth draft of *A Study in Scarlet* represents a singularity in space-time from which all things Sherlockian originate, then this literary "big bang" continues to expand from that moment (note 2). Doyle's continued creative output over the four decades after the initial big bang expansion ultimately resulted in distinct, observable bodies such as stars (Father Ronald Knox, Christopher Morley), gas clouds (the Great Game), and galaxies (the Baker Street Irregulars [BSI], the Sherlock Holmes Society of London [SHSL], fandom communities). The mass annihilation of matter/antimatter particles during the initial cooling period postulated in the physical theory corresponds to Moretti's (2000) literary slaughterhouse. Moving ahead in time, if the BSI and SHSL represent galaxies, and if galactic centers contain black holes, then these gravitationally bound systems have attractive (and possibly creative or destructive) capacities. Enthusiast activities in the 19th and 20th centuries orbited around these centers. The London and New York gravitational fields pulled individuals and groups toward core British and American devotee identities. At the same time, they spun satellites and other Sherlockian cosmic debris far and wide in the form of publications and nascent scion societies.

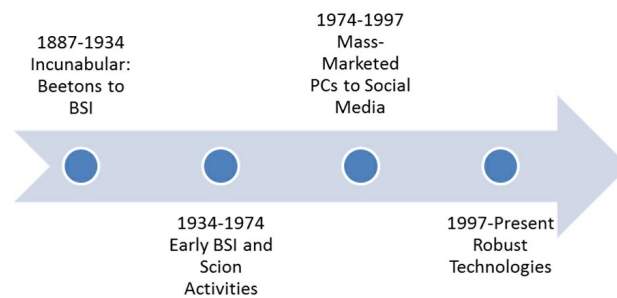
[1.3] Still further ahead in time, another astrophysical model presents itself, one based on the recent discovery of gravitational waves. If the BSI and SHSL represent galactic centers (that is, black holes), and if those massive centers are gradually moving toward each other to the point of merger as one massive center—which may or may not be observationally verified—then will our detectors hear

the sound of the ripple created by this collision? Or has the collision already occurred? Are AO3 or FanFiction.net results of this collision? Or are they something else entirely? Without distorting the metaphor beyond what theoretical physics allows, we have a Holmesian universe that continues to exhibit both creative and destructive energies. Physicists remind us that the big bang "is not an explosion *in space*, but rather an expansion *of space*" (Anderson 2015, 24). For librarians collecting data and observing phenomena in a 21st-century Sherlockian universe, this is both a rewarding and challenging time.

[1.4] After 130 years of creative, expanding Sherlockian energy, we offer observations and commentary from the perspective of librarians responsible for a principal Holmesian repository operating within one of the larger academic research libraries in North America on the challenges and opportunities for preserving, describing, discovering, and collecting the objects that each generation of Sherlockians creates, even as the Sherlockian world continues to expand and evolve. The expansion of this Sherlockian space—this literary big bang and its attendant library/archival challenges—provides our framework. Running through this expansive universe are additional themes, including how librarians/curators attempt to keep ahead of collecting/acquisitions/digitizing processes by anticipating future researcher interests and needs; types of items produced in each era, with special attention to those newly created, born-digital objects residing on the Internet or other digital platforms; and the types of fans/enthusiasts who create the stuff. Our focus is more on product than people, but we cannot forget individual inventiveness.

[1.5] For librarians or collectors observing this expanding universe, a number of progressively emerging markers help delineate areas for acquisition. On the established front are materials generated by Doyle and early Game players. Boundaries for this incunabular period might count 1887 as the genesis, through early Eille Norwood-Hubert Willis films, to the founding of the BSI in 1934. A second era is delineated by early BSI and scion society activities; radio (William Gillette, Edith Meiser); film (Basil Rathbone-Nigel Bruce); and early television (Ronald Howard-Howard Marion Crawford), up to the appearance of *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* by Nicholas Meyer in 1974—a book (and later film) that seemed to reawaken a slumbering Sherlockian community. A third age—one that included Granada Television's Jeremy Brett, David Burke, and Edward Hardwick but also embraced the first mass marketed personal computers, early automated bulletin board systems, CompuServe, AOL, and arguably the first social media site, Six Degrees—extended to 1997. We are now in the fourth epoch, one marked by Guy Ritchie, Steven Moffat, and Mark Gatiss along with robust technologies, seemingly endless debates on the death of print, born-digital creations, and a surprising volume of squabbling between newer fans and older devotees. Cons, cosplay, and ships (relationships) collide with book and paper scribblers. A challenge for

librarians, who have observed the rise and fall of Holmesian enthusiasms before, is to stay above the fray; to observe; to attempt to take in as much as their missions, pocketbooks, or creativity allows; and to plan for an ever-expanding universe (figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Timeline of various eras in an expanding Sherlockian universe. [[View larger image.](#)]

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## 2. Forms of Sherlockian fandom culture

[2.1] Fandom as concept or reality is not new, but the word did not enter the English language until the late 19th or early 20th century. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (<http://www.oed.com/>) pins the first use of the word "fandom" to 1903, but various searches reveal appearances as early as 1895 (Boström, personal communication, 2016). An early example cited by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is a 1903 headline in a *Cincinnati Enquirer* article on American baseball ("By Windtown Tales" 1903). While many early mentions of "fandom" are associated with this sport, use of the word quickly spread to other sports, entertainers, literary characters, radio, movies, and television. A 1958 *Times* article on science fiction noted that one editor calculated "that at least half his British writers have been recruited from 'fandom'" (Our Special Correspondent 1958).

[2.2] On the Sherlockian front, Mattias Boström reported that the word "is not to be found in any of the three first volumes (i.e. 1881–1893)" (personal communication, 2016), referring to the ambitious and extremely useful *Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle in the Newspapers* (Boström and Laffey, 2016). At the bibliographic level of the title, De Waal (1994) recorded the first use of "fandom" as occurring in a 1980 article on "Mystery Fandom" (Bishop 1980). Douglas Greene's 1982 introduction to John Dickson Carr's "Speckled Band" script marks the first appearance of the word on the pages of the *Baker Street Journal*. It reappears again in a 1987 obituary (Lellenberg 1987) and a later BSI reflection by Michael Dirda (2000). Fandom is not a word associated with, or much used by, traditional Sherlockians. Newer entrants to the cult of Mr. Holmes are happy to appropriate this identity ([note 3](#)).

[2.3] Current excitement surrounding Holmes obscures a simple fact: readers become enthusiasts. Victorian Holmesian readers were our protofanatics. Beyond Doyle and his editors, we have no exact idea who first experienced this secular form of *lectio divina* (Latin, divine reading) while paging through *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, *Lippincott's Magazine*, or *The Strand*. But we should be clear: Sherlockian enthusiasm, at its origin, was rooted in printed text and images—at least for the first few years. However, once the first pastiche—or derivative work in another medium—was created, all fields of creative endeavor opened to exploitation. Holmes and his fanatics moved beyond the published page.

[2.4] Newspapers and other accounts provide some examples as to how individuals self-identified (or were identified by others) relative to the Holmes phenomenon during the Victorian-Edwardian era. "Readers" was a commonly used term. In reference to Doyle (which might also apply to Holmes), an 1891 article in the *Birmingham Daily Post* spoke of "a distinct public of his own" ("Advertisements and Notices" 1891). In Liverpool, the *Mercury* exclaimed that "Sherlock Holmes is now a household word" and that "all who want to read one of the most exciting detective stories ever penned" should get their hands on a copy of *A Study in Scarlet* ("Advertisements and Notices" 1892). An 1893 article entitled "The Literature of Crime" in the *Leeds Mercury* described an enthusiastic reader as a "spectator," "ardent admirer," "the evening newspaper reader," "comrades on terms of the most friendly intimacy," and "the most sensitive schoolboy." Clearly these words and phrases reverberate with our current notion of fandom and conventions.

[2.5] People read—on tablets, smartphones, and other devices as well as books. Sherlockians create—fields for their endeavors are boundless; their enthusiasms come from multiple sources, exist in various guises, and commenced concurrently with the original tales. Holmesians also play—the Great Game began early on, and the rules of play are straightforward. First, Holmes and Watson are considered real people, not fictitious characters. Second, Watson (with a few exceptions) is viewed as the author of the original adventures. Conan Doyle is merely the literary agent. The Game's goal, fueled by authorial inconsistencies and a fascination with Victorian-Edwardian England, is to construct robust biographies of Holmes and Watson.

[2.6] As evidence for the first rule—on the reality of Holmes and Watson—enthusiasts point to the index volume of the 14th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (in which Holmes is listed as a real person) and a noticeable lack of an obituary in the paper of record, the *Times* (Smith 1946). Further proof might be found in the large archive of mail, posted to Holmes's 221B address, much of it seeking his assistance, or the Royal Society of Chemistry's 2002 posthumous award to Holmes of an honorary fellowship. Even Library of Congress catalogers

have come round to Holmes's reality. Previous name authority headings listed our consulting detective as "Holmes, Sherlock (Fictitious character)." Now this heading reads, "Holmes, Sherlock" with a birth date given in code as 18540106 (i.e., January 6, 1854). Watson, alas, has yet to receive the same treatment (Library of Congress 2015).

[2.7] Arguments persist on when the Great Game began. Claims to its origins date from as early as 1902 to as late as 1932 and include writings, criticism, and commentary by Ronald Knox, Arthur Maurice, Christopher Morley, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Frank Sidgwick (Lellenberg 2010). By 1946, Sayers could note that the Game had "become a hobby among a select set of jesters" in the United Kingdom and America, and that it "must be played as solemnly as a county cricket match at Lord's; the slightest touch of extravagance or burlesque ruins the atmosphere" (7). By present-day standards and praxis, Sayers's provincial observations no longer hold. Her select set of British and American jesters—primarily white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant men—find themselves supplanted (or at least supplemented) by a globally diverse and critically deft audience, many of them women and/or members of marginalized communities.

[2.8] With the advent of the Great Game came the rise of Sherlockian societies. Peter Blau (2016), doyen of Sherlockian society information, records 925 Sherlockian societies in his most current census. Of these, 416 are active and 509 inactive. Among active societies, 275 are defined by Blau as geographical (192 of these are located in the United States), 18 professional (all American), and 123 "other" (of which 96 are based in the United States). Mother of North American societies is the Baker Street Irregulars, founded in 1934 by New Yorker Christopher Morley. That same year, Holmesians in London founded the Sherlock Holmes Society. Their activities, however, were cut short by World War II. After the war, and coincident with the 1951 Festival of Britain, a new but descendent group emerged, the SHSL. Together, these two societies are major guiding lights in the historic Sherlockian universe, with both claiming global membership.

[2.9] Having earlier noted the origins of the Great Game, BSI, and SHSL, it is not necessary in this context to expound those histories. Sources and stories are well documented by the BSI (Baker Street Irregulars Trust, <http://www.bsitrust.org>), SHSL members (<http://www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/>), the pages of the *Baker Street Journal* and the *Sherlock Holmes Journal*, or in writings by William S. Baring-Gould, Michael Dirda, Jon Lellenberg, and others. Morley's observation that "never has so much been written by so many for so few" or W. T. Rabe's (1958, 61) variation that "never has so much been inferred by so many from so little" confirms New York and London as centers of the Holmesian universe in the 20th century ("Whodunit" 1947). Or does it? Do London and New York still occupy pride of place? Or does the astrophysical theoretical model of the big bang, as

well as observed realities, provide us with an alternative cosmology?

[2.10] Creative and destructive powers are evident when observing formation and decay of Sherlockian societies. Of the 925 organizations tallied by Blau (2016), more than half (55 percent) are inactive. This formation and decay creates an immediate problem for any librarian or collector seeking information on or materials produced by these organizations. Founding dates, membership totals, and other demographic data for many societies are not readily available. A sample ( $n = 144$ , 34.5 percent, confidence interval 6.62, confidence level 95 percent) of the 416 active societies for the year a society was established, based on data acquired from individual organizational Web sites or aggregated (Sherlockian Who's Who, <http://www.sh-whoswho.com/>), reveals a median date of 1987 (average = 1984.8). In other words, roughly half the societies in this sample were founded before 1987 and the other half after. Extrapolating across the entire range of active organizations, we might conclude that approximately half these societies came into being after April 1984, the initial broadcast date of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* starring Jeremy Brett (1984–94).

[2.11] Within conventional Sherlockian culture, women are sometimes marginalized or excluded entirely. A prime example might be found in the relationship between the BSI and the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH). Founded in the late 1960s, ASH "achieved early notoriety when its members picketed the Annual Dinner of the Baker Street Irregulars in protest of the BSI policy of excluding women" (<https://ash-nyc.com/>). Following traditional forms, ASH members communicated poetry and other writings through their journal, *Serpentine Muse*. In 1991, women were finally invited to participate in BSI activities and were invested as members. While some scion societies of the BSI, including early groups formed in the 1940s, exhibited inclusivity from the start, we might think of ASH's welcome into the BSI as a first major expansion of the Sherlockian universe in terms of marginalized groups. This expansion toward greater inclusion should continue—explicitly stated through collection development policies—to correct earlier unperceived or naive biases in the holdings of existing archives that reflects their privileged or exclusive nature.

[2.12] Other marginalized groups or communities—LGBTQA and/or nonwhite, for example—found new, nontraditional ways to create and communicate Holmesian experiences. Innovative technologies and platforms such as blogs, podcasts, social media, fan fiction, and fan art merged with an evolving popular culture/convention milieu to create opportunities for unconventional, extracanonical expression. Failing to find narratives that mirrored their own life experience, emerging fan communities created new expressions of a Sherlockian world. These newer, diverse, and increasingly virtual communities added a vitality sometimes unappreciated or unwelcomed by an older demographic. Destructive,



creative, and expansive capacities evident in our cosmological big bang model played out in print (Philip Shreffler's 2013 "The Elite Devotee Redux" in the revived *Saturday Review of Literature*) and online (Kristina Manente's Baker Street Babes post "The Elite Devotee, or How the Sherlock Fandom Is a Horrible Embarrassment to the Sherlockian World by Phillip Shreffler"; <http://bakerstreetbabes.tumblr.com/post/41481263409/the-elite-devotee-or-how-the-sherlock-fandom-is-a>). The University of Minnesota's Sherlock Holmes Collections is made up of many collections; it reflects, over time, what people collected, what we purchased, or what markets offered. As such, the face or nature of the collection has evolved as fandoms changed over time. As a principal Holmesian archive, for at least the last two decades, we've sought diversity through our collection development policy. This policy states our goal to be comprehensive in documenting Holmes as a cultural icon at all levels and in all formats. In some ways, we've taken our cue from legendary Sherlockian John Bennett Shaw, who is known to have said, "Don't throw it away, send it to me." Similarly, greater attention needs to be paid to and greater use and promotion made of materials produced by marginalized creators in exhibitions, outreach, teaching, and research. Only then will this universe display the kind of inclusivity we desire. Professionally trained librarians and curators working in, listening to, and watching the Holmesian cosmos should aspire to collect these and other works representing an expanding universe; they should document all aspects and cultural expressions without becoming entangled or identified with any particular position, perspective, or intramural squabble.

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### 3. Types of fan works and topics

[3.1] Individually or collectively—in print, online, or as dimensional objects—Game players, Holmesian society members, or members of fandom and online communities generate valuable material, with "value" being variously defined. The Society of American Archivists lists 19 types of value in their glossary (<http://www2.archivists.org/glossary>). Such value-laden associations figure into the calculus of individual or institutional collectors seeking to amass objects corresponding to their own goals or mission.

[3.2] Doyle's friend J. M. Barrie anonymously penned "My Evening with Sherlock Holmes" in 1891. (This is the second documented published pastiche. It is interesting to note that one of Doyle's closest friends jumped on the pastiche bandwagon so soon and that he did so anonymously. Is this a precursor to what we later see with fan fiction?) Within a decade of Holmes's debut in *A Study in Scarlet*, nearly forty pastiches appeared (Barquin and Saint-Joanis 2015; Peschel 2015). In 1894, actor John Webb performed on stage, starring in a play by Charles Rodgers. That same year, the public enjoyed singing along with "The Ghost of Sherlock Holmes," a sheet music selection written by Richard Morton and

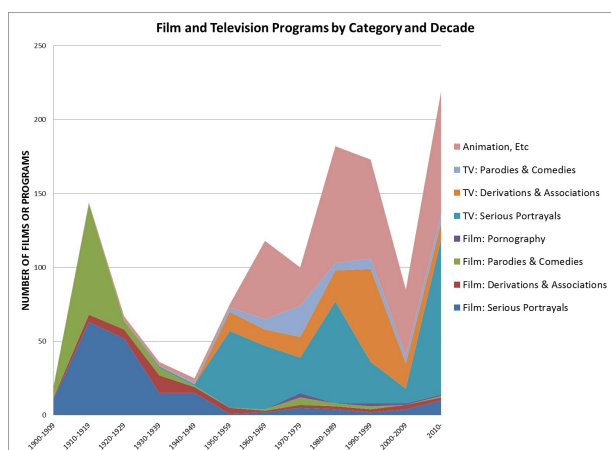




1970–79	5	2	5	3	24	14	21	26	100
1980–89	4	2	2	0	69	21	5	79	182
1990–99	2	2	2	2	28	63	7	67	173
2000–9	4	3	0	1	10	17	5	45	85
2010–	10	2	1	1	105	11	6	83	219
Total	184	44	106	7	333	150	55	365	1,244

*F, film; TV, television; SP, serious portrayals; D&A, derivations and associations; P&C, parodies and comedies. Data from Bergem (2016).*

[3.4] Data from table 1 may be reconfigured as in figure 2. Clearly—with the exception of a burst of film activity in the second decade of the 20th century—there is a marked expansion in creative visual output from the age of television to present online communities. Were we to overlay activities in other media such as publishing, theater, or radio, other patterns might emerge (or converge). There is both a growing market for Holmes and an expanding fan base. The rise of new fandoms associated with performances by Jeremy Brett, Robert Downey Jr., Benedict Cumberbatch, and Jonny Lee Miller joins older enthusiasts' alliances with William Gillette, Eille Norwood, Basil Rathbone, Ronald Howard, and Douglas Wilmer.



**Figure 2.** Film and television programs by category and decade, 1900–2016.  
[[View larger image.](#)]

## 4. Platform types

[4.1] Our earliest Holmesian creators and collectors worked in a paper-based world focused primarily on original canonical works, early pastiches, and parodies. What they knew were books, periodicals, manuscripts, correspondence, illustrations, printed photographs, and other paper ephemera. By the mid-20th century, a wider variety of parodies and pastiches enjoyed a greater number of

platforms for distribution. New media developed for commercial purposes appeared on the market. Items such as phonograph records, transcription recording discs, safety (nonnitrate) films, paper- or plastic-backed recording tape, slides, transparencies, microfilm, and filmstrips gathered on collectors' and library shelves. Each new fandom era generated its own memorabilia. Traditional collectors, unmoved by new fads or technologies, tended to stay with paper. By comparison, enterprising librarians and nontraditional collectors wanted to capture the full range of formats. By the later 20th century, collectors of all stripes shuddered in either joy or frustration as new collectibles in a dizzying array of formats appeared. Corporate strategies, inventiveness, and obsolescence dominated the marketplace while library budgets contracted or struggled to stay even with inflation (Davis 2009). With the arrival of personal computers, the Internet, and cloud-based applications, the landscape grew increasingly complex and more difficult to manage. Collecting what each era generates is an ongoing challenge.

[4.2] De Waal's (1994) bibliography is the most comprehensive for materials produced up to the year 1994 and includes a list of 203 periodical titles. Sixty-three languages, plus braille and shorthand, are represented. Because his 24,703 entries also include memorabilia or three-dimensional objects, another source for numbers on printed material is useful for comparison. A wider look in the bibliographic utility OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) using a keyword search for "Sherlock Holmes" provides some sense of publication history, format, and language. These numbers, although somewhat suspect, include cataloged material held by libraries around the world that participate in the utility, WorldCat (<http://www.worldcat.org/>). OCLC reports 6,163 works of fiction, 8,597 nonfiction works, and 336 biographies (total = 15,096). In terms of audience, the utility reports 1,328 juvenile works and 13,432 nonjuvenile (total = 14,760). The tables and figure in the appendix provide additional perspectives on Holmesian publication.

[4.3] In 1967, librarians from the American Library Association established what is recognized as "the oldest themed or profession oriented" scion society associated with Holmes and the BSI (Sub-Librarian Scion of the Baker Street Irregulars, <http://scholarexchange.furman.edu/sublibrarians/>). The Sub-Librarians maintain a list of collections from 19 libraries related to Doyle or Holmes. Over time, these libraries collectively amassed the most significant, publicly accessible gathering of materials in the world. Many of these libraries are now digitizing portions of their holdings to make them even more accessible (note 4). From a collector's perspective, Randall Stock's (2012) Web site gives a good indication of manuscript and other holdings in private hands (Best of Sherlock Holmes, <http://www.bestofsherlock.com/conan-doyle-manuscripts.htm>). Taken together, De Waal (1994), OCLC, the Sub-Librarians, and Stock (2012) provide an

excellent account of an older, print-driven universe. What none of them takes into account is the creative energy associated with new fandoms and online communities.

[4.4] AO3 contains an informative series, including presentation slides, on fandom statistics related to Holmes (strangelock and destinationtoast 2015). The presentation of these digital works provides a revelatory contrast to the world of print and paper outlined above. According to these data, as of 2015, AO3 hosted approximately 49,400 fan fiction works associated with BBC's *Sherlock* (2010–). A similar number, 43,600, were posted to another site, FanFiction.net (<https://www.fanfiction.net/>). Sherlockian fandoms exist for Fox television's *House* (2004–12), Doyle's canon, Guy Ritchie's movies (2009, 2011), CBS's *Elementary* (2012–), the *Great Mouse Detective* (1986), Granada's *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1984–94), *Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century* (1999–2001), and Laurie R. King's Mary Russell book series (1994–). These fandoms accounted for an additional 11,000 plus fan fiction works. Surprisingly (or not), these 61,000 or so Sherlockian works represent a little over 5 percent of AO3's total content. (By mid-2016, the total number of AO3 works associated with Sherlock Holmes and related fandoms rose to nearly 91,000—further evidence of an expanding universe.)

[4.5] On AO3, the type of fan fiction for BBC's *Sherlock* is categorized as General (30 percent), Teen (31 percent), Mature (14 percent), Explicit (15 percent), or Not Rated (9 percent). More than a third of these works (35 percent) have a word count under 1,000. Ninety percent contain fewer than 10,000 words. About 3 percent contain exactly 221 words. The median length of a BBC *Sherlock* fan fiction work is 1,624 words, while the longest contains a staggering 916,251 words. For comparison, strangelock and destinationtoast (2015) show Doyle's *The Final Problem* weighing in at 7,488 words, while *A Study in Scarlet* comes in at 104,333 words. Crossovers exist between BBC's *Sherlock* and at least a dozen other fandoms, including Doctor Who, Harry Potter, and Star Trek.

[4.6] In many ways, AO3 presents an alternate universe to librarians. In less than a decade, over 90,000 works—three times the number of creative works listed in De Waal (1994) and nearly five times the number accounted by OCLC—have been presented to the world. Astonishingly, this represents just one slice—fan fiction—of an online communities' output. Add to this fan art found on Pinterest, blogs and podcasts posted by the Baker Street Babes, and online products from other online fan communities, and one begins to sense the enormity of it all. Created in digital form and hosted on digital platforms, these works present new opportunities and challenges to librarians charged with collecting, preserving, and making accessible this portion of an ever-expanding Holmesian universe.

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## 5. Challenges for collecting born-digital fandom material

[5.1] A signed, limited edition book published by a small press or scion society is a tangible, collectable item, with certainty in the metadata provided on the title page and value based on the number of copies in circulation and of whose writings are found within. As librarians/curators consider collecting creative works of earlier generations, finding rare, small-print-run books is by far the easiest road. How does an academic repository capture the expressions of the current generation—the born-digital fan fiction not published as limited editions but often written in anonymity for worldwide exposure? In part, the challenge comes by learning new rules. Where the past's Great Game presented solemnities borrowed from the cricket pitch and simple, albeit vetted, stipulations, this new version of the Game (or something entirely beyond the Game) comes with a noticeably different playfulness, one still earnest in spirit but without the traditional boundaries often dictated by editorial mandates, scholarly gatekeepers, or critical mechanisms. Institutionally, this playfulness took multiple forms over the past decade as we went about developing an electronic infrastructure for acquiring, preserving, and making accessible digital materials; forming an electronic records task force; seeking training and certification through the Society of American Archivists Digital Archives Specialist curriculum; and building institutional, media, and data repositories. In many ways, researchers are still looking backward; they remain engaged with earlier works. As curators, we want to draw their attention to newer works and prepare durable, usable discovery infrastructures for future researchers.

[5.2] Works generated by the current generation of fans are unique in that they are easily published on open platforms such as YouTube, Pinterest, or AO3. It is easy to publish, but from a curatorial perspective, it is not as easy to manage. The commercial nature of these platforms, in conjunction with the sometimes bewildering legalese found in terms of service, means that librarians need to pay more attention to rights issues like copyright, fair use, and other intellectual property rights. Overall collecting strategies may remain the same—creator/donor communications or appraisal—but tactics may change or additional actors enter the conversation. In the old days, one didn't have to worry as much about (or attend to) matters related to rights and use. Simple letters of permission often covered any necessary usage. However, given the more recent (and frequent) commodification of information, librarians and curators find themselves attending early and often to rights questions. For materials created on social media platforms, this becomes even more complex, as creators may themselves not have been attendant to rights issues embedded in their work, such as borrowing or use made of other works. Therefore, methodologies and infrastructures designed for acquiring, discovering, or using born-digital materials need to

include and account for additional rights management/safeguards before items will be selected and added to existing collections.

[5.3] Content (as opposed to medium or format) frequently pushes the envelope of what would be considered acceptable material for collecting as defined by generations of librarians or communities. Content and format are sometimes confused, but they are two different facets of a larger discussion of what might be considered acceptable material. Some may think of this in terms of what is appropriate reading material for certain age groups (or the general public), while others might think more in terms of format—for example, whether it is appropriate for libraries or museums to collect and preserve video games. If we are to exercise a curatorial prerogative and capture, preserve, and make accessible only a small portion of the digital universe (because we can't collect it all), there may also be questions around who gets to define what is acceptable (the professionals, the greater community) or the context for these discussions (libraries or the fans).

[5.4] Part of this curatorial prerogative involves including subaltern voices. When groups fail to find stories that reflect their own realities, they write them. The various ships portrayed in Sherlockian fan writings are indicative of this. Fan fiction can be a vehicle for telling stories about relationships and realities unknown or not conceived of in the original Doylean tales. It is the creation of these new realities and stories that makes our specific institutional curatorial mission of collecting and preserving new fandom's stories all the more important. It is what one should expect from a leading Sherlockian repository. Subaltern voices are part of the creative community; we wish to look at the totality of the new Sherlockian fandom in all formats.

[5.5] This naturally led us to consider collecting digital fan-created materials surrounding Sherlock Holmes. Presenting at the Sherlock Seattle Con 2015 confirmed our idea that we needed to develop a plan to capture and archive fan fiction, pastiches, and parodies created by this generation of fans. Charged with the mission of documenting Holmes in popular culture, we would be remiss if we ignored these works merely because they are not printed in traditional formats. Part of the question on how to do this might involve relationships and capacities. Are we, for example, satisfied with the Internet Archive's (<https://archive.org/>) ability to capture Web pages, or do we need to design and build other redundant systems to achieve this goal? Is this kind of collecting appropriate to the missions of individual institutions of higher education? Or would this be better handled at a consortium or regional level?

[5.6] Librarians and curators work with fragile materials every day, yet what is even more fragile are the tapes, CDs, and bits and bytes of electronic material generated and stored digitally. In 2013—building on previous discussions among



cultural memory institutions and professional organizations over the previous decade—conversations surrounding born-digital materials rippled through the special collections/archival communities with the concomitant challenge of creating standards and procedures for acquiring, preserving, and making accessible digital material (Reside and Taylor 2013). As donations began to arrive in digital formats, many of them obsolete, we realized as a local professional community that formal procedures were required to carefully manage what could only be viewed on digital devices. With processes in place at our institution to handle donations in digital formats, we turned our attention to what might be termed fugitive born-digital materials—that is, materials found in new, nontraditional places, including ephemera and substantive works posted online but not immediately offered to the archives.

[5.7] The amount of electronic Sherlockian fan fiction and fan art is staggering when compared, for example, to De Waal's (1994) bibliography. We reflected on ways that items are selected for library acquisition, conscious that informed archival acquisition needs to be more than some generic sense of Web archiving, such as scraping, grabbing, or downloading content without a creator's consent or adequate infrastructure. Often we work with a mediator, such as a dealer or bibliographer, someone who helps us—with catalogs or bibliographies—locate elusive editions that meet our mission to support teaching, research, and outreach. In the same way, contacts need to be made in the world of fan fiction with someone who points us to quality works (<http://sherlockian.net/pastiches/fanfic.html>). Or do we rely on "kudos" to help guide selection? Likewise, creative anonymity is a new challenge, one not faced in traditional acquisition scenarios. How do librarians or archivists contact anonymous creators in order to request their works for acquisition by a library or archive? Again, we looked at how we collect print material as an analogous activity. Sherlockians have their conferences, gatherings, meetings, and publications. However, emerging meeting places for a newer fandom are cons, like Sherlock Seattle, Sherlocked (London), and 221B (Atlanta). These are perfect places to establish new relationships and to discover creators and their works—just as one does in formerly more traditional settings like Holmes or Victorian literary (academic) conferences. Sherlock Seattle 2015 opened our eyes to emerging possibilities and new fandom's energies. We quickly realized that stepping out and beyond traditional venues could potentially yield a trove of material more reflective of evolving interpretations of the canon and characters. Regular, annual participation requires a commitment to be a presence at cons around the globe in order to establish relationships.

[5.8] Selecting materials to archive also presents a challenge. As curators, we continue to seek that balance between professionally informed selection and anticipated future use. Given the exponential output of creativity, we opt to

capture both a sample and select the best from a wide variety of authors, thereby ensuring that all communities are represented in our selections. Some online fandom host sites have filters to sort by self-selected or software-designed rating systems. The former includes a faceted search that includes various ships, which helps tease out representation of various groups. The concern for securing quality work is a real one. A substantial amount of work on AO3 explores the Holmes characters in relationships and situations that range from material appropriate for all audiences to soft porn and erotica. This is where contacts made at various cons can point us to those creators who use Holmes and Watson to tell their communities' stories in all their fullness and variety.

[5.9] Once printed material has been selected for a collection, it is typically sent to a cataloging unit, where existing metadata can be captured and attached to that item via a bar code. Similarly, work from AO3 would be treated as a typescript, processed according to our standards for preserving electronic data, and housed on a server. A creative work joins either the online catalog or archival finding aid and becomes accessible through various access points such as title, creator, subject, and publisher. Our hope is that creators would reveal their real names as well as their online pseudonym or handle; this would help meet the archive's desire to present as complete a record as possible.

[5.10] Questions surrounding anonymity would be discussed before donation. Depending on creators' comfort with sharing their handle or full name, we would present a number of options to accommodate the degree of anonymity they wish to enjoy. We can use the term Anonymous for the Creator field and tuck the handle (and/or real name) away in a suppressed field for administrative use. A timed suppression or restriction of the creator's name of 5, 10, or 15 years might appeal to creators who want to maintain a distance from their works. Should they wish to use their full name in the record, the handle used to sign the original work should be recorded as "also known as."

[5.11] Web sites and posts are fleeting, just as issues of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* or *The Strand* were tossed after a short life on the train or nightstand. What is now seemingly everywhere will not be for long. Capturing what this generation of fans has created is our mission, just as much as it is to archive the newsletters, publications, and works of earlier scion societies, scholars, and authors.

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## 6. Conclusion

[6.1] The 60 canonical Sherlock Holmes stories yielded thousands of derivatives in the form of parodies, pastiches, plays, films, and television shows since the first decade of Holmes's 1887 appearance in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*. Shortly



after the turn of the 20th century, Ronald Knox's espousal of what became the Great Game caught on with a select set and spread through the emerging scion societies, BSI and SHSL. The Game's goal is simple: fill the biographical gaps in the 60 canonical stories abiding by the assumption that Sherlock lives. Likewise, librarians and archivists look to fill bibliographic breaks—those moments, perhaps, when a brief hiatus took Holmes or Watson out of our view, interrupting a larger narrative arc.

[6.2] This Game propels enthusiasts to research, write, and publish their findings. Findings invariably lead to collections, and collections need homes, be they private hands, an archive, or a library. As curators of the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota, we continually examine fandom's sweeping and timeless expanse, each era presenting its own materials, challenges, and opportunities. Creative energies generated by Doyle's "distinct public" continue to expand our Holmesian universe.

[6.3] Each Sherlockian age displays its own marker; each epoch plays well on the media of the time. Print productions, beginning in 1887, mark the genesis, and they find completion in the established literary societies of the 1930s. Through wars and social movements, Holmes's popularity continued by way of societies, radio, television, and print. Meyer's *Seven-Per-Cent Solution* marks a transition between old and new fandoms. Between 1975 and 1997, with the arrival of computers, the Internet, and social media, Holmes found new performance platforms. This in turn led to a revival of Holmes on both big and small screens. From 1998 to the present, film, television, blogs, podcasts, conventions, and other media have fueled a rapidly expanding fan base. Film and television may be points of entry for newer, primarily online communities compared to an older culture that entered this world through print. There are both similarities and differences between traditional Game culture and other emergent fan cultures. Newer fan cultures create biographies or alternative universes, sometimes extracanonial in nature. These new worlds may be foreign to a traditionalist's understanding of the Sherlockian universe or playing the Game. It is this new digital output created by emerging fandoms that we hope to secure for our archive.

