STUDIES IN BLACK, EMERALD, PINK, AND MIDNIGHT: TRACKING RESCRIPTIONS OF HOLMES AND WATSON THROUGH CONVERGENCE CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Sherlock Holmes has been called the "most prolific" character in literature (Redmond 232), and critics often seek to explain this status in terms of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's original narratives. However, I argue that Holmes's ongoing popularity must be considered alongside that of John Watson, and that we can profitably do so by engaging with Henry Jenkins's idea of "convergence culture." As I examine four rescriptions of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson that build from Doyle's initial 1887 "Study in Scarlet," I observe the paradox that, although convergence culture might explode the implicit elitism of the original texts, it also reincodes an extra-narrative elitism. From the developments and receptions of four recent "Studies," each in a different media form, I then show how convergence culture often increases insularity as it functions both alongside and against the rescriptive processes.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:

"YOU MAY MARRY HIM, MURDER HIM, OR DO ANYTHING YOU LIKE TO HIM"

In 1897, American actor William Gillette asked British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle for permission to change certain things about Doyle's most famous character, detective Sherlock Holmes, for a play eventually staged in 1899. Disgruntled, Doyle replied to Gillette's query with a terse "You may marry him, murder him, or do anything you like to him" (Eyles 34).

This epistolary exchange, which took place ten years after the initial introduction of Sherlock Holmes in Doyle's 1887 novella "A Study in Scarlet," highlights two intriguing facts often remarked upon in Holmesian scholarship: first, that Doyle quickly grew tired of the constant association with his fictional character (Eyles 34, 65, 77), and second, that Sherlock Holmes eventually became a cultural artefact despite his creator's ensuing displeasure. Critics have even observed, humorously but semi-accurately, that "Holmes was the first character in modern literature to be widely treated as if he were real and his creator fictitious" (Saler 600).

This popular treatment of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes is visible today in the many ways that the character seems to have outgrown even the considerable success he enjoyed during the author's own lifetime. Over a hundred years after his initial introduction, Sherlock Holmes has been accepted as one of literature's "most prolific" characters (Redmond 232), so widely depicted that it is impossible to count how many times he has been portrayed ("Everything Anticipated" 1). Many of these "prolific" portrayals, though, also enjoy considerable cultural and commercial success. In the last decade alone, for instance, Holmes has been the feature character of three new franchises garnering high levels of popular and critical interest, millions of dollars in earnings, and their respective industries' top awards: Warner Bros.'s Sherlock Holmes action movies (2009-2011), the BBC's television crime drama Sherlock (2010-present), and CBS's television crime drama Elementary (2012-present).

These highly visible examples of Sherlock Holmes's continuing popularity, though, already demonstrate that this popularity comes with its own codicils. Although contemporary audiences might recognize Holmes visually by one of many signifiers (for instance, a deerstalker hat or magnifying glass), these signifiers are often taken from rescriptions or adaptations of Doyle's work rather than the *Adventures* themselves. The various settings and narratives of the examples above also demonstrate that it is not the presence of such signifiers or even a familiar storyline alone that identifies Sherlock Holmes, even for audiences with no previous exposure to the character or Doyle's stories. Instead, contemporary works that derive from Doyle's initial 1887 novelette "A Study in Scarlet" suggest that audiences often recognize Sherlock Holmes through some relationship with John Watson.

In his graphic novel "A Study in Black," for instance, Karl Bollers relocates Holmes and Watson to New York's Harlem district as figurative partners in crime. Neil Gaiman takes this relationship a step further by portraying Holmes and Watson as literal partners in crime with his short story "A Study in Emerald." Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat increase the stakes as they re-imagine Holmes and Watson as ambiguous partners in the inaugural television episode "A Study in Pink," while M_Leigh specifically portrays Holmes and Watson in a romantic and sexual relationship in her fanfiction "A Study in Midnight." Yet despite their differences, both from the original "Study in Scarlet" and from one another, each of these four media artefacts builds from a shared value in Doyle's canon, and each does so by both adapting and rescripting some aspect(s) of that canon – most notably, Holmes and Watson's relationship.

Critics who attempt to explain Sherlock Holmes's continuing popularity often frame it in terms of some narrative quality. Allen Eyles, for instance, credits simply "the sheer readability of the stories" (9), although Martin Priestman ascribes Holmes's initial popularity not to Doyle's originality or the appeal of Holmes himself but rather to the "raw power" of serialized fiction as a participatory and still-innovative genre in the late 1800s (54): alternately, Neil McCaw attributes Holmes's continuing popularity to the way in which Doyle's characters and stories can be lifted from their original settings and re-imagined in "interaction with [different] socio-cultural contexts" (47). Similarly, in looking for "the source of the original's appeal," Bran Nicol extrapolates that it stemmed from the "brilliance of the [Holmesian canon], the relationship between Holmes and Watson, and most of all, the peculiarities of Holmes's personality" (125); drawing on Nicol's observations, Carlen Lavigne also cites "the potential homoeroticism innate in the

relationship between Holmes and Watson" (13), especially as currently evidenced in the recent Warner Bros. and BBC productions. Elsewhere I have also argued that audience participation is already an inherent part of the detective fiction genre and that John Watson's first-person "everyman" voice is one of the earliest devices to thus acknowledge and include audiences in the narrative itself ("Everything Anticipated" 1).

Despite their diversity, though, these critical explanations for Holmes's continuing popularity also share common underpinnings: each acknowledges that Doyle's work has moved among different media types since its inception, and each also builds from the assumption that Sherlock Holmes is a character who cannot function in a vacuum. While both of these concepts are true of many literary characters, I will argue that Holmes has been defined by them to a unique degree.

Christopher Redmond, for instance, establishes his claim that Holmes is the "most prolific" character in literature with a list of over 200 films and 6,000 articles before admitting that he cannot even count the offerings in other media such as theatre, television, and comics (232-242, 290-1). Redmond's exhaustive lists of Holmes-derived media, though, also demonstrate that both Doyle and his inheritors usually surround the prickly detective with certain characters – presumably in order to mediate the experience of both the mystery and Holmes himself for readers. In this mediation, some of Doyle's original characters can be converted to stock figures (his Inspector Lestrade can be replaced by any bumbling police chief/inspector, and his Mrs. Hudson might be exchanged for another well-meaning proprietor) but his John Watson is portrayed nearly as often as Sherlock Holmes himself. While Doyle unambiguously positions Holmes, his intelligence, and his methods as the main draw for Victorian audiences of the original

"Adventures," Doyle's Watson blunts Holmes's odd personality, esoteric knowledge, and cutting-edge methods for these audiences.[1] Yet although contemporary audiences are certainly more familiar with some of these facets – real-world forensics and erratic in-text narrators, to begin with – a John Watson or Watson-esque figure still accompanies every contemporary adaptation and rescription of Sherlock Holmes.