[6.4] Collectors and archivists alike are challenged by the broad array of material and formats being generated. OCLC, the bibliographic utility used by libraries across the world, gives us a snapshot of cataloged titles: 15,046 (print, large print, thesis, e-book, microform, and braille) in 88 languages. Yet in the last decade, over 90,000 works have been posted on AO3. While these creations are easily uploaded and accessed online, in our context at Minnesota, we are interested in preserving a representative sample of these works in perpetuity. Some professionals in archival or library communities might question this

approach, arguing that this takes born-digital objects out of context, thus compromising future research integrity and value. But we believe creation of robust metadata within well-developed institutional digital repositories alleviates this concern and allows us to sustain original context. Engaging with new fans found at various cons is a first step in developing relationships with those who can point us to best works; just as with print material, a mediator can be the best solution to aid in selection processes, especially with creators who operate anonymously. The prerogatives of anonymous creators relating to their identities would be discussed before donation. Standards for preserving and making accessible born-digital material are already in place at various research institutions. Items would be cataloged or identified in an archival finding aid with provision for access points such as collection name, title of work, creator (handle), and subject.

[6.5] Out of one story written in 1887 spins an entire universe of titles, formats, and communities with Sherlock Holmes at its center. As a principal Holmesian repository, we collect and curate printed material well. Our new challenge is to meet contemporary and emerging fans associated with recent adaptations and to discover works that reflect their communities and stories. By forming new relationships, gaining trust, and gathering this creative output, we hope to incorporate this part of an expanding universe into our recorded, collective, and cultural memory.

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## 7. Acknowledgments

[7.1] Our thanks go to Lucy Brusica, Lisa Vecoli (aka V1), Lisa Von Drasek (aka V2), and Carol Kussmann, who took time to read drafts and offer comments.

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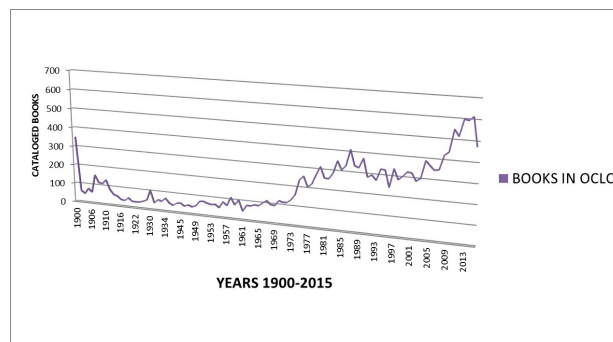
## 8. Notes

1. We use "Sherlockian" and "Holmesian" interchangeably. The term "Sherlockian" is generally used by North Americans; "Holmesian" is often associated with British usage.
2. This article's central metaphor of the big bang refers to the astronomical/cosmological model of the universe and should not be confused with a type of challenge known in online fan communities that involves long fics and accompanying art.
3. John Bennett Shaw used "cult" in the title of a talk delivered in 1975. There can be little doubt that Shaw, given his popularity, delivered this talk a number of times in various venues.

4. Libraries actively collecting Doyleana or Sherlockiana include: Athenaeum of Philadelphia; Bibliothèque Cantonale et Universitaire Lausanne, Switzerland; Birmingham Southern College, Birmingham, Alabama; British Library London, England; Harvard University, Houghton Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington; Marylebone Library, Westminster, England; National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; New York Public Library; Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois; Portsmouth Library Service, Portsmouth, England; Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, Scotland; Toronto Public Library, Toronto, Ontario; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin; and University of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

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## 9. Appendix



**Appendix figure 1.** Sherlockian cataloged books in Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) by date of publication, 1900–2015. [[View larger image.](#)]

**Appendix table 1. OCLC Sherlockian cataloged books by format**

Book Format	Number
Print book	14,476
Large print	208
Thesis/dissertation	116
E-book	111
Microform	83
Braille book	52
Total	15,046

OCLC, Online Computer Library Center.

**Appendix table 2. OCLC Sherlockian cataloged books by language (n = 88)**

Language	Number
Afrikaans	4
Albanian	2

Arabic	31
Armenian	6
Artificial	2
Assamese	5
Asturian	2
Basque	9
Bengali	21
Bokmal (Nor)	1
Breton	1
Bulgarian	7
Burmese	5
Catalan	47
Chinese	482
Choctaw	1
Cornish	1
Croatian	28
Czech	108
Danish	237
Duala	1
Dutch	187
English	7,946
English (Old)	1
Esperanto	5
Estonian	1
Fijian	1
Finnish	80
French	1,108
Frisian	1
Friulian	1
Galician	15
Georgian	1
German	1,269
Greek Ancient	1
Greek (Mod)	34
Gujarati	11
Hebrew	50
Hindi	15
Hungarian	61
Icelandic	8
Indonesian	36
Irish	2
Italian	261
Japanese	459
Korean	102

Lao	1
Latin	1
Latvian	3
Lithuanian	3
Malay	17
Maltese	1
Malayalam	21
Marathi	4
Mongolian	1
Multiple lang	5
Nepali	1
Norwegian	23
Oriya	3
Perian	11
Polish	91
Portuguese	360
Romance	1
Romanian	33
Romansh	9
Russian	130
Serbian	12
Sinhalese	17
Slavey	1
Slovak	8
Slovenian	17
Spanish	575
Swahili	3
Swedish	197
Tajik	1
Tamil	4
Telugu	1
Tetum	1
Thai	50
Turkish	77
Turkish (Ott)	6
Ukrainian	12
Unknown	337
Urdu	9
Uzbek	1
Vietnamese	33
Welsh	4
Yiddish	11
Total	14,753

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# Praxis

## The scholarly rebellion of the early Baker Street Irregulars

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[0.1] *Abstract*—This work provides and analyzes an early institutional history of the pioneering Sherlock Holmes American fan club, the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI). Using the publications and records of these devoted Sherlockians, I track the BSI's development from a speakeasy gathering in 1934 to a national organization by the mid-1940s. This growth was built on a foundation of Victorian nostalgia and playful humor. Yet at the same time the members of the Irregulars took their fandom seriously, producing Sherlockian scholarship and creating an infrastructure of journals, conferences, and credentialing that directly mimicked the academy. They positioned themselves in contrast to prevailing scholarly practices of the period, such as New Criticism. I trace both how their fan practices developed over time and how this conflict with the academy led to many of the BSI's defining characteristics.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Fan community; Fandom; Scion society; Sherlockiana; Sherlock Holmes

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### 1. Introduction

[1.1] In *A Scandal In Bohemia*, Sherlock Holmes tells Watson not to simply "see" but to "observe" (Doyle 1930, 221). Over the years since Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's hero began to appear in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* and *Strand Magazine*, he has captivated fans, scholars, and some who blur the boundaries between these labels. In studying such individuals, who do not fully conform to any one classification, scholars can both strive to further their understanding of the complexity of fandom and observe these individuals as a cultural barometer of their time.

[1.2] The Holmes-focused Baker Street Irregulars (BSI), a fan club founded in 1934, provides a prime example of a pioneering fan-scholar society. The BSI evolved from a lunch club and drinking group that gathered in New York speakeasies. Today, the BSI and its affiliated organizations have hundreds of members across the United States and around the world. As the group grew increasingly regular in their structure and restricted in their membership, their fan culture remained steeped in an ideology of affective scholarship. The Irregulars attempted to bring romance back into the professionalized American intellectual culture of the early and middle 20th century. In doing so, they thumbed their noses at the traditional highbrow culture that Russell Lynes satirized in his 1949 essay "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow," asserting instead that literature should be passionately engaged with and enjoyed. Over the course of the 1940s, they built formal structures to support this belief system. They created a journal of Sherlockian scholarship, sponsored local scion societies throughout the nation, and hosted an annual dinner conference dedicated to Sherlockiana. Through literary magazines, newspapers, and their own publications, the Irregulars actively combated the elitism that precluded the object of their fandom from the highbrow literary



canon. They argued that their work was as worthy as any literary critic, blasting the growing esotericism of contemporary professional scholars and couching their defense in pure aestheticism.

[1.3] The Irregulars' disposition for scholarly romanticism can be traced back to their earliest meetings. In an upstairs room of Christ Cella restaurant on the East Side of New York, they gathered to celebrate the birthday of their hero: the world's first consulting detective, Sherlock Holmes. It was December 1934, Prohibition had just been repealed, and the employees of the speakeasy turned restaurant poured numerous newly legal drinks for their amiable, albeit unconventional, patrons. In reference to Holmes's unofficial force of street-urchin assistants in Doyle's *The Sign of Four* (1890), they had dubbed themselves the Baker Street Irregulars. The Irregulars of this moment were an inchoate group of devotees marked by the peculiarity that, with their tongues tucked firmly in their cheeks, they believed Holmes to be a living, breathing individual. They read his stories as histories written by his partner, John Watson, rather than fictional tales of Doyle's imagination ([note 1](#)). The founder of the group, Christopher Morley, had planned a black tie evening of congenial fellowship for followers of this shared hobby. This dinner, their second official gathering, marked the beginning of many traditions that the Irregulars have maintained with almost perfect consistency for the past 80 years.

[1.4] The Irregulars punctuated the evening with the eccentricities of true aficionados. The room in Christ Cella restaurant was 17 steps up from the ground floor—the same number that led to Holmes and Watson's apartment at 221B Baker Street (Oakley 1976, 236). The menu represented their dedication to Sherlockian authenticity along with their playfulness. Every item, from the predinner "Cocktail Mycroft" to the dessert drink of "Scotch and Gasogene," referred to a character or piece of trivia from the stories. The main course was "Goose Henry Baker," in reference to Doyle's 1892 "Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" ([note 2](#)). Rather than being content with purely eponymous references to the story, one enterprising Irregular allegedly convinced a confused restaurateur to bake a blue sapphire inside the goose (Morley 1993, 276).

[1.5] The main event of this evening, however, was the delivery and discussion of pseudo-academic papers of literary and "historical" criticism on the lives of Sherlock Holmes and his partner, Dr. John Watson. These works engaged with a contemporary body of works in a field known as Sherlockiana that connected a burgeoning community of Holmes devotees across the Atlantic and throughout the United States. Morley and his compatriots debated such questions as whether Holmes had attended Oxford or Cambridge. They questioned the number of women Dr. Watson had married, and they probed into the narrator's inconsistent memory of whether Watson had been shot in the shoulder or the leg. These men, educated at the best British and American universities, had publicly declared that they considered these questions equal to the literary analysis of works by luminaries such as Chaucer or Shakespeare (Davis 1933, 307). In their professional lives, they were publishers, literary critics, radio commentators, industrialists, and doctors. But for many of this group, Sherlockiana would become a second, nearly professional passion that went beyond the casual activities of hobbyists. They were not just fans. Rather, they considered themselves to be expert scholars in a field they thought was equal to any traditional academic pursuit.

[1.6] As Henry Jenkins notes, "There is nothing timeless or unchanging about [fan] culture; fandom originates in response to specific historical conditions" ([1992] 2013, 3). The early Irregulars were no exception. The BSI was created by a distinctive group of journalists and

men of letters in a growing New York literary scene. They represented what Joan Shelley Rubin calls a latter-day "genteel" class of Anglophile men (1992, xx). Nostalgic and bibliophilic, they harkened back to a world where lunches were long, alcohol flowed freely, and witticisms were paramount. In their day jobs, they were stewards of what Lynes calls the "upper-middlebrow"—distilling down the work of the intellectual elite for upper middle-class consumption ([1949] 1976, 152). By night, however, they built the foundation for a fan culture with a paradoxically quasi-academic structure characterized by humor and a dedication to pure literary pleasure. They pushed for affective literary studies built on a foundation of atavistic Victorianism. This sort of scholarship positioned itself in contrast to prevailing methodologies that grew within criticism during the 1930s and 1940s such as the New Criticism. Though the Irregulars were on more than one occasion mocked by critics who deemed their practices as ridiculous, embarrassing, and trivial, they fearlessly defended their belief in the worth of studying Holmes because he belonged to "that higher realism which is the only true romance" (note 3).

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## 2. Justifying fandom: The Irregulars' argument for affective merit

[2.1] At the turn of the century, the academic study of literature was becoming an increasingly serious and professionalized pursuit. As Gerald Graff notes, "The idea that literature could be taught—rather than enjoyed or absorbed in the normal education of gentlefolk—was a novel one" (1987, 1). Given the relative newness of literary studies at the time of the Irregulars' operations, the theories and methodologies of how literature should be taught and studied were still being developed both inside and out of the academy. The process of organizing literature was not at all coherent during the Irregulars' time in college. Nostalgia still existed for the more emotional, nearly religious form of literary appreciation promoted by Victorians of the late 19th century (Graff 1987). The writings of Morley, Vincent Starrett, and other Irregulars subscribe to this tradition of literary appreciation. Their works insist that the emotional impact of literature is a valid indicator of literary value.

[2.2] A contrast between the methodology of the Irregulars and that of the New Critics provides insight into how these Sherlockians' seemingly odd practices and organization amounted to a defense of an older bibliophilic understanding of literary appreciation in the midst of a contemporary realignment of literary studies. The New Critics were a group of mostly Southern American scholars, professors, and writers, most notably John Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, and Robert Penn Warren. The principal tenets of this approach came in divorcing interpretations of art from the historical and social contexts of the artwork's production, as well as from the affective response of the reader. Instead of these less empirical forms of criticism, the New Critics promoted a more scientific approach, known as close reading, steeped in attention to how the formal elements of a work affect its overall themes (note 4). While these scholars cannot be treated as entirely monolithic, their general ideology developed in the mid-1930s and early 1940s and remained a fixture of English departments until the New Criticism's waning in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

[2.3] The Irregulars pushed back against the development of empirical literary scrutiny and a myopic literary canon by providing their own elaborate analysis on the Sherlockian canon in both romantic and imaginative historiography, as well as by adhering to a scholarly format. Sydney Castle Roberts, an Englishman, wrote one of the first major works of Sherlockian studies in 1931, "Doctor Watson" (note 5). Roberts postulated that Miss Violet Merville, from Doyle's "The Illustrious Client" (1924) could be Watson's second wife. His evidence for this

claim was that Watson does not narrate the story immediately after "The Illustrious Client," in which the second Mrs. Watson is introduced. Roberts theorized that Watson, preoccupied with restarting his medical practice, "turned over the task of editing one of the memoirs" (Morley 1993, 31). This argument would not hold up under peer review, yet Roberts acted as a legitimate scholar taking up a historical problem in Watson's narration of true events. Given that Roberts was a Cambridge professor, he gave some scholarly legitimacy to his argument by including detailed citations in his pamphlet.

[2.4] Roberts's use of these strategies in a quasi-academic manner influenced like-minded thinkers in the United States creating an ecosystem of Sherlockian scholars. Roberts expanded his pamphlet into a full biography of Watson in 1931. Inspired by this opus, an American theatre critic from Chicago named Vincent Starrett published *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, a biography of the detective, in 1933. Starrett expressly thanked Roberts in his introduction and his extensive bibliography cited the growing community of Holmes scholar-fans. *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* became a major work in the canon of Sherlockian studies because it provided justification for the intensive study of the "life" of a man whom Starrett only grudgingly admits never lived. To Starrett, the cultural resonance of Holmes was more important than the veracity of his corporeal existence. He instructed skeptics to ask the London post office how many letters had been written to "a man who never lived and a house that never existed" (Starrett 1933, 188). Because of the love and belief that Holmes engendered in his readers, Starrett argued that Holmes's popularity validated sustained research into the gaps in Watson's legendarily faulty memory.

[2.5] The reading methods found in Starrett's and Roberts's biographies map closely onto Jenkins's description of television fan practices. Jenkins defines typical reading practices as "close scrutiny, elaborate exegesis," and "repeated and prolonged re-reading." Fans, he argues, apply these practices to more "disposable texts of mass culture," like the literature of Sherlock Holmes ([1992] 2013, 17). While these practices were similar in spirit to the close reading of the New Critics, the early Irregulars' investigations, such as Robert's questioning of Watson's authorship of "The Adventure of the Three Gables" (1926), were grounded in the extratextual inferences that New Critical close reading shunned. Starrett's erudite background as a theatre critic in Chicago and Roberts's impressive résumé as a Cambridge don meant that these individuals could compellingly apply a pseudo-professionalism to their undertakings—one that seems out of sync with the subject matter. By including complex timelines, footnotes, bibliographies, and references to Doyle's own papers, these fans co-opt the apparatus of scholarship to make an implicit argument for the inclusion of Holmes in the literary canon.

[2.6] This argument of Sherlockian studies as a worthy field became a rallying call for fans devoted to the detective. In December 1933, Elmer Davis gave public credence to the writings of his fellow Sherlockians in the *Saturday Review of Literature*. In his review of Starrett's *Private Life* and Roberts's *Dr. Watson*, Davis argued for the scholarly merit of their discoveries in comparison to "the dreary trivialities of the average PhD thesis" (1933, 307). In contextualizing the histories of Holmes and Watson within the scope of the academy, Davis validated the endeavors of men like Roberts and Starrett. Yet he went even further. By describing the credentialing work of academics as dull and obscure, Davis elevated his own proclivities for Holmes trivia above the average work of professional scholars. Even at this nascent moment in Sherlockian scholarly fandom, Davis's piece emblemized the tension between scholars and fans to which fan studies critic Matt Hills (2002) refers: Hills suggests

that while "wary" of one another, the practices of scholars and intensive, elitist fan societies are not as irreconcilable as either scholars or elite fans might think (18).

[2.7] Davis's protestations fit within this framework. He showed clear contempt for the academy by mocking the topics that he deemed less worthy of such intensive study than Sherlock Holmes. The corollary of this argument was that he urged further scholarly engagement with Holmes. After spending much of his review of Starrett's and Roberts's books begging for more insight into the omissions around the edges in the lives of Holmes and Watson, Davis drove home his point regarding the need for further study:

[2.8] These are all matters that deserve the serious attention of scholars and will undoubtedly receive it. The sort of research worker, who delights in studies of the iota subscript, or the use of prepositions in Chaucer, or an analysis of the duties of the high-school janitor, may feel himself superior to these investigations of the history of Holmes and Watson; actually competent historians should not. (1933, 307)

[2.9] Davis's list of increasingly ridiculous and exaggerated professional studies bemoaned a lack of respect for Holmesian scholarship from the academy. How a study of janitors might be more suitable for academic validation than research into the identity of Watson's second wife seemingly befuddled him.

[2.10] Though his examples were comical, Davis offered an earnest critique of the academic and literary critical elite. The antagonistic tone in this defense of fan culture anticipated the sense of marginalization that fans often experience. The Irregulars were on the receiving end of this condescension in the wake of their December 1934 dinner. Alexander Woollcott wrote an acerbic takedown of the Irregulars in the *New Yorker*. He called their dinner a "befuddled hope" and mocked the Irregulars' early forays into Sherlockian scholarship by placing sardonic quotes around the word "paper" when describing a thesis read by Davis. Perhaps most cruelly, Woollcott implied that William Gillette, the star of Broadway's theatrical Sherlock Holmes and the Irregulars' guest of honor, thought the Irregulars to be ridiculous and was embarrassed to attend (Woollcott 1943, 173). Jenkins begins *Textual Poachers* ([1992] 2013) with William Shatner's famous 1986 *Saturday Night Live* sketch where he suggests *Star Trek* fans should get a life. Just as *Saturday Night Live* used Captain Kirk himself to mock Trekkies, Woollcott used Holmes incarnate to mock the Irregulars.

[2.11] The community built by the Irregulars, however, provided a supportive and rapt audience for Sherlockian scholarship. Davis's argument preceded the establishment of any formal organization, yet in his review of Roberts and Starrett, Davis concluded with the prediction of a community of scholar-fans, whom he asserted need not be traditional historians to study Holmes and Watson. Rather, he quoted Starrett saying that those who will come to write about these men "still live...in a romantic chamber of the heart: in a nostalgic country of the mind: where it is always 1895" (1933, 307). Davis's prediction proved prescient as a community of scholars took shape and produced a glut of Sherlockian studies over the following decade. The pinnacle of these was the collection *Profile by Gaslight* (1944), edited by Edgar Wadsworth Smith. It is a pure document of textual poaching as the Irregulars wrestle with Doyle for control of their hero's history. As Smith wrote in the introduction, "The characters in this book are real persons. Any resemblance to fictional characters, living or dead, is purely accidental" (1944, vii). By playfully presenting themselves as academics studying a true history, the Irregulars attempted to bring a sense

of romance back into an academy that had grown increasingly scientific. The demand for *Profile by Gaslight* was far beyond the 60 or so Baker Street Irregulars centered in New York. It sold nearly 7,000 copies and was renewed for another publication run in 1945 (Lellenberg 1995, 52).

[2.12] Vincent Starrett combated the newer empirical theories of literary analysis directly in his 1944 review of *Profile by Gaslight*. Starrett called this work an example of "higher criticism," invoking the terminology of biblical studies in reverence for what the Irregulars called in their constitution "The Sacred Writings" (Davis 1934, 491). Starrett positioned himself in a literary generalist mold that ascribed literature with the power to evoke "emotions that, a half century earlier, would have been expressed in evangelical Christianity" (Graff 1987, 85). To this point, he described the proper methodology of a literary critic in the eyes of the Irregulars as opposed to modern empiricism, quoting 19th-century classicist A. E. Housman:

[2.13] A textual critic engaged upon his business...is not at all like Newton investigating the motions of the planet; he is much more like a dog hunting for fleas. If a dog hunted for fleas on mathematical principles...basing his researches on statistics of area and population, he would never catch a flea except by accident. They require to be treated as individuals; and every problem, which presents itself to the textual critic, must be regarded as possibly unique. (Starrett 1944)

[2.14] Starrett's review, ironically enough, shares a page with a review of Robert Penn Warren's *Selected Poems, 1923–1943* (1944). Warren and Cleanth Brooks's *Understanding Poetry* (1938) was a key work in systematizing and disseminating the theory and practice of the New Criticism. Despite this ironic proximity, Starrett uses Housman's unpleasant metaphor to imply that the scientific method holds no place within the "scholarly method of Baker Street Irregularity" (Starrett 1944). Instead, these nuggets of insight must be sought intuitively rather than methodically. While the New Critics focused on a work in a contextual vacuum, the Irregulars studied Holmes's stories as though the characters were real historical figures, whose personalities and biographies could help illuminate the texts in which they appeared. Starrett (1944) viewed their extratextual excursions and inferences as valid literary practices; "Watson's postulatory inaccuracy" was comparable to "disputed passages in Shakespeare and Chaucer."

[2.15] This disagreement went beyond the validity of different reading practices to questions of taste and worthiness for literary study. At the time of the BSI's creation in the mid-1930s, there was a deep tension within the American critical community, the result of the growing democratization of literature. John Guillory comments on the New Critical revision of the canon—which celebrated the modern and deprecated the romantic—by arguing that it must be viewed in conflict with "mass culture" (1993, xii). Men such as Morley, Davis, and Starrett were positioned as enablers of a middlebrow culture in America. They worked as cultural decipherers, making high culture palatable to the average consumer. After beginning his career as a writer and publisher, Morley's column in the *Saturday Review*, "The Bowling Green," was so widely read that the Book of the Month Club elected him as a judge. The club's selection committee chose a book every month that was mailed to their subscribers. By 1929, the club had 110,588 subscribers (Rubin 1992, 96). Advertisements for the club said of Morley: "Perhaps he has done more than any other single man to revive the memory of good old books and welcome new ones" (Rubin 1992, 136). Through the reach of the Book of the Month Club, the popularity of his column, and his early successes as a

novelist, Morley was a household name by 1930.

[2.16] He personified Lynes's critique of the upper middlebrow: journalists watering down highbrow culture, "who straddle the fence between highbrow and middlebrow and enjoy their equivocal position" ([1949] 1976, 153). Rubin notes that author and poet Malcolm Cowley in particular scorned Morley for his "whimsy" (1992, 135). He was out of step with the intellectual elite of his moment with his belief that great literature should be enjoyed by all. His first novel, *Parnassus on Wheels* (1917), is the tale of a farmer named Helen McGill. She is the sister of a famed Thoreau-esque intellectual who has moved to the wilderness to write about its glory while Helen takes on true experience: the hard work of tending to the farm. Itching for an adventure, McGill buys a portable bookstore and travels the countryside helping farmers appreciate great literature. There is less condescension in the novel than a true belief that everyone should be exposed to a little Shakespeare in his or her life. The first line of the novel sums up Morley's view of academic elitism as Helen muses, "I wonder if there isn't a lot of bunkum in Higher Education." This attitude came in the midst of a changing intellectual landscape in the United States in which most scholars and critics looked down on Helen McGill's customers as the "hoi polloi" and did not consider Sherlock Holmes to be worthy of the focus men like Morley and the Irregulars were giving him (Lynes [1949] 1976, 157). Critic Clement Greenberg was referring to men like Morley, who treaded the balance between highbrow and middlebrow culture, when he wrote, "It is hard to tell who is serious anymore" (qtd. in Lynes [1949] 1976, 149).

[2.17] Sherlock Holmes in many ways represented the kitschy, commodified mass culture that the New Critics opposed (Guillory 1993, 85). Criticism of detective fiction's place in the canon came explicitly from Marxist critics like Edmund Wilson in the *New Yorker*. Wilson directly lambasted Irregular Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe detective stories (1934–75), calling his work derivative of Doyle, whose work he considered "literature on a humble but not ignoble level" (Lellenberg 1995, 347). Stout responded with typical Irregular humor and academic form to this critique. He delivered a paper at the 1944 BSI dinner, speculating that Holmes's nemesis, Moriarty, had a child named Edmund Wilson (Lellenberg 1995, 347). Morley responded to the criticism of "high minded observers," arguing that "no printed body of modern social history (including Keyserlings, Spenglers, Paretos, and other brows like Dover Cliff) either by purpose or accident contains a richer pandect of the efficient impulses of its age" (1993, 276). Morley stood tall against criticism to proclaim the worthiness of studying Sherlock Holmes because of the feelings it inspired in those who studied it as a "social history."

[2.18] Central to the Irregulars' scholarship was their belief that affective appreciation of literature warrants deep study—a belief directly opposed to the New Critical credo that the reader's feeling about a work is not relevant as a marker of literary importance. Starrett argued, as he had for many years, that he studied the Holmes canon because he loved it. He wrote, "We are all a little mad, perhaps but...behind all this curious activity lies the stupendous legend of Sherlock Holmes, an illusion unique in profane letters," for which, he continued, "I am profoundly grateful for half a century of as good pleasure as the world of print affords" (Starrett 1944). The practice and purpose of analysis itself lay in the pursuit of literary pleasure. Though New Critical scholars W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley would soon disparagingly term emotional impact in literary interpretation the affective fallacy, Starrett and the Irregulars planted their flag as hopeless romantics. Starrett understood that he might be considered "mad" or that others might not appreciate the pleasures that he and

his fellow Irregulars experienced, but he tried to convince his readers in any case.

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### 3. Organizing fandom: The Irregulars become regular

[3.1] Starrett claimed that he saw Holmes in ways that those uninitiated as Irregulars could not understand, an attitude that led to a distinct hierarchy in the Sherlockian world, not unlike that of the academy. When Starrett began his review by arguing that the current Irregular publications were part of a "higher criticism" in Sherlockian studies, he placed the Irregulars above the average consumer of detective fiction. He noted the existence of "close to 100 volumes concerned...with Baker Street's most famous inhabitant," but he considered many of these to be "travesties" (Starrett 1944). Starrett's comments surrounding other Sherlockian research exemplified his belief that not all Sherlockian fandom was created equal. The Irregulars earnestly prized quality in literary criticism of Holmes, leading to the development of much of the infrastructure of Sherlockian studies that would develop over the next decade.

[3.2] Indeed, while the Irregulars mocked the highbrow literary critics who deemed the Holmes oeuvre to be below their standards, they were not overly accepting of those perceived to be below the standards of their Sherlockian academic field. To be a member of the BSI, they thought, meant to hold a level of arcane knowledge about the Holmes canon that surpassed the knowledge a casual Holmes buff might possess—a gatekeeping mentality that sprouted along with the BSI's inception in the early 1930s. In May 1934, Frank Morley created a crossword puzzle with questions from the various Holmes stories. Christopher Morley published his brother's work under the pseudonym Tobias Gregson—a detective from the Holmes stories—in the *Saturday Review of Literature*. Only someone who filled out the crossword puzzle with 100 percent accuracy and then sent it to Morley could be considered for membership in the BSI. Morley called this the original Sherlockian "shibboleth"—again giving a pseudo-religious significance to the Irregulars' pursuits. Morley bragged that fame alone did not earn one membership, as H. G. Wells could not even pass the exam (Morley 1993, 277). Yet Morley didn't match his enthusiasm and charisma for creating the society with the organizational skills required to sustain the early Irregular efforts. Indeed, the group might have dissolved were it not for General Motors-trained industrialist Smith, who catalyzed the Irregulars and Sherlockiana from an inchoate idea into a fully fledged academic organization. After the success of *Profile by Gaslight* in 1944, Smith worked with Morley to create an official voice for the Irregulars to disseminate the increasingly scholarly pursuits of the group: the *Baker Street Journal* (BSJ), a quarterly publication.

[3.3] As editor, Smith positioned the BSJ as a mouthpiece for the organization with high editorial standards. He wrote, "Every effort will be made to maintain a level of scholarship for the quarterly which will hold its circulation to modest figures by assuring the complete indifference of *hoi polloi*" (1945, 205). This foundational credo of the journal implied a level of highbrow exclusivity among the Irregulars akin to that of the literary critical elite. The Irregulars had embraced their esotericism. They intended the journal to operate as a centralized location for Sherlockian scholarship rather than a vehicle for making money. In fact, industrialist Smith positioned financial gain against pure scholarship.

[3.4] This rigor was not born entirely as a counterpoint to highbrows such as the New Critics. The Irregulars—particularly Morley—harkened back to Victorian nostalgia for gentleman's societies, exclusive for the financial and literary elite. In 1923, noted critic and

scholar Carl Van Doran wrote that Morley "has the air of a man reading old books and drinking old wine with old friends before a fire of old wood" (qtd. in Radway 1997, 181). At the time of Van Doran's writing, Morley was only 33 years old—hardly timeworn enough to merit the word "old" four times in one sentence. Yet he radiated Victorianism in his tastes, fashions, and hobbies. Rubin writes that Morley was "an anachronism" and "a symbol of a more gracious earlier era," though she adds that these tendencies at times veered into pretentiousness and "foppishness" (1992, 135). He was famous for his daily lunches—one of his biographies is called *Three Hours for Lunch*—and he had a tendency to declare any gathering of multiple people a club, though few lasted for a second meeting (Oakley 1976). For Morley, the creation of a club served to bring people together and create a sense of closeness through firmly defined borders. This also contributed to the Irregulars' choice of quasi-academic rigor as their particular means of exclusivity.

[3.5] The BSJ helped unify the growing community of Irregular scionists around the country who aspired to be part of this elite community of Sherlockians. Smith announced to the Irregulars that space in the publication would be reserved for local scion societies to report on their activities. Upstart Holmesians from coast to coast who aspired to Irregularity could contribute to the growing archive of "the writings upon the writings," as the Irregulars' commentary came to be known (Smith in Shreffler 1989, 33). Given the journal's precarious business model, Smith warned Irregulars that its success or failure would rest on their willingness to contribute scholarship to the publication (Lellenberg 1995, 205). The quantity of submissions Smith received dispelled these worries. The contents of the BSJ's initial editions attempted to fulfill Smith's high ambitions for the publication. The first 3 years of the BSJ yielded nearly 1,700 pages of Sherlockian criticism and analysis. Upon seeing the initial subscribers' list in 1946, Christopher Morley playfully appropriated Winston Churchill, quipping, "Never has so much been written by so many for so few" (qtd. in Smith in Shreffler 1989, 33). The journal's original series were printed on ornate yellow pages with Victorian lettering (Shreffler 1989, 3). A typical edition hovered around 100 pages of analytical essays, poems, reports from scion societies, and other Sherlockian miscellany. The academic aspirations of the journal's editor come through in these essays. Smith and Starrett intentionally focused on setting a "respectful" and "reverent" tone to their writings so as to avoid the "flippancy" that could come from a casual readership (letter, Edgar Smith to Vincent Starrett, October 25, 1945, in Lellenberg 1991, 210). For this quality, it was determined that the cost for a year's subscription would be \$5. This was a stretch for some less affluent Irregulars and scionists. Clifton Andrew, the founder of the Scandalous Bohemians of Akron, crowd-sourced among local Sherlockians, asking for donations of a dollar to buy a subscription for the Akron public library (Hugh Harrington, "Profile of a Scionist," in Lellenberg 1995, 250).