The phenomenon of rescription, which describes "the changes made by a [producer] in the received text in response to a perceived problem or to achieve some agenda" (Dessen 3), differs substantially from that of adaptation, which involves the changes made to accommodate the shift from one media form to another, though the two processes certainly do occur in conjunction. Redmond's aforementioned lists of Holmes-derived narratives in media from books to television already demonstrate that the Great Detective has been involved with adaptation since Doyle's first stories; to really examine Sherlock Holmes's popularity, though, necessitates observing the rescriptive process as well. More importantly, though, any examination of adaptation and rescription in regards to Sherlock Holmes should also acknowledge that John Watson's accompaniment serves some significant purpose, and that the interaction of all three factors is just as crucial to our contemporary image of the Great Detective as more globalized signifiers such as the deerstalker and magnifying glass.

Rescriptions of Holmes and Watson tend to both reiterate and complicate the ways in which Doyle originally portrayed his protagonist and deuteragonist. Santana and Erickson maintain that this is to be expected of rescriptions, which often "point to

[1] This is borne out by the 1926 "Adventure of the Lion's Mane" and 1926 "Adventure of the Blanched Soldier," the only two of Doyle's stories in which Watson takes no narratorial part. Instead, both "Mane" and "Soldier" are narrated by Holmes in Watson's apparent absence – and historically, both are among audiences' least favorite Sherlock Holmes stories.

moments when texts transcend their boundaries as cultural documents" (7). Santana and Erickson's description of the rescriptive process remains effectively applicable:

> In this expression, we find a kind of popular alchemy that transforms the dross of mass culture into sacred articles of faith for everyday people. Here, popular expression becomes more significant, more enduring, and more resonant than [just] the doctrinal. . . (2)

Santana and Erickson's idea of this process as a "kind of popular alchemy" (2) is further detailed by Alan Dessen, who argues that the term rescription applies equally well to streamlining a narrative, eliminating obscure references, or "cancel[ing] out a passage that might not fit comfortably with a particular agenda or 'concept'" (3). Both definitions, though, agree that rescription concerns meeting a cultural need or expectation, regardless of whether the rescriptors are approaching characters, narratives, events, or entire texts with this intent.

None of these critics, though, mention that rescription may involve either minimal or extensive changes to the rescripted material(s). Practically speaking, rescription might involve eliminating a short scene or a minor character, but it might just as well encompass changing settings, altering noticeable aspects of major characters, or reworking a recognizable part of a canonical narrative.

With this level of variability in mind, we can easily see how rescription might become controversial for a number of reasons, and also, to a number of different consumers. An extensive rescription might be disliked by consumers who have already encountered and preferred the original narrative; conversely, even a limited rescription might be disavowed by consumers who dislike the rescriptors, or agents who decide and

enact the rescriptive process.[2] For Dessen, then, "To discuss [rescriptive] choices [at all] is to enter a murky area, one where the vested interests of the scholar . . . can easily be at odds with the 'real world' reflexes" of a contemporary audience and/or producer (3). When discussing rescriptions of a particularly well-loved narrative or character, it can be difficult to pinpoint the source of contestation beyond the perceived breach of what Thomas Leitch calls blind "fidelity" to the original text (6).

This clash between what Dessen calls the "scholarly" love of the unaltered original and the "real world" demand for certain changes is further magnified in Holmesian rescriptions by the influence of what Henry Jenkins calls "convergence culture." Jenkins coins this term to describe "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want" (2). Put differently, Jenkins's idea of convergence culture describes contemporary trends in which users' values and behaviors help drive the creation and consumption of media, rather than just commercial entities producing media for public use.

Despite its limitations – such as its overt focus on social media rather than the creation of culture(s) among its users – Jenkins's definition of convergence culture proves useful with its notion of multiple users participating and collaborating, sometimes unknowingly, to create a larger, shared cultural space. In regards to rescriptions of Holmes and Watson specifically, we might say that the emergence of convergence culture has disseminated both rescriptive and critical power, thus demonstrating "the

[2] I am indebted to my advisor, Dr. Rachel Carnell, for her use of this term in comments on an early draft!

work [that] spectators perform in the new media system" (Jenkins 3). The ability to rescript Holmes and Watson is available to a far wider pool of rescriptors, and the power to access, interpret, and judge such rescriptions is open to a far wider audience, than possible in either Doyle's time or the decades immediately following. It is not that convergence culture initiated a more widespread interest in Holmes and Watson, or even that rescriptions of the two began with the combination of technological, cultural, and global factors that Jenkins observes. However, convergence culture has made the process of rescripting Holmes and Watson more visible, easier to access, and open to rescriptors without the types of commercial or authoritative sanction previously necessary.

At the same time, though, this dissemination of rescriptive and critical power also allows Holmesian audiences to turn away from the purely technical consideration of Holmes's and Watson's relationship. Rather than relegating this relationship to a purely literary tactic that Doyle created in order to mediate Holmes to Victorian audiences, one direction that rescriptors have taken is a more intra-narrative curiosity. In the turn from literary to intra-narrative, both rescriptors and their audiences consider the relationship between Holmes and Watson as an interaction between (still-fictional) individuals rather than as a function of Doyle's writing for an audience that needed an everyman mediator for Holmes's brilliance and Doyle's own serialization. This intra-narrative relationship may be rescripted completely differently among different media, by different rescriptors, and for different presumed audiences: similarly, these differences may include changes in race, class, culture, sexuality, sexual orientation, and/or romantic connotations unlike those initially created by Doyle. Perhaps more noticeably still, such change(s) – whatever

they may be for the specific rescription in question – can also become a central, or even the main, focus of the new Holmesian narrative.

Much like adaptations and rescriptions of Holmes, the intra-narrative relationship between Holmes and Watson is more than just a recent matter of interest. As we saw earlier, audiences seem to continue needing Watson alongside Holmes, and we might ask what leads to this expectation if contemporary audiences no longer need the mediation of content that Victorian audiences did. Most of the critics noted earlier address this question by remarking upon the tested friendship between Holmes and Watson: others, however, interrogate specific attributes of that friendship, such as Holmes's immediate decision to trust the doctor, Watson's willingness to follow and memorialize the detective, and both characters' drive to seek not only mystery but also justice beyond the reach of the law. Still others propose further complications: the theory that Holmes and Watson were lovers was proposed as early as 1941 by American mystery writer Rex Stout, whose infamous "Watson was a Woman" speech concluded that Doyle's stories actually featured a married couple – a male Holmes and a female Watson. Convergence culture and its dissemination of rescriptive and critical power thus make an additional opportunity possible: contemporary rescriptions can focus on the intra-narrative relationship between Holmes and Watson as well as on the characters themselves.

The four "Studies" mentioned above offer compelling examples of this new possibility. Despite their different methods of rescripting Holmes and Watson's relationship, "A Study in Black," "A Study in Emerald," "A Study in Pink," and "A Study in Midnight" each demonstrate that rescriptors evince comparable knowledge of and admiration for Doyle's original work and characters, even while making significant

changes to them. In turn, though, audiences' different reactions to these various rescriptions and their origins from within Jenkins's idea of convergence culture also reveal a startling paradox.

On the one hand, convergence culture would appear to explode the implicit elitism of Doyle's original text, which introduces Holmes as both a budding professional and a holdover of England's leisured gentry, since he works for mental stimulation rather than a living (Reiter): it also implicitly positions its readers as those who accept this social and cultural hierarchy. The opportunities of convergence culture would appear to combat this elitism by extending rescriptive and cultural power beyond the middle- and upper-class readers to whom Doyle's texts appealed and the traditional publishing venues through which they appeared. In reality, though, convergence culture and its new possibilities actually reincode a new and arguably more troubling form of extra-narrative elitism by building up insular clique-ishness around the rescription process itself.

Although the four rescriptive "Studies" above offer a collective prospect of convergence culture as a positive process of democratizing literature, negative reactions to these "Studies" also reveal significant downsides of convergence culture, including that same community's clannish insinuation that only certain rescriptors should be allowed to make certain changes to beloved characters and narratives. Though the rescriptions in each of these four "Studies" make comparably high-level changes to Doyle's Holmes and Watson and their relationship, then, only some of these changes are approved by readers and critics: perhaps more notably, criticisms of unaccepted rescriptions often stem from pre-existing values on authorship, media types, and the relation(s) of all of the above to "pure" canonicity.

CHAPTER II

"YOU DON'T KNOW SHERLOCK HOLMES YET": THE ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES OF ADAPTATION(S)

In an interesting twist of adaptive power, Sherlock Holmes as a character, and then the canon of Sherlock Holmes as the fifty-six short stories and four novels written by Doyle, have become separable and even separate things. As we have already seen, certain aspects of Holmes have become ubiquitous to the point of functioning as cultural shorthand for intelligence or mystery; a similar occurrence, though, can also be seen for other parts of Doyle's narratives. Though contemporary audiences might not be familiar with specific stories such as Doyle's "Study in Scarlet" or "Scandal in Bohemia," images or ideas from them – such as the supposed "damsel in distress" who ultimately dupes Holmes – can also be removed from their story of origin. It should also be noted that the phenomenon of Holmes-as-a-character can exist fully independently from that of concept-from-Doyle-story: that is, audiences will recognize Holmes even when placed in a completely dissimilar narrative, even a non-mystery.

This difference between Doyle's Holmesian canon and then Holmes as a character comes into play most notably with the question of adaptations, or changes made to meet

the demands of different media (Andrew 30-31; "Effort to Translate"), as opposed to process-oriented rescriptions, which are changes made "in response to a perceived problem or to achieve some agenda" (Dessen 3). As we have already seen, many of Holmes's "prolific" appearances (Redmond 232) are found in media other than text, and any one of these appearances might be rescripting either Holmes-as-character alone, or Holmes-as-character within the specific environment of one of Doyle's stories. To this end, Neil McCaw has called adaptations of Sherlock Holmes "perhaps the most palimpsestuous of all popular-cultural reworkings" (47), noting that producers and writers have been able to change the character and/or Doyle's canon in any number of ways and to various levels of canonical fidelity to suit their own purposes. Something about Holmes, McCaw maintains, has allowed the character to be a part "(to give just a few examples) [of] the evolution of silent cinema, World War II propaganda, and most recently, the information technology explosion of the twenty-first century" (47).

While other recognizable characters can be similarly altered to fit the changing demands of other media, genres, and/or producers, though, McCaw sees Holmes as unique in the sheer variety of ways these changes can be made without losing the specific character (47-8). In other words, Holmes is distinguished by the possibility and ongoing appeal for both rescription, as we saw earlier, and also adaptation, as we see here. To compare: other popular characters from literature and media are often limited to either one process or the other, and even if not, rarely undergo both processes as fully equally. For instance, other literary characters may be adapted for additional media or rescripted for other types of literature, but rarely both processes to the same degree (e.g., Dracula, who features in multiple adaptations but only recently has begun undergoing rescription

beyond his initial villain role, and even then more the species itself than the Count himself as a particular specimen): comparably, film characters may be rescripted for other genres or purposes without being themselves adapted for other media (e.g., Bugs Bunny).[3]

To explain this particular capacity on the Holmes character's part, Matt Hills has proposed an answer proceeding from Jenkins's own work on converging media. He argues that, from Jenkins's idea that media allows singular "points of entry into singular franchises" (Hills 38), recent adaptations of Holmes can actually be considered "*de facto* transmedia where there is no guiding (corporate) hand compelling any unity across media and across narrative iterations, precisely because there is not [a] singular franchise, but rather a network of intertextualities – some disavowed, others privileged – which contingently coalesce into the reinventions and extensions of cultural myth" (Hills 38). With this, Hills is pointing out the same proliferation of Holmes adaptations that others have noted (Redmond 232): Hills, however, is also adding the idea that this proliferation exists – and continues – due to the involvement of multiple producers, the "some disavowed, others privileged" (38).

However, although Hills uses the terms "disavowed" and "privileged" to echo the official sanctions that only some producers enjoy (i.e. license or legal permission from the Doyle estate to depict Holmes), these terms can also be applied to critical valuations

[3] Similarly, the necessary retention of Holmes's specific name (as well as the individualized signs and signifiers mentioned earlier) are what I would argue prevents Holmes from becoming an avatar or archetype, despite the similar functions of a shared and "customizable" basis: a closer approximation of a Holmes-like archetype might be "the detective" or "the truth-seeker," even Jung's "magician" (*Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*). An archetype itself, however, cannot undergo rescription, as it is typically understood as a more foundational figure whose surface can be built upon, while rescription is the process of actually making individually-determined changes in order to meet changed cultural needs and demands. I would argue that the foundational aspect of the avatar and/or archetype forestalls the rescriptive process, making that term unhelpful here.

of the different media types Redmond has named. Conventionally, films and graphic novels have been valued less than traditional texts; when films and graphic novels are based on, or adapted from, traditional and "classical" texts, the devaluation also becomes that much more pointed. In his 1957 examination of the relationship between the novel and the film seeking to adapt it, George Bluestone opened the field that would come to be known as adaptation studies: his ground-breaking *Novels into Film* concluded that such adaptive relationships between different media are "overtly compatible, secretly hostile" (Bluestone 2), as each medium must portray the shared narrative differently according to the disparate expectations, time constraints, and even educational levels of their respective audiences (Bluestone 2). More recently, Thomas Leitch has pointed out the questionably default "proposition" in which "novels are texts, movies are intertexts, and in any competition between the two, the book is better" (Leitch 6) actually comes from critics' own value on the texts, and not from a true consideration of each medium for its own merits. And although adaptation studies has primarily focused on filmic adaptations, subfields for graphic novel and fandom studies have recently acknowledged that its ramifications actually reach far beyond cinema. Jan Baetens and Aaron Meskin have recently taken sides on the question of whether graphic novels can "constitute" literature, while critics such as Anne Jamison and Sheenagh Pugh have traced the relationship between fanfiction and literature.