[3.6] Localized nodes of the Irregular network throughout the country, such as Clifton Andrew's group in Ohio, provided a small but avid audience for Sherlockian scholarship. The creation of these local societies allowed the Irregulars to spread outward, and it also inwardly bolstered their own elite status as fans. An elaborate network burgeoned across the nation, connecting the Scandalous Bohemians of Akron with the Hounds of the Baskerville of Chicago. At their core, fans are networkers (Duffett 2013, 21), and the Irregulars were no exception as they sought to connect with other like-minded Sherlockians to share their various theories, research, and exegesis. Local scions were akin to small university departments—local hotbeds of Sherlockian learning, discussion, and research that all subscribed to an overarching network that mediated the field. One Boston society even



monetized Sherlockiana through essay competitions on scholarly topics concerning Holmes (note 6). While the Irregulars may have started as a friendly outgrowth of a casual lunch club, they helped create a broad network of societies with arduous standards for what it meant to be a qualified Sherlockian.

[3.7] This standard was upheld from coast to coast, reaffirming the authority and expertise of the Irregulars in Sherlockian circles. The Five Orange Pips of Westchester were the first such society, founded in 1935. The Pips prided themselves on their exclusivity and their high standards of Sherlockian knowledge. Founding member Richard W. Clarke remembered that this was due to the "rigid requirements, which face each applicant" ("The Five Orange Pips of Westchester County," in Lellenberg 1990, 134). Indeed, Clarke wrote that "individuals having only a temporary flair for this labor of love are sometimes awed and deterred from further pursuit of our favorite muse" (134). What Clarke described in his requirements for entry were not the characteristics of simple hobbyists or aficionados. Rather, to join the Five Orange Pips, one had to submit to "formidable and lengthy questionnaires," write "theses which must be acceptable to all members," and demonstrate "a fervent and continued literary interest in the stories of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson" (134). Those who could not meet these requirements—despite their love for the subject and genial relationships with members—could not join the club.

[3.8] Under the guidance of Smith over the course of the early and mid-1940s, the Irregulars became increasingly regular. By the late 1940s, the BSI had developed into a quasi-academic society with an official publication, local scion societies, and annual dinners that functioned as conferences bringing together a community of scholars from across the country to share their latest research. Yet the form of their society was ultimately built on the subversive arguments of Starrett and Davis as well as the traditions of earlier Sherlockian scholars by pushing back against what Jenkins calls "the institutional power that values one type of meaning over all others" ([1992] 2013, 33). In pursuit of this struggle with their contemporaries, they created structures that would last far beyond the original founders of the organization—structures that over time must cope with a vastly different Sherlockian landscape than that of 1934.

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## 4. Modernizing fandom: The "romantic chamber of the heart" lives on

[4.1] Holmes is omnipresent in modern culture. He has been portrayed more times in film and television than any other human literary character (note 7). There have been 75 different film and television adaptations of Sherlock Holmes, beating Shakespeare's Hamlet by 48. The most recent flurry includes BBC's *Sherlock* (2010–), CBS's *Elementary* (2012–), and the Sherlock Holmes films (2009, 2010) starring Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law. Even when Holmes is not the focus of the story, the trope of the brilliant detective with a lack of social skills and a more genial partner appears in numerous other incarnations, including HBO's *True Detective* (2013–) and USA's TV shows *Monk* (2002–9) and *Psych* (2006–14). Holmes has been portrayed in mass market formats like film and radio nearly continuously since the early 1930s, and in today's online age, Sherlockian fandom has seen explosive growth.

[4.2] These modern versions of Holmes have birthed a new generation of Sherlockians online with the fervor to match even the most devout Baker Street Irregular. Web sites like

Tumblr provide instant community for fans regardless of their location, socioeconomic status, or gender (Stein and Busse 2012). Blogs give any fans with a theory a venue to espouse their thoughts without the fear of social alienation of high-minded critics. One such blog, *The Baker Street Babes* (<http://bakerstreetbabes.com/>), releases a podcast on all things Holmes, including texts from the Holmes canon as well as BBC's *Sherlock*. These younger Sherlockians are embracing new technologies to broaden the message and the appeal of the Holmes canon. Yet these newcomers have also come to be incorporated within the traditional structures of the Baker Street Irregulars.

[4.3] Along with these rapid changes in the media of fandom, the Irregulars have to some extent modernized. Irregular Andrew Solberg, chair of BSI Trust, which is dedicated to archiving the group's history in Harvard's Houghton Library, states that young Sherlockians, brought in by the television programs, are bringing "fresh viewpoints on the canon." He insists that the Irregulars appreciate all of these modern approaches to Sherlockian fandom, as "it all keeps the memory of the master green" (Solberg 2015). The Irregulars remain dedicated to high-quality scholarship. Their publishing enterprise, BSI Books, releases three to four volumes per year. Yet newer members are encouraged to contribute to the effort through their own media—for example, the leader of the Baker Street Babes, Kristina Manente, received an investiture into the group in January 2015 for her work spreading Sherlockian fandom by podcast. As a result of this more open-minded definition of what comprises a contribution to the field of Sherlockiana, the group is trending toward a slightly younger demographic. Whereas the average Irregular in the early days was invested while he was in his 50s, newer Irregulars are joining in their 20s and 30s (Solberg 2015).

[4.4] The purpose that undergirds the Irregulars, however, remains the same. The Irregulars engage in the scholarly pursuit of intellectual stimulation as a means of aesthetic escape, and they remain steadfast that this is justification enough for their practices and only works to bolster the quality of their scholarship. Solberg (2015) describes the character of the group:

[4.5] The Edgar Smiths of the world, they weren't young. They were grown men. We're all grown people, and we all contend that Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson were real people, so we're starting with our tongues planted firmly in our cheeks. And I think that may be one of the things that make it enjoyable for us, but we're all grown people. And the BSI are, for the most part, accomplished grown people. Doctors and lawyers and teachers and actors and writers, but they're all people who have accomplished stuff in their private lives and also in the Sherlockian world. And it's always been interesting to me that we grown ups are willing to put so much time into the kind of scholarly analysis that we do...It may be that the scholarly analysis is a good...what's the word...you know alternative to what they do in real life on a daily basis. I don't know. It may be that. It's still scholarly; it still meets a need for intellectual curiosity.

[4.6] Though the world has changed since the original Irregulars founded the group, their core principles remain. Solberg (2015) admits that the group is escapist, but he insists that it is also scholarly. To the Irregulars, these are not contradictory, as scholarship comes from the "romantic chamber of the heart" (Davis 1933, 307).

[4.7] By 1949, Christopher Morley recognized that the Irregulars had changed from "a group of a dozen devotees." His tone playfully mournful, he described the nature of the

group: "The scholarly group of Baker Street find themselves swaddled, or saddled, with a publishing business, an annual meeting, and a province of pulp. They have about 30 scionist branches whose letters have to be answered. But not by me" (Morley 1993, 240). The Irregulars had changed. Morley's charisma and Smith's industriousness combined to build a society for Victorian romanticism and nostalgia, couched in formal scholarly packaging. The writings of these Irregulars show that their efforts were part of an often confrontational dialogue with the literary highbrow establishment of their age. The Irregulars pushed back on the rigidity of contemporaneous methodologies, justifying the worth of both their methods as fan-scholars and the media that they adored. Furthermore, this bridging of the gap between fan and scholar created the by product of consciously academic structures that Morley notes in his 1949 description of the group. These outlets provided the Irregulars a venue to both engage with one another in playful scholarly banter and to create internal exclusive hierarchies among themselves. Assessing how these patterns evolve will only provide further room for study as the group modernizes in the online age.

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## 5. Acknowledgment

[5.1] Thanks to my advisor, Stephen Biel, Committee on Degrees in History and Literature, Harvard University.

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## 6. Notes

1. Michael Saler (2012), in one of the Irregulars' few treatments by modern scholarship, argues that many Holmes fans engage in "ironic belief" or "suspended disbelief" (113). This state is what Saler calls a "double minded awareness" that allowed them to engage in their Sherlockian world without "relinquishing their practical reason" (110). Saler's chapter "Clap If You Believe in Sherlock Holmes" is a superb scholarly take on the Irregulars focused on literary fantasy theory using Sherlockian fandom as a case study.
2. "1934 Dinner Menu," December 23, 1934, Baker Street Irregulars' Papers, Container 340, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
3. Felix Morley, "Significance of the Second Stain," Baker Street Irregulars' Papers, Container 306.
4. For an in-depth take on the New Critics and their infusion into American universities, see Graff (1987).
5. Roberts's work here built from an even earlier work, Ronald Knox's "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes," which was presented at Oxford's Gryphon Club in 1911. Knox took up the study of Sherlock Holmes in the style of biblical analysis, providing some of the first deep pseudo-scholarly investigations of many of the questions the Irregulars would come to focus on.
6. The Speckled Band of Boston, founded in 1940, created a tradition of prize competitions for essays that shed light on disputed matters of Sherlockian lore. One such contest in 1945 offered a \$100 war bond to the best "paper elucidating the various difficulties of a scandal in bohemia." Smith concluded his message announcing the competition to the Irregulars with the statement, "It would, of course, be inexcusable if a member of one of the scion organizations were to win this contest." The Irregulars were the preeminent Sherlockian

scholars; they would therefore be expected to "uphold the dignity" of their station in this contest. Despite this hierarchy, the contest served as a democratizing force in the academic community. In these small, remote societies, fans could work on their theories and discuss their opinions among friends. They could then gain affirmation, notoriety, and financial support of their expertise of their work through these contests. See Lellenberg, *Irregular Memories* (1990, 232).

7. "Human" is a key distinction here. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* beats Holmes, with 272 representations (Guinness World Record News 2012).

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# Praxis

## "The florals": Female fans over 50 in the *Sherlock* fandom

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[0.1] *Abstract*—This article uses e-mail interviews with nine female fans to explore what it means to be a fan over the age of 50 of the popular BBC drama *Sherlock* (2010–). The research aims to better understand the role of fandom in later life, in particular how the participants in this study negotiate their perceptions of their subjective age in relation to being a fan in this part of their life course. This study combines theory on cultural gerontology with fan studies and mediatization theory in order to understand the dynamics and processes that guide fans' negotiations of subjective age as well as the role of fan practices and the affordances of social media in these processes. I argue that fandom, as a manifestation of a mediatized culture, augments the relevance of subjective age and informs the way in which participants in middle and later life perceive and negotiate their own subjective age specifically in relation to fandom as youth culture, women's passion, and creativity.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Aging; Benedict Cumberbatch; Fan studies; Gerontology; Mediatization; Sherlock Holmes; Subjective age

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[0.3] Growing older is mainly an ordeal of the imagination—a moral disease, a social pathology—intrinsic to which is the fact that it afflicts women much more than men.

—Susan Sontag, "The Double Standard of Aging" (1972)

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## 1. Introduction

[1.1] Sontag's (1972) observation suggests that growing old has a special set of implications for women and that growing old is much more than a biological process. It is also a sociocultural process that shapes our everyday lives as well as our norms and ideals tied to aging. This study analyzes the intersection between two spaces—subjective age (Montepare 2009; Ward 2010) and fandom (Hills 2002; Sandvoss 2005)—in nine women over the age of 50 who are fans of BBC's *Sherlock* (2010–). I argue that fandom, as a part of a mediatized culture (Hjarvard 2009, 2013; Hepp 2013; Lundby 2009), augments a space in which



subjective age is negotiated in a particular way through social media and fan practices.

[1.2] The BBC TV series *Sherlock* stars Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman in the leading roles of the famous detective Sherlock Holmes and his trusted right-hand man, Dr. John Watson, in a modern interpretation of Arthur Conan Doyle's classic detective stories. The show's fan base has a prevalent place on social media such as Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and a number of dedicated forums. Sherlock fans follow the minutiae of filming new episodes (under the hashtag #setlock), discuss the narrative in great detail, create ancillary texts and artwork, interact with cast and crew, plan meetups, and follow the main actors' every move. While some fan phenomena draw primarily teenage audiences, the Sherlock fandom seems to represent a wide range of age groups. This might be because of the age of the original Arthur Conan Doyle stories, meaning that even older adults will have grown up with the stories in both their literary forms and earlier adaptations for film and television. We might also speculate that the appeal of lead actor Benedict Cumberbatch and his cerebral approach to the role as Sherlock helps draw in more mature audiences. Harrington, Bielby, and Bardo (2011) highlight some of the major socio-demographic changes for recent generations and how these changes may be understood in relation to "their potential impact on fandom" (568). They reflect that with the advent of a dominant media culture over the past half century or more, we now encounter older generations who have been a part of media-based fandoms for the majority of their lives. They grew up with mass media and the rise of celebrity culture as we know it today. As an active member of the *Sherlock* fandom, I was struck by the spread in age groups among fellow fans, and this led to the current study.

[1.3] This article brings together studies on subjective age (Montepare 2009; Kotter-Grühn and Hess 2012; Ward 2010; Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn, Kotter-Grühn, and Smith 2008), cultural gerontology (Gilleard and Higgs 2000), mediatization theory (Lundby 2009; Hjarvard 2009; Hepp 2013), and fan studies (Sandvoss 2005; Harrington and Bielby 2010; Harrington, Bielby, and Bardo 2011). I wish to argue that social media play a role in the way in which fans negotiate and understand their subjective age. Whelehan and Gwynne (2014) argue that contemporary media culture's means of dealing with aging is often prescriptive:

[1.4] Whether negative and predictable or hopelessly positive, depictions of ageing manage to seem prescriptive: the no-longer-young (anyone over 45) dress too young or too old, have given up on a "healthy sex life or are still sexually active and acting disgracefully." The only measurement used to gauge ageing is lack of youth, and the only way to deal with it is to "defy" it and remain provisionally, improbably young. (4)

[1.5] I argue that this is still a predominant mode of understanding aging in fandom. People over a certain age are considered too old to participate in what is often, particularly in popular media, considered predominantly a youth culture. Furthermore, I wish to argue that this prescriptive approach is being changed from within fandom by fans themselves. There nevertheless remains a broad understanding of anything from middle age and up as too old for fandom. This was emphasized in a 2014 interview with *Sherlock* actor Benedict Cumberbatch. Interviewer Aaron Hicklin (2014) sets the scene as follows: "Cumberbatch curses gently under his breath: 'Oh lord, here we go, here we go.' He indicates two middle-aged women in flowery dresses sitting at a table across the room. 'The florals over there,' he says, eyes averted. 'They're giving a bit of a head-turning—it's begun.'"

[1.6] In the interview, the two florals later walk up to Cumberbatch to ask for his autograph, which he politely declines. When the interview came out, it generated a reaction on Twitter from both younger and older fans who found the comment insensitive and hoped that Cumberbatch had been misquoted. Other fans joked about "the florals" as a label, and some fans joked that the fan community should coordinate its presence at Benedict Cumberbatch's performance of *Hamlet* at the Barbican in 2015 so that the entire audience would be wearing floral dresses. To my knowledge, this ambition was not realized. Over the following months, Benedict Cumberbatch's then-fiancée, Sophie Hunter, was seen wearing floral dresses at red carpet events, with the result that the derogatory sentiment that could initially be read into his outburst softened. Maybe being a floral was not so bad after all.

[1.7] Many older fans do still partly subscribe to the prescriptive approach to aging in fandom. Little remarks in their Twitter bios such as "Too old to be here, too old not to care" or "refining grumpy old bag skills" point to an awareness that fan culture is believed to belong to a particular life course and that they are somehow infringing on this as outsiders. Montepare (2009, 42) discusses the issue of subjective age in relation to behavioral development: "Although we know a great deal about some aspects of subjective age (such as its patterns and correlates), our understanding about why individuals perceive their age the way they do and why it changes or differs across the lifespan is more limited." My aim is to offer one perspective on how fandom, here exemplified by *Sherlock* fandom, impacts participants' perceptions and guides their negotiations regarding their own subjective age through their passion and devotion to a media text.

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## 2. Theory: Processes of mediatization and subjective age in fandom

[2.1] This article takes its point of departure from a cross-disciplinary theoretical



outset that combines mediatization theory (Hjarvard 2009), fan studies (Harrington and Bielby 2010; Harrington, Bielby, and Bardo 2011; Sandvoss 2005; Hills 2002), and cultural gerontology (Gilleard and Higgs 2000), with a particular focus on subjective age. This cross-disciplinary approach allows us to understand the complex parameters that shape how fans make sense of their age, their fan commitment, and their fan practices after the age of 50. I focus in particular on how the fans in this study negotiate subjective age in relation to: (1) fandom as a youth culture, (2) their passion for the television series *Sherlock*, and (3) the creative outlet available through their participation in fandom.

[2.2] Mediatization theory (Lundby 2009; Hjarvard 2009, 2013; Hepp 2013) has gained ground in media studies research over the past decade as a theoretical frame that attempts to grasp media's role in sociocultural transformations in a variety of sociocultural contexts from religion to politics. Mediatization is both a historical process that captures media's increasing authority in and saturation of our society, but we can also understand and analyze how processes of mediatization occur on micro and meta levels in specific empirical contexts. In this article, I include mediatization theory because it offers a framework for understanding how fandom, as a cultural space that to a high degree takes place on online social media, becomes a vehicle for transformations of the application and use of subjective age for the participants.

[2.3] Thus far, mediatization theory has not sought to grasp mediatization processes in relation to aging, but an upcoming volume of *Nordicom Review* deals with growing old in an age of mediatization (forthcoming 2017). Hjarvard (2009) discusses transformations of social character in relation to mediatization. He argues that media promotes a soft individualism, indicating that the formation of social character in highly modernized societies is guided by weak social ties enabled by social media networks. This is particularly interesting in relation to fandoms in which social ties are often instigated and developed on social media such as Twitter and Tumblr. While many fans would object to the notion of their online friendships as weak, Hjarvard's thoughts on the changes in social character brought about by changes in the media landscape are a relevant entry point into this discussion. Hjarvard discusses "how mediatization processes affect the relationship between the individual and society, with a particular emphasis on how media enable, structure and change the ways in which individuals acquire normative orientation and enter into social relations with each other" (Hjarvard 2009, 160). In the present article, I focus on this process in relation to the question of age, with particular emphasis on how participants acquire normative orientation when negotiating subjective age in relation to other fans and their nonfandom surroundings.

[2.4] Harrington and Bielby (2014) argue that the marketing of certain popular

culture texts targets subjective age rather than chronological age and that we may understand this tendency as part of the process of restructuring the life course. Their discussion of age and media consumption includes thoughts on tribal marketing: "Tribal marketing focuses on affinity groups that emerge through shared passion" (Harrington, Bielby, and Bardo 2011, 573). This marketing toward affinity groups rather than age-based cohorts reflects tendencies in consumption that are particularly relevant to fandom, in which a wide range of consumers and media users engage in media and popular culture with shared habits and patterns of consumption (see also Maffesoli 1996). On a related note, some fans do in fact describe their fan community as a tribe, underpinning the point of Harrington, Bielby, and Bardo (2011). One 56-year-old fan from Germany reflects, "I felt like, I finally had found my people, my tribe:) I always hated seeing something good with friends and not being able to discuss it afterwards because they were already back in their everyday lives, so to see that amount of thought, analysis, ideas, creative, enthusiasm spent on this show—it was a revelation."

[2.5] This market tendency to place less emphasis on generational indicators and more on other parameters of belonging across generations manifests itself in the social structures of fandom. Cultural gerontologists Gilleard and Higgs (2000) discuss the rise and fall of various (media) brands and technologies, such as the VHS or the home computer, and how the technologies enter into processes of self-care and anti-aging. They discuss media's role in fashion and self-expression and argue that the spread and influence of different media technologies is becoming "a cultural pursuit where age is largely irrelevant" (Gilleard and Higgs 2000, 67). They argue: "These commodified technologies of the self have enabled more and more people—women more than men, although as in many areas of personal care the gender gap is narrowing—to actively resist being defined by their appearance as 'old and grey'" (Gilleard and Higgs 2000, 69). We may regard this as a consequence of a largely mediatized culture. The media, on a broader historical scale in a Western context, is part of a process in which individuals can "actively resist" defining themselves by their chronological age. This tendency, I argue, has become much more prevalent over the past two decades with the advent of social media. On Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and online discussion sites, age becomes irrelevant.

[2.6] Mediatization is a dual process that reflects the juxtaposition of broader societal changes on the one hand and media-centric transformations on the other. Mediatization processes are furthermore context and culture specific. At the intersection of fandom and aging, Harrington, Bielby, and Bardo (2011) sum up the dynamics as follows (without relating them to mediatization processes): "We argue that population aging and restructuring of the life course, on the one hand, and the changing role of media and media fandom in people's lives, on the other

hand, are *dual processes* that *inform and shape* one another" (Harrington, Bielby, and Bardo 2011, 571). This article aims to shed light on this duality through interviews with active fans and to discuss how these processes inform participating fans' negotiations of subjective age.

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### 3. Subjective age and the affordances of online fan culture

[3.1] Several studies within gerontology (Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn, Kotter-Grühn, and Smith 2008; Kotter-Grühn and Hess 2012) have shown that as people age, they tend to feel younger and self-identify as younger. This tendency is part of what is labeled subjective age. These studies connect subjective age to feelings of well-being and concepts such as successful aging. So it is unsurprising that fans over the age of 50 may have a younger subjective age. I am interested in how the fans in this study relate their subjective age to their fan involvement, the aim being to gain a deeper understanding of the processes of negotiating self-perceptions of age and aging in the context of social media and fan participation. My argument is that the cultural environment of fandom and the affordances (Gibson 1979; Petersen 2014) of social media heighten a process in which aging fans use younger subjective age to legitimize their participation on the one hand and use older subjective (and perhaps chronological) age to position themselves within the fan community as other on the other hand. These personal negotiations are connected to the role that fandom plays in participants' lives and its potential for personal growth and development. Studies by Harrington, Bielby, and Bardo (2011) have looked into fandom and the life course. These studies argue that fan practices are to a certain extent structured in relation to age. It is thus relevant to analyze how these age-related structures unfold within this specific group of Sherlock fans.

[3.2] In order to analyze fans' negotiations of subjective age, it is important to call attention to the meaning of subjective age in the context of cultural gerontology. Kotter-Grühn and Hess (2012) define subjective age as "a multidimensional construct assessing facets, such as felt age, perceived age, or desired age" (563). In this sense, we may understand subjective age as a complex process that the fans in this study negotiate on the basis of a range of factors. Furthermore, Montepare (2009) points out that subjective age is anchored both externally and internally: "Subjective age derives from a process of anchoring and adjusting personal age perceptions in light of distal reference points (i.e., internal representations of developmental models) and proximal reference points (i.e., historic, physical, normative, and interpersonal age markers) that guide the age younger and older individuals across the lifespan perceive themselves to be" (Montepare 2009, 42).

[3.3] For this study, I am interested in analyzing the processes in fandom

participation that might inform these markers. What are the historical, physical, normative, and interpersonal markers that fans use, for example, to adjust their self-perceptions of subjective age, and how is this process informed by fans' media use and online identities? Montepare (2009) points out how subjective age, particularly in terms of aging adults identifying as younger, is more complex and multifaceted than a case of elders simply resisting identification as old. Subjective age instead relates to particular reference points and age markers. For adults over the age of 50, this has specific implications when participating in fandom on social media. Montepare does not consider the role of media, but I suggest that media and media use are relevant not only as reference points or age markers but also that they shape how these reference points and age markers enter into these fans' multifaceted negotiations.

[3.4] We thus require an understanding of how media use and media saturation aids in perceptions of participants' own age. Mediatization theory offers insight into this. Hjarvard (2013; Petersen 2014) use Gibson's (1979) concept of affordances as a central concept for understanding mediatization processes. Affordance is a concept from perception psychology that attempts to grasp the imagined and applied uses of objects and nonobjects. Social media have certain affordances, but the ways in which audiences adapt these affordances are complex and are rooted in personal needs and expectations. Fandom in itself is a transformative space. Fandom transforms texts and narratives, but I suggest that these transformations also extend to the people who engage in fandom. Sandvoss (2005) argues for an understanding of fandom as "an extension of self" and that conscious and unconscious processes of self-reflection on the part of fans cause them to perceive the fan object as part of their selves and conversely themselves as part of the external object. I suggest that this also relates to our self-understanding of subjective age. Or rather, for a member of a fandom, the process of negotiating subjective age occurs relative to the norms, ideals, and practices that shape fandom life. This can happen precisely because fandom has authority in participants' lives and because it is closely tied to their understanding of their own identities. Being a fan means doing life in a certain way. It means being passionate. It means being playful. It means being creative and engaged. It means obsession and flailing. All of these perceived affordances of fandom are tied to norms, ideals, and practices, and these are again tied to self-reflections about age and their associated appropriateness. I argue that fandom, as a mediatized cultural practice, is transformative and thus has the potential to shape understandings of subjective age for its participants.

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## 4. Method: Asynchronous e-mail interviews

[4.1] This study is the result of nine asynchronous, in-depth interviews conducted via e-mail (Meho 2006; Ratislavová and Ratislav, 2014) with female

fans aged 53–59. E-mail interviews are asynchronous in nature because they do not require interviewer and interviewee to be online and present at the same time. I chose this method because I was interested in fans within this age group and their use of social media, so it made sense to both find and interview them using digital media.

[4.2] The recruitment request for participants was shared on my personal fandom (*Sherlock*) Twitter account and Tumblr. A few participants were in my own personal network and joined to help me out with this study while others saw my call through our shared network. It is interesting to note that even after years in the same fandom, I did not know the ages of these participants until they direct messaged me to volunteer their participation. The participants in this study come from Canada (1), the United States (1), the United Kingdom (3), Germany (2), the Netherlands (1), and New Zealand (1). The geographical spread was not intentional, but it emphasizes the need for a method that uses media technology, as face-to-face interviews would not have been possible (Ratislavová and Ratislav 2014). Furthermore, I chose this because it was a good way to meet fans on their own turf, behind the screen and in text. The hope was that this would make them more comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences. Ratislavová and Ratislav point out how "some participants also simply prefer to express themselves in writing rather than having to improvise when speaking. So are better able to describe their feelings and express themselves better in writing" (2014, 454). This is even more likely to be the case for fans who are familiar with expressing themselves on Twitter, in Tumblr posts, and so on. Some participants mentioned being introverts and preferring online banter to physical meetups but also how getting to know other people online meant being more confident in participating at fan events. At the end of the interviews, several participants reported that they were sorry to see the interview come to an end. They had enjoyed reflecting on their own fan practice and felt that they had gained deeper insight to themselves. One participant came to a conference presentation of this study, and we were able to discuss the findings after the session.

[4.3] The data collection process began with seven introductory questions for all of the participants. The number of follow-up e-mails varied from one to five, depending on the conversations that I had with each participant and their openness in sharing their thoughts on their lives as fans. Follow-up e-mails included two to four questions per e-mail. As a result, these interviews sometimes took on very different expressions because while some fans engaged heavily in the more political aspects of being a fan, others delved into their personal engagement with fandom, and others again focused more on the connection between fandom and their creative lives. Meho (2006) points out that one of the benefits of e-mail interviews is that it allows several interviews to be conducted at the same time. This meant that I was able to get the interviews started as

interviewees e-mailed me with their interest in participating, and it also meant that I had several participants' answers before replying with follow-up questions. This added to the richness of the replies I received although it also made it increasingly complex to remember who had given a certain reply because all interviews took place simultaneously.

[4.4] One of the limitations of e-mail interviews is that, as Meho (2006) points out, the interviewer "will not be able to read facial expressions and body language, make eye contact, or hear voice tones of the participants" (Meho 2006, 1289). There is no chance to observe the visual and nonverbal cues that are present in conversation. But while this can certainly be a limitation, the e-mail interview also has the potential to offer more insight into personal information. All participants are guaranteed anonymity, so while I know their names and private e-mail addresses, they are listed in this study as "fan," followed by their age and their country. Anonymity is important for many fans because they may be avid readers or writers of fan fiction and do not feel like sharing this with their colleagues, friends, and families. The themes that structure the analysis in this article were the dominant themes in the interviews, although other themes emerged. Especially some of the interviews delved into discussions about fanfiction and sexuality in later life, but for space reasons and because I find that this topic deserves an in-depth analysis on its own, I only touch upon sexuality briefly here in relation to fans' passion. Certainly, there is still much more to study when it comes to mature and older fans.

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## 5. Analysis: Female *Sherlock* fans over 50

[5.1] The e-mail interviews centered on participants' histories with fandom, their current experiences and practices as fans, and their understandings of their own age in relation to these histories and practices. In this article, I focus on three categories that emerged from the material: fandom as youth culture, fandom and passion, and fandom and creativity. The aim is to gain insight into how aging is negotiated within these categories and discuss how these negotiations occur through processes of mediatization. Mediatization places media as central to transformative processes, and I argue that it is relevant for this analysis because the participants themselves place fandom and their media use as central to their lives. The fans in this study knew that they were chosen to participate on the basis of their age. I had specifically requested fans over 50. Age thus became a natural theme in our conversations, and even if a question did not directly prompt reflections on age, some participants offered it anyway. As such, these interviews are clearly shaped by the theme of the study, and the issue of aging is not necessarily as prevalent in fans' daily self-reflections about their personal identity as fans. Here, I am interested in how subjective and chronological age is negotiated in relation to fan practices and media use and the

markers that fans attach to these negotiations.

[5.2] Hjarvard's reflections on the relationship between mediatization and what he labels "soft individualism" are relevant in that they capture changes in social character resulting from the increasing authority of media in our society. For example, Hjarvard (2009, 160) argues how "strong social ties toward family, school, and workplace experience increased competition from weaker social ties enabled through media network." In fandom, this is most certainly the case. One fan expresses how she has her mobile phone with her at all times, and her constant presence online has been observed by her husband, who does not have a mobile phone: "It's only sitting here writing this that makes me think about how that must feel for him" (fan, 54, United Kingdom), she reflects. I argue that the particular affordances of fan practices and online participation shape the way in which these participants reflect upon their own subjective age and change the parameters that inform these reflections.

[5.3] The participants are divided into two almost equal-sized groups: those who have been lifelong fans and gradually moved their fandom activities online as digital media has become more accessible and those who only became participating members in a fandom late in life because it suddenly became visible to them with the presence of social media. One participant reflects upon her image of fans before she joined the *Sherlock* fandom online in her midfifties: "The image I had of 'fans' from the media was of screaming girls at Beatles or Elvis concerts and that didn't appeal to me at all. Now I wonder if the media wasn't already in the business of making fun of fans who were usually portrayed as female and hysterical" (fan, 59, United Kingdom).

[5.4] Even before engaging in fandom, through media portrayals, this fan understood fandom as an activity related to age. She could not identify with this age-specific representation, and it initially kept her away. Now that she is inside fandom, her experiences are different in that she is now able to negotiate a space for participation that reflects her subjective age. She separates herself and her personal fan experience from that of screaming girls behaving hysterically. This is a tendency that dominates the interviews. Participants actively remove themselves from the image of screaming girls. One fan says, "Recently BD [Benedict Cumberbatch] did an event where people could pay to have their photo taken with him. He did it with great grace and charm and everyone had a lovely moment—I would like to have done that but the prospect of a dotty old bag of 53 turning up amongst a queue of young fans doesn't feel right to me!" (fan, 54, United Kingdom).

[5.5] Another fan tells a story about standing on a red carpet for a movie premier and hoping to catch a glimpse of Cumberbatch. In the end, she not only

got to see him, but he came up to her and signed a picture for her. She expresses how she initially felt a little out of place because of a few young screaming girls, but when she looks at YouTube videos of the event (in which the moment is captured) she does not feel all that out of place. For these fans, age becomes a barrier in parts of their fandom, specifically the parts in which their chronological age becomes apparent. We can argue that this reflects a self-understanding of their own age as older than fellow fans, and in the context of fandom the general tendency of people to identify as younger is not that simple.

[5.6] For one fan, being a fan (a concept that she tied to being a geek) addresses how this practice for her involves inherent openness: "Geek culture to me signifies both intelligence and a willingness to be 'other'" (fan, 53, the Netherlands). We may connect this willingness to be other to the question of age and argue that being a fifty-something fan includes a willingness to be an other in a group that consists of others in a broader societal context. We may also understand this age-defined otherness as a result of societal norms toward aging fans. Harrington, Bielby, and Bardo (2011) point out:

[5.7] For example, older fans are held accountable to age norms in ways that younger fans are not (e.g. they are expected to "grow out of" their fandom)...and cognitive changes reshape not only fans' pleasure (e.g. the ability to recognize once-cherished song lyrics or TV characters) but the very ability to access fan texts and communities given increasingly complex media technologies and changes in cognition over time. (570)

[5.8] In the interviews, I found that being online and up to date with both the daily humdrum of fandom and the media technology that provides access is central to the meaning that the interviewees ascribe to their fan participation. We may speculate that fandom in this sense provides a space for feeling younger for this age group through fandom's adaptability to new digital platforms and the use of memes, GIFs, and so on as part of fans' communicative practices (Petersen 2014).

[5.9] In other areas, these fans are more eager to assign a younger perceived age to themselves or, perhaps more accurately, they understand the emotions attached to physical attraction as not being age specific. Montepare (2009, 43) points out how there are both transient and more stable variations in subjective age, and we may argue that physical attraction or sexual desire is a relatively stable variation that informs subjective age. The attraction that these fans feel toward Benedict Cumberbatch in particular is something that comes up in almost all of the interviews and is undoubtedly a central pleasure of fandom for all ages. It is also something that exists in a certain way within a fandom because talking about a physical attraction toward an actor with others changes those feelings.