With these added complications of adaptation in mind, though, Hills's division into the "some disavowed, others privileged" producers of Holmesian works (38) also unwittingly echoes another conflict, one that is found specifically stemming from fannish circles. Fannish discourse has produced terms such as "transformative," "curative," and

“affirmational” to delineate modes of production comparable to Leitch’s adaptive “fidelity” (6) for films. As I have pointed out elsewhere, curative and affirmational modes of fannish production connote strict fidelity to the original source and/or its creator, while transformative work “instead allows fans to create, discuss, and compare their own interpretations of and additions to the source” (“Effort to Translate” {forthcoming}).

Even without venturing into strictly evaluative judgments of “Study in Black,” “Study in Emerald,” “Study in Pink,” and “Study in Midnight,” such judgements are easy to stumble into, since these four “Studies” involve media forms less culturally and critically valued than the traditional text of Doyle’s initial stories. In addition, too, there is always the question of purpose: why “re-do” or “re-make” – i.e., adapt or rescript – something that was already popular and “well-done” in the first place? While the various “Studies” by Karl Bollers, Neil Gaiman, Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, and M_Leigh might not set out to answer or even address these questions, this sort of inquiry is always implied in rescriptions that build upon the possibilities of convergence culture – thus making these two critical frameworks invaluable to any consideration of Holmes’s continued and continuing popularity. By considering the interplay of the rescriptive process with “media convergence, participatory culture, and collective intelligence” (*Convergence* 2), we will begin to see how these two phenomena are present and co-functional in Sherlock Holmes’s continuing popularity – a realization that may in turn lead us to notice how many unspoken assumptions and values still underlie and color our reading (consumptive) practices themselves.

CHAPTER III

"IT'S ELEMENTARY": FIGURATIVE PARTNERS IN CRIME IN *A STUDY IN BLACK*

Karl Bollers's 2013 "A Study in Black" offers a compelling first case for the contention that contemporary rescriptions of Sherlock Holmes have a unique relationship with what Jenkins calls convergence culture, but also for the attendant argument that this multi-media Holmes is rarely rescripted without a comparable and complementary Watson. In "Study in Black," which is actually a compilation collecting the first four issues of New Paradigm Studios' series *Watson and Holmes*, Bollers re-envisions Doyle's characters as African-American men from Harlem and places them in contemporary approximations of their initial Victorian positions.

"Study in Black" opens with Afghanistan War veteran-turned-medical intern Jon Watson and private investigator Sherlock Holmes trying to find a missing girl but then being drawn into a much larger intrigue when, after the girl is rescued, Holmes continues to chase her kidnappers. The duo soon learn that the girl was targeted for her connections to a local drug-running gang, who are running through a hit list of those who have cheated them. As Holmes struggles to solve the case before the corrupt and incompetent NYPD, Watson questions why he follows and protects Holmes instead of leaving this to

official law enforcement, and the two men discover that together they are even capable of taking on the mercenaries who control the local gang.

Readers can immediately see that the plot follows Doyle's initial Holmes adventure, the 1887 "Study in Scarlet," with dedication but not complete devotion. Despite a shared mystery, differences are already obvious in the re-imagining of Holmes and Watson as black Americans as well as in the setting of twenty-first century Harlem, but also in the move from the traditional medium of print to the "hybrid" (Meskins 220) medium of comic form. As a black comics author from New York, though, Bollers also leaves his own specific mark on the text: in a recent interview, for instance, he acknowledged the probable influence that Blaxploitation films such as the 1970 *Cotton Comes to Harlem* and the 1971 *Shaft* had on the aesthetic and characterization of "Black" ("Cracks the Case" par. 8), and the technological aspects of the narrative's mystery story also display Bollers's comfortable familiarity with the conventions of contemporary forensics and forensic drama(s). To discuss the rescriptive "Black" in relation to either Holmesiana or Jenkins's ideas of convergence culture, then, requires that we first clarify the discussion itself.

For instance, visual texts have only recently begun undergoing academic and critical consideration: the term "comic(s)" itself might bring to mind comic books or the newspaper funnies, but more contemporary definitions actually render the term an "extension" that also includes "mainstream, underground and 'alternative' comic books, graphic novels, one-off comics in magazines, photocomics, and webcomics" (Meskin 219). Alan Meskin also points out that this tendency toward multimodal forms as well as popular subjects has often led to the question of "whether comics are literature" (220),

which he suggests is significant because a positive answer would "legitimize" serious study of the medium (220). Relatedly, Jan Baetens notes that critical concerns about quality aside, any question about comic forms as literature "presupposes a minimal definition of the 'literary'" (78) – and that even such definitions themselves

> . . . oscillate between the antagonistic viewpoints of an internal and essentializing stance (the word literature can refer to works submitting to a predefined set of criteria, such as, for instance, beauty, autonomy, and complexity) and a more ad hoc and contextualizing stance (the same word referring to those works that are considered literary by a certain community at a certain point in time). (Baetens 78)

To bridge what he sees as legitimate if also overblown concerns, Meskins ultimately contends that comics are most effectively considered a "hybrid art form that evolved from literature and a number of art forms and media" (219). While Meskin's compromise may seem self-explanatory, it also bypasses a little of the issue that Leitch observes: that strict fidelity to an original canon is automatically prized in – and over – the merits of any "intertextual" media such as film or comic form (Leitch 6). If as Meskin proposes, though, comics are a hybrid of both literary and extra-media forms, then it seems reasonable to wonder whether they might also inherit some of literature's automatic status in critical considerations: as both Leitch and Meskin note, though, various forms of the comics tradition are popular enough that critical work on the medium will often be as much value- and experientially-based as it is academically objective.

Helpfully bridging this particular hurdle, Sharon Sarbeti proposes that comic forms are critically situated "somewhere on the spectrum between print and digital culture" (182). Her terminology here is worth remarking, though, as it demonstrates how each of these media has its attendant cultural expectations, high and low respectively: this

delineation is surprisingly comparable to the popular reception of Doyle's serialized *Adventures*, already indicative of "a new genre in the late 1800s" (Priestman 54), and, both then and now, considered literary but "low" or genre literature. In addition to this inadvertent connection between Victorian and contemporary conceptions of culture through various media, though, Sarbeti also offers the provoking thought, drawing from Jenkins and other cultural theorists, that "'comics literacy' and 'digital literacy' have been seen as aligned, often possessed by the same individuals, and both involving more participatory forms of culture interaction" (182-3). With this observation, Sarbeti identifies comics forms as a crossroads between different types of audience participation as well as media types – on the one hand, the more receptive audience of traditional literature and on the other, the more participative audience of digital culture. Between the two, she seems to suggest, is an audience that will be able to engage with its source multimodally by accepting that the narrative is conveyed both visually and textually.

Specific aspects of Bollers's rescriptions of Holmes, Watson, and their developing relationship in "Black" stress the changes made possible by these convergent cultural values. Most notably, where Doyle's Holmes and Watson are not above bypassing the law in several of the later *Adventures*, Bollers's Holmes and Watson knowingly and willingly bypass the law from the beginning in "Black." From their first meetings, Bollers's Holmes warns his Watson that "Our methods become downright irregular" (Issue 1) as he trusts the local lieutenant but not her team or the NYPD: this mistrust is driven only in part by Holmes's own eccentricities, as in Bollers's depiction of twenty-first century Harlem, the police are corrupt or incompetent and the prison system cultivates repeat offenders (Issue 1) and infamous celebrities ("Epilogue"). Amidst these

environmental and cultural complications, Bollers rescripts Holmes as a sometimes-pickpocket with gang informers (Issue 1, Issue 4) and his Watson as a conflicted veteran who uses an unlicensed firearm to protect the detective (Issue 3).

In another notable difference – and here, one that seems due as much to the adaptation from traditional print to Meskins's "hybrid" comic form as to the culturally-driven rescriptions of Bollers and New Paradigm – readers of "Black" are far more privy to the inner development of a relationship between Bollers's Holmes and Watson. A significant part of this more visible development can be attributed to the potential of multimodal storytelling, which in comics often includes the layering of text and visuals so that the narrator(s) may tell the reader one thing while the visuals tell another – a possibility that can underscore mentalities generated by experience, reflection, memory, sarcasm, or hallucination(s). Bollers makes use of this possibility to visualize Watson's struggles to be Holmes's moral, legal, and narratorial mediator. Even though the Watson of "Black" still shares noticeable first-person narratorial traits with the Watson of Doyle's "Scarlet," Bollers shows that for this Watson, Holmes is "as much a mystery" as the missing girl (Issue 1): in other words, while Bollers's Watson does question what drives Holmes to pursue mysteries, in turn he also realizes that the corollary is "And what was driving me?" (Issue 2). The cause-and-effect nature of these two questions, though, is emphasized by the way that the visuals of "Black" portray a high-speed footrace between an armed gunman, an unarmed Holmes, and a panicked Watson even as Watson is asking himself these question, thus emphasizing the experience that drives the two men closer.

In another notable instance, Bollers also exploits the possibilities of multimodal storytelling to show how Holmes has come to value Watson in turn. In this two-page

spread, the first panels show Watson driving to see his ex-wife only to find her with a new boyfriend: panels then show Holmes finding an envelope with a vital clue, being sent a video feed showing a sniper's view on Watson, receiving texts saying "Place the envelop in the trash can. . . Do it now or your friend dies," and finally relinquishing that clue to walk away (Issue 4). Throughout this sequence, though, the text-boxes are all from Watson's point of view as he muses how "it's crazy what people will throw away" (Issue 4). With the benefit of multimodal storytelling, readers see the connection that Watson is never told about: they will realize that the "it's crazy what people will throw away," a musing on his ex-wife leaving him, is in fact mirrored by Holmes as he discards the vital clue in order to keep Watson safe. The multimodal form of "Black" here means that the visual narrative (Holmes choosing Watson over the mystery's solution) transcends the purely textual (Watson mourning for his lost relationship and not realizing his own danger).

For some, though, either the move *to* comic form or the move *from* precise attributes (descriptions, settings, era, etc.) may re-prompt the question of *why*. In other words: why rescript Doyle's characters, why bring them into the twenty-first century, why have them deal with gang- and software-driven crime – but often more particularly, why change them into Americans, why make them black? While these types of questions certainly can prompt productive conversations about the value of textual fidelity (Leitch 6), it is also easy to see how some of the rescriptive questions specific to "Black" are not raised by other, arguably even less fidelitous adaptations, such as the "limited videogame action" style of Guy Ritchie's films (Nicol 139), the post-modern take of BBC's *Sherlock*, or even other comic-form series (Alterna, Black House Comics). This difference, of course,

is race. No matter their other changes to era, environment, age, etc., each of the aforementioned Holmesian adaptations rescripts Holmes in ways other than his whiteness, and in fact, each of the other media artefacts examined in this project also features an either implicitly or explicitly white Holmes.

This particular rescription from Bollers's "Black," though, cannot be waved forward with a simple repetition of the rallying cry "representation matters," or the argument that the increased representation of diversity (in terms of race, ethnicity, class, orientation, religion, etc.) in popular culture is vital to surmounting stereotypes – not that this is a universally-accepted argument in the first place. Instead, two particular questions come into play here. First, there is the common interrogation of why "representation matters," which can be answered by evidence that increased popular representation has significant primary-world effects that include increasing awareness and acceptance, offering positive role models, boosting self-esteem, and encouraging dialogue, among others (Denson and Chang; Azoulay; Wilson). Then, the related question of how and where such representation might be implemented proves more complicated. Critics have pointed out that representation itself is not enough: instead, as Maryanna Erigha contends, the quality and centrality of representative characters and narratives are key (79). Similar conclusions have also been found in primary-world fields as diverse as politics and business: *Forbes* commentator Sebastian Bailey, for instance, notes that diversity and inclusion are related but not identical, as "Inclusion requires individuals to alter their innate beliefs and behaviors, which is why it is more difficult to realize" (par. 8).