This occurs because the fan community negotiates what is considered the star's attractive features, and these discussions become part of a practice that is much more about sociability than the initial attraction. As such, physical attraction becomes a space for negotiating subjective age.

[5.10] **Interviewer:** I'm interested in this point you make about on the one hand having that physical attraction to your idol (i.e., Benedict Cumberbatch) and on the other hand having a more maternal/sisterly approach to your affection toward him.

**Fan:** Both emotions find room at the same time. I don't know how old you are but I am sure there are things you won't feel any differently about...than you did when you were 18. (fan, 54, United Kingdom)

[5.11] This fan expresses a duality of emotions toward Benedict Cumberbatch: on the one hand, feelings of protectiveness and almost motherly affection and on the other hand, a pure physical attraction. Most other fans exclusively express feelings of physical attraction. Several of them tie these emotions to age with a similar sentiment: physical attraction does not change with age. I understand these statements from several fans as an indication that their subjective age to a large degree corresponds with their chronological age in the context that they feel that this is an accepted strategy for engaging in fandom. The normative structure that guides the fan community makes space for sexual and physical expressions toward the actors and characters in a way that includes all age groups. This, of course, also happens because the objects of their attraction, Cumberbatch and Freeman, are both in their forties.

[5.12] Montepare (2009, 46) points out that "subjective age is an interesting personal construct in its own right." In the case of these fans, subjective age is constructed in specific ways in relation to the fan practices in which they engage. Participating in fandom involves a dual process in relation to negotiating subjective age for this group of mature fans. Riesman says of the role of media that "the mass media can foster autonomy as well as adjustment, independence from the peer-group as well as conformity to it" (Riesman [1961] 2001). Age, then, becomes an anchor with which participants can make adjustments as autonomous participants relative to their peer group while at the same time conforming to norms and ideals related to age in different ways. This duality become increasingly visible in the context of passion as it is expressed through fandom.

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## 6. Women and fandom as passion in middle age and later life

[6.1] Fandom is my hobby, my passion. It's how I relax and also how I excite myself.

—Fan, 57, United Kingdom

[6.2] This sentiment is prevalent throughout the interviews. Fandom is closely tied to being passionate, being enthusiastic, being excited. It is a space for feeling better and happier. I am interested in how these fans negotiate the passion that they experience through their devotion to the *Sherlock* series in relation to their perceptions about age. Being a fan of *Sherlock* wittingly or unwillingly becomes both a feminist and anti-ageist endeavor because insisting on being passionate about a TV series and its actors as a 50-year-old is sometimes met with skepticism and wonder. One fan in particular is very clear about her feminist standpoint with regards to her own fan practice and the way in which passionate women are often regarded in a societal context: "Ageism is the cause, but also the idea that being fanatically obsessed with a subject equals being a loser is also in the mix. I have asked male friends over the age of 50 if they get the same treatment in their fandoms (football, Marvel, Doctor Who) and they report that they don't" (fan, 57, United Kingdom).

[6.3] Scodari (2014) analyzes a group of fans often identified as Twi-mums: middle-aged women who were fans of the popular book and movie series by Stephenie Meyer, the *Twilight* Saga. Scodari points out how age and gender "coalesce to generate a double standard that constructs midlife women as 'over the hill' and men of similar vintage as 'in their prime'" (Scodari 2014). This is the double standard that Sontag (1972) also identifies, and it is perhaps particularly prevalent when it comes to being passionate in relation to popular culture texts. "I feel quite alone in my love of Sherlock as my family are not interested to the degree that I am. I have however stood my ground when criticised, because I believe women and their interests are often considered frivolous by family members...who take no time to understand why I find Sherlock so compelling" (fan, 56, New Zealand).

[6.4] Within fandom, however, these fans meet others who share their level of passion, and so fans must often defend their level of engagement to their nonfandom surroundings because that kind of engagement is connected to a younger age group. In these cases, identifying as feeling younger can be a helpful strategy. Other fans detect an ambiguity in the reactions that they get from friends and family: "And I've noticed that the few people in my life who know about it [her fandom] seem to almost envy my passion and obsession because it really is something we tend to give up when we leave our teens. But so what? Men have their silly sports obsessions all their lives, why can't I have mine?" (fan, 53, Canada). This fan expresses a sentiment echoed by many in this study: an insistence on being passionate regardless of chronological age. In contrast to the

youthfulness from which these fans distanced themselves in the previous section, being passionate is seen as a youthfulness that is loaded with positivity.

[6.5] Ward (2010) identifies three factors associated with subjective age: personal growth, generativity, and social integration. He argues that these factors are correlated: "In combination...these patterns suggest that persons who are more successful in fulfilling developmental challenges, especially for personal growth, *feel* younger but have older *ideal* age." One fan (59, United Kingdom) describes returning to fandom after a 40-year break when she discovered that fans are now active online. She started rewatching the original show of which she was a fan (*Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, 1964–68), and she elaborates on how she began re-watching it with a friend: "We re-watched several times and then discussed the fact that for each of us the reaction was as though no time had passed, the attraction was just as intense. Further that the reaction was absolutely of a sexual nature, not merely a schoolgirl romantic one. As mature women we could identify what we had not been aware of as pre-adolescent girls" (fan, 59, United Kingdom). Here chronological age or time passing is present on two levels. First, fandom is a set of emotions, an enthusiasm and passion that pulls the interviewee back to how it felt to be a young girl. I understand the comment about how "no time has passed" as a reflection upon how the level of excitement feels the same way it did when the participant was younger. Second, the participant then reflects that as an adult in her late fifties, she is now fully aware that part of the excitement has to do with sexual attraction. On the one hand, being a fan in your fifties is a way of bringing a set of emotions (passion, enthusiasm, etc.) from earlier in life into one's adult life, but on the other hand, she actively attempts to separate herself from the age she was in the past and instead embraces her current life stage. Below, I will return to the point regarding how fandom is closely tied to a creative life for many of the participants, but I will here simply observe that fandom is used as a place for personal growth, and this juxtaposition between feeling younger but embracing an older ideal age seems to be a central tendency. Harrington, Bielby, and Bardo (2011) study changes in affect over time and argue that the process of aging involves increasing attention toward positive affective experiences: "While we tend to think of fandom's role in identity construction in the context of adolescence or adolescent-to-adult transitions, the very process of growing older presents unique challenges to the self and thus transform fandom over time" (577). Thus, the transition between middle age and old age also offers a space for identity constructions in a fan setting. It is interesting to note that none of the participants sees themselves as ceasing to be fans in the future. Instead, several of them mention having more time to participate online once they retire. Others see their physical health as the only potential future limitation for participation. "I am actually able to retire from my job in the next few months. And I haven't told anyone this, but my fan-life is

actually a factor in deciding when to do it" (fan, 53, Canada). This fan went to see the premiere of *The Imitation Game* (starring Benedict Cumberbatch) at the film festival in Toronto in 2014, and, as she explains, the next time she goes to meet Benedict, she will not need to worry about getting up early for work the next day. Her current life stage allows her to devote more time and attention to the aspects of her life about which she is passionate and that bring her feelings of well-being.

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## 7. Creative play for Sherlock fans over 50

[7.1] Several of the participants are engaged in what Fiske (1992) labels textual productivity by writing fan fiction or meta-analysis, drawing fan art, and so on. David Riesman ([1961] 2001) emphasizes how modern societies modify what he labels the era of inner direction, so that pleasure is a sideshow while work is the main show: "To some degree play is marked off from work, linguistically and by special costuming and ceremonials. To some degree work and play are blended, for instances handicraft art applied to articles of daily use or in ceremonials that accompany a socially or economically useful activity (Riesman [1961] 2001, 116). This blend is visible in fan culture in which, for example, fan art and fan fiction are well-established practices (Sandvoss 2005; Hills 2002). For these fans, being a fan is very much about the playfulness and the pleasure that they get from creating. For some of the fans in this study, being creative within a specific social framework is valued as important for constructing their own identities. Sandvoss (2005) describes how fan objects and the fan's sense of self merge and how this tendency is strengthened through textual productivity. "In all these cases fandom becomes an integral part and extension of the fan's self, rather than a mere textual possession" (101). Being creative in a fandom, then, becomes another tool with which to negotiate subjective age.

[7.2] Throughout the interviews, I was struck by the level of productivity in this group of interviewees. One fan tells me how becoming a *Sherlock* fan opened the floodgates to her productivity and creativity after years of not writing: "I finished the first Sherlock book, immediately started the 2nd, but I actually wrote the 3rd even before the 2nd one was done. Now I'm on the 4th one" (fan, 56, United States). Fandom is closely entwined with creative expression for these fans, and following Sandvoss's observations, their creative identity and fan identity blend and become impossible to separate. One fan had her drawing of Benedict Cumberbatch published on the *Guardian's* Web site as part of a collection of fan drawings of the actor. She does not spend as much time drawing as an adult as she did when she was younger but reflects on the experience: "Still it was fun and took me back to when I was a student and had all the time in the world to sit and draw celebrities" (fan, 53, Canada). Again, creativity and passion are believed to belong in our youth, and bringing them back into one's life in middle age or later is, in a way, a means of reconnecting with something youthful. However,

creativity is also connected to feelings of well-being and happiness, which in turn shape the construction of subjective age.

[7.3] Another fan not only connects creativity to her own childhood but also places fandom as a marker for preserving a tradition of individual storytelling: "It seems to me a technological saving of the creative tradition of oral story-telling (even though most it is written, it shares that aspect where each story-teller stamps the material with their own style and even changes it considerably) just as the in-person tradition was nearly dead due to radio, television, films and other diversions of the internet" (fan, 59, United Kingdom). I understand her statements as a way of ascribing to creativity in fandom the value of personal growth as well as inserting this creativity and the role of social media into a broader historical context laden with positivity and meaningfulness. This refers back to one of Ward's (2010) factors associated with subjective age, namely social integration. Ward (2010, 170) argues for the influence of positive developmental assessments: "Thus, older *felt age* can be expected to be more positively (or less negatively) related to well-being if developmental assessments are more positive." One fan expresses what being creative in fandom means to her: "I found I could tackle even my more professional tasks with more fluency simply because of the practice of working outside of its severe limitations. It gives me a respite from the pressures of professional concerns and the joy of creativity. My brain feels happier. I feel proud of what I create and see development in my skills" (fan, 59, United Kingdom). Perhaps we may understand creating art, fan fiction, metatexts, and other kinds of contributions to an online fan community as one way in which fandom supports positive developmental assessments (personal growth, accomplishment, and meaning in life and social integration) and thereby creates a more positive evaluation of felt age for the participants.

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## 8. Conclusion

[8.1] I realize I'm much older than some other fans out there, but it doesn't really seem to be an issue when you're online. Age doesn't really matter.

—Fan, 53, Canada

[8.2] Since fandoms are built on a shared passion and devotion toward an object, other demographic signifiers seem to matter less. Furthermore, the nature of social media and the ability to create an online identity that is one-step removed from one's physical self means that people communicate and develop friendships based on shared interests or shared sense of humor rather than age markers. More interestingly, the nature of fandom and the affordances of social media in conjunction with societal tendencies in the development of social

character augment the importance of subjective aging.

[8.3] For fans over 50, subjective age is negotiated through specific patterns and with specific markers, which have implications for the fans' self-understandings of their own experienced age. Gilleard and Higgs (2009) argue that:

[8.4] Despite being embedded within the general cultural shift toward indeterminacy and flux such age-resisting practices do not eliminate the spectral presence of age. But "age" as a social category no longer occupies the simple foundationalist position it once did. Age exists but it is harder and harder to define what exactly it is and to whom the applies/should be applied. (69)

[8.5] Berger, Berger, and Kellner (1973, 73) discuss the consciousness of the modern individual: "Not only does there seem to be a great objective capacity for transformation of identity in later life, but there is also a subjective awareness and even readiness for such transformations." This observation allows us to consider the notion of a changing subjective self as a process shaped by the readiness to change in modern individuals along with the changing affordances of social media and the structured practices of fandom. Mediatization processes are not linear and thus cannot be understood as media effects (Hjarvard 2013). Mediatization is instead a multifaceted, long-term process that both encompasses media's increasing authority and role in our daily lives and attempts to grasp other societal conditions as indicative of transformative processes.

[8.6] Subjective age is constructed through a myriad of markers and factors within a fan context, ranging from the affordances of social media to the norms and structures within a fan community to the norms of age-appropriate behavior in a broader cultural context to internal markers such as experienced passion or desire. The fans in this study negotiate their subjective age with all of these layers as information markers. The notion of subjective age is sometimes tied to the concept of successful aging (Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn, Kotter-Grühn, and Smith 2008; Kotter-Grühn and Hess 2012). The correlation between chronological age and (younger) subjective age seems to indicate levels of well-being and age adjustment throughout the life span. Certain aspects of fandom—such as the practice of contributing creatively to a community and the opportunity to engage freely in discussion about physical desires and attractions as well as the technological aspects of being at the forefront of popular media culture—are markers that guide fans toward a younger subjective age as well as toward an older but positive felt age. Other aspects, such as outsiders' judgment and norms concerning passion may guide them toward feeling too old (a negative older subjective age), and the fans in this study are constantly negotiating these layers in their participatory practice.

[8.7] This study captures the views of a group of fans in their fifties. As this generation of fans enters into a new life stage, when their children leave home and the fans reach retirement age, it will be interesting to return to this group and see what markers guide their subjective age and how fandom and social media play a role in this part of the life course.

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# Praxis

## Traditional transformations and transmedial affirmations: Blurring the boundaries of Sherlockian fan practices

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[0.1] *Abstract*—The modes of discourse employed by fans of Sherlock Holmes represent both affirmational and transformational impulses. As the fan community has grown and diversified, tensions have arisen between Sherlockians who prefer to utilize traditional frameworks dating back to the early practices of the Baker Street Irregulars in the 1930s and '40s and those who operate primarily in virtual spaces and utilize 21st-century digital platforms as frameworks for their discourse. Because the demographics of affirmational fans tend to align with those of fans preferring traditional frameworks, and conversely, the demographics of transformational fans tend to align with those of fans preferring transmedial frameworks, the styles of engagement often become conflated with the impulses driving the discourse itself. By first examining these tensions and then utilizing case studies that illustrate the four combinations of frameworks and modes of discourse—traditional-affirmational, transmedial-affirmational, traditional-transformational, and transmedial-transformational—I seek to complicate the boundaries that appear to divide the larger Sherlock Holmes fan community. I will demonstrate that the twin fannish impulses to affirm the text and transform it have operated not at odds but in parallel throughout the history of the fandom.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Affirmational; Baker Street Irregulars; Fan community; Sherlock; Sherlock Holmes; Transformational

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## 1. Introduction

[1.1] As I have argued elsewhere, fans' primary mode of engagement with the BBC's *Sherlock* (2010–) is transformational (Polasek 2012). According to *obsession\_inc*, who coined the term in a 2009 Dreamwidth post, this mode is characterized by "laying hands upon the source and twisting it to the fans' own purposes...It tends to spin outward into nutty chaos at the least provocation, and while there are majority opinions vs. minority opinions, it's largely a democracy of taste; everyone has their own shot at declaring what the source material means, and at radically re-interpreting it." Fans who incline toward transformational engagement draw their pleasure from bending and stretching the text beyond the

boundaries established by the original author. Demographically, transformational fans appear to skew young and female, and they are active primarily in virtual spaces. They stand in contrast to the affirmational fans of Sherlock Holmes, represented by those who "play the Grand Game" ([note 1](#)) and who appear to skew older and male. I argue that these fans operate as what Henry Jenkins terms "gatekeepers" for the Holmes franchise (2006, 224); they apply continuous pressure on the ever-evolving Holmes character to keep it within certain boundaries consistent with the rules of their discourse. While I briefly acknowledged that "the Game certainly offers Sherlockians an outlet for transformative engagement" (Polasek 2012, 44), I primarily worked to reinforce the link between the affirmational mode of fan discourse and the traditional print pastiche and pseudoscholarship that dominated the pre-Internet Sherlock Holmes fan communities.

[1.2] While this distinction stands up in its essentials—it is useful in helping us understand some of the complex dynamics that drive different Sherlockian fan communities—I would now like to complicate these boundaries. I will explore not what distinguishes traditional Sherlock Holmes fan engagement from contemporary transmedial discourse, but rather how these communities interact and overlap, with the aim of establishing that much of what appears transgressive from the perspective of the Game is actually merely a continuation of some of the Game's own trends and an application of some of its own drives. I also investigate how the larger fan community perceives the differences that appear to divide it, and how, in particular, these differences may be misunderstood when they are considered to be primarily the result of a divide between affirmational and transformational fan engagement.

[1.3] There are four terms, then, that are germane to this analysis: "traditional," "transmedial," "affirmational," and "transformational." The latter two refer to modes of fan discourse, as noted above. I will use them to describe the processes at work when fans engage with texts of Sherlock Holmes. The former two, "traditional" and "transmedial," reflect the frameworks for expressing various modes of discourse. In simple terms, "affirmational" and "transformational" describe modes of engaging with the narrative text—that is, how one relates to the stories as stories—while "traditional" and "transmedial" describe the frameworks through which one might engage the text as a product, including how one interacts with others with reference to that product.

[1.4] The traditional frameworks for Sherlockian discourse are face-to-face meetings and print publications that have generally undergone some form of editorial review. Transmedial frameworks use primarily digital platforms and virtual spaces to allow cross-platform, largely unmediated fan discourse. It is important to note the connotations of the term "traditional": it is the framework

that is long-standing, orthodox, and concerned with ritual and habit. I do not mean to imply that the traditional framework is "normal" or "correct," and thus that the transmedial framework is "abnormal" or "incorrect." They are equally legitimate. Because traditional frameworks have historically been preferred by older and male fans, while transmedial frameworks are dominated by younger and female fans, the frameworks are often conflated with the modes of discourse: traditional is conflated with affirmational and transmedial is conflated with transformational. In this article, I hope to clarify all four of these labels and demonstrate why it is important to distinguish between them. Doing so will enable us to explore links and overlaps between the frameworks and the modes of discourse, and will help show that transformational fan discourse is not new, nor is it contingent on transmediality. In order to recognize the value of exploring these links, however, it is first important to acknowledge the tension that exists between factions of the larger Sherlock Holmes fan community.

[1.5] I will first demonstrate that this tension is misunderstood as dividing the community along the perceived boundary between affirmational and transformational fan discourse; in fact, it is at least equally due to the divide between traditional and transmedial engagement. This is a component of my larger argument that both traditional and transmedial platforms have a history of enabling both modes of discourse. Relocating this tension not only helps us understand how the fan community operates, both as a whole and as competing factions, it also reminds us to distinguish between modes of discourse and frameworks for those discourses.

## 2. "The right way": Of traditional and transmedial tensions

[2.1] In 1934, author and journalist Christopher Morley founded the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI), which would eventually become the world's most exclusive Sherlock Holmes society. The Grand Game predates the BSI; its precepts are generally considered to have been unofficially established by Ronald Knox in a lecture he gave in 1911. However, the Irregulars function as a bastion for affirmational fan discourse, and set the rules of the Game. The BSI's associated publication, the *Baker Street Journal* (BSJ), was founded in 1946, and while not every article in the BSJ is in the style of the Game, thousands of articles utilizing this mode of discourse have appeared in its pages over the last seven decades. This affirmational discourse is primarily expressed through articles that attempt to fill in the gaps in the narratives without challenging the "facts" as established by Conan Doyle. Because the BSJ is a print journal that publishes only five issues a year (four quarterly issues containing a variety of articles and a themed Christmas annual), is generated through traditional means (articles are submitted to—or solicited by—an editor who controls the journal's content), and considers traditional Sherlockians such as members of the BSI and associated

scion societies its primary readership, it is undoubtedly a traditional platform. And because it has published so much material in the style of the Game, it is an archive of affirmational Sherlockian fan discourse. Untangling the mode of discourse from the framework is difficult, and it is not always clear whether criticisms leveled against the BSJ by the transmedial segment of the fan community are aimed at its content or its format.

[2.2] In recent years the BSJ, under the guidance of its current editor, Steven Rothman, has striven to be more aware and inclusive of Sherlockians who do not operate within the traditional framework. In particular, it has sought more young female voices from the transmedial community to balance its generally older and male contributors. It has also welcomed articles on topics that the affirmational fan community sees as transgressive. For instance, Christopher Redmond's "Intimate Converse in Baker Street," published in the winter 2014 issue, responds to the question "Were Holmes and Watson secretly gay lovers?" by analyzing instances in the canon (Conan Doyle's original Sherlock Holmes stories) that might support such a reading. Following this, Redmond explores the history of examining romance between Holmes and Watson, from Larry Townsend's 1971 *The Sexual Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, which Redmond argues is the first explicit argument in print for reading Holmes and Watson as lovers, through to the virtual explosion of slash fan fiction in recent years.

[2.3] His article, operating liminally by considering a topic generally rooted in transformational discourse in a primarily affirmational style and in a venue that serves a primarily affirmational readership, represents one method for challenging the boundary between these modes of discourse. Interestingly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, neither transformational nor affirmational fans responded entirely positively to this blurring of modes of engagement. Some affirmationally grounded readers were confused and even slightly offended by what they perceived as an attempt to normalize a radical reading of the characters. Meanwhile, members of the community of Sherlockians who support and promote transformational gay readings of the characters found Redmond's treatment of the subject "offensive" in its simplification of the impetus behind explicit slash fiction and its ultimate revalidation of heteronormative readings (Chap 2016).

[2.4] While it may at first seem that it was Redmond's entry into transformational discourse that prompted these different negative reactions—annoyance either that he attempted it at all, or that he failed to take it far enough—they may be due more to the tension between the expectations of discourse in the traditional framework and the boundaries set by that framework. In this instance, the discourse frustrated both fans who operate primarily in traditional frameworks and those who operate primarily in transmedial ones. The former considered Redmond's work inappropriate for their highly policed platform. The

latter, accustomed to a much larger and freer arena, reacted against the limitations of the traditional framework, which they felt enabled a reductionist argument about an expansive and culturally important subject.

[2.5] This division between traditionalists and nontraditionalists is further illustrated by a recent heated debate surrounding a genderqueer Sherlockian's public break with the BSJ. Sherlockian Basil Chap, who uses the pseudonym "Ghostbees" online, was an illustrator for the BSJ for over three years. "I wanted to be more visible as a non-binary artist and open about things that matter to me," Chap explains, and therefore asked Steven Rothman, the journal's editor, for a revised contributor's note that would include both the adjective "genderqueer" and the nongendered singular pronoun "they," which Chap (2016) prefers. In an effort to be accepting of the growing LGBTQ+ Sherlockian community without confusing the traditionalists with singular "they," Rothman offered them a compromise wording that retained "genderqueer" but eliminated the need for a pronoun of any kind (Rothman, pers. comm., February 24, 2016). Interpreting this as an offensive "refus[al] to use my correct pronouns," Chap severed ties with the BSJ, posting a seven-sentence summary of their reasons on their Tumblr page, which soon had nearly 600 notes ([note 2](#)) and spawned pointed responses across Twitter and Facebook as well. To further complicate the issue, Rothman was not trying to police his traditional platform for the sake of traditional readers; rather, he wanted to avoid introducing a complicated topic—the definition of "genderqueer" and the use of nongendered pronouns—into a space that would not allow for consciousness-raising conversation. Though he elected not to make a public statement to avoid fanning the flames of the controversy, his aim—to "challenge them, yes! But not confuse"—was clear from personal correspondence (Rothman, pers. comm., February 24, 2016). As with Redmond's article, neither side was satisfied, and the divide between traditional and transmedial Sherlockians grew wider as a consequence.

[2.6] The issue of uncloseted queer representation in Sherlockian fandom is large and complex; my purpose in pointing to this specific clash is less to address it than to acknowledge the distinct sides of the debate. Those who favored traditional frameworks for fan discourse lined up in support of the BSJ. On the other side, those who primarily functioned within the transmedial fan community reacted with anger and an impulse to further distinguish themselves from traditional Sherlockiana. This is certainly not the first controversy that has divided the larger Sherlock Holmes fan community along the boundary between traditional fan engagement and largely transmedial fan engagement, which is perceived to be more transgressive. What is notable is that this specific conflict was not related to interpretations or manipulations of the text, as the debate surrounding Chris Redmond's BSJ article was. Many responses to the controversy not only addressed the immediate issue of Chap's contributor's note, but also

defended or attacked the BSJ's privileged position as a framework for fan discourse. It is therefore an even starker illustration of the argument that the traditional/transmedial axis is as fundamental to the divides in the larger fan community as the affirmational/transformational axis.

[2.7] When Henry Jenkins described "fan critics" in *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*, he acknowledged these layers as roughly analogous to structures of academic criticism:

[2.8] While the demand for novel readings allows for different meanings to be attached to a given artwork, there are conventional ways of producing interpretations shared by most, if not all, scholars. A certain common ground, a set of shared assumptions, interpretive and rhetorical strategies, inferential moves, semantic fields and metaphors, must exist as preconditions for meaningful debate over specific interpretations. (1992, 89)

[2.9] In order for fans to judge the quality and legitimacy of an interpretation, it must be presented within a mutually agreeable framework, according to Jenkins. In this 1992 volume, he is describing the systems and functions of fandom within the context of what we would now call affirmational engagement, in which fans are "responsive to...expectations about what narratives are 'appropriate' for fannish interest, [and] what interpretations are 'legitimate,'" and in which "an individual's socialization into fandom often requires learning 'the right way' to read as a fan, learning how to employ and comprehend the community's particular interpretive conventions" (88, 89).

[2.10] The moments of tension between traditional Sherlockian communities and the transmedial Sherlockian fandom seem to center on readings of Sherlock Holmes that traditional fans perceive as radical or transgressive, and these moments therefore appear to result from differences in how affirmational and transformational discourses operate with respect to the text. I contend that it is not the transmedial fans' interpretations but rather their operation beyond the traditional framework, which represents many decades of established conventions of interpretation, that sits at the heart of this tension. It is a reaction not to transformational discourse but to transmediality that is at the heart of the divide. In fact, the traditional Sherlockian framework of the Game has legitimized many interpretations that attempt to "[twist the source] to the fans' own purposes" and thus meet obsession\_inc's definition of transformational discourse. By exploring a few such interpretations and the impulses behind them, I hope to draw useful parallels between traditional Sherlockian frameworks for discourse and the transmedial Sherlock Holmes fandom, and to challenge the assumption that the traditional Sherlockian framework always goes hand in hand with affirmational discourse, while transmedial engagement is by definition transformational.

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### 3. Fan identification and mapping self-identity

[3.1] In her chapter "Bachies, Bardies, Trekkies, and Sherlockians" in the 2007 collection *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, Roberta Pearson considers the distinction between fans and mere enthusiasts—those who enjoy a hobby but do not rise to the level of "fan." She paraphrases William Uricchio in suggesting that "non-fans...engage in aesthetic reflection or are temporarily moved by cultural texts but that fans...incorporate the cultural texts as part of their self-identity, often going on to build social networks on the basis of shared fandoms," and agrees that "centrality to identity and social networks handily distinguish [her own] fandoms from [her] enthusiasms" (Pearson 2007, 102). Certainly, the label of "Sherlock Holmes fan" or "Sherlockian" informs an individual's identity, as any association with fandom does; the greater one's emotional investment in the product and the social networks around it, the greater the proportion of one's identity that is informed by the investment (note 3).

[3.2] This process is self-perpetuating; Michael Saler (2012) notes in his extensive consideration of virtual world building as it relates to Sherlock Holmes that "individuals began to spend a great deal of time residing in imaginary worlds, heightening their emotional investment in them by participating in collective exercises of world building. In so doing, they...[used] references from the original text to reconcile its contradictions, fill in gaps, extrapolate possibilities, and imagine prequels and sequels" (25). He describes, in essence, the Game, which takes advantage of what he calls "the absence effect"—the conspicuously incomplete nature of the Holmes canon, which frequently references tantalizing "unpublished events that gave the world additional depth and mystery" (33). As he explains, this process both expands the available material related to Holmes through extrapolation, and demands minute familiarity with the Sherlock Holmes canon; such familiarity breeds emotional investment, which, in turn, sends the fan back to reengage with the expanded virtual literary world and expand it further. This cycle, Saler suggests, may lead the fan to seek "a more immersive and prolonged experience...through societies, fanzines, and websites in which the world is continuously elaborated by a community...enabling individuals to dwell in it communally and relate it to actual life" (27).

[3.3] Though their works are related, Pearson and Saler are actually defining inverse relationships between fannish participation and self-identity: Pearson argues that "fan" is a label utilized by individuals to build and understand their own identities, while Saler describes the reflection of participatory culture outward onto reality. This link to identity operates in both directions. In one direction is the individual's identification with the text and its associated fan products and networks. This identification might manifest in labeling oneself a Sherlockian and



participating in events, discussions, and relationships derived from mutual interest in the text. It takes the text as a starting point and incorporates it and its associated fan practices into one's definition of self. In the other direction, the fan will manipulate and interpret the text to reflect their own interests, outlook, historical-cultural context, and perceptions of reality. This impulse might manifest in, for example, a gay fan writing fan fiction in which Holmes and Watson are lovers. It takes the fan's personal identity as the starting point and reimagines the text to reflect the self. Both impulses are essential to the definition of a "fan." Arguably, the distinction between these two impetuses to fannish engagement should be central to the distinction between affirmational and transformational fan practices, with the former reflecting the affirmational impulse, and the latter reflecting the transformational impulse.

[3.4] If we accept this distinction, we find that both the affirmational and transformational impulses are soundly woven through traditional Sherlockian publications dating back at least to the beginnings of the Baker Street Irregulars, as well as through contemporary transmedial fan discourse. What follows is a series of case studies juxtaposing an example from each of the four intersections of traditional and transmedial frameworks with affirmational and transformational modes of discourse to illustrate that the tensions between the factions of Sherlockian fan communities ignore some of their fundamental similarities. In choosing traditional Sherlockian material I have deliberately drawn on the early years of the Baker Street Irregulars, the first generation of organized Sherlockian publication, in order to highlight the early appearance of both affirmational and transformational discourse in the fan community. Because the transmedial fan community is so disparate, my case studies from this arena have been selected, as far as possible, to reflect large trends, to avoid the danger of drawing conclusions on the basis of idiosyncratic data.

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## 4. "We are Sherlockians": The impulse of affirmation

[4.1] In 1944, Baker Street Irregular Edgar W. Smith published a collection titled *Profile by Gaslight: An Irregular Reader about the Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*. Its success, according to the noted Sherlockian, BSI historian, and former BSJ editor Phillip A. Shreffler, "demonstrated that there was a substantial readership to whom the well-executed Sherlockian game truly mattered" (1999, 390). In considering the origins and early years of the BSJ, Shreffler quotes Smith:

[4.2] When the possibility of publishing a journal of Sherlockiana was first discussed, back in 1945, there was much argument as to how often, and with what number of pages, such a periodical might be made to appear. Quite a few desirable items had been crowded out of *Profile*

*by Gaslight*, when it came out in 1944, and these, it was felt, could form a nucleus around which an irregular annual, or even semi-annual, could safely be built. (quoted in Shreffler 1999, 388)

[4.3] In 1946, Smith became the first editor of the BSJ. Like much of the material published in the BSJ, the majority of the material in *Profile by Gaslight* exemplifies, in both its conceit and its contents, the affirmational impulse behind the Grand Game.

[4.4] The Game operates both seriously and ironically: practitioners meticulously apply themselves to the challenge of reconciling inconsistencies within, and extrapolating additional information from, the 60 stories that make up the Sherlock Holmes canon. At the same time, tongue-in-cheek irony is at the center of the Game. Practitioners engage what Michael Saler (2012) calls "the ironic imagination," in which "adult readers seeking enchantment began to inhabit the imaginary worlds of fantastic fiction for extended periods of time without losing sight of the real world" (30, 14); it represents a "union between logic and fancy" (119). Edgar W. Smith noted in his preface to a 1953 issue of the BSJ titled "A Perspective on Scholarship" that "if we approach our task of writing about the Writings with the sincerity and objectivity Holmes himself would have liked...we shall, after all, have more fun than if we try heavily to be funny" (quoted in Saler 2012, 125). It was with this attitude that he included a note in *Profile by Gaslight*, between the dedication and the table of contents, that reads, "The characters in this book are real persons. Any resemblance to fictional characters, living or dead, is purely accidental." Smith maintains this conceit in his Foreword, in which he states that

[4.5] Holmes lived and had his being, in sober truth, in that nostalgic gas-lit London of the late nineteenth century which saw the realization of a snug and peaceful world...It was a world we would all give our hearts to capture and to know again...This book is for those who would explore that pleasant world again, and who would seek to know the man himself a little better. (quoted in Saler 2012, 126)

[4.6] The essays collected in the book likewise adopt Smith's conceit, with the exception of four pieces collected under the heading "Sherlock Holmes the Legend." At the end of that section, Smith dismisses the essays by declaring, "What we have heard until now is interesting and instructive, but...we are led to cry: 'Let us get back to reality!'" Subsequent essays utilize details from the canon to explore such diverse questions as Holmes's coat of arms and genealogy, his drug habit, and Watson's mysterious, wandering war wound.