Here, then, is where Bollers's "Black," and indeed the continuing series *Watson and Holmes*, stand out: not only are racially-diverse characters integrated into a Holmesian

adaptation, but also that rescription itself becomes the adaptation's focal point.[4] While Bollers does rescript Doyle's Holmes and Watson as black Americans, and succeeding series writers similarly rescript other characters (Lindsay Faye later writes Irene Adler as a Dominican singer, for instance), "Study in Black" is also a rescription of the entire Holmesian narrative – both its setting and the mystery itself are changed to become culturally-referent. Recent interviews have revealed Bollers's hand throughout this rescription, as for instance "The initial idea to set the detectives in an imaginary city was nixed by series writer Karl Bollers, who suggested NYC's black cultural mecca" (Boyer par. 7). The consequences, though, reach beyond this author's love for his hometown. Instead, this rescription of Holmes, Watson, and the mystery narrative of Doyle's "Study in Scarlet" into even a limited, fictional frame of black American experience demonstrates a move away from what bell hooks calls "the colonizing gaze" of white producers (2), and in its implicit assumption that of course a black Holmes is a valid rescription, instead acknowledges the challenge of "expand[ing] the discussion of race and representation beyond debates about good and bad imagery" (hooks 7). In "Black," Bollers rescripts and presents Holmes and Watson as black men dealing with both a recognizably Doylean mystery as well as with contemporary issues such as drug addiction, teen parenthood, and gang violence – and, as readers cannot have the former without the latter, "Black" compels them to reconsider any possible unease from this particular rescription of classical literature. Is it that some can genuinely protest that Bollers's rescriptions are unfaithful to Doyle's "real" characters – or is it more that such

[4] For instance, New Paradigm executives discovered Lindsay Faye, a well-known fan and professional author, from the Holmesian fan group The Baker Street Babes ("Eisner-Nominated" par. 40) and brought her on to write the series' Irene Adler arc: a female and feminist author to write one of Doyle's most commonly adapted and rescripted female characters.

critics might not want the more "fidelitous" successors of Doyle's canon, though these may make equally high-level changes to his work (Nicol 139), joined by a black Holmes and Watson?

Critics of Boller's "Black," however, are not the only ones to note the cultural tensions possible in these rescriptions of Holmes, Watson, and their relationship as black men combating organized crime in Harlem, as evidenced by this anonymous question posed online to a Holmesian blogger:

> I've been considering reading *Watson & Holmes*. I've hesitated because everything I've heard about it stresses the racebending and the modern, updated location (both of which are great!!) over the actual relationship between Holmes & Watson. Ultimately, its [sic] the characterisation of Holmes & Watson, plus the quality of their relationship, which draws me to adaptions. ("Cracks the Case" par. 1)

Interestingly, blogger Violsva's response addresses almost every one of the concerns discussed above, while also demonstrating how this particular rescription of Holmes and Watson is further complicated by Holmesian-specific values. She first agrees that "there's a tendency in discussions, and especially professional reviews, of non-white guy adaptations to focus on how they're not about white guys rather than on how they are as art, or as adaptations" (violsva, par. 3) before ultimately concluding "But, yes, this [the series] is great, it's great because of the character interactions, as well as the way the characters fit into their world" (par. 7).[5,6] With the first segment of this response, Violsva

[5] See the entirety of the exchange here: http://violsva.tumblr.com/post/105530519298/ive-been-considering-reading-watson-holmes

[6] Even more interestingly, New Paradigm Studios also weighed in on this conversation, but more notably, only addressed parts of the original poster's questions – as if certain about the text's adaptive and cultural significance, but not as sure about the adaptation or rescription themselves. See the Studios response at: http://newparadigmstudios.tumblr.com/post/105561215214/ive-been-considering-reading-watson-holmes.

is acknowledging complications that even critics such as Leitch do not mention when delineating critical values on adaptive fidelity: while he does emphasize the problems inherent in the critical default of "the [original] book is better" (6), for instance, Leitch does not really address the complications of diversifying representation as a part of either the rescriptive or the adaptation processes.

Both the nature and the content of this conversation demonstrate the "participatory" aspect of convergence culture introduced by Jenkins (*Convergence* 2) and stressed for comic forms in particular (Sarbeti 182-3). An anonymous reader brought up particular questions about the ways "Black" related to its predecessor(s) from Doyle as a potential condition for their reading the text; a blogger unaffiliated with Bollers or New Paradigm Studios responded with a complex acknowledgement of multiple cultural expectations surrounding that text; and the publisher, here taking the place of the sanctioned rescriptor and producer, weighed in uninvited and only to secondary effect. Ultimately, we might imagine, one or both of these responses may have influenced the original questioner's decision to either read or ignore "Black" and *Watson and Holmes*: the interesting thing to note about the exchange prompting this potential decision is the fact that the conversation occurred at all. As a comic book and as a media artefact, Karl Bollers's "Study in Black" was held to a particular, arguably very subjective set of standards beyond the usual "was it any good?" inquiry made of most adaptations – and all because it involves the rescription of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson as the black protagonists of a graphic novel.

CHAPTER IV

THE TALL MAN AND THE LIMPING DOCTOR: LITERAL PARTNERS IN CRIME IN "A STUDY IN EMERALD"

Neil Gaiman's 2003 short story "A Study in Emerald" is another noteworthy case for the argument that rescriptions of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and John Watson have a unique and ongoing relationship with convergence culture. Where Bollers's comic "A Study in Black" demonstrates this correlation, though, Gaiman's "Emerald" takes it a step further. In "Black," Bollers's rescriptions of Holmes and Watson leave these new versions of Doyle's detective and doctor immediately recognizable despite multiple high-level changes. With the rescriptions in his "Emerald," though, Gaiman repositions Doyle's characters entirely – a change that reflects the influence of convergence culture on rescription even more clearly when paired with the text's ambiguous genre and unique publishing history.

Gaiman's "Emerald," which is set in a Lovecraftian universe, is told by a first-person narrator who recounts how he and his friend pursue a highly-unusual criminal investigation through a nightmarishly Cthulhuian London, racing to "solve" the murder of a monstrous royal nephew who has been methodically disemboweled. The narrator's friend identifies the members of a seditious revolutionary group called the Restorationists as the most likely

suspects, but the subsequent hunt for these revolutionaries is ultimately unfruitful. Discerning readers, perhaps already curious why Gaiman withholds names, might find certain suspicions crystalizing when the narrator's friend interviews an actor named Sherry Vernet (Gaiman 6), the narrator is named as "my friend Sebastian" (Gaiman 6), and a Limping Doctor is implicated in the professional-grade disembowelment (Gaiman 7). Readers eventually discover that the narrator of "Emerald" is Sebastian Moran and his consulting detective friend must be Dr. James Moriarty, who are the archnemeses of Doyle's Holmes. Furthermore, the criminals that Gaiman's narrator and his friend have been pursuing, the Tall Man and the Limping Doctor, are named Sherlock Holmes and John, or maybe James, Watson (Gaiman 9).

The ultimate result of "Emerald," then, is quite different from "Black" even though both texts work from Doyle's initial adventures by adapting the mystery narrative to different media and rescripting the characters of and relationship between Holmes and Watson themselves. While Bollers introduces significant changes to his version of Holmes and Watson, the "partners in crime" aspect of the two characters' original relationship remains recognizable despite the changes necessary in their new context: in "Black" as in Doyle' 1886 "Scarlet," Bollers's Holmes and Watson uphold the spirit of the law, even as this may necessitate breaking the letter. In a universe where Lovecraftian horror is the rule of the day, though, Gaiman's Holmes and Watson do not even acknowledge the law: indeed, Gaiman's "criminal" Holmes leaves a note to Moriarty explaining that he murders their monstrous overlords because their deeds are "not the price we pay for peace and prosperity. It is too great a price for that" (Gaiman 9).

For audiences to realize that Gaiman's rescription has inverted the roles of Doyle's main characters, knowledge of Holmesian canon and attention to Gaiman's own text are both needed initially. To this end, "Emerald" is replete with easter eggs, or unexpected bonuses for the attentive and familiar reader – most notably the various pseudonyms under which Gaiman's Holmes disguises himself, including "Vernet" (Gaiman 6), "Rache" (Gaiman 3, 9), and "Sigerson" (Gaiman 9), which are all drawn from different stories by Doyle. As a result, the reader who recognizes these easter eggs from Doyle's *Adventures* will "get" the twist of this short story – that Moriarty is the "hero" and Holmes is the "villain" – several pages before Gaiman's reveal at the end of "Emerald." While "Emerald" can be read and enjoyed from either a comprehensive or a surface knowledge of Doyle's Holmes stories, then, less familiar readers may only catch the tribute to Doyle while more familiar readers might also realize that there is a mystery of identity at play behind the murder-mystery homage.

Gaiman's ability to construct two simultaneous mysteries in "Emerald" stems from a differentiation noted earlier, which is that Holmes as a character can exist independently from a Holmesian snapshot – that is, both Sherlock Holmes and the structure of associated mystery stories can function either in contemporary shorthand such as "deerstalker + magnifying glass = deduction, intelligence" or, conversely, in full homage to Doyle with purposeful references for familiar readers. As already noted, Gaiman's "Emerald" uses both techniques – surface-level shorthand and homage for unfamiliar or less-versed readers alongside hidden easter eggs for familiar readers – to create the expected murder mystery as well as an additional mystery of narrative identity. While the protagonists of "Emerald" are pressed to find and catch two specific murderers, readers themselves are challenged to

identify these murderers, and more specifically, as characters other than the criminals that Gaiman has his text's central characters claim they are.

Interestingly, both of these mysteries in "Emerald" are constructed from Doyle's 1886 "Study in Scarlet" – as if Gaiman realizes he can safely assume that even unfamiliar readers will know that much about Doyle's Holmes. Much like "Scarlet," "Emerald" begins with the narrator describing his experience in an Afghanistan war and his meeting with a genius who offers to share rooms in Baker Street (Gaiman 1): Gaiman's short story then continues with the introduction of a police inspector whose bumbling ineptitude leads to the discover that the new roommate is "a consulting detective" (Gaiman 2). Since "Emerald" is set in a Lovecraftian universe, there are of course cosmetic differences, such as the narrator's being wounded by cthulhuian monsters rather than native Afghani fighters (Gaiman 1), but most audiences will be able to recognize the trappings of a Victorian London and police investigation in the main narrative (Porter 192). Notably, though, Gaiman is also able to use this supposed familiarity to mislead audiences' expectations of a story about Sherlock Holmes and create the aforementioned twist on identity.

In "Emerald," the first-person narrator does not report his own name until the very last sentences, and even then simply as "S_____ M_____ Major (Ret'd)" (Gaiman 9). From the beginning, though, he does provide readers with information that easily leads to the belief that he is Gaiman's version of John Watson and that his "consulting detective" friend with unusual deductive methods must be Sherlock Holmes: among other things, Gaiman's narrator immediately mentions that he survived a war in Afghanistan, met his new friend at St. Bart's, and soon shared a set of rooms at Baker Street (Gaiman 1). As

this is just how Doyle's first-person Watson opens "A Study in Scarlet," describing his misfortunes in the second Anglo-Afghan War and then his meeting with Holmes, audiences might easily believe that any small oddities in Gaiman's narrator – such as his complete avoidance of names – stem from the necessary complications of a monstrous Lovecraftian universe.

As a result, though, these various narrative tricks – and how easy and understandable they make it for readers to assume that Gaiman's narrator is Watson – can also lead to our re-evaluation of Watson alongside his slightly more recognizable counterpart. As I pointed out earlier, contemporary readers are more familiar with forensic procedures than Doyle's Victorian readers would have been: forensics, or the investigation of crimes through the application of scientific technique and methodology, have been further refined and more frequently used, in popular culture narratives as well as in the primary world, since Doyle's Holmes helped to popularize it. Though less quantifiable, a similar argument of familiarity could also be made for textual narrativity and serialization: thanks to modern, postmodern, and even posthuman literary movements, contemporary audiences are undoubtedly familiar with more narrative quirks than Victorian audiences would have even considered, with explicitly unreliable and/or extradiegetic narrators commonplace in even literary fiction, let alone its genre counterparts. Despite these immense changes between 1886 for "Scarlet" and 2003 for "Emerald," though, the narrative tricks employed in Gaiman's short story demonstrate that readers still expect a rescription of Watson alongside any rescription of Holmes, even if the mediating reasons for Doyle's original first-person Watson would seem to have disappeared.

Gaiman's initially-unnamed narrator plays to these unvoiced expectations of Watson from the beginning of "Emerald": in addition to his use and occupation of specific place markers such as St. Bart's and 221b Baker Street, this narrator also establishes a certain relationship with his unnamed friend, the "consulting detective." Gaiman's narrator reports a certain kind of unequal banter with his friend, such as the exchange of " 'I scream in the night,' I told him. 'I have been told that I snore,' he said" (Gaiman 1), as well as his friend's idea that "I have a feeling that we were meant to be together. That we have fought the good fight, side by side, in the past or in the future, I do not know" (Gaiman 3). While such instances lead readers to believe that Gaiman's narrator is Watson, readers' own expectations of Watson – as a friend, a sounding board, and a mediator – are instead being used to disguise Gaiman's character inversion and the narrator's actual identity as Sebastian Moran, even as Gaiman provides multiple clues from Doyle's own work to warn that this is not the case.