[4.7] The book and most of its contents represent the impulse of affirmation, in which "fans of the 'canon' obsess about every detail of the fictional universe

Conan Doyle created, mentally inhabiting this geography of the imagination" (Saler 2012, 107). Where essays in the book tend toward the transformational, Smith utilizes editor's notes to distance himself from the opinions presented in them. *Profile by Gaslight's* enjoyment of the Grand Game is driven by an investment in the world of Sherlock Holmes as it was established by Conan Doyle. The fannish self-identification at work is thus in the affirmational model, in which fans immerse themselves in minutiae, claiming their place in the community through their adept navigation of the text. Manipulation and interpretation are at work, but their aim is to explore the virtual geography, as Saler would have it, and uncover details within a bounded space.

[4.8] The style and framework of Smith's book would be carried over into the pages of the BSJ and promote its tendency toward affirmational discourse. The preservationist and escapist attitudes that unsurprisingly pervade the work, published as it was at the height of World War II, became an entrenched component of that discourse. Contemporary concerns are often conspicuously absent from it, and the measure of a Sherlockian is often judged by the depth of their knowledge of the canon.

[4.9] As I indicated earlier, the affirmational impulse is frequently conflated with the traditional framework in which fannish discourse is expressed. The affirmational impulse, however, is not unique to the traditional Sherlockian framework. It is also expressed in the transmedial fan community. On January 15, 2012, the final episode of the second series of BBC's *Sherlock* aired in the UK. The episode featured Benedict Cumberbatch's 21st-century Sherlock Holmes battling his arch-nemesis, James Moriarty. In the confrontation's original iteration, published by Arthur Conan Doyle as "The Final Problem" in December 1893, Holmes and Moriarty perish together in the throes of mortal combat, toppling into the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland (note 4). In *Sherlock's* reimagining, Jim Moriarty creates an elaborate game of cat and mouse during which he utilizes the pseudonym Richard Brook—a clever Anglicization of "Reichenbach"—to slander the detective and frame him for Moriarty's own series of heinous crimes. The episode ends with Sherlock, his reputation in tatters and his friends in imminent danger, throwing himself off the rooftop of St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London.

[4.10] The day after the episode aired, a Swedish Tumblr user named Mika Hallor, who goes by the username "Earl Foolish," posted a message to other transmedial fans as though he were within the fictional world of *Sherlock* and speaking to others who were likewise immersed:

[4.11] So...I guess you all have heard/read/seen the news. It's been pretty hard to miss it—the death of Sherlock Holmes. I'm gutted but I'm doing my best to keep it together. I don't know about you guys, but I

refuse to believe it. That he was a fraud. He just can't have been, can't have! I saw him at a crime scene once, I had followed the sound of sirens in hope it'd be one of his cases, and there is NO WAY he was a fake. You can't make that sort of shit up, he was too good! He was an inspiration for all of us to be more observant in our every day lives, and I won't accept the so called truth about Sherlock that is all over the media. I know you feel like I do, and now it's our turn to show that we haven't lost faith in him. Sherlock might be gone, but I won't sit silent! (Hallor 2012)

[4.12] In his post, he followed this statement by stepping out of the fiction and issuing a call to action to other fans of the program:

[4.13] Imagine being a Sherlock fan in the show universe. You've been following John's blog, stalking Sherlock a bit at crime scenes, try to be within earshot so you can hear him do his deductions. You've got cutouts from the papers. Then the news reach you. What do you do? Some would believe the papers, but not everyone would buy it. And they would do what they could to clear his name...This is my take on what I would like to propose as a tribute campaign, to show our love and support. Yes, in real life. We put ourselves in the mindset of the in-show fans. (Hallor 2012)

[4.14] Hallor proposed the hashtag #BELIEVEINSHERLOCK and the slogans "I believe in Sherlock Holmes" and "Moriarty was real" to represent the campaign, and it soon went viral globally. Fans who were connected to the Sherlockian community primarily through the Internet—those whose framework was transmedial—coalesced behind the campaign, answering the call to post flyers, paint graffiti, and create T-shirts. Within two weeks, the campaign had been reported widely across social media and in the mainstream UK news; soon after, the BBC appropriated it to promote the show. An interactive Google map maintained by the "Believe in Sherlock" Tumblr reports campaign activity as far afield as Canada, Brazil, India, Japan, Israel, and South Africa.

[4.15] Although this is a decidedly transmedial iteration of Sherlockian fan engagement, it is characterized by the same affirmational impulse that was behind *Profile by Gaslight*. Saler's ironic imagination is firmly at work in the "I believe in Sherlock Holmes" campaign. It is marked by the same interplay between passionate dedication to craft and studious engagement with a fictional space uncomplicated by contemporary world issues. When Michael Saler describes Sherlockians "inhabiting [Holmes's] imaginary world and contributing to its virtual existence through their freely chosen efforts" in which they, "like Holmes...were productive detectives, solving the riddles of his existence; like Sherlock, they were self-determining artists, delineating his character solely out of love" (Saler

2012, 128), he is describing the drive of early Baker Street Irregulars. However, he could just as easily be describing transmedial *Sherlock* fans and their efforts to inhabit the fictional space of the program while simultaneously sustaining their passion for the beloved property during the long wait for the next episode.

[4.16] Gatekeeping seems to be central to affirmational discourse, and although it is difficult to spot here, it is nonetheless at work in the campaign in two related forms. The first is in the fans' desire to perpetuate a controlling narrative. In the two-year hiatus between the airing of "The Reichenbach Fall" and that of the next episode, "The Empty Hearse," the fluidity and expansiveness of transmedial platforms could have allowed a free and varied unraveling of the central text, as fans theorized about and played with it. However, "I believe in Sherlock Holmes" reinforced the narrative at the heart of the ur-text, calling on fans to continually reiterate the story as it was presented by the program's writers and to override theories that might contradict it. The second form of gatekeeping was enacted by the BBC. Throughout his 2006 monograph *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins utilizes the term "gatekeeper" primarily to refer to those who hold corporate, or fiscal-creative, control over a property. When the BBC appropriated the "I believe in Sherlock Holmes" campaign, it normalized the campaign's reading of the text—that Holmes was innocent and the public should stand by him and eschew Moriarty's version of events—and incorporated that reading into its own construction of the *Sherlock* property, going so far as to have one of the main characters speak the phrase "I believe in Sherlock Holmes" in "The Empty Hearse."

[4.17] "I believe in Sherlock Holmes," like *Profile by Gaslight*, takes itself seriously in its devotion to existing within and preserving the virtual space of the text. It is joyful in the same way that Smith defined the fun of the Grand Game: it is earnest, and the fans who were part of it, despite their geographic diversity and nontraditional platforms for engagement, used their participation to identify as fans of Sherlock Holmes. Rather than manipulating the text, they utilized it as a starting point and allowed their discourse—their participation with the campaign and with others involved in the campaign—to build and define their fan identities.

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## 5. "Sherlock Holmes is everyone": The impulse of transformation

[5.1] If affirmational fan practice is marked by fans' self-identification with a text that is conceptualized within a premapped, or at least bounded, virtual space, then the contrary impulse, transformational fan practice, is marked by fans' manipulation of some aspect or aspects of a text considered to inhabit an unbounded virtual space to reflect their own identities, or more broadly, their outlook on the world. Transformational discourse, according to this model,

involves an expression of fans' desire to see themselves and their interests, concerns, and perceptions of the world reflected in the text, and their willingness to "twist" the text to achieve this. While affirmational discourse is akin, according to Edgar W. Smith and Michael Saler alike, to Sherlock Holmes's own methods of inductive reasoning as described in "A Scandal in Bohemia," according to which one should "twist theories to suit facts," transformational discourse involves the inverse, in which one "twists facts to suit theories" (Conan Doyle 2005, 11). It is in this arena that those who operate as traditional Sherlockians often find fault with what they consider transgressive readings of the Holmes milieu by transmedial fans. However, just as transmedial fans are sometimes driven by affirmational impulses, traditional Sherlockiana is sometimes driven by transformational ones.

[5.2] Although he was "an infrequent contributor to the Grand Game" (King and Klinger 2011, 91), there can be no more apt representative of traditional Sherlockiana than the founder of the Baker Street Irregulars, Christopher Morley. In his introduction to the collection *The Standard Doyle Company: Christopher Morley on Sherlock Holmes*, Steven Rothman is adamant about Morley's importance:

[5.3] Every movement needs its point man—the fellow who actually goes out on the road, climbs a stump, and starts to preach the received truth to the as-yet-unbelieving masses. Though others may be more inspired or delve deeper into the mystery, one lone fearless voice gives the movement form out of the void...Christopher Morley was just such a voice for the Sherlockian movement. (Rothman 1990, 1)

[5.4] In founding a society in which Sherlockians could meet face to face and in publishing ample material in print media, Morley clearly operated within the traditional framework of Sherlock Holmes fan discourse.

[5.5] Among the eclectic essays in Morley's 1936 volume *Streamlines* is a piece titled "Was Sherlock Holmes an American?" The work appears to follow the precepts of the Game, treating Holmes and Watson as real and finding evidence in the canon for Morley's unorthodox proposition. Morley claims that Holmes's being of American birth "would explain much. The jealousy of Scotland Yard, the refusal of knighthood, the expert use of Western argot, the offhand behavior to aristocratic clients, the easy camaraderie with working people of all sorts, the always traveling First Class in trains" (quoted in King and Klinger 2011, 92). However, Morley must explain away nearly as many details as he cites in favor of the theory: Holmes's older brother's explicit identification of England as "your country" in "The Bruce-Partington Plans," his "broad satiric treatment" of America, his "curious ignorance of Southern susceptibilities in the matter of race," and his ignorance of US geography, as "he did not know which was the Lone Star State,"

are among the conflicts he notes (94–96). Morley concludes by appealing to "the absent-mindedness and inaccuracy which we have learned to expect from good old Watson," who has "hopelessly confused us on even more important matters" (97).

[5.6] My critique is not aimed at undermining Morley's theory; rather, I wish to point out that it transgresses the boundaries of the canon, and that, with his final appeal to Watson's unreliable narration, Morley breaks down the boundaries established by Conan Doyle and opens the door to the legitimatization of virtually any reading of the canon. His own reading, and the door it opens, allows the text "to spin outward into nutty chaos" so that "everyone has their own shot at declaring what the source material means, and at radically re-interpreting it" (obsession\_inc 2009). This is, emphatically, still within the traditional Sherlockian framework of the Game; it is also driven by the transformational rather than the affirmational impulse. Morley's argument that Holmes was an American is not an example of a fan's immersion in the text, as *Profile by Gaslight* was; it is an instance of a fan claiming that the text reflects himself.

[5.7] In introducing Morley's essay in their collection *The Grand Game: A Celebration of Sherlockian Scholarship*, Laurie R. King and Leslie S. Klinger posit that "evidently,...the idea [that Holmes was American] was much on the minds of the American Irregulars during World War II" (King and Klinger 2011, 91). As evidence that this was a trend among those with a national and historical interest in the theory, they pair Morley's essay with a brief letter written to Edgar W. Smith on December 18, 1944, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was secretly a Baker Street Irregular. Roosevelt states categorically, and with "little evidence except presidential prerogative" (Dundas 2015, 231), "Actually, [Holmes] was born an American and...his attributes were primarily American, not English" (quoted in King and Klinger 2011, 98). In the midst of World War II, in 1944, the affirmational impulse was driving some Sherlockians, like Smith, "to recapture and preserve in amber a magical past" as they avoided associating "Holmes's world with contemporary concerns" (Saler 2012, 126). Meanwhile, in the same year, one of the men at the heart of the conflict, the commander in chief of the United States, driven by the transformational impulse, sought to appropriate Holmes as a reflection of himself and his countrymen.

[5.8] In his essay Morley transformed Holmes to reflect his own Americanness, but fans need not make characters reflect themselves in order to pursue the transformational impulse. The transformational impulse can also be identified in works that shift the text not to reflect the personal identity of the fan, but rather to bring it more closely into alignment with the fan's broader worldview. As an example of this less obvious implementation of transformational discourse in early traditional Sherlockiana, consider author Rex Stout's essay "Watson Was a

Woman."

[5.9] Rex Stout was himself a fairly radical liberal, so it is not surprising that he published a piece that to this day is labeled a "radical reading" of the Holmes canon (note 5). The piece originally appeared in the *Saturday Review of Literature* in 1941 and was reprinted three years later in *Profile by Gaslight* with an accompanying good-humored editor's note:

[5.10] Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are watchwords with Americans, and there can be no faltering in our determination to stand with Voltaire in defending to the last breath the right of our opponents to be as subversive as they please. Yet when our most cherished institutions are under bold and ruthless attack, we can be forgiven if we search our hearts in an effort to sift tolerance from folly. Mr. Rex Stout, who has otherwise and elsewhere exhibited every evidence of soundness of mind and reverence of soul, here launches a heterodox doctrine that challenges the very foundation of our faith. We are torn between an embittered urge to burn him at the stake and a generous compulsion to let him have his say. Calm in the knowledge that our faith is strong, however, and that freedom is our watchword still, we choose to let him have his say. (Smith 1944, 156)

[5.11] The note distanced Smith from Stout's argument, preserving the affirmational tone of the book as a whole. However, Stout's essay is transformational in its content, blithely arguing, on the basis of quotations from the canon, that "indubitably ["the Watson person"] was a female" (King and Klinger 2011, 379). Although the shift of Watson's gender is clearly not meant to reflect Stout's own identity, it does reflect his heteronormative understanding of close personal relationships. He selects passages that, to a twentieth-century heterosexual male, may be read as the words of a wife regarding her relationship with her husband. "The reader may set me down as a hopeless busybody, when I confess how much this man stimulated my curiosity, and how often I endeavored to break through the reticence which he showed on all that concerned himself," Stout quotes from *A Study in Scarlet*. He declares that on the basis of this page of text from the canon, he "regarded the question of the Watson person's sex as settled for good." An additional passage describing Holmes's daily routine, Stout insisted, "was unquestionably a woman speaking of a man" (379). He also cites Watson fainting at the sight of Holmes upon the detective's return in "The Adventure of the Empty House" and one of many "painful banal" scenes of Watson and Holmes eating breakfast and bickering over tobacco smoke as evidence that theirs was a common domestic relationship of man and wife.

[5.12] The affirmational impulse leads fans to appreciate, venerate, and even attempt to emulate the close friendship that Holmes and Watson share in Conan



Doyle's tales. A great deal has been written on this "textbook of friendship," as Christopher Morley called it. The transformational impulse, however, led Stout to reimagine that friendship, taking the scenes as written and interpreting them through the lens of his own heteronormative worldview. This is not to say that Stout actually believed his argument, nor that his goal was to reaffirm mid-20th-century gender roles. However, the essay does, in its way, reflect the transformational impulse; it is guided by Stout's experience of his own world, rather than the world of Sherlock Holmes.

[5.13] Just as the transformational impulse can be found in the earliest traditional Sherlockian framework, transmedial platforms have provided an expansive arena for transformational discourse. Perhaps the most obvious case study for transmedial, transformational Sherlockian discourse is the wealth of material relating to queer readings of Sherlock Holmes. There is certainly not enough space to offer anything like a comprehensive analysis of such readings here, but their ubiquity and variety recommend them as broadly representative of the intersection between transmedial frameworks and transformational modes of discourse. To some degree, these readings are an extension of Stout's reimagining of Watson as a woman, and, more importantly, as Holmes's wife.

[5.14] In an October 2014 post to the Syracuse University English Department's online "forum for critical analysis and cross-disciplinary dialogue," Ashley O'Mara defines "headcanon," a term used by transmedial Sherlockians (and other fans), as "a fan's personal parallel world(s)," utilized "to explore *what could have been* or *might be*, especially as regards sexualities that have not found mainstream representation." She notes that a characteristic of "headcanon" is that "a plurality of 'headcanons' co-exist on the periphery of the source text." In other words, headcanons allow fans to express their preferences, manipulations, and interpretations in their fan discourse without needing to appeal to, or claim to represent, an authoritative reading of the ur-text. This space for legitimating multiple parallel and conflicting readings is characteristic of transformational discourse. Morley and Roosevelt's claim that Sherlock Holmes was American can coexist with the canonically authoritative claim that he was English. Similarly, O'Mara argues that fans can elect to apply noncanonical sexualities to characters "without needing or intending to make claims about their 'canonical' sexuality."

[5.15] Two characteristics of the use of headcanons are particularly relevant to my purpose. The first is its centrality to transmedial frameworks for fan engagement, which allows it to properly illustrate how the transformational impulse manifests within them. The second is its function as a method for members of the LGBTQ+ community to appropriate, and thus see themselves reflected in, the texts of Sherlock Holmes, which makes it parallel to my earlier example of traditional transformational discourse.

[5.16] Transmedial fandom is notably different from traditional fandom in that it is less hampered by financial and physical concerns. There is unlimited, free virtual space for the dissemination of fan works; the digital platforms (such as the Archive of Our Own, FanFiction.net, Tumblr, and LiveJournal) that house fan works, together with others (such as Facebook and Twitter) that facilitate networking and cross-pollination of ideas and trends, encourage the unrestrained proliferation of headcanons. Transmedial frameworks, by virtue of their ability to preserve anonymity, also encourage fans to explore interpretations that they may not be comfortable being linked with in more traditional face-to-face and print spaces.

[5.17] Transmedial Sherlockiana is home to a large LGBTQ+ population, and this population is often outspoken in its support for specifically queer readings. The Retired Beekeepers, for example, a Tumblr community that labels itself an "all-inclusive LGBTQ+ Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts' group," publishes *The Practical Handbook of Bee Culture*, a biannual journal that "especially encourage[s] anyone identifying as LGBTQ+ to submit pieces relating to their own experiences, as we feel that our voices rarely have the opportunity to be heard when it comes to Holmesian scholarship" (Tumblr post, September 28, 2016). The group promotes openness to queer readings of Sherlock Holmes, because such interpretations and manipulations of the texts will likely reflect the identities and experiences of the group's majority LGBTQ+ membership. Queer readings both of the canon and of adaptations—BBC's *Sherlock*, in particular—are supported by culling evidence from the texts, just as Morley did in arguing for Holmes's American origin. And like Morley's, the fannish impulse at work is transformational: the texts are being manipulated to reflect the fans, their concerns, and the contemporary historical and cultural environment.

[5.18] Although these transmedial fans are treating a more sensitive and complex subject than Morley was, the impulse is the same. It is possible that traditional Sherlockians are made uncomfortable by seeing transmedial fans mirror what the traditional Sherlockians perceive as radical characteristics onto the characters of the canon, but this has more to do with their own qualms than with the frameworks and modes of discourse in play.

[5.19] A further intersection may elucidate how personal identity influences transformational fannish play, and why the transformational impulse appears at first glance to be less evident than the affirmational one in traditional discourse. The common belief is that early traditional discourse was highly affirmational in nature. For instance, in his "Editor's Gas-Lamp" column in the third issue of the BSJ (1946), Edgar W. Smith stated that "we have, for instance, protested with our silence the horrid deed performed in selling Holmes and Watson down the twin and twisting rivers of ethereal travesty and cinematic schmalz...We have

resisted every temptation to modernize the scene in Baker Street, or to give a super-duper streamlining to its characters and its characterizations." But despite this screed against the transformational impulse, which is inevitably in play in adaptation, Smith had justified that very impulse in the preceding issue, published the same year:

[5.20] For it is not Sherlock Holmes who sits in Baker Street, comfortable, competent and self-assured; it is we ourselves who are there, full of a tremendous capacity for wisdom, complacent in the presence of our humble Watson, conscious of a warm well-being and a timeless, imperishable content. The easy chair in the room is drawn up to the hearthstone of our very hearts—it is *our* tobacco in the Persian slipper, and *our* violin lying so carelessly across the knee—it is *we* who hear the pounding on the stairs and the knock upon the door. The swirling fog without and the acrid smoke within bite deep indeed, for we taste them even now. And the time and place and all the great events are near and dear to us not because our memories call them forth in pure nostalgia, but because they are a part of us today. That is the Sherlock Holmes we love—the Holmes implicit and eternal in ourselves.

[5.21] Although these statements seem at odds, they are easily reconciled by acknowledging the important role that personal identity and worldview have in shaping the products of transformational fandom. Transmedial fandom is largely populated by young women, and includes a substantial LGBTQ+ community as well. In order to transform the text to be reflective of themselves and their concerns, transmedial fans have quite a distance to travel. Conversely, traditional Sherlockian publications were and still are primarily produced by cisgender, heterosexual, white men. Demographically, therefore, the Sherlock Holmes stories already largely align with the identities and worldviews of a majority of the fans who prefer traditional frameworks for discourse.

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## 6. Conclusion

[6.1] My aim in addressing these links between competing Sherlockian discourse frameworks that occasionally find themselves at odds is to acknowledge an additional layer of complexity in the impulses that drive them. Although the demographics of affirmational fans and traditional fans appear to largely overlap, as do those of transformational and transmedial fans, the distinctions between these groups are not so clear. In reality, the impulses of affirmational engagement and transformational engagement run in parallel through the entire history of Sherlock Holmes fandom. And while traditional and transmedial Sherlockians will likely continue to line up on opposite sides of debates within the larger fan community, they share the urge to identify as members of that

community through affirmational discourse, and also the desire to see themselves and their understandings of their world reflected in the texts they love through transformational discourse.

[6.2] In a 2011 editorial, "'I'm Buffy, and You're History': Putting Fan Studies into History," Nancy Reagin and Anne Rubenstein discuss the value of historical studies of fan communities and their practices. They call for more, and more nuanced, scholarship on the subject:

[6.3] Fans' accounts and fan studies scholarship...have reinforced each other in acknowledging only these two time periods [i.e., that following the appearance of *Star Trek* in the 1960s and that of the advent of the Internet in the 1990s]. While we agree that these two developments were important, they do not constitute a complete history. If we fail to develop a more complex, careful, and detailed understanding of the past, we risk misinterpreting the present and underestimating the ways that fans have shaped the world. (¶5.4)

[6.4] Moreover, if the history of fandom is oversimplified, both fans and those studying them risk utilizing these historical flashpoints to define all of the practices inherent in fan communities. This oversimplification has led to the conflation of frameworks—the platforms and "rules" that dictate how fans engage with the texts as products and with one another as fans—with the modes of discourse that those fans prefer—how they choose to relate to and engage with the texts as stories. We can develop a more complete understanding of both the history of Sherlock Holmes fandom and the impulses that drive the fans themselves if we recognize that while one framework may tend toward a particular mode of discourse or draw fans who are disposed toward that mode, the frameworks and the modes of discourse are nonetheless distinct.

[6.5] Although the community of Sherlockian fandom may seem monolithic from the outside, there are clear and distinct factions within it. I believe that locating individual fans, smaller communities, particular practices, and specific fan artifacts on both the traditional/transmedial axis and the affirmational/transformational axis, rather than collapsing them into one dimension, will help both fan studies scholars and those within the Sherlock Holmes fan community better understand these factions. Further investigation of this topic, looking more deeply into more case studies, will help us identify other factors that may also divide the larger Sherlockian community, such as age, sex, gender identity, income, race, nationality, or education. Perhaps more importantly, it will allow us to identify continuities that may not be immediately apparent. Many first-generation Sherlockians may have been driven by the same fannish impulses as those only discovering Sherlock Holmes today.

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## 7. Notes

1. The "Grand Game," the "Great Game," or simply the "Game" are terms for a fan practice in which Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are envisioned as real historical figures and the 60 stories that make up the Sherlock Holmes canon are considered genuine records of their exploits, written by Watson. This fantasy necessarily relegates Arthur Conan Doyle to a supplementary position, and within the context of the Game, he is referred to as the Literary Agent. Published material within the context of the Game is generally of two types, pastiche and pseudoscholarship. Both types of writing ultimately serve the same fannish function, which is to fill in the gaps of the characters' backgrounds, lives, and activities. Pastiche does so by imitating Conan Doyle's stories, thus supplementing the fictional world of the canon, and pseudoscholarship manifests itself when aficionados, familiar with the canon down to the last detail, seek to generate a single cohesive narrative that slots flawlessly into historical reality.

2. While this may seem a small number, it is significant in that the vocal core of the transmedial fan community and the relatively insular upper echelons of the traditional fan community rarely engage in direct, deep, and extended conversation. Specifically, comments by many traditional Sherlockians on Facebook indicated that they had read the Tumblr post, and several transmedial Sherlockians engaged directly with traditional Sherlockians on Facebook. There are many Sherlockians who operate in both communities, and as one myself, I can attest, at least anecdotally, that those who stand firmly in one camp often have little knowledge of the operation, interests, or concerns of the other. The Chap incident therefore represented an uncommon moment of mutual visibility.

3. For clarity, I use the term "fan" regardless of whether the person in question prefers traditional or transmedial engagement. However, it is worth noting that a tenet of the traditional framework is the rejection of the term "fan" in favor of "devotee," "enthusiast," "aficionado," or simply "Sherlockian." This is a form of gatekeeping. For reference, see the controversy surrounding the BSJ article "The Elite Devotee Redux" by former Baker Street Irregular Phillip Shreffler, in which he maintains, "I like to think of Sherlockians—we ought to think of Sherlockians—as devotees, not fans...The devotee is a person of language, of words; the fan is more commonly a person of half-ideas, half-expressed." The article was leaked to the online Sherlock Holmes fan community in early 2013 and is available online, together with a brief response from the Baker Street Babes, a podcast group that operates both traditionally and transmedially and that Shreffler directly targeted (<http://bakerstreetbabes.tumblr.com/post/41481263409/the-elite-devotee-or-how-the-sherlock-fandom-is-a>).

4. After experiencing both public and financial pressures, Conan Doyle resurrected

Holmes in "The Adventure of the Empty House" (1903), in which Holmes explains to Watson that he had survived (while Moriarty had not) and had spent the intervening years in hiding, traveling Europe and Asia in disguise.

5. King and Klinger (2011) place Stout's essay as the first in their section titled "Radical Criticism," locating it firmly within the tradition of the Grand Game, but clearly outside the mainstream of Sherlockian pseudoscholarship.

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# Symposium

## GTOs (Girls Together Outrageously)

Patricia Lou Guy

Verona, Italy

[0.1] *Abstract*—Memories of the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH) fan group.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Fan community

Guy, Patricia Lou. 2017. "GTOs (Girls Together Outrageously)." In "Sherlock Holmes Fandom, Sherlockiana, and the Great Game," edited by Betsy Rosenblatt and Roberta Pearson, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2017.0888>.

[1] The only organizations I have ever willingly joined are the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH) and the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI). I joined ASH in 1982 because I had already been socializing with them, and knew and liked all the members. I joined BSI in 2010 because I knew all the women members and the smart BSI (often referred to as the Boys) who used to hang around the Adventuresses' events back in the days of segregation.

[2] In fact, ASH was formed in the late 1960s in part as a jolly alternative to the Baker Street Irregulars, who at that time refused to accept women among their ranks.

[3] We Adventuresses loved books, we loved to laugh, we knew how to have a good (and occasionally riotous) time. Perhaps even more than an appreciation of the Holmes stories themselves, it was the camaraderie and the feeling of having found a home that drew me to ASH: the joy of being able to be with people who got the jokes, who could top a funny line and who could understand the wisdom that comes from diving into a book and living in someone else's reality for a time.

[4] When I moved to New York City in late 1977 to manage the Mysterious Bookshop—a job I was offered because I have always been a voracious reader of mystery novels—I was fortunate enough to immediately fall in with the Adventuresses, and I began attending their monthly get-togethers (ASH Wednesdays) in 1978.

[5] What a magnificent group we were! At our meetings, we sang too loudly, we laughed too loudly, and we were free to be who we really were—women with



agile minds and a knack for mischief. I look back on those days fondly. Of course, we did our own bit of backlash segregation: No Boys Allowed—well, not until the bar opened.

[6] Every January in New York, there is a marathon of events revolving around Sherlock Holmes. This is generally referred to as the Birthday Weekend, as it is nominally organized to celebrate the birthday of the Great Detective. The Boys would always swing by our ASH January dinner after their own had finished and compare notes on *their* program versus *our* program, and try their best (which was often not quite good enough) to pick up attractive young women (we were in our succulent 20s and 30s then).

[7] I don't really know what the BSI dinners were like in this period, but I sincerely doubt they included more boisterous merrymaking than that to be found at a typical ASH do. Yes, we occasionally had to face an embarrassed waiter who asked us to tone down the singing as the diners in the room below had complained. This often as not was greeted with laughter and a call for more wine! I am proud to say that I was a member of the "rowdy table." There is something invigorating about being naughty! I urge you all to try it now and then. Evelyn Herzog could bring us to order (at least our version of order) with an authoritative cry of: "Ladies! Ladies!"

[8] I was staying at the apartment of Mickey Fromkin and Susan Rice, two fabulous ASH, on the eve of my trip to France in 1982. It was to be one of my free-wheeling rambles around Europe in search of some as-yet undefined *je ne sais quoi*. That year, serendipity led me to picking grapes in Champagne and living for a time in Paris, and this in turn led me to my entry into the wine trade.

[9] That late summer evening in Mickey and Susan's book-filled front room, Evelyn Herzog, ASH's Principal Unprincipled Adventuress and founding mother of the organization, told me that I could not set out to live the life of an Adventuress without becoming one officially. She invited me to join ASH and gave me the investiture name of Mlle. Vernet, the name of Sherlock Holmes's maternal *grand-mère*. It is a name with which I am very proud to be associated. The fading yellowed certificate that commemorates this event hangs in my office as I type this.

[10] Over the next few years, I bounced back and forth among the UK, France, and New York City. And yes, I did lead the life of an Adventuress (in the swashbuckling sense of the word)—occasionally down and out, but often riding high, and always ready to accept the surprises that life had in store. When I periodically returned to New York City and my ASH friends, I always felt a comfortable, cozy, lively, and vivacious freedom—a sense of being at home.

[11] In 1987, I moved to London to study blind wine tasting, take some professional exams, and broker fine Bordeaux—shades of James Windibank! In order to keep contact with the Ladies of ASH, I wrote an occasional column for the Serpentine Muse, the ASH newsletter. I then moved to Italy in 1991.

[12] This was the year the BSI announced its intention to admit women. The first two were Adventuresses: Evelyn Herzog and Susan Rice. I flew back from Verona for this happy occasion. It was a time of celebration: we had achieved a goal—to be accepted as equals by the Boys of the BSI.

[13] Foolishly, I thought that the Ladies would accept the BSI invitation and then everything would go back to normal—an ASH January dinner and a BSI January dinner.

[14] But that was not the way it turned out. Nor should I have expected it to. Getting recognition from the BSI had long been on the ASH agenda: the new distaff BSI couldn't just snub the Boys and walk away.

[15] The first January ASH dinner without Evelyn and Susan just didn't feel the same. In those moments when the laughter stopped, a funereal air crept in and tried to settle on our high spirits.

[16] The ASH January dinner evolved into a dinner for all Sherlockians who had not been invited to the BSI function, and has gone by many names, among them the Fortescue Symposium and the Baskerville Bash. At a symposium, I delivered a paper on Victorian medicinal imbibing. At the end of the evening, I was asked by an eager participant if I were writing a book on the subject. I said no. Then another kindly person asked the same question. To the third query, I said: "Yes!" And *Bacchus at Baker Street* became my first Sherlockian book.

[17] During the 1990s, I went back to New York for other alternative January dinners. The format remained the same: the ASH spirit of whimsy was maintained. But every year, more of my oldest and dearest friends were being persuaded into the ranks of the BSI.

[18] As the years passed, I continued to feel a longing for the bonhomie of ASH. I missed my Sherlockian pals and so decided to start the first (and only) ASH scion society: the Assorted and Stradivarious of Verona.

[19] Our first meeting took place on Halloween 2002 in the basement of the wittily named Prosivendolo bookshop (a fruit shop is a *fruttivendolo* in Italian; hence, this emporium was a prose seller). Around 20 Veronese turned up. They were mildly interested in Sherlock Holmes, but very interested in talking about their trips to London in English. My husband, Michael, and I brought a bottle of port and our pal Ugo gave a dramatic reading of "A Scandal in Bohemia,"

featuring the beautiful adventuress Irene Adler. The Assorted and Stradivarious has remained mainly Ugo and Michael and me. However, we are always ready to entertain Sherlockians who pass through town. We usually shepherd them to the Filippini for aperitifs and on to the Osteria Carroarmato for eats.

[20] In 2006, in a hotel room at the Algonquin on a sunny morning after the big January dinner, I called a little meeting of some of my favorite ASH and proposed another idea, one conceived—once again—because I was lonely for Sherlockian companionship. I asked them and some clever Boys to write essays for a book called *Ladies, Ladies: The Women in the Life of Sherlock Holmes*. I did this not so much to amplify the place of women in the Holmes stories, but rather to have a reason to be in weekly contact with some of my closest friends. The book is lovely. It is chock-full of information. But for me, it is a document attesting to longtime friendship.

[21] In 2010, thanks to the lobbying of Venerable Ash and Old Boys from my New York youth, I was accepted into the BSI, with the investiture name of Imperial Tokay. This is a reference to a fine wine with startling medicinal properties, which is mentioned in *The Sign of the Four* and *His Last Bow*. The investiture name is, of course, a reference to my career in the wine trade. I am grateful for this honor: the BSI parchment shares wall space with my ASH certificate.

[22] It should be noted that BSI dinners are not like the ASH ones. At BSI occasions, there are no spontaneous bursts of song. When BSI members sing, they are careful not to do so too loudly (just loudly enough). There are seldom whoops of laughter at the drinks table or seemingly nonsequitous table talk that leads to creative interpretations of life, liberty, and the Holmes stories—in short, no waggish fun. There is, of course, serious fun at the BSI dinners. But ASH members need a dose of free-floating silliness every now and then. These we find at the smaller get-togethers that pop up during the Sherlockian Birthday Weekend in January and at the monthly ASH Wednesday meetings.

[23] The first time I went back to New York in the mid-2000s to attend a BSI dinner, I was assailed by a covey of young women. One of them (you know who you are, Lyndsay) looked at me reverently, her eyes wide with wonder, and said: "You're one of the *old* ASH." Over the rest of the weekend, I found myself saddled with that label. It was disconcerting, because I knew that—in her heart, mind, and soul—an ASH never grows old.

# Symposium

## From outside to inside

Julia Carlson Rosenblatt

*Pleasant Valley, New York*

[0.1] *Abstract*—The author recounts the history of female exclusion by the Baker Street Irregulars, contrasting it with the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. She reveals her reactions both to the exclusion and to her later admittance to the previously all-male realm.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Baker Street Irregulars; Male-only club; Sherlock Holmes Society of London; The Woman

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[1] What does one do when one has read the last of the 60 Sherlock Holmes stories and wants more? For me, the answer was to read everything I could about Holmes and Watson. I gravitated not to pastiche but to the "writings on the writings," mock scholarship that treats Holmes and Watson as real-life historical figures. This is not pseudo scholarship but genuine study, tongue in cheek, footnotes and all. As someone from the academic world, I welcomed a context in which I could take a break from the sort of study needed for professional advancement and act as a scholar with a sense of humor.

[2] This sort of Sherlockian study, encompassing a wide variety of topics, is often referred to as the Great Game. In this world, the original 60 stories are known as the canon. Everything else is commentary. And so I became acquainted with the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI), a group of men who engaged in this discourse.

[3] When Christopher Morley established the Baker Street Irregulars, it was an outgrowth of his penchant for creating congenial luncheon clubs. Some were stag, but the most relevant, the *Grillparzer Sittenpolizei Verein*, encouraged the presence of women, while the men picked up the check. When the late Robert K. Leavitt described the nascent days of the BSI, he wrote that Morley included women in an early but unofficial BSI meeting for cocktails on January 6, 1934. It was coed along the lines of the *Grillparzer* club, but by the official establishment of the BSI later in the same year, Morley had decided to limit its membership to

men (Leavitt 1990).

[4] Ironically, the December 1 annual dinner came after Morley had decreed that membership in the BSI would be granted to those who solved a crossword puzzle printed in his "Bowling Green" column in the May 13, 1934, *Saturday Review of Literature*. Although several women submitted suitably correct answers, they were not invited to full membership, which included an invitation to the December dinner ([note 1](#)).

[5] Before rushing to judgment, bear in mind how times have changed since the 1930s. Today we can hardly imagine that women would not expect to pick up their share of the tab. BSI membership, in which the gentlemen shared the check for the ladies, would not only be expensive but would hardly be membership on an equal basis. In addition, the inclusion of women in these early gatherings was more flirtatious than serious. If the BSI were to be an ongoing club, the wives of the men might object to the presence of other women as Irregulars in an arguably frivolous setting.

[6] In contrast, the British group, the Sherlock Holmes Society, founded the same year, has always accepted women as full members. Counted among the nine core founders were Helen Simpson and Dorothy Sayers, both of whom contributed to the literature of Sherlock Holmes. Records of the dinner meetings show a high level of intellectual discourse and delightful engagement in the Game (Green 1994).

[7] From the beginning, both the BSI and the Sherlock Holmes Society introduced literary elements beyond the canon, producing early transformative works. Views about Holmes's attitude toward women reflected the different makeup of the two societies on either side of the Atlantic. The BSI advanced a widely accepted myth that Holmes was a misogynist. On the other hand, S. C. Roberts, one of the original Sherlock Holmes Society members, wrote in 1934 of Holmes's appreciation of women: "Evidences of the affectionate feelings which Holmes entertained from time to time towards his lady clients peep out from Watson's narrative" (Roberts 1934, 186). To this, BSI member Elmer Davis wrote a refutation, calling Holmes a misogynist and claiming that Watson's marriages were not so good either (Davis 1940).

[8] In the early 1940s, the BSI began the practice of inviting one woman to the cocktail hour before the dinner. After toasting her as "The Woman" in honor of Irene Adler who had bested Holmes in "A Scandal in Bohemia" ([note 2](#)), they gave her the bum's rush out. After a critical mass of women had been so honored, these women began dining together on the same evening as the BSI annual dinner, welcoming the newest of The Women to the group, a practice continuing today.

[9] My husband Al is every bit as much a Sherlockian as I am. In January 1973, we attended our first BSI weekend. Al had been invited to the annual dinner; I enjoyed all the other activities, including the cocktail party that Julian Wolff gave at his apartment the following day. Shortly thereafter, the revival of the *Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH)*, a Sherlockian society of women founded in the 1960s at Albertus Magnus College, provided me with excellent Sherlockian companionship during the Friday dinner hour.

[10] Al, who received his membership investiture of Inspector Bradstreet in 1974, tape-recorded the proceedings at the dinner so that I would know what had transpired there. These recordings, as well as some made by the late Wayne Swift, reside in the BSI archives at the Houghton Library. If you gain access to the tapes, you too can know what happened at those dinners.

[11] I reveled in Sherlockiana. Al and I would sit on either side of a cheery fire to read and discuss the stories, loving the atmosphere of what we call the gas-lit world of Victorian illusion. It would be delightful, we thought, to create this world with a dinner such as Holmes and Watson would have eaten. The Culinary Institute of America had just moved to nearby Hyde Park, New York. That would be the ideal place, and we organized our first such dinner in 1973, followed by 1976, 1981, 1987, 1991, 1995, and 2001, each supervised by Chef Fritz Sonnenschmidt. After the first of these dinners, someone casually mentioned "Wouldn't it be great to have a cookbook?" That led to my coauthoring *Dining with Sherlock Holmes* with Fritz.

[12] In the autumn of 1978, I received a letter from Julian Wolff, the head of the BSI, inviting me to be "The Woman" of 1979. As I walked uphill from the mailbox, I contemplated it. The idealistically feminist side of me questioned how I could possibly go along with such a sexist practice. On the other hand, I felt honored and did not want to rebuff Dr. Wolff's kindness. I wanted to say "yes." After all, I reasoned, while Sherlock Holmes refused a knighthood, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle accepted one. By the time I reached the house, I was ready to pen my acceptance.

[13] It was a good decision. This was not a time to isolate myself as some sort of feminist crank. I met some outstanding gracious ladies, mostly from a previous generation. None of The Women I met at that time were Sherlockians in their own right. They were all supportive wives of revered members of the BSI. Was I honored because of my writing the cookbook, or was it because I, too, was a supportive wife? I figured it was both.

[14] At the cocktail hour, I was standing near the bar chatting with friends when another friend approached saying "I wonder who The Woman will be this year." Then he stopped, took another look, and said, "Oh, yes, now I know." At that

moment, I realized that admitting women to the BSI would not be as earthshaking as some believed.

[15] It took another 12 years for that to happen, and then it came as a surprise when Tom Stix invested the first six at the Saturday afternoon cocktail party (note 3). It caused a mixed reaction. One BSI welcomed me to the organization, pleased to have me as a member, but added "You know I don't agree with the decision to admit women." Of course, the membership was not polled. Al and I would guess that most members agreed with Tom's action.

[16] After Tom announced that the six women would be full members, including attending the annual dinner, there could be no argument. It was done, period. The BSI is not a democracy. The leader decides. Within my Sherlockian lifetime, there have been three: Julian Wolff with the title Commissionaire; Tom Stix, who retired the title Commissionaire and adopted that of Wiggins; and Michael Whelan, also known as Wiggins.

[17] An inner circle known as the Men's Room Committee (MRC) advises on BSI policy and general business affairs, but it does not decide. The MRC began in the days of Julian Wolff's leadership. The Saturday afternoon cocktail party had grown too large for his apartment, and he hosted us at the Grolier Club. Although he had issued discreet invitations, noninvited people also showed up. Julian, always gracious, took it in stride. A few men, including Al, retired to the men's room at the Grolier to confer about advising Julian, and that is how the MRC began. The most pressing issue was the concern that Julian, a man of modest means, should pay for such a large and expensive gathering. Despite well-intentioned advice, Julian insisted on continuing to pay for the Saturday afternoon cocktail party. The question of women's membership was not on the table at that time.

[18] The MRC still functions as an advisory group, although it no longer meets in a men's room. It may be significant, however, that it has not taken on any female members.

[19] The MRC that met the morning of the 1991 dinner had no inkling of Tom's intention. He planned it as a complete surprise.

[20] My husband, who feels uncomfortable belonging to a group that will not admit eligible women, had, as early as March 1987, written a letter saying he would no longer attend BSI dinners as long as women were excluded. I urged him, please, not to send it. People would think that it was because of me, that I had somehow pressured him. He agreed to postpone mailing it and continued going to the dinners. We still have the letter tucked away in a filing cabinet.

[21] In 1991, after the MRC meeting at the Williams Club, Al took Tom Stix aside, telling him that it was wrong to continue the exclusion. The practice had

gone on long enough, it was no longer acceptable, and he could not continue going to the dinners under the circumstances. Al reported to me that Tom simply shrugged, not letting on that within a few hours he was about to reverse history.

[22] Robert Thomalen may have been the only BSI in on the plan because his wife, Terry, had done the calligraphy on the investiture certificates. He congratulated me as I walked into the cocktail party. I accepted the congratulations, not knowing what possible triumph he had in mind. He was afraid that he had given it away, but the possibility of investiture was not on my radar screen. The secret was safe.

[23] Before the announcement, BSI members had voiced their own opinions as to the admission of women—many, but not all, in favor. Some said that it was a matter of numbers, that it was simpler to keep the BSI to a manageable size if it were men-only. Others wanted the BSI to be a gathering where it was always 1935. On the other hand, many saw it as a matter of social justice. It was not fair to exclude women from the self-styled preeminent group of Sherlockian scholars.

[24] As for me, I had taken no position. I loved being a part of the beautiful history of the BSI, except the sexist part. I partook of the Baker Street tradition through my reading and association with friends. The BSI recognizes a network of groups called scion societies, each with its own requirements for membership and types of activities. Scion society members are affiliated with the BSI. Our own scion society, the Hudson Valley Scionists, that Al and I had founded along with enthusiast Glenn Laxton, had never dreamt of excluding women. Of course, it would be nice, I thought, to belong to the core BSI itself with an investiture of my own, but I could continue being a Sherlockian. Social justice was not part of my calculation. The question for me was whether the BSI would admit women to full membership or whether it would fade into irrelevance by excluding half the population.

[25] The world continues to change. The Baker Street Irregulars continue the annual meeting but with an expansion of activities surrounding the dinner. Scion societies continue to assemble. The *Baker Street Journal* and scion newsletters continue to publish. But now, most communications among Sherlockians take place on the Internet. E-mails, texts, Facebook, Twitter, podcasts, and the like have surpassed pen and paper means of correspondence.

[26] Sherlock Holmes thrives in the world of fan fiction. Pastiche blossoms in this world, and the canon on which it is based is not limited to the original 60 stories. A new all-female organization of Sherlockian enthusiasts has emerged, the Baker Street Babes. The Holmesian world is no longer male-dominated. The extent to which the BSI will change with change remains an open question.

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## 2. Notes

1. Approximately one-third of the successful entrants were women. Of these, Velma Long, Gladys Norton, Katherine McMahon, and Dorothy Beverly West were still alive 50 years later. Mrs. Norton recalled that Morely had congratulated her on being a Baker Street Irregular, but this did not include being invited to the dinner (Rosenblatt and Rosenblatt 1985).
  2. "To Sherlock Holmes, she is always *the* woman."
  3. The six invested on January 12, 1991, were Dame Jean Conan Doyle, "A Certain Gracious Lady," Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's daughter; Katherine McMahon, "Lucy Ferrier," one of the original solvers of the Crossword Puzzle; Edith Meiser, "A Fascinating and Beautiful Woman," who wrote a series of Sherlock Holmes radio programs; Evelyn Herzog, "The Daintiest Thing under a Bonnet"; Susan Rice, "Beeswing"; and I, "Mrs. Turner."
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# Symposium

## Fandom, publishing, and playing the Grand Game

Andrew L. Solberg and Robert S. Katz

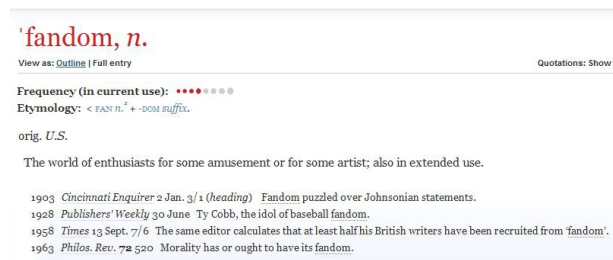
[0.1] *Abstract*—We explore the characteristics of fandom in the Sherlockian world and why so many people are drawn to participate in Sherlockian critical analysis.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Critical analysis; Fan community; Sherlock Holmes; Sherlockian

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2017.0825>.

[1] The *Oxford English Dictionary* shows that the term "fandom" had an American origin and that it first appeared in print in 1903 (figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Screenshot of "fandom, n." *OED Online* (<http://www.oed.com/>).



**Figure 1.** [[View larger image.](#)]

[2] In general, seasoned (i.e., old) Sherlockians must swallow before we admit that what we do for and with our love of Sherlock Holmes fully fits in the fannish domain. We doubt that the word "fandom" was in general usage while Arthur Conan Doyle was still writing, and it certainly was not used in any Sherlockian writings before about five years ago. We like to think of ourselves as aficionados or devotees. But if we are honest with ourselves, we realize that our love of the Sherlock Holmes 40-year chronicle made us individual fans initially and then a community of fans. What is it about being a fan of Sherlock Holmes and the Sherlockian canon that encourages the desire to write, edit, and publish? More specifically, why is writing more of a compulsion than a mere desire?

[3] The Sherlock Holmes stories are unique. Anyone reading this article

probably realized that by page four of the first story that they read. The characters leap from the page into the deepest recesses of our minds. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Dr. Watson starts out rather down and out in London (to paraphrase George Orwell), and his meeting with Sherlock Holmes is memorable. After a new reader has devoured several stories, however, other things become apparent. Those who love the canon are invariably curious people who question what they read. What become apparent are the many inconsistencies, the contradictions, the unanswered questions. And this was true of even early readers. The January 1902 edition of *The Bookman* included an article entitled "Some Inconsistencies of Sherlock Holmes."

[4] Thoughtful fans are offered a lot of grist for the mill. The urge to analyze is partly caused by there being 60 stories covering 40 years. In one tale, Watson tells us that he was wounded in the shoulder. In another tale, he refers to the same wound as being in the Achilles tendon. It takes Holmes 7 years to get around to telling Watson that he has a brother. As if turnabout were fair play, Watson never tells Holmes about his own brother; Holmes has to deduce his existence from a pocket watch. There are the stories that were never printed (the "Untold Tales"). The chronology of the stories is murky at best, and opaque most of the time; it is a perennial topic among Sherlockian analysts.

[5] Some readers would just regard these gaps and inconsistencies as flaws in the stories and move on to some other author. But fans view them as challenges, provoking thought and constant rereading of the tales.

[6] Eventually many of us then have the Moment. It happens when we realize that we are not alone and that others ask the same questions about the Sherlockian canon, puzzle over the same inconsistencies...and actually write about them. The Moment often occurs in a bookstore when one comes across a book of Sherlockian criticism. For the baby boomer generation, that book was often Baring-Gould's annotated version of the canon or his biography of Sherlock Holmes. Whatever it is, it probably offers footnotes and references, not only to the canon itself but also to other books and to journals. One in particular, *The Baker Street Journal* (BSJ), is an entire magazine, published four times a year (since 1946), devoted entirely to the study and analysis of Sherlock Holmes! What a find. After one subscribes and the first issue arrives, the desire to publish takes hold. The learned articles, fascinating discourse, and impeccable research are immediately addicting. If others can do this, so can we.

[7] Then things take a further leap. A section in Baring-Gould's *Annotated Sherlock Holmes* describes something called scion societies. There are organizations that meet to discuss and enjoy the canon. The reader's reaction is inevitably, "Oh, my God, others who think like I do formed a community." What a revelation to learn that others who share this interest actually meet with each

other! Attendance at a meeting is often the final stage of ascent into fandom and publishing. Meeting kindred spirits is exhilarating. Finding that they read and discuss not only the stories but also what are called "the writings on the writings" is intoxicating. A large percentage of Sherlockians then rush to typewriters (or now to computers) and set their own thoughts and research into words.

[8] Both of us felt the need to set down in type scholarly articles before joining the Sherlockian community or attending any scion meetings. Both articles were eventually published in the BSJ (Solberg 1976; Katz 1977). In both cases, while it was gratifying to receive an acceptance from an editor and see our article in print, it was even more so to meet someone at a meeting, give our name, and then hear, "Didn't you write that article in the most recent BSJ? It was really clever." Now it's a done deal. Publishing is in our blood, as art is in Holmes's.

[9] Research and publishing are just two of the many things Sherlockians have done as part of the Game. In 1911, Ronald Knox presented a parody of literary analysis entitled "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes" at Oxford University that was later published. Though it was a parody, it raised many analytical points that Sherlockians have been writing about ever since. In 1931, S. C. Roberts published *Dr. Watson*, the first book dedicated entirely to Sherlockian analysis. It was quickly followed by many others, including T. S. Blakeney's *Sherlock Holmes: Fact or Fiction?* (1932), H. W. Bell's *Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson: The Chronology of Their Adventures* (1933), and Vincent Starrett's *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1933).

[10] These authors weren't young. They were grown, accomplished adults. Since then, authors of books of Sherlockian analysis have included doctors, lawyers, teachers, actors, writers, businesspeople, and many others who are accomplished in their private lives as well as in the Sherlockian world. They operate in that world by stipulating that Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson were real people. This stipulation is called the Grand Game, and adherence to it runs through almost all Sherlockian analysis. And while we embark on it with our tongues planted firmly in our cheeks, we take it very seriously. In 1941, mystery writer Dorothy L. Sayers articulated the rules of this Sherlockian game in the introduction to her 1946 book *Unpopular Opinions*, writing, "The rule of the game is that it must be played as solemnly as a county cricket match at Lord's." It has always been interesting to us that we grown-ups are willing to put so much time and effort into scholarly analysis because of our love of Sherlock Holmes. It may be that scholarly analysis is a good alternative to what we do in real life on a daily basis.

[11] We enjoyed doing the research and honing the text of our papers. We read the work of other Sherlockian analytical writers, many of whom become friends. Published papers lead to invitations to speak at Sherlockian meetings and events,

and those talks are turned into other papers.

[12] For the two of us, things then took a new and unexpected turn. We were at the 2011 annual dinner of the Baker Street Irregulars, and the series editor of the BSI Manuscript Series, which publishes annotated facsimile editions of Conan Doyle's handwritten Holmes-related manuscripts, approached each of us separately during the cocktail hour. First one and then the other was asked to serve as editor of the next volume in the series. Each of us pled other obligations and begged off. It is a prestigious series, and we each hated to decline. Later that evening, we happened to be seated together for the dinner, and we realized that while neither of us had time to edit the book independently, it would be possible if we did it together. We'd been friends for decades but had never worked on a project together. We offered to undertake it as a team. The series editor quickly gave assent, and we now had a new project.

[13] In the past, we'd worked on our own articles, though we sometimes sought advice from others before submitting them for publication. This book was a very different undertaking. It was to include a reproduction of Conan Doyle's original manuscript of "The Golden Pince-Nez," an annotated transcription of it, and chapters on aspects of the story and Conan Doyle's writing of it. We needed to assemble a team of contributors, and so we drew on Sherlockians whose work we respected. Chapters were assigned and began to arrive. We spoke with the chapter authors, helped them when they needed it, and challenged them when they needed that. We worked together to edit the chapters and then assisted the publisher in the production process. Seeing the finished product, between hard covers, was thrilling.

[14] But beyond the sheer pleasure of publishing was something much deeper. Working with Conan Doyle's original manuscript enabled us to see the thought process that went into the writing of the story. Each crossed-out word represented a different direction that the tale could have taken. In addition, there were subtle differences between what was written in the manuscript and what appeared in print. Clearly the story had changed between submission and final publication. All of these changes provided new and different perspectives on the story. Studying the manuscript allowed us to see the story from angles that had never occurred to us in multiple readings of the published version.

[15] Then there were the chapters by our contributors. We were fortunate in having put together a group of talented scholars who worked hard on their contributions. Each took an approach that we had not previously seen in our own readings of the literature.

[16] Finally, the process of publishing the manuscript also gave us a sense of Sherlockian history. There are 60 stories, but not 60 original manuscripts. Some,

particularly those of the earlier stories, just don't exist. A few are incomplete. The handwritten manuscripts represent a writing process that dates back to the invention of paper and ink but that no longer exists. For a brief period, many writers put aside their pens and used a typewriter. With the advent of the computer and the Internet, the era of handwritten manuscripts ended. Our own book was prepared entirely by electronic methods. We all communicated by e-mail. All editing was done on the computer screen. The typesetting was automated, and the galley proofs were also handled by computer. The first time any of us saw the physical book, composed of paper, ink, and binding, was when it went on sale at the 2013 annual meeting of the Baker Street Irregulars. As we worked with Conan Doyle's manuscript, we were truly in a lost world.

[17] It's impossible to read the Sherlock Holmes stories without thinking about the inconsistencies that make these tales unique in literature. Realizing that others wrote about these issues with the same passion that we felt was all the incentive it took to start us on a lifetime of research and publishing. There are many stories of crime and detection by other authors, with interesting plots and colorful characters. But none of them constitutes a chronicle spanning 40 years of one man's life, and none has spawned as vast a literature as that surrounding the Holmes canon. When it comes to Sherlock Holmes, being a fan and being a writer are almost inseparable.

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## Symposium

### The fan-judges: Clues to a jurisculture of Sherlockian fandom

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[0.1] *Abstract*—American judges sometimes encourage other participants in the legal system to behave like Sherlock Holmes. They are relying on a shared culture that both appreciates a literary figure and recognizes a human capacity to emulate an imaginary creature (here, Sherlock) outside the context in which it was created. Consciously or not, the judges are tapping into classic fandom, but do they think of it that way, and should they?

[0.2] *Keywords*—Conan Doyle; Courts; Holmes; Judicial; Law; Literature; Posner; Role-playing

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[1] Literary references abound in judicial opinions. There are thousands of them, including a substantial set of references to Sherlock Holmes. Within that Sherlockian set, there is an intriguing little subset: cases in which judges permit, endorse, or command engagement by other participants in the legal system in something that sounds a bit like Sherlockian role-playing. Are these judges—as they instruct or encourage—teaching participants in the legal system to be Sherlockians? Whatever the judges' intentions, their messages ought, at the very least, to resonate with scholars and teachers who advocate for fandom in education.

[2] Judges in the United States sometimes cite great (or at least famous or recognizable) literature and literary characters in their opinions. This strikes me as a good idea, generally speaking. Literary eloquence and vividity—including that borrowed from other writers—can be useful tools for judges seeking to explain or otherwise illuminate their decisions and the laws and fact situations on which they are based. It is the wise and modest author who recognizes words and ideas that are superior to anything she or he could come up with, and makes good (and fair) use of them in pursuit of worthy ends. And making the law, and compliance with it, more comprehensible and attainable is mighty worthy. (Besides, literary references can be fun in some circumstances) ([note 1](#)).

[3] This is not to say that the intermixing of law and literature is uncontroversial as a matter of policy—Judge Richard Posner, for example, is a prominent skeptic, and he in turn has his prominent critics and supporters ([note 2](#))—only that it is widespread as a matter of practice.

[4] Thus, for example, Westlaw's main database of federal and state judicial opinions includes thousands of opinions containing references to Shakespeare's works, more than 600 opinions with references to Dickens's works, and more than 400 that mention the works of Arthur Conan Doyle. Wide, wide ranges of others are scattered throughout, from the lowest court of first instance to the highest court of last resort, and from Isaac Asimov (note 3) to Emile Zola (note 4), in every literary and jurisprudential direction.

[5] The broad question of whether judges are themselves engaging in fannish behavior when they cite literature in their opinions is beyond the scope of this little article (note 5). The narrower question I am asking here is this: do judges foster fandom when they permit, or endorse, or even command engagement by other participants in the legal system in behavior modeled on literary characters? I seek to answer this question by examining a few opinions in which judges refer to Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes character.

[6] Why focus on Conan Doyle, when other authors such as Shakespeare and Dickens are more widely cited? Because, as best I can tell, judges like to cite Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, but they never encourage anyone to behave like those characters (let alone Dick, from *Henry VI*, Part 2!). Judges also like to cite Dickens's *Bleak House*, but they never encourage anyone to behave like any of the characters in that book. Judges do, however, sometimes make encouraging noises about behaving like Sherlock Holmes (note 6).

[7] Why do judges favor Sherlock Holmes? I am not certain. But I am suspicious. I suspect that judges think Holmes has admirable personal qualities (despite his occasional drug abuse and comments that offend the modern ear) and professional practices (despite his occasional flouting of the law) that are worthy of emulation—that he is a good role model. In other words, judges sometimes invite experts, investigators, jurors, litigants, prosecutors, trustees, and other actors in our legal system to be like Sherlock because they respect Sherlock, and perhaps even like him (note 7). But that is just a guess.

[8] Let's take a look at one example of each of the three levels of judicial invocation of Holmes (command, endorsement, permission) as both literary figure and role model.

[9] First, a command. In 2012, Judge Amul R. Thapar of the US District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky excluded the testimony of an expert witness in a case involving nuisance, trespass, and other tort claims against a pair of mining companies. Quoting from Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Stockbroker's Clerk," the judge explained:

[10] "I am afraid that I rather give myself away when I explain," said Sherlock Holmes to his companion. "Results without causes are much more impressive." Despite this motto, whenever Watson invariably pushed him for an explanation, Holmes would confess his methodology, identifying each premise, assumption, and inference that led to his conclusion. Similarly, an



expert must be able to identify his methodology and its underlying premises and assumptions. If he fails to do so, he may not testify in court. Here, Jack Sparado's methodology fails to meet the requisite standard. Thus, the Court must grant Grizzly Processing and Frasure Creek's Daubert motions. (note 8)

[11] Judge Thapar's admonition might be rephrased as follows: Dear Expert Witness, when you are preparing and delivering your testimony, imagine you are Sherlock Holmes explaining your amazing deductions to Dr. Watson. Sigh at the dimwittedness of your audience if you must, and then explain to us, step by step, how the facts you have at hand lead to the conclusions you have reached. If you cannot or will not do that, then you are no Sherlock Holmes and you may not testify in my courtroom. A good expert witness wears not only a lab coat (note 9), but also a deerstalker.

[12] Second, an endorsement. In 1987, Maryanne Trump Barry (then a District Judge on the US District Court of the District of New Jersey, now a Senior Circuit Judge on the US Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit) was reviewing an appeal from the grant of a preliminary injunction in a bankruptcy case. Her summary of the work of the bankruptcy trustee began:

[13] On October 11, 1983, Richard [Bertoli]'s own estate filed for reorganization pursuant to Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code. Bernard J. D'Avella, Jr. was appointed acting trustee on February 1, 1985 and began the unenviable task of assembling Richard's assets. While the Trustee has not stated the obvious, the task of sorting through Richard's fraudulent affairs and assembling assets for the benefit of the creditors no doubt requires herculean efforts. As the case before me demonstrates, it also requires detective work more commonly associated with Sherlock Holmes than with a bankruptcy trustee. (note 10)

[14] Judge Barry's observation might be rephrased as follows: Dear Bankruptcy Trustee, serving in this capacity does not often require you to dig as deeply or reason as elaborately as Sherlock Holmes, but there are cases in which a trustee must step up and play that role, as your work here shows.

[15] Third and finally, a permission. In 2006, the Supreme Court of Utah was considering the state's appeal from a lower court's grant of a new trial for a criminal defendant. One of the issues on appeal was the status of an investigation conducted by the state's Division of Consumer Protection, about which Justice Ronald E. Nehring, writing for a unanimous supreme court, said:

[16] Regardless of whether an investigation is performed in the Holmesian (Sherlock, not Oliver Wendell) tradition of culling insights into the make-up of human beings from observations of dress, speech, and carriage or by employing the latest advances in genetics, chemistry, or physics, any report or other account of data gathered through the investigation is subjected to sifting and evaluation. Training, experience, and intuition are applied to the compilation of raw data, and a report emerges. Facts are found. (note 11)

[17] The supreme court's statement might be rephrased as follows: Dear Investigators, you are free to don your deerstalkers and engage in an investigation right out of a Conan Doyle story, knowing it will be viewed by this court just as any other type of investigation would be—even the most modern and high-tech. Do as you will, and we will review.

[18] My sense—based on considerable but not-yet-complete digging—is that judicial commands (like Judge Thapar's) to play the role of Holmes are outnumbered by judicial endorsements (like Judge Barry's) of that kind of behavior, which are outnumbered by expressions of permissive encouragement (like Justice Nehring's) of it. But there are at least enough of each kind of message, from beginning to end of the 20th century and into the 21st, to make it seem pretty likely that for as long as there has been a Sherlock Holmes there have been judges who would be comfortable seeing more rather than less of him in their own courtrooms ([note 12](#)).

[19] *Disclaimer:* I do not claim—and do not believe—that a brief (or other written or spoken argument) that cites a work of literature has any influence on a judge beyond the merit of the legal or factual or policy argument in support of which the story is cited. So the presence of Sherlock Holmes (or any other literary character) in a case does not affect the way a good judge judges, even if the judge is a Holmes fan. Andrew Jay Peck—who is both a highly regarded federal judge and a renowned Sherlockian scholar—demonstrated this judicial quality quite nicely in his opinion in the case of *Desiderio v. Celebrity Cruise Lines*, after both sides in the case invoked Holmes in support of their arguments:

[20] My appreciation for Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories is no secret. However, in the end, although I enjoyed Celebrity's clever Holmes reference and the Desiderio plaintiffs' response, I agree with the Desiderio plaintiffs that Celebrity's argument and Holmes citation are irrelevant, as is the issue of whether the Zenith was "in" or just too "near" the hurricane, or whether the winds were hurricane forces or not. ([note 13](#))

[21] Judge Peck, like all good judges, decides cases based on the relevant law as applied to the relevant facts. Literary references may be useful to judges when they are explaining those appropriate legal-factual connections—and may also, as the article you are reading suggests, be useful when they are encouraging other participants in the legal system to behave in certain ways—but that is a far cry from making literary works the basis for judicial decisions.

[22] These varied judicial metaphorical instructions about being Sherlockian would be pointless, of course, if the intended audiences for them did not understand what it means to be like Sherlock. And so the judges must be assuming that their audiences either are already familiar with Holmes or will be inspired by the judges' words to make themselves sufficiently familiar with him to be able to play the part in the future, within their own respective roles in the legal system. All these audiences need is judicial instruction to incorporate what they know or will learn about Holmes into the roles they play in the legal system.

[23] This instructional function of adjudication is unremarkable. The idea—and reality—of US judges as teachers both on and off the bench is as old as the Constitution (note 14) and as modern as those fixtures of today's law school, the honorable adjunct professor (note 15) and moot court panelist (note 16).

[24] The only remarkable aspect of these Sherlockian opinions is that the instructions in them involve encouragement to play the role of a literary figure, or at least to incorporate attributes of a fictional character into real-world role personas.

[25] To scholars of teaching in fandom, however, this might not seem remarkable at all. Professor Paul Booth, for example, has argued that teaching "critical fandom...is about teaching constructive styles of personal and community engagement," of which the scenes I have described might well be examples, albeit ones that have arisen in a context far from the more familiar and brightly lit fields of fandom. More confounding might be the fact that the judicial system is not a place where a critical scholar would expect to find this kind of education taking place, since "once formal schooling is complete, one's fandom may be one of the only places where one is encouraged to think critically, to write, to discuss deeply, and to make thoughtful and critical judgments about hegemonic culture" (Booth 2015). But what if that fandom is springing from, or at least fostered by, some of the most powerful figures in a long-established and powerful government institution?

[26] In contrast, the very fact that the judiciary is a deep-rooted establishment in which many participants (including those in the examples presented above) are themselves deeply rooted and involved, might be seen as making the courts promising places for fandom, which is, as Professor Aaron Schwabach has put it, "about shared experience, and the more experience the fans can share, the deeper their attachment" (Schwabach 2009).

[27] Moreover, the idea—the real sense—that judges hope to share the experience of these people playing their Sherlock-infused roles is evident from the context in which the judges offer their encouragement. These judges surely hope that experts who appear in the courtrooms in the future will engage in more nearly Sherlockian analysis and presentation (see Judge Thapar above), that bankruptcy trustees will detect like Sherlock when circumstances call for it (see Judge Barry above), and that investigators will feel free to engage in the classic Sherlockian forms of the science of deduction (see Justice Nehring above).

[28] To argue—based on the anecdotes presented here—that there are judges out there in US courtrooms who are evangelizing for Sherlockian cosplay would surely be to overreach; but to suggest that some judges might be fostering a kind of Sherlockian fandom of the legal professions might not be. It is at least worth considering, both as an example of educational fandom and as a set of points to account for when considering what is and is not fandom at all (note 17).

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## Notes

1. See, e.g., *Yates v. United States*, 135 S.Ct. 1074, 1091 (2015) (Kagan, J. dissenting, joined by Scalia, Kennedy, and Thomas, JJ.): "A fish is, of course, a discrete thing that possesses physical form. See generally Dr. Seuss, *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish* (1960)."
2. See, e.g., Posner (2009); and White (1989), a critical review of the first edition of Posner's book; see also, e.g., Papke (1989); Schaller (1997); and Weisberg (1998).
3. See, e.g., *Karn v. Morrow*, 415 Fed. Appx. 428, 429 (3d Cir. 2011) (also citing Thomas Paine in the same paragraph).
4. See, e.g., *Anwar v. Johnson*, 720 F.3d 1183, 1184 (9th Cir. 2013) (also quoting Douglas Adams and Benjamin Franklin in the same paragraph).
5. Are they "participating in [fan activity] and interacting in some way, whether through discussions or creative works...face-to-face at gatherings such as conventions, or written communication, either off- or on-line"? (<http://fanlore.org/wiki/Fandom>). Are they transforming literary classics and modern hits into new works in new forms and then sharing them with interested others? Can they be treated as doing such things if they lack the intent to do them? (Kalinowski 2014; 655, 658).
6. Of course, several dozen of the Sherlockian ones are references to "the curious incident of the dog [that did nothing] in the night-time." See, e.g., *US v. Smith*, 441 F.3d 254, 280 (4th Cir. 2006) (Dever, D.J., concurring in part and dissenting in part). But there is plenty of variety as well. See, e.g., *State v. Pena*, 840 N.W.2d 727, 2013 WL 5745608, at \*5 (Iowa App. 2013) (Doyle, J. (dissenting): "As was once aptly written, '[c]ircumstantial evidence is a very tricky thing...; it may seem to point very straight to one thing, but if you shift your own point of view a little, you may find it pointing in an equally uncompromising manner to something entirely different.' *United States v. Saborit*, 967 F. Supp. 1136, 1137 (N.D. Iowa 1997), quoting Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Boscombe Valley Mystery," in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 85 (repr. 1892; Modern Library ed. 1920); *Chlystek v. Donovan*, 2013 WL 1629207, at \*7 (E.D. Mich. 2013) ("A famous fictional detective, Judges Easterbrook and Boggs observe, was known for remarking that 'when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth'"; *Bammerlin v. Navistar Int'l Transp. Corp.*, 30 F.3d 898, 902 (7th Cir. 1994) (Easterbrook, J.) (quoting Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Sign of Four," in *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 111 (1905); see also *Hanner v. O'Farrell*, 142 F.3d 434, n. 4 (6th Cir. 1998) (unpublished table op.) (Boggs, J., dissenting), quoting same passage; *Hernandez v. County of San Bernardino*, 2013 WL 454871, at \*1 (C.D. Cal. 2013): "'Data! Data! Data!' he cried impatiently. 'I can't make bricks without clay,' Arthur Conan Doyle, *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 289 [Harper & Bros. Publishers, 1900]. Despite Sherlock Holmes's admonition, Plaintiff Alberto Hernandez tries to make a case with no evidence."); In re *Essex Search Warrants*, 60 A.3d 707, 716 n.10 (Vt. 2012): "As Sherlock Holmes once explained, 'It is of the highest importance in the art of detection to be able to recognize, out of a number of facts, which are incidental and which vital. Otherwise your energy and attention must be dissipated instead of being concentrated.' Sir Arthur

Conan Doyle, 'The Reigate Puzzle,' in *Complete Sherlock Holmes*, 459, 469 (1930)."; Fabre v. Taylor, 2009 WL 162881, at \*11 (S.D.N.Y. 2009) ("As Sherlock Holmes said (when use of a new almanac did not serve as the code book but the prior year's almanac did) in The Valley of Fear: "'We pay the price, Watson, for being too up-to-date!'" (Arthur Conan Doyle, The Valley of Fear.)").

7. Cf. "Be Like Mike," <https://youtu.be/Y3zZ2OUVgPQ>.

8. Barnette v. Grizzly Processing, LLC, 2012 WL 293305, at \*1 (E.D. Ky. 2012) (footnote omitted).

9. Cf. Roberto Aron, Julius Fast, and Richard B. Klein, *Trial Communication Skills*, 2nd ed. (Dearfield, IL: Clark, Boardman Callaghan, 1996–2015), § 33, p. 13: expert wearing lab coat.<

10. Matter of Bertoli, 1987 WL 8196, at \*1 (D.N.J. 1987).

11. State v. Ison, 135 P.3d 864, 869 (Utah 2006).

12. This is not to say that all judicial encouragement of Sherlockian behavior is well-advised, because some of it is not. For example, jurors should not be encouraged to be like Sherlock. See Commonwealth v. Gonzalez, 545 N.E.2d 1189, 1191–92 (Mass. App. Ct. 1989): "A judge properly may use modern examples to explain the concepts of inference and circumstantial evidence to the jury...However, when the judge departs from Commonwealth v. Webster, 5 Cush. 295, 312, 319 (1850), and the usual examples of 'footprints in the snow' or 'the whistling tea kettle,' he must exercise care not to choose illustrations which permit the drawing of remote or speculative inferences from assumed facts, the piling of inference upon inference, or the suggestion that, if one is very good at deductive reasoning, only one conclusion is possible. The particular reference to the methodology of Sherlock Holmes, in the format conveyed to the jurors by the judge, suffered from all three weaknesses."

13. Desiderio v. Celebrity Cruise Lines, Inc., 1999 WL 440775, [n.p.] n.15 (S.D.N.Y. 1999).

14. Lerner (1967); see also, e.g., Tushnet (1994).

15. See, for example, Hon. Judith L. Meyer, <https://www.law.whittier.edu/index/directory/profile/hon.-judith-l.-meyer>; see also, e.g., Hall (2007).

16. See, for example, Ciavarra (2007); "Gallery" (2013).

17. This aspect of judges' treatment of Sherlock Holmes invites a number of other questions that are beyond the scope of this short article: Are those judges really seeking to facilitate fandom? If they are, do they know it? If they don't know it, does it matter? (If you were trying to make a case for the possibility of unconscious fandom, would the US judiciary and its enthusiasm for Sherlock Holmes be good evidence?) Are these judges effective Sherlockian facilitators or not? Is it a good thing that some of

our "republican schoolmasters" might be "Sherlockian schoolmasters" too? Are there other characters that are or could be employed in this way? Is there anything distinctive about the judges who engage in this sort of communication with their readers, about the authors and characters they use, or about the readers to whom the judges are speaking? And so on.

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# Symposium

## A duet: With an occasional chorus

Evelyn A. Herzog

Peter E. Blau

[0.1] *Abstract*—A presentation at the annual dinner of the Baker Street Irregulars, January 15, 2016.

[0.2] *Keyword*—Baker Street Irregulars; Fan club; Sherlock Holmes; Sherlockians

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### 1. Peter E. Blau

[1.1] The Baker Street Irregulars (BSI) have always had women as members, as Al and Julie Rosenblatt reported in their far-from-trifling monograph *The Sherlock Holmes Crossword*, published by the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota in 1958.

[1.2] The crossword puzzle, composed by Frank V. Morley, was published in the *Saturday Review of Literature* on May 19, 1934, by Christopher Morley as a test for membership in the BSI. And there were women on the list of those who solved the puzzle, published in two later issues of the magazine, including the "Staff of Mrs. Cowlin's Open Book Shop in Elgin, Ind." The bookshop staff were Gladys Norton, Katherine McMahan, and Dorothy Beverly, who had collaborated and submitted a flawless solution. The Rosenblatts interviewed all three of them and wrote that they "keenly remembered Christopher Morley, who occasionally dropped in."

[1.3] "Did he mail the winning entry back to you?" they asked Mrs. Norton. "No, he handed it to me," she replied, "with his congratulations on becoming a Baker Street Irregular."

[1.4] Of course when Christopher Morley issued invitations to the first meeting of the BSI, he did not invite all those who solved the crossword puzzle, and he definitely didn't invite any of the women, creating a tradition that lasted for



decades.

[1.5] But consider what might have been: Michael Murphy has noted that Logan Clendening wrote to Vincent Starrett on November 20, 1934, reporting that "I have written to Woolcott suggesting that we have one woman, Irene Adler—who is the only woman there was—at the dinner, and nominate Miss Katherine Cornell to play the part." We don't know whether Alexander Woolcott acted on Clendening's suggestion, but it was not until 1942 that a lady was honored as *the* woman, not at the annual dinner but at the preprandial cocktail party.

[1.6] It's possible that Helene Yuhasova and Edith Meiser shared the honor in 1942. Next came Gypsy Rose Lee, toasted in 1943, apparently invited at the suggestion of Rex Stout, who obviously wanted to offer his friends a chance to boast about having had a drink with the most famous ecdysiast of the era. Other ladies were invited to the cocktail party from time to time in later years.

[1.7] It wasn't until 1958 that a woman was awarded an investiture in the Baker Street Irregulars, thanks to Edgar W. Smith: Lenore Glen Offord ("The Old Russian Woman"). I had a chance to meet her, and she explained that Edgar had made it clear that, despite her investiture, she would not be invited to the annual dinner.

[1.8] Edgar died in 1960, and Julian Wolff, who in 1961 formalized the practice of honoring *the* woman every year at the cocktail party, continued the tradition of inviting only men to the BSI's annual dinner.

[1.9] But: to paraphrase what Bob Dylan sang in 1964, "The Times They Were a-Changin'." And it wasn't long before times changed in the world of Sherlockians.

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## 2. Evelyn A. Herzog

[2.1] As Peter has made clear, there have long been women Sherlockians and there have long been Baker Street Irregulars, but for many years there were only disjointed relations between the two groups. Now things are different, and my own group, the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes, played a part in effecting the change, though it was a peculiar part.

[2.2] The Adventuresses (ASH) got started in the 1960s at Albertus Magnus College—we were a bunch of new friends sharing an endlessly interesting hobby. We read and discussed the stories, pored over the BSJ, worked on articles, and ventured to write to eminent Sherlockians, all of whom turned out to be Baker Street Irregulars and all of whom were kind to us and encouraged us.

[2.3] Our most avid correspondence was with William S. Baring-Gould, the

author of the biography *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street* who was now working on his annotated version of the canon. We wisecracked with him, and he jollied us along. Peter says I must mention our great moment of pride and shame with Bill Baring-Gould: we decided to go to New York and invite him to dinner; he agreed, we dined at Asti's in the Village, and then, when the bill came, we failed to grab it and he ended up paying for at least half a dozen of us. Astonishingly, he remained our friend, though it's possible that this incident hastened his death, which occurred within the year, to our great sorrow.

[2.4] There was consolation for us in the correspondence that had already begun with such friendly notables as John Bennett Shaw, Peter Blau, and Ted Schulz, all (as I mentioned) BSI and all generous with advice, humor, and copies of homegrown Sherlockian memorabilia, the like of which we'd never imagined.

[2.5] We enjoyed our Sherlockian activities, including our growing correspondence with this greater world of Sherlockians, scions, and publications, but one thing still rankled—and it was a pretty big thing. The Baker Street Irregulars was the premier Sherlockian organization, with distinguished members throughout the country, and it was men-only. However good we got at the Game, we would never be good enough to dine with them. To make matters worse, there were in those days relatively few scion societies and—young and impoverished as we were—there was little chance of getting to meet them for some years. Besides, many of those groups were men-only, too. Curses!

[2.6] And then an unexpected glimpse at paradise opened up: John Bennett Shaw got us invitations to the Gillette Luncheon at the 1968 Birthday Weekend. And we realized that we would be in New York at the very time that the Baker Street Irregulars were having their yearly dinner. And we realized we had an opportunity to open their eyes to the error of their ways. Six of us bought our train tickets.

[2.7] I can hardly tell you what a thrill it was to climb the stairs at Keen's Chop House and lay eyes on Sherlockians who weren't us. Part of the magic was that Lisa McGaw (not yet a BSI herself) presided over a luncheon that was already the peaceable Sherlockian kingdom of our dreams—men and women lunching together, discussing Holmes and so much more—it was heavenly and uproarious. We confided to our neighbors about our cause, and they said "You should picket." We said that we were going to, and they smiled.

[2.8] We spent the afternoon writing slogans on posterboard—"We Want In!" "BSI Unfair to Women!" "Let Us In Out of the Cold!" Then we bundled up and went down to begin our picket line outside Cavanagh's Restaurant. It was indeed cold—and there was not much warmth in the then-fashionable miniskirts and fishnet stockings. BSI walked past us and into the restaurant—at least I suppose

some did, since we didn't know what most of them looked like. And then business got slow, and we didn't know how to wind things up, but another wonderful thing happened—John Shaw and Peter Blau materialized and invited us into the downstairs public bar to talk things over. They bought us drinks and said they'd say something on our behalf, so we composed the following manifesto:

[2.9] Gentlemen, this is it! We have long been distressed by your apparent reluctance to admit ladies into the BSI. In order to bring our opinion to your attention, we have come here through the bitter chill of winter to ask you to reconsider and bow to the feminine influence. It is not for ourselves that we have come—oh, no! It is for those lovers of Sherlock Holmes everywhere (he did get around a lot). In conclusion, we hope that when you are choosing new members, you will give equal consideration to the feminine Irregulars.

[2.10] Honor was now satisfied. John and Peter headed upstairs, and we headed back to The New Yorker Hotel.

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### 3. Peter E. Blau

[3.1] What happened upstairs was that someone arrived at the cocktail hour and told Julian Wolff that "some girls are downstairs picketing the restaurant." Julian, well aware of who might have suggested the protest, turned to John Bennett Shaw and issued an order: "Do something about your girls." John, presumably wanting to be accompanied by someone who was closer to the age of the girls than he was, said to me: "Come along." And of course I did.

[3.2] John happily promised to read the girls' manifesto to those assembled at the dinner, and so he did, explaining first that as a serious Catholic, he knew something about Albertus Magnus College, a seriously Catholic school for young women in New Haven, Connecticut. "The school is so Catholic," John told the BSI, "if a girl isn't a virgin when she arrives at the school, she is when she graduates." And then he read the manifesto, amazing or amusing the BSI.

[3.3] The next day John and I found on Times Square a shop that sold newspapers printed with headlines of your choice. We chose "Baker Street Sextette in Picket Line Protest" and duly sent it off to the Adventuresses.

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### 4. Evelyn A. Herzog

[4.1] So we treasured our souvenir and hoped that our protest had had some effect on the Irregulars, but there was little sign of that. Still, though we evidently hadn't won our case, there were certainly some happy surprises in store. As many

of you remember, the 1970s were a golden age for Sherlockians. Coed societies sprang up everywhere, and existing ones flourished. It became easy to be a woman Holmesian—there simply was no distinction made between male and female enthusiasts in these many clubs. On a practical level, there were endless ways for all of us to enjoy our favorite hobby. But deep in our hearts, we women still felt bad that we couldn't aspire to membership in the Irregulars.

[4.2] For the Adventuresses, the 1970s were a magical time because we Albertus graduates got to meet and become friends with comradely Sherlockian women from throughout the country. Our inactive little college group came roaring back to life with an influx of wild, wonderful women—and if you think I'm overstating it, you weren't there.

[4.3] The chance that placed ASH in New York City meant that in carrying out our own plans, we were able unofficially to do some of the BSI's work for them. We'd established a kind of spiritual home for interested female Sherlockians from around the country. We held an alternate Friday dinner, at first just for female Sherlockians but soon for both women and men who wanted to celebrate the Master's birthday with kindred spirits but were not on the BSI's list. Today that event is run by an independent team of New Yorkers and is known as the Gaslight Gala—they're whooping it up across town as we speak. Christopher Morley and the earliest Irregulars could hardly have envisioned the throng who would come to town in conjunction with a dinner that they could not themselves attend, much less foresee that some provision would have to be made for them, but that's how things worked out.

[4.4] In the years after the picketing, as I recall it, the Irregulars and the Adventuresses got along pretty well on a personal level—after all, now many of us rubbed shoulders regularly at our local scion societies. With Julian Wolff's passing, some thought that there might be change in the air, but the new head of the Irregulars, Tom Stix, was a hard man to read. The BSI's membership had to be the BSI's decision—we had stated our opinion all those years ago and were resigned to the fact that you can't force people to like you.

[4.5] Which brings us to the Saturday cocktail party of the 1991 Birthday Weekend. I still get all shivery when I recall that evening. Tom Stix took the microphone and quieted the throng in the big palm court to make his announcements, which went from the welcome to the astonishing. He announced first an investiture being made simultaneously in the UK, namely, to Dame Jean Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur's daughter; then one to Katherine McMahon, who had solved the Morley crossword puzzle all those years ago; then to Edith Meiser, who had brought Holmes to the radio waves. The investiture of these three distinguished women of such standing in our world set the room on fire. What a moment of joy! And then—no one could believe it—he went on and invested three

Sherlockian women of our own day: Julie Rosenblatt, Susan Rice, and me. It was like a dream, except much noisier. Cheers, tears, and champagne are about all I remember for the rest of the day. The door to the upper room at Baker Street was now open to all, and the 25 years since then have seen many fine Sherlockians of both sexes walk in together, for which I thank you.



**Figure 1.** *The authors performing their duet at the annual Baker Street Irregulars dinner, January 2016. Photo courtesy of the Baker Street Irregulars.*  
[[View larger image.](#)]

# Symposium

## *Sherlock* (Holmes) in Japanese (fan) works

Lori Morimoto

*Independent scholar, Virginia, United States*

[0.1] *Abstract*—I explore the history of Japanese writing centered on Sherlock Holmes as a means of interrogating the 2014 BBC *Sherlock* pastiche *John and Sherlock Casebook 1: Jon, zenchi renmei e iku* (The stark naked league), written by Japanese Sherlockian Kitahara Naohiko for mainstream publication by the publishing house Hayakawa shobō. I argue that exploration of the Japanese (fan) cultural contexts of Kitahara's book begins to reveal the limits of the Anglo-American-centered framework through which fan studies scholars explore fan/producer relationships.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Appropriation; BBC *Sherlock*; Fan fiction; Fan studies; Japan

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## 1. Introduction

[1.1] In 1958, American Sherlock Holmes aficionado Edgar W. Smith wrote, "There is no Sherlockian worthy of his salt who has not, at least once in his life, taken Dr. Watson's pen in hand and given himself to the production of a veritable adventure" (quoted in Watt and Green 2003, 4). Not confined to the English-language sphere, such writing has been a global phenomenon since the earliest days of Sherlock Holmes fandom, prompting Japanese Holmes expert Kitahara Naohiko (note 1) to observe, "What definitively sets Holmes stories apart from other mystery novels is that they boast a vast number of high quality 'derivative works' (*niji sōsaku*)" (2013, 131). Since the first recorded Holmes pastiche, published in 1893 (Watt and Green 2003, 1), these works have spanned a diversity of genres—adaptation, parody, pastiche, fan fiction—and media—books, films, television, theater, comics, and even video games—blurring the distinction between canon and fan works that English-language fan studies has used to define media fandom. Moreover, the creators of such works are often also fans, blurring as well what is often perceived as a firm (if weakening) line separating fans and producers.

[1.2] Roberta Pearson has remarked on the traditional Sherlockian tendency to

avoid the label "fan" in favor of "'admirer,' 'enthusiast,' 'devotee,' 'aficionado'—[terms that] disassociate them from the excessive affect and hormone-induced behavior connoted by fan" (2007, 107). Given this, Matt Hills notes, "it seems reasonable to assume that 'fandom' would, at the very least, be a contested identity within Sherlockian culture" (2012, 34). Both Pearson and Hills discuss at length the cultural and gender hierarchies that separate "fan" from other, less obviously affective (and thus preferred) relationships to Sherlock Holmes; yet this border policing goes both ways. The online fans—mostly women—who read and write transformative fan fiction, those whom the Sherlockians would hold at arm's length, form their own communities, and they "can police these worlds and their boundaries with tremendous vigilance" (Jamison 2013, 20). They do so particularly where the line between gift and cash economies blurs; a troubled boundary similarly inflecting English-language fan fiction scholarship that assumes that transformative fandoms are nonprofit and open access, and are therefore distanced from commercial publishing. But this assumption is challenged not only by fan fiction that makes its way out of online fan culture and into mainstream bookstores and movie theaters, but also in the intensifying transnational mélange of fan cultures whose norms often clash. It is increasingly unable to account not only for changes in Anglo-American fan fiction writing cultures, but also for differences between those cultures and non-Western ones. Such differences go back over a century and continue to affect non-Western fan production today.

[1.3] Kitahara Naohiko's 2014 BBC Sherlock pastiche collection, *John and Sherlock Casebook 1: Jon, zenchi renmei e iku* (The stark naked league), offers compelling examples of such work. Written, like countless other Holmes pastiches, in the first-person voice of John Watson, the six stories contained in this volume (note 2) center not on the characters of Conan Doyle's canon, but on the John and Sherlock of *Sherlock*, Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss's modern adaptation for the BBC—characters that, in an Anglo-American context, fall strictly in the purview of fan fiction authors. Indeed, I am a reader and writer of *Sherlock* fan fiction myself, and the idea of commercially published BBC *Sherlock* pastiche was so anathema to my understanding of fan fiction that I scoured the book for evidence that it had been published with the BBC's permission; it comes in the afterword, where Kitahara writes, "I had written *Sherlock*-inspired modern Holmes pastiche before this for [*Hayakawa*] *Mystery Magazine*; this time, the editorial division contacted BBC Japan to ask if it would be "alright to publish such work, to which they received a quick OK" (2014, 279).

[1.4] Kitahara has written not only a plethora of commercially published Holmes pastiche, in both Japanese and English, but also original science fiction and mystery novels, and he has translated non-Holmes works by Conan Doyle and Alan Dean Foster's novelization of the 2009 *Star Trek* reboot. He is unquestionably a commercial author, earning professional income on the

Holmesian writings he sells to such mainstream publishing houses as Hayakawa, Kodansha, and Kadokawa. This makes it difficult to talk about his Holmes pastiches as fan fiction, although that is what they are, just as much as anything I—or other, better writers in the fan community—have produced. Yet, while Kitahara's book blurs the line separating fandom and commercial media production, in ways that I will discuss in detail below, it also is the logical successor to over a century's worth of Japanese Holmesian writing that began in a more muddled subjectivity than did such writing in the West.

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## 2.The blurred boundaries of Japanese Holmes writing

[2.1] Sherlock Holmes was introduced to Japan in the 1894 translation of "The Man with the Twisted Lip" (1891), which was reworked into literary critic Yasunari Sadao's "Kasuga dōrō" (The stone lantern) in 1912. Far from an example of straightforward transmission from Conan Doyle to Yasunari, the story in fact made its way to Yasunari by way of Maurice Leblanc's 1907 adaptation of "The Man with the Twisted Lip" entitled "The Jewish Lamp," in which he pitted Holmes against a character in his own work, the gentleman thief Arsène Lupin (Kitahara 2013, 132). In other words, Japanese Holmesian writing began with the blurred figure of a man who was simultaneously a fan, a professional writer, and a literary critic. And because early 20th-century Japan valorized English-language culture, his work largely bypassed the careful distinctions of taste that set Anglo-American Sherlockian connoisseurship apart from less elevated popular cultural consumption. In *Japan and Sherlock Holmes*, published by the Baker Street Irregulars, Masamichi Higurashi somewhat derisively notes that, prior to World War II, "the Canon was introduced as a collection of British literature or merely as early detective stories" (2004, 4); yet I would argue that it was precisely because Holmes entered into Japanese popular consciousness via broader explorations of English literature that Holmes-centered writing in Japan today enjoys singularly wide dissemination outside the strict confines of Sherlockian societies.

[2.2] Indeed, references and allusions to Holmes and his creator litter the modern Japanese literary landscape. Not only was Holmes the inspiration for mystery writer Edogawa Rampo's own detective, Akechi Kogoro (note 3), but he makes parenthetical appearances in works by such luminaries of Japanese literature as Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, who mentions Holmesian deduction in his novel *Gin to kin* (Gold and silver, 1918) and his short story "Hakuchū kigo" (Devilish words at high noon, 1918) (Hirayama and Hall 2013, 143), and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, author of *Rashōmon*, who discussed Holmes and Conan Doyle's prose in three critical essays on writing as well as in personal correspondence (Ueda 2015, 113). Rather than isolating Holmes (and thus his connoisseurs) as unique in English literature, these authors normalized him in such a way that Japanese Holmes fandom followed suit.



[2.3] This is perhaps nowhere better exemplified than in the autobiographical writings of Mori Mari, daughter of famed novelist Mori Ōgai. Throughout her memoir, *Watashi no bi no sekai* (My world of beauty, 1968), Mori reads everyday moments through a Holmesian lens, talking about her attempts at poaching an egg through a recollection of the poached eggs of breakfasts at 221B Baker Street (Ueda 2015, 192) and later reminiscing about the various foods that have appeared in books and films she loves: "The roast chicken of Jean Gabin's films. The grog and muffins piled on the country kitchen tables of Hitchcock's films. Sherlock Holmes's cold duck dinners" (quoted in Ueda 2015, 193). In Mori's writings, Holmes is part of the broad popular cultural repertoire that informs her daily comings and goings, almost independently of his role as a famous detective, leading her to claim in a 1976 essay on Holmes, "Of all [his] many fans, I think I'm the biggest fan [*fuan*] of all" (quoted in Ueda 2015, 199). Mori's use of the word "fan" here is telling. In Japanese it signifies both the kind of fannish passion associated with the word in the English-speaking world (with which meaning it appears in such borrowed terms as *fuankurabu*, "fan club," and *fuanrettā*, "fan mail"), and a fannish passion that is specifically focused on non-Japanese objects.

[2.4] Mori's fannishness is echoed in contemporary essayist Arashiyama Kosaburō's 2008 collection, *Kaimono ryokōki* (A memoir of my shopping travel), in which he records a trip to the Sherlock Holmes Museum, where he bought "a Sherlock Holmes hat," that is, a deerstalker cap, at the museum shop. Along with the deerstalker, Arashiyama received a facsimile of Sherlock Holmes's calling card from the shopkeeper, about which he reminisces poetically, "When I held the calling card in my hand / it deepened my belief that / 'Sherlock Holmes was a real man,' giving me a real feeling of pleasure" (quoted in Ueda 2015, 305).

[2.5] These examples of Holmesian influence are described in detail in Ueda Hirotaka's *Bunjin, Shārokku o aisu* (Writers love Holmes, 2015), alongside accounts of some 25 other Japanese writers whose works have touched on Holmes, making the book a uniquely comprehensive survey of the character's influence on Japan. Ueda is a more recognizably traditional Sherlockian, belonging to both the Japan Sherlock Holmes Club and the British Baker Street Irregulars (BSI), and he has written two other books on Holmes, *Shārokku Hōmuzu dai hakurankai* (Sherlock Holmes: The great exposition, 1988), and *Shārokku Hōmuzu tabitabigakugaku: Shārokkiana etsurakki* (Musings on Sherlock Holmes: The joys of Sherlockiana, 2001), as well as coediting and contributing to the BSI publication *Japan and Sherlock Holmes* (2004). In *Bunjin*, his objective history, like Mori's and Arashiyama's reminiscences, is colored by a particularly fannish subjectivity, as when he good-naturedly quibbles with Mori over her memory of facts. Of her poached egg anecdote, he observes, "It seems impressive that she remembers this, but reading 'The Problem of Thor Bridge,' it says that they ate

'hard-boiled eggs' for breakfast, not poached" (192), and of her cold duck one, "But Holmes didn't eat 'cold duck.' Snipe, pheasant, and cold beef appear in the Canon, but cold duck doesn't" (193). Such attention to the minutiae of Holmes canon echoes that of English-language Sherlockiana; it differs less in its content than in its mode of production, and this is where we might locate the specific cultural context that enables the publication of Kitagawa's BBC *Sherlock* pastiches.

[2.6] With few exceptions, English-language nonfiction about Sherlock Holmes and pastiches of him are the purview of two kinds of publishing: academic and small press. While pastiche by established authors often enjoys a somewhat more expanded market, it seems safe to say that Sherlockian publishing in both British and American markets is highly niche and mostly self-sustaining. In contrast, Japanese writing on Holmes, including both Kitahara's and Ueda's works as well as such nonfiction writing as Uemura Masao's *Shārokku Hōmuzu no tanoshimikata* (How to enjoy Sherlock Holmes, 2011) and Hiraga Saburō's *Hōmuzu seichijunrei no tabi* (Holmesian pilgrimages, 2010), is almost uniformly published by mainstream publishing houses and is sold both online and in large, urban bookstore chains. Kitahara alone publishes his Holmesian works through such Japanese publishing behemoths as Kadokawa (which also distributes BBC *Sherlock* on DVD and Blu-ray in Japan), Kodansha, and Suieisha, while Ueda's *Bunjin* was published by Seidosha, publisher of the well-regarded journals *Eureka* and *Gendai shisō* (Contemporary thought). This industrially pedigreed (and materially far-reaching) publication context accords Japanese Holmesian writing a mainstream legitimacy that it often lacks in the West—one that almost certainly benefits from the character's Britishness, since that has historically been valued in Japan. It's this legitimacy, I would argue, that combines with a comparatively blurred line separating fan and producer in Japan to create a fan and industrial context within which mass-marketed BBC *Sherlock* pastiche is made possible.

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### 3. Fan works in the age of global convergence

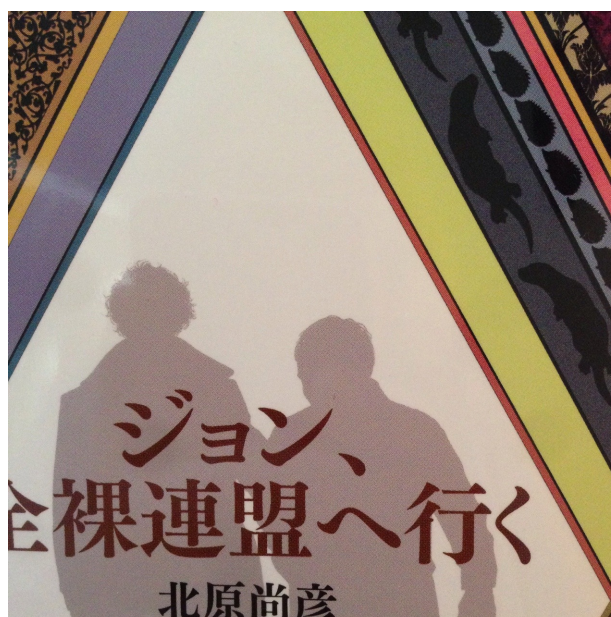
[3.1] There are many different Japanese fan cultures, of course, and some are themselves more culturally legitimated than others. Yet even in the case of *otaku* and *fujoshi* fan cultures—the former roughly equivalent to American geek culture, and the latter to English-language slash communities—we see slippage between fan and producer subjectivities. Notable examples include the founders of the anime studio Gainax, who established themselves as anime producers with inexpensive, homemade animation that they premiered at anime fan conventions, and professional manga artists such as Fumi Yoshinaga, who supplements her own commercial works with amateur *doujinshi* (fan comics) that expand her stories, often in more homoerotic directions. This slippage is enabled at least in part by the geographical concentration of Japanese popular culture in Tokyo and

Osaka, and it anticipates the blurring between fan and producer subjectivities we have only recently begun to see in Hollywood and the UK.

[3.2] Given this cultural context, it seems less surprising that a work that would be considered amateur fan fiction in Anglo-American fan culture was distributed in Japan by a well-known mainstream publisher; and if this were the extent of the differences separating these two fan cultural contexts, Kitagawa's book might be little more than a passing curiosity. What makes it something worth taking note of is its use, on its cover, of the otter and hedgehog meme that originated squarely within English-language online fandom. The cover of *John and Sherlock Casebook 1: Jon, zenchi renmei e iku* was designed by professional manga artist and illustrator Mizutama Keinojo (who died on December 15, 2014, shortly after the publication of Kitahara's book), who based it on the cover of Hayakawa's 1981 *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, translated by Okubō Yasuo.



**Figure 1.** Mizutama Keinojo's August 29, 2014, tweet contrasting the cover of "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" (1981, left) with her 2014 homage cover for "John and Sherlock Casebook 1: Jon zenchi renmei e iku." [[View larger image.](#)]



**Figure 2.** Close-up of Mizutama's cover for *"John and Sherlock Casebook 1: Jon zenchi renmei e iku,"* featuring the hedgehog and otter of (English-language) Sherlock fandom fame in the blue ribbons on the right. [View larger image.]

[3.3] Mizutama, who described herself as a fan of the BBC's *Sherlock*, was particularly taken with the otter and hedgehog meme, which originated in British fan Red Scharlach's Tumblr post "Otters Who Look Like Benedict Cumberbatch: A Visual Examination" (<http://redscharlach.tumblr.com/post/19565284869/otters-who-look-like-benedict-cumberbatch-a>). After publication of the book, Mizutama made a special version of her cover available to fans in Japan who, for 24 hours, could print it at networked 7-Eleven convenience stores for only the cost of making a color photocopy: 60 yen (note 4); both she and Kitahara publicized the offer on Twitter. In this version, the official cover's center silhouettes of Sherlock and John are replaced with the costumed silhouettes of an otter and a hedgehog, inextricably linking Mizutama's work with English-language fan works.



**Figure 3.** Author Kitahara Naohiko's tweet demonstrating that he downloaded and printed Mizutama Keinojo's limited fandom version of the *"John and Sherlock Casebook 1: Jon, zenchi renmei e iku"* cover, featuring an otter wearing Sherlock's distinctive Belstaff coat walking next to hedgehog John. [View larger image.]

[3.4] It's this last cover that I find all but impossible to discuss through those frameworks of oppositionality, appropriation, and clearly defined fan/producer relationships that currently characterize English-language scholarship of fan fiction and transformative works. Indeed, the decentralized context of the book's production—it was produced by the longtime publisher of both Conan Doyle's works in Japanese and the long-running *Hayakawa Mystery Magazine*, written by

identifiably traditional Sherlockian Kitahara, and illustrated by a professional artist-cum-*Sherlock* fan—raises the questions of where we locate production and how we might conceptualize "monetization" here.

[3.5] Rather than an outlier, Mizutama's book cover seems a vanguard of things to come. Nele Noppe writes, "I question whether it makes sense for fans and fan scholars to focus debates about commodification on whether commodifying fan work is in any way desirable. It will most likely happen, in some form, at some point in the future" (2011, ¶5.1). That future, I would argue, has come, and now we need to shift debates about whether or not we should "allow" commingling (within both fandom and fan studies) of fans and producers to debates about how we might more effectively navigate these turbulent waters. This is not to say we should abandon issues of appropriation, which are particularly relevant within the far more structured American media industry. But Mizutama's hybrid identity as both fan and producer, set in a culturally specific context in which these identities have historically been blurred, suggests that we might expand our consideration of fan/producer relationships and the circulation of fan works outside fandom to include the ways that fannish authenticity and identities are being challenged by an always-changing technological landscape.

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## 4. Notes

1. Japanese names are given in Japanese order (with the surname first) except where a Western precedent exists.
  2. The stories appear under both Japanese and English titles: "Jon no suirihōshūgyō" (How John learned the trick), "Jon, zenchi renmei e iku" (The stark naked league), "Jon to jinsei no nejireta onna" (The woman with the twisted life), "Jon to bijin saikurisuto" (The shapely cyclist), "Jon, san kyōfukan e iku" (The three terribles), and "Jon to madara no nawa" (The speckled rope).
  3. Edogawa Rampo was the pen name of author Hirai Tarō, styled after the name Edgar Allan Poe.
  4. This was the same means by which Mizutama had distributed an earlier *Sherlock doujinshi* cowritten with fantasy novelist Yu Godai.
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## Review

### *Fan phenomena: Sherlock Holmes*, edited by Tom Ue and Jonathan Cranfield

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[0.1] *Keywords*—Fan fiction; Film; TV

Harrington, Ellen Burton. 2017. *Fan Phenomena: Sherlock Holmes*, edited by Tom Ue and Jonathan Cranfield [book review]. In "Sherlock Holmes Fandom, Sherlockiana, and the Great Game," edited by Betsy Rosenblatt and Roberta Pearson, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 23.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2017.0914>.

Tom Ue and Jonathan Cranfield, editors. *Fan Phenomena: Sherlock Holmes*. Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2014, paperback, \$28.50 (164p) ISBN 9781783202058.

[1] Did Holmes read *Hamlet*? Of course, as an educated Victorian man, Arthur Conan Doyle himself partook in the fan culture of his time, and this volume begins with Tom Ue's essay on Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes as fans—of Shakespeare. This scholarly essay opens up a slender and diverse volume, which roams from literary and historical analysis to perspectives on audience and authorship to interviews with writers currently producing Holmes stories in various formats for the marketplace. Given the brevity of this installment in the Fan Phenomena series and the necessary limitation on the range of approaches to Sherlock Holmes it can consider in this medium, such an anthology must be mostly a launching point for contemplating aspects of contemporary fan culture. Intriguingly, Tom Ue and Jonathan Cranfield's volume invites us to consider the "figure of Holmes, laced with nostalgia" as the "most enduring model" for the kind of creative participation that represents the new model for fan culture (6). Yet *Fan Phenomena: Sherlock Holmes* feels a bit scattered; the various works within it are somewhat uneven in quality and provide little cross-commentary or framing as scaffolding for the reader.

[2] The volume is structured to some extent by the three denser analytic essays, which fall at its beginning, middle, and end. Considering the myriad ways in which Shakespeare's plays structure and influence the canon, directly and through the novels of George Meredith, Ue's essay reminds readers of the Victorians' fascination with Shakespeare and with the familiar conspiracy theory

that Francis Bacon was the true author of the plays attributed to Shakespeare. Thus, Conan Doyle himself was engaged with issues of canon legitimacy and authorship as he wrote the Holmes stories. Writing about Holmes fan culture later in the volume, Jonathan Cranfield's essay considers early Holmes fan letters in relation to the "coming multiverse of Sherlockian fan phenomena," our contemporary world in which fan culture is courted (67). Cranfield's reading considers the ways that the meticulous aspects of the early fan culture function as a form of play that anticipates our current interactive and often commercialized fan culture, down to the ways in which the fans' desire created the economic pressure that caused Conan Doyle to resuscitate Holmes. The volume ends with Benjamin Poore's thoughtful essay on Moriarty and conspiracy as he notes that Conan Doyle's sudden introduction of Moriarty as the vehicle for killing Holmes causes the reader's "deductive apparatus [to be] smashed to pieces on the rocks of Moriarty" (137). Poore considers the seductiveness of conspiracy theories in relation to the modern condition—our meaningless lives thus buttressed by an excess of meaning—the tendency of recent versions of Moriarty to stoke fear via chaos and the intertextual playfulness of many of the concurrent adaptations currently being produced.

[3] Russell Merritt's "Holmes and the Snake Skin Suits" and Noel Brown's "Sherlock Holmes in the Twenty-second Century" focus on the historical and creative context for quite different kinds of television adaptations. The fast-paced prose of Merritt's cultural history of the rapid 1950s conversion of the Holmes films to television shows deliberately pulls us into an investigative account of a significant shift in how the Holmes stories were told and how fans were able to see them. Butchering the Rathbone-Bruce films into shorter shows that could be watched on a very small screen, and thus eliminating dark scenes and long shots, enabled them to make the transition from the cinema to the television just as studios were quietly making such content available to television stations to avoid conflict with theaters. These TV shows repurposed from Rathbone films created a specific version of Sherlock Holmes to which other Holmes shows reacted. Noel Brown's essay examines the adaptation of Holmes for the children's television market in the futuristic world of a 22nd-century version of Holmes in which he is branded for the juvenile market. Inhabiting a future world of potentially threatening technology, this younger version of Holmes loses his antiheroic and decadent qualities, a handsome 20-something detective sparring with a recurring villain in the specific formulaic structure that resembles other kids' shows like *Sesame Street* and *Scooby-Doo*.

[4] Three brief essays are written from the perspective of writers of pastiche: Luke Benjamin Kuhns's essay "Doyle or Death?" initially promises to assess various adaptations as it considers a range of styles, yet it draws back from staking strong claims or making specific critiques, instead withdrawing into a



generalized, upbeat perspective on the field. Jonathan Barnes's essay delves into his experience writing Holmes adventures specifically for audio in which highly canonical works require loving and precise detail, following prescribed "rules" to achieve an interpretation that closely resembles the original. Shane Peacock considers how his experiences as a Holmes fan and his authorial choices inform his creation of "The Boy Sherlock Holmes," which nods to both the canon and to Sherlockians, as he hypothesizes what kinds of childhood experiences in Victorian London would have shaped the adult Holmes.

[5] These eight essays in *Fan Phenomena: Sherlock Holmes* are interspersed with five "Fan Appreciation" interviews with writers who recently produced or are currently working on Holmes adaptations in an interesting array of media. These include Anthony Horowitz, who wrote the "authorized" novel *The House of Silk* (2011); Ellie Ann Soderstrom, the producer of the interactive book *Steampunk Holmes: Legacy of the Nautilus* (2012), adapted from the print version by P. C. Martin; three members of the team behind the graphic novel *The Young Sherlock Holmes Adventures* (2014); Scott Beatty, who co-wrote the graphic novel *Sherlock Holmes: Year One* (2011); and the novelist Robert Ryan, author of *Dead Man's Land* (2013). While these authors are clearly fans of Holmes, their personal and to some extent commercial investment in their Holmes adaptations means that these interviews do not function primarily as "appreciation" in the way that their works might. The interviews themselves often wind up being more informational than revelatory as the subjects introduce readers to their adaptations and, perhaps unsurprisingly, some of the subjects seem to be unwilling to explore the critical ramifications of their interpretations.

[6] On the whole, this slim volume's lively variety in assembling so many kinds of meditations on Holmes means it is stretched rather thin, leaving the reader longing for a more nuanced consideration of the implications of, for instance, the choices made in certain kinds of adaptations. In comparison with the analytic essays, some of the other material only skims the surface, avoiding a consideration of the political resonances beginning with Conan Doyle to which later interpretations must react, if only by omission. The minimal editorial apparatus means that the reader is left to sift through the meanings of, say, the plethora of mentions of Moriarty, without the pleasure of a guide to that mysterious professor who resurfaces in our own times as an "agent of chaos" (138).

## Book review

### *Twentieth-century Victorian: Arthur Conan Doyle and the "Strand Magazine," 1891–1930*, by Jonathan Cranfield

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[0.1] *Keywords*—English literature; Modernism; Periodical studies

Mecklenburg, Anne-Charlotte. 2017. *Twentieth-century Victorian: Arthur Conan Doyle and the "Strand Magazine," 1891–1930*, by Jonathan Cranfield [book review]. In "Sherlock Holmes Fandom, Sherlockiana, and the Great Game," edited by Betsy Rosenblatt and Roberta Pearson, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2017.01050>.

Jonathan Cranfield, *Twentieth-Century Victorian: Arthur Conan Doyle and the "Strand Magazine," 1891–1930*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016, hardcover, £75 (272p) ISBN 978-1474406758; e-book, £75, ISBN 978-1474406772.

[1] Jonathan Cranfield's *Twentieth-Century Victorian: Arthur Conan Doyle and the "Strand Magazine," 1891–1930* joins a growing body of academic work on middlebrow literature at the beginning of the 20th century. As the title may suggest, this book tracks the intertwined histories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the *Strand Magazine*, the publisher of much of his literary work. In particular, *Twentieth-Century Victorian* aims to shift both the *Strand* and Conan Doyle out from under the shadow of Sherlock Holmes and, by extension, from the late Victorian moment in which the Holmes stories are set. It primarily focuses on the paired questions of first, how the *Strand* and Conan Doyle both became characterized as Victorian, and second, how to make sense of Conan Doyle's and the *Strand*'s later literary output in the context of the 19th century without framing them as inextricably bound to that moment. While the book engages with the Holmes stories, its focus is on placing them within the larger context of the *Strand* as a whole and on reading them as moments in a longer history. For example, Conan Doyle's later writing on spiritualism is often seen, at worst, as an absurd departure from the worldview articulated in the Holmes stories or, at best, as the slightly embarrassing output of a man unable to translate 19th-century values into the 20th. Cranfield, in contrast, takes this turn toward spiritualism seriously and argues that both Conan Doyle and the *Strand* were offering their readers a type of radicalism, albeit of the "creeping, cumulative kind" that

emerges from popular fiction (12).

[2] *Twentieth-Century Victorian* is organized chronologically, spanning the years 1891 to 1930. This period encompasses both the *Strand*'s rise and decline in popularity and the majority of Conan Doyle's literary career. This chronological structure allows Cranfield to establish a set of key concerns at the beginning of the book that he traces through the subsequent chapters. Specifically, he focuses on the increasingly disparate ways in which the *Strand* and Conan Doyle registered the shifting role of institutions in public life. Cranfield pays particular attention to the interrelationships between a burgeoning consumer culture, technological developments and the professionalization of science, the British military, and institutionalized religion. One added benefit to pairing a discussion of the *Strand* with Conan Doyle's literary career is that it allows Cranfield to view these larger institutional structures through gradually expanding circles of analysis. For example, we can see in Conan Doyle's own fraught relationship with the *Strand* a negotiation between a particular author and the institution of the periodical press, even as both he and the *Strand* also attempted to map the shifting network of social structures in which they found themselves participating.

[3] The book's five chapters and conclusion track the relationship between Conan Doyle and the *Strand*, starting from a position of ideological compatibility (chapters 1 and 2), through a transitional period of ambivalence (chapter 3), to fundamentally differing world views (chapters 4, 5, and conclusion). Chapter 1 focuses primarily on the *Strand*'s founding in 1891 and the beginning of its longstanding relationship with Conan Doyle. This chapter works to define the *Strand*'s ideal middle-class reader; to position both the *Strand* and Conan Doyle in the context of the literary marketplace; and to discuss the *Strand*'s founding political stance, a liberal optimism in social institutions. Chapter 2 covers the four years bridging the 19th and 20th centuries, focusing primarily on the *Strand*'s response to the Second Boer War (1899–1902) and the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900. It specifically details the magazine's breakdown of faith in an institutionalized military during the Second Boer War and, given its anxieties surrounding national and imperial degeneration, its transference of that faith to the scientific establishment.

[4] The remaining three chapters and the conclusion track the increasing disparity between Conan Doyle's and the *Strand*'s ideological projects. In the face of the upheaval of early 20th-century social movements and World War I, the *Strand* pursued a tone of light-hearted relief, exemplified by P. G. Wodehouse and influenced by early film comedies. Conan Doyle, in contrast, sought a way to reenchant a world that he saw as held hostage by institutionalized religion, scientific materialism, and increasingly globalized capitalism. Chapter 3 discusses the first decade of the 20th century, centered primarily around Conan Doyle's

hesitation to resurrect Sherlock Holmes in 1903. Cranfield argues that in addition to the common explanations for his reluctance to return to Holmes—such as the tension between the commercial potential of Holmes and his own artistic aspirations—we can also understand Conan Doyle's ambivalence as a product of his politics. As he became increasingly politically radical during this period, Conan Doyle fell out of step ideologically with the middlebrow *Strand*. Even the Holmes stories that Conan Doyle did eventually produce, argues Cranfield, departed from his earlier work through formal and thematic experimentation, as well as more pointed critiques of traditional Victorian values.

[5] This separation between Conan Doyle and the *Strand* only intensified during the war and its aftermath, the period of time that occupies chapters 4 and 5. In several ways, this section can be read as the companion to chapter 2, in that it discusses the *Strand's* reevaluation of the values of chivalry and scientific advancement that had preoccupied the magazine during the turn of the century. For Conan Doyle, in contrast, science became both the cause of, and the possible cure for, the disenchantments of modernity. His novels *The Lost World* (1912) and *The Land of Mist* (1925) search for spaces that might allow for a reconciliation of faith, literary romance, and new technologies. The *Strand* similarly attempted to integrate older values of valor and national identity with new scientific models. The conclusion, which covers 1925 to 1930, the year of editor Herbert Greenhough Smith's retirement from the magazine and Conan Doyle's death, traces the *Strand's* shift in focus from technologies of war to those of entertainment.

[6] The book's underlying structure—of pairing discussions of the *Strand's* history with Conan Doyle's often independent literary trajectory—does an interesting job of formally mirroring Cranfield's own theoretical interest in the interplay between individuals and larger institutional systems. At times, however, these conceptual links between the *Strand* and Conan Doyle seem underexplored, as though the book were pursuing two independent subjects simultaneously. In part because placing these two histories in conversation with each other is such a productive avenue, it would have been helpful to bring the connections between them closer to the surface of the text and to knit the Conan Doyle sections and the *Strand* sections of each chapter together more explicitly.

[7] Another avenue for future work concerns the readers of Conan Doyle and the *Strand*. Cranfield spends some time referencing circulation data to provide an indication of readers' interest in the *Strand*, and he discusses reviews in other periodicals that engage with both the *Strand* and Conan Doyle's work. With these exceptions, however, Cranfield primarily refers to readers in the context of imaginary addressees of the texts under discussion. Given the book's investment in the interplay between the actual contents of the *Strand* and its imagined

position in a wider cultural landscape, the magazine's real readers seem like a key piece that is missing from Cranfield's account.

[8] Because of the book's focus on the *Strand* and Conan Doyle from a primarily textual and historical perspective, scholars of Sherlock Holmes fandom may find that it provides a valuable context for the types of texts that readers and fans would have seen in conversation with the Sherlock Holmes stories. For example, Cranfield shifts our understanding of the Holmes stories themselves by reading them as firmly established within the system of domestic institutions discussed above. Scholars have often framed Sherlock Holmes as both policing and exemplifying a Victorian English ideal that was imagined to be under constant threat from imperial subjects, criminological types, emasculating forces, and other such elements. Holmes is seen as a limit case: a figure who is both unattainably more than ordinary citizens and dangerously intertwined with the forces that threaten them. Cranfield instead concludes that "Holmes's vaunted 'method,' then, was not necessarily something esoteric and unachievable for *Strand* readers, but rather a heuristic and ideological model that could be at least partially applicable to the moral practices of everyday life" (73). The book therefore offers a helpful lens on the Holmes stories by discussing them not only in the context of detective literature or criminology but also as unified pieces of the larger, multigenre bodies of work of both Conan Doyle and the *Strand*.

[9] The general reader of *Twentieth-Century Victorian* is left with a detailed understanding of the ways in which gradual changes in an organization's assumptions, interests, and constraints can manifest. The investments of the *Strand* of the 1890s become recycled and reinflected throughout the first three decades of the 20th century, as it attempted the simultaneous processes of both fitting new realities to old frameworks and evaluating old frameworks in the face of new realities. This book therefore may be valuable to readers interested in histories of the early 20th century that focus on industrial shifts, especially within the periodical press.



## Book review

*The Great Detective*, by Zach Dundas; *Gender and the modern Sherlock Holmes*, edited by Nadine Farghaly; and *Sherlock Holmes*, edited by Alex Werner

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[0.1] *Keywords*—Arthur Conan Doyle; Fandom; Sexuality; Victorian England; Victoriana

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2017.0968>.

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Zach Dundas. *The Great Detective: The amazing rise and immortal life of Sherlock Holmes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015, hardcover, \$26 (336p), ISBN 978-0-544-21404-0, e-book \$15.95 (2378 KB), ISBN 978-0-544-22020-1, ASIN B00LZ7GP6U.

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Nadine Farghaly, ed. *Gender and the modern Sherlock Holmes: Essays on film and television adaptations since 2009*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015, paperback, \$35 (260p), ISBN 978-0-786-49459-0, e-book \$9.99 (3353 KB), ISBN 978-1-4766-2281-1, ASIN B019WQQEY8.

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Alex Werner, ed. *Sherlock Holmes: The man who never lived and will never die*. London: Ebury Press, 2014, hardcover, £25 (256p), ISBN 978-0-09-195872-5, e-book £12.99, ISBN 978-1-47-350264-2.

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### 1. Introduction

[1.1] "Nobody writes of Holmes and Watson without love," John Le Carré (2013,

xv) famously states, and it certainly seems as though there is still plenty left to say about Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and its surrounding worlds. This book review examines three recent nonfictional publications about the Great Detective: *Sherlock Holmes: The Man Who Never Lived and Will Never Die*, compiled by Alex Werner (2014); *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes: Essays on Film and Television Adaptations since 2009*, edited by Nadine Farghaly (2015); and Zach Dundas's *The Great Detective: The Amazing Rise and Immortal Life of Sherlock Holmes* (2015).

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## 2. Werner, *Sherlock Holmes*

[2.1] Werner's *Sherlock Holmes* is the accompanying publication to the Sherlock Holmes-themed exhibition held at the Museum of London in 2014–15. The volume follows the exhibition's structure, focusing on Holmes as character and literary work, on his world, and on his cinematic history in turn. It works equally well as an exquisitely illustrated stand-alone volume for those who did not have the chance to go to the exhibition itself and as a means of revisiting the exhibition for those that have. Alongside the illustrations, which include photographs, maps, and sections of the *Strand Magazine*, stand a selection of diverse and fascinating articles. Conan Doyle's work is here a springboard to a wider exploration of the Victorian world: united by the thread of Sherlock Holmes, sections move from an exploration of the Holmesian production context to a discussion of what it means to be Bohemian in the Victorian era to an examination of the art and photography capturing the typical Victorian atmosphere—a truly refreshing and informative mix. While aimed at the general reader, the articles also give longtime friends of Sherlock Holmes something new to discover. David Cannadine's "A Case of [Mistaken?] Identity" starts off the volume with an exploration of the Holmesian London—or rather, how Conan Doyle constructs this fictional London (part of it is actually Edinburgh) and the detective's position within this "great cesspool." It then touches on all of the main points of the exhibition: the literary work, its world and era, and its cinematic history. These points are then explored in shorter, more detailed essays and images.

[2.2] "The 'Bohemian Habits' of Sherlock Holmes" by John Stokes gives an account of the second meaning of "Bohemian." It does not simply allude to a territory of the then–Austro-Hungarian empire, well remembered from "The Scandal in Bohemia" but also hints at an intriguingly diverse "way of life, a caste [*sic*] of mind" (57). The essay makes it easy to imagine Holmes and Watson in this context as it moves from describing eating habits to "lounging, loafing, loitering—and idling," a context in which boredom becomes "a mark of superiority" (84). Especially fascinatingly, the essay also touches on female



Bohemians. While acknowledging women's "exclu[sion] from both contemporary accounts and retrospective male autobiographies," Stokes highlights the prominence of the play *The Bohemian Girl* as "probably the best-known application of the term," as well as the rise of more "visible" "'Bohemian' women, who would flaunt their sexual independence, even from the more earnest members of their own gender" (66).

[2.3] Following on from there, we have "Sherlock Holmes's Central London in Photographs and Postcards," and Alex Werner's exploration of Sidney Paget's illustrations for the *Strand*, which examines both Paget's technique and his role in shaping an image of Holmes—for instance, his choice of clothing (Paget famously introduced the deerstalker cap) and his "skill in conveying natural posture" (121). This is followed by a brief exploration of Conan Doyle's circumstances and bibliography directly from the *Strand*, "A Day with Dr. Conan Doyle." From Holmesian art, the volume then moves on to art in the Holmesian world: Pat Hardy explores artists' presence in and work on the atmospheric London in "The Art of Sherlock Holmes: 'The air of London is the sweeter for my presence,'" accompanied by a selection of photographs by Alvin Langdon Coburn, both of which focus particularly on the quality of light and the famous London fog. Next the volume turns to the apparent ephemerality of Holmes in the *Strand* in Clare Pettitt's "Throwaway Holmes," which explores Victorian magazine culture and convincingly argues that the phenomenon of Holmes transcends it. Finally, Nathalie Morris's "Silent Sherlock Holmes and Early Cinema" offers a quick historic overview of early film incarnations, followed by snapshots of Holmes in adaptations up to the present day.

[2.4] The volume succeeds in enriching the reading experience of the Sherlock Holmes stories by bringing the world in which they move back to life. It does not offer a close textual analysis; instead, it brightly illuminates the era in which Holmes, had he been real, lived. It situates Arthur Conan Doyle as Holmes's creator within the reality of the time of Holmes's inception, shedding light on production contexts, illustrations, and cinematic afterlives. It is at its strongest when it explores and illustrates the real atmosphere of Victorian London and its people that Watson (and Conan Doyle) so skillfully evokes in the Sherlock Holmes stories.

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### 3. Farghaly, *Gender and the modern Sherlock Holmes*

[3.1] Farghaly's *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes* offers a diverse set of essays from an equally diverse range of contributors, including artists and academic scholars. If the volume suffers from anything, it is the sometimes unfortunate conflation of gender and sexuality. Standing under the title of "Gender," many essays discuss sexuality and queerness; the collection would

have perhaps been better served with the title *Gender and Sexuality and the Modern Sherlock Holmes*. However, that should not deter the reader from picking up the collection, as it offers a satisfyingly wide range of discussions, focusing especially on the Holmesian female characters. Within academic publications on recent Holmesian adaptations, this volume stands out in particular through its inclusion of *Elementary* (and its Joan Watson), about which little academic material has yet been published. Indeed, the volume could be split into three main sections, the first primarily interested in Irene Adler in various incarnations, the second focused on *Elementary* (2012–) and Joan Watson in particular, and the third discussing queerness.

[3.2] After a brief introduction by Farghaly, the collection opens with an article by Greg Freeman, "The Evolution of Sherlock Holmes: An Examination of a Timeless Figure amid Changing Times." It provides a quick overview of recent incarnation of Holmes in film and TV, starting with the Granada series and Jeremy Brett, and ending with *Elementary*. Unfortunately, this article also gives the collection a rocky start. While most of the rest of the volume clearly distinguishes issues of gender from issues of sexuality/queerness, Freeman barely addresses gender at all, and when he does, he establishes erroneous links between sexuality and masculinity (10). What is more, the article makes unfortunate sweeping assumptions about both the sex appeal and the sexuality of the various incarnations without backing them up with textual or other evidence. We are left with the dubious assertions that Joan Watson and Holmes in *Elementary*, despite their lack of romance so far, have "just the right amount of underlying tension to make the couple's interactions suspenseful" (15) and that it "is indeed laughable to imagine previous Holmes actors, Basil Rathbone or Jeremy Brett, [...] appearing naked to the waist" (19). Freeman attempts to argue that newer Holmeses possess a "sex appeal" (19) not found in older incarnations, but in doing so, he disregards the historicity of these adaptations and fails to back up the "laughable" with any evidence from audiences. If anything, this first article succeeds in highlighting precisely what makes gender and sexuality in the modern (and, for that matter, past) Holmesian adaptation a worthy and necessary point of discussion.

[3.3] From there on, however, the collection of essays proves to be of excellent quality, offering a remarkable breadth of points of view. The following five articles all concentrate on Irene Adler: Benedick Turner, "There's a Name Everyone Says: Irene Adler and Jim Moriarty"; Rhonda Lynette Harris Taylor, "Return of 'the woman': Irene Adler in Contemporary Adaptations"; Maria Alberto, "'Of dubious and questionable memory': The Collision of Gender and Canon in Creating *Sherlock's* Postfeminist Femme Fatale"; Katharine McCain, "'Feeling Exposed?' Irene Adler and the Self-Reflective Disguise"; and Lindsay Katzir, "I Am Sherlocked: Adapting Victorian Gender and Sexuality in 'A Scandal in Belgravia'").

Most are interested in either Adler's role in Guy Ritchie's movies (2009, 2011) or in BBC's *Sherlock* (2010–), though *Elementary* does receive some discussion. The articles primarily explore the role of Adler's gender presentation, though discussions of sexuality—hers or other characters'—are never far away. The predominant conclusion seems to be that the modern Adler affirms rather than challenges patriarchal gender roles and heteronormativity.

[3.4] The collection then turns more fully to *Elementary*, with one article on "The Woman and the Napoleon of Crime: Moriarty, Adler, *Elementary*" (Joseph S. Walker) and two on Joan Watson: Elizabeth Welch's "Joan for John: An Elementary Choice" and Lucy Baker's "Joan Watson: Mascot, Companion, and Investigator." The latter is especially interesting as it shifts the focus off the Holmes-Watson relationship and onto the relationship of Joan Watson and Irene Adler, in the sense that it is Watson, rather than Holmes, who is in conflict with and ultimately bests Adler.

[3.5] The final section of the collection is centered on the question of Holmes's sexuality and the presence of "queerness" in the adaptations. The odd essay out is perhaps Zea Miller's "The Veneration of Violation in *Sherlock*," which interrogates Sherlock's questionable behavior toward "people, especially women." Miller describes the show as having "a sheer masculinist agenda" and argues that the audience, through their hero-worship of Sherlock, becomes complicit in it (208–9). While the role and treatment of women in *Sherlock* certainly deserves critical analysis, Miller's article argues so adamantly for the series' embeddedness in "rape culture" (215) that it fails to acknowledge the series' continuing criticism of its title character; rather, it assumes an audience incapable of combining the love for a character with disagreement with his behavior. The four other articles (Ayaan Agane, "Conflations of 'Queerness' in 21st Century Adaptations"; Hannah Mueller, "A Questionable Bromance: Queer Subtext, Fan Service, and the Dangers of Queerbaiting in Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* and *A Game of Shadows*"; Karma Waltonen, "Sherlocked: Homosociality and (A)Sexuality"; and Kathryn E. Lane, "'Now, Watson, the fair sex is your department': The BBC's *Sherlock* and Interpersonal Relationships") focus on Holmes's sexual orientation. Of particular interest among these essays is Mueller's, which is the only essay in the volume to explicitly discuss not only audiences but fandom, as she considers slash fan fiction and subtextual homoeroticism of modern Holmes adaptations, which frequently takes the form of queerbaiting. Also of note is Waltonen's essay, which applies asexuality as a sexual orientation and the split-attraction model (that is, decoupling sexual and romantic orientation) in its discussion of Sherlock's sexuality. The article seems to lack an awareness of pan- and aromanticism alongside homo-, hetero- and biromantic orientations (199), but it is a much-needed addition to the academic analyses of Sherlock's queerness because it broadens the spectrum beyond the more frequently addressed potential

homosexuality, bringing asexuality into the discussion.

[3.6] Overall, this collection of essays is well worth a read, if with a necessary critical eye. Certainly for its discussions of *Elementary* alone it should not be passed by. If one approaches the volume expecting discussions of sexuality/sexual orientation/queerness alongside questions of gender, the disjoint between title and content is far less jarring, and the volume is indeed at its strongest where the two subjects are allowed to stand side by side without being conflated.

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#### 4. Dundas, *The Great Detective*

[4.1] Dundas's exploration of *The Great Detective* runs 300 pages. The book's lack of illustrations and large blocks of text should not deter the reader: the writer is a member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and thus moves easily within circles of Sherlockian aficionados, making his work a fascinating read. The chapter titles evoke a novel rather than a nonfiction work, and the volume's genre skillfully shifts between fiction, biography, autobiography, travel report, journalism, and light academia, which more often than not enriches the reading experience. Alongside Dundas, whose personality rarely fully fades from the text, the reader moves from a discussion of Sherlock Holmes's inception to an imagined scene in Joseph Bell's lecture hall and back again (33–36), or from the narrative of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) to Dundas's own hiking experience on modern Dartmoor (160–61), to give just a small sample.

[4.2] Guided by the chronology set by the Holmes stories—from their first inception to their afterlives—Dundas traces an enjoyable breadth of topics surrounding the Great Detective, always returning to touch base with the Arthur Conan Doyle canon. Not unlike Werner's *Sherlock Holmes*, Dundas too illuminates Conan Doyle's life and background, the times in which *Sherlock Holmes* was conceived and proceeded to be written, but he moves his exploration far beyond it. Instead of dwelling on faded photographs and history books (for the most part, anyway), the reader follows Dundas in an exploration of what is left of the Holmesian world today. Dundas paints a picture of the stories' atmosphere by shifting effortlessly from Watson's narration to a modern-day search for the real 221B, or by describing his visit to the Sherlock Holmes Museum in London's Baker Street (not at 221B).

[4.3] The most important of Holmes adaptations and actors are given nearly as much space as Conan Doyle himself, and what is more, the book never loses track of the Holmesian readers, the aficionados, the fans. While Dundas is clearly more at home in the Sherlockian societies than in the online-based fan communities, both are spotlighted in turn. The chapter "Moriarty and Friends" introduces the

Baker Street Irregulars, the "mother ship of [...] Holmes enthusiasts" (109). "The Great Game" discusses, of course, the Great Game of "quasi-scholarship" (232) in Sherlockian circles (that is, writings that share the inside joke that Holmes and Watson are historical figures and that Conan Doyle was nothing but Watson's literary agent). The chapter also talks about pastiche writing, and "The Return(s) of Sherlock Holmes" highlights not only the more recent TV and film adaptations but also the online fan fiction culture. While doing so, Dundas manages to avoid the fandom's debate about the use of the terms "pastiche" and "fan fiction" almost entirely. "Why the distinction between fic and pastiche?" he asks. Instead of exploring or even acknowledging the debate himself, he opts to give an answer by quoting Elinor Gray, who offers that either "pastiche is done for money, and fanfiction is available for free" or that there is a difference in "tone and intent," one "writing in Watson's voice and re-creating Conan Doyle" and the other "using the characters and world to explore completely different possibilities" (265–66).

[4.4] Dundas's frequent lengthy renarrations of Conan Doyle might be slightly cumbersome for a reader well informed of the Sherlock Holmes corpus, but overall, the read is a fascinating one, if only in its offering of a firsthand and consciously subjective account of what it means to explore the world of Sherlock Holmes today. Dundas merges his personal experience with factual report without boring the reader with either. Dundas's book is based on subjective experience and information gleaned via interviews and thus might not be the best pick for a reader looking for well-sourced information on Holmes and his world. The book's concluding source notes (299–306) take more the form of a "find more here!" than a bibliography, though the book's index is impressively comprehensive. Dundas offers a firsthand, frequently tongue-in-cheek, and highly readable overview of the Holmesian world, covering everything from Arthur Conan Doyle to the Sherlock Holmes Pub.

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## 5. Conclusion

[5.1] These three publications illustrate the breadth of recent engagement with Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, including explorations of his Victorian historical background to contemporary academic themes in recent adaptations to narratives of personal engagement with the material. "Nobody writes of Holmes and Watson without love" indeed—there is clearly still plenty of love going around, finding outlets as diverse as today's friends of Sherlock Holmes, and giving us, the reader, an impressive selection of genres in which to explore Holmes further.

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## 6. Acknowledgments

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