While these links to his unnamed friend become notable characteristics of Gaiman's narrator, readers who return to "Emerald" after learning of the characters' moral inversion will notice that the peripheral Tall Man is similarly dependent on the Limping Doctor – or, in other words, that this rescripted criminal version of Sherlock Holmes still also needs a John Watson even if neither man is the story's central character. By the end of "Emerald," readers have never even glimpsed the Limping Doctor, but they have learned that he is in fact responsible for much of the damage that Gaiman's criminal Holmes has caused, including the actual murder. While the Tall Man/Vernet is the one who sets up the crime scene for Gaiman's narrator and consulting detective to find (Gaiman 3) and later makes actual contact with them (Gaiman 6-7), it is the Limping

Doctor who creates their performances and who actually executes the vivisection of the monstrous prince (Gaiman 9). Thus although readers may have been tricked into reading characteristics of the original Watson into this new Moran, the first-person narrative choices, banter, and language markers of Gaiman's first-person narrator do not actually change the role that Watson plays alongside Holmes in "Emerald."

"Emerald" is also significant for the way in which aspects of Jenkins's convergence culture are evident in its singular publication history. Initially published by science fiction imprint Del Rey Books in the fairly low-key 2003 anthology *Shadows Over Baker Street*, which collected eighteen original short stories re-setting Doyle's Sherlock Holmes adventures in various Lovecraftian scenarios, "Emerald" then won the prestigious Hugo Award for Best Short Story in 2004. The story was then made available for sale in Gaiman's 2006 collection *Fragile Things* and separately as an illustrated "broadsheet": it is now offered primarily in *Things* and as a free PDF on Gaiman's website.[7, 8]

However, it is in the critical discussion surrounding "Emerald," and attempting to classify it, that the intersections of Gaiman's rescriptions and Jenkins's idea of

[7] All "Emerald" page numbers here are cited from this version: http://www.neilgaiman.com/mediafiles/exclusive/shortstories/emerald.pdf

[8] It is also noteworthy that "Emerald" becomes a different reading experience depending on whether audiences access the *Fragile Things* reprint or the free PDF on Gaiman's website: while the anthologized *Fragile Things* version is simply traditional text, the PDF incorporates Finnish illustrator Jouni Koponen's work from the 2006 broadsheet and is formatted like a Victorian penny paper, with headlines and two vertical columns, thus encouraging the impression of a nineteenth-century British "Daily Newspaper for All Classes" (Gaiman 1). The difference this makes becomes most evident in the "ads," which in both versions of "Emerald" reposition classic horror and/or Gothic narratives as legitimate businesses in Gaiman's universe: here, for instance, Henry Jekyll's powders are advertised to "release the constipation of the soul" (Gaiman 4) rather than release the inhuman id as in Robert Louis Stevenson's original text. Alert readers will note that the ads reposition other classic characters and stories – Victor Frankenstein, Dracula, and Spring-heeled Jack as well as Jekyll/Hyde. In the *Fragile Things* reprint, though, these "ads" are text-only, and used as chapter-like subtitles, while in the PDF, the "ads" are worked into the aforementioned formatting of a penny paper. Here we might see another, if also smaller, dependence on the "participatory" part of Jenkins's term convergence culture: for the different versions of "Emerald," the different versions of the "ads" give readers more and different chances to participate in the narrative, realizing that the prince's murder is not the only mystery to be solved.

convergence culture actually become clearest. Overall, reviews of "Study in Emerald" are positive, with one of the most common praises being that this "pastiche" is highly faithful to Doyle and reminiscent of the style, content, and characterization of the original *Adventures*.[9] Intriguingly, most critiques that touch on "Emerald" do not directly concern Gaiman's writing or concepts, but rather the term "pastiche," which assumes certain values in both its assignation and usage.

In a blog post published March 2015, for instance, Christopher Redmond argues that the term "pastiche" should be applied primarily to "a story written in an attempt to imitate the stories of the published Canon. Such a story is written in Watson's persona and his style, and set somewhere around 1895" (par. 6). Most positive reviews of Gaiman's "Emerald" stem from this type of traditional definition for the term "pastiche," and in doing so, value the short story's "imitation" of Doyle's style and characterizations – even though, as we have already seen, Gaiman simultaneously pays homage to and creates a twist on Doyle's work. Specifically, Gaiman's imitative narratorial tactics hide his inversion of Doyle's protagonists and antagonists, and more specifically still, play into readers' expectations of a Doyle pastiche being "written in Watson's persona and style" (Redmond par. 6) to mislead them into believing that "Emerald"'s first-person narrator Moran is Watson.

In a next-day response to Redmond's post, however, reviewer Amy Thomas notes a considerable obstacle. Though she does acknowledge that "I don't have a massive quarrel

[9] For some examples of "Emerald" categorized as a pastiche, see reviews from venues such as Tor.com (http://www.tor.com/2011/12/29/the-adventure-of-the-devils-foot-neil-gaiman-and-the-great-detective/) and Fantasy Literature (http://www.fantasyliterature.com/reviews/a-study-in-emerald/).

with [Redmond's] definition – technically," Thomas also points out that for the term "pastiche" to work as claimed:

> Somebody has to decide which works are enough "like Doyle" or "trying hard enough to be like Doyle" or "traditional enough" to warrant the word. Works that "fail" someone's subjective test are, all-too-often, relegated to second-class status: In other words, fanfiction. . . Let's make one thing crystal clear. All pastiche is fanfiction. Breathe into a paper bag and repeat: All pastiche is fanfiction. Anything written by a fan of something, inspired by that something, is, by definition, fanfiction. (par. 3-4).[10]

According to Thomas if not to Redmond, then, the debate concerning the term "pastiche" is not so much a matter of arguing a work's literary value as it is a matter of determining some nebulous sort of fidelity to its source text(s) – much as Leitch notes that any other-media adaptation is at best "intertext" despite its value in its own medium (6). With the assignation of the term "pastiche" to "Emerald," then, neither Gaiman's ability to mimic Doyle's particular narrative style nor his own ability to craft a riveting story are in question. Instead, the debate is tied particularly to the multi-participant/producer aspect of Jenkins's convergence culture: if a critically-acclaimed pastiche can diverge so far from the accepted definition of that term, what of those works that supposedly cannot, and why?[11]

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[10] See Redmond's blog post "You Say Fanfic, I Say Pastiche" at http://www.ihearofsherlock.com/2015/03/you-say-fanfic-i-say-pastiche-is-there.html#.VorNUvkrLIV and Thomas's response "Pastiche vs Fanfiction: The Debate That Wouldn't Die" at http://bakerstreetbabes.com/pastiche-vs-fanfiction-the-debate-that-wouldnt-die/.

[11] I mention this question not so much because I can answer it, but rather because it exists. If anything, Gaiman's basing Holmes and Watson in a morally-inverted Cthulhian London seems far less fidelitous than Bollers's racial switching in "Black," and no more so than M_Leigh's same twist in the later "Study in Midnight." As we will see with the latter, though, the assignation of the approbatory "pastiche" or the denigrating "fanfiction" is more relative and subjective than so might care to admit, once terms of authorial wronging and commercial gain are removed from the picture.

Lindsay Faye, an author who has published works that would be considered in the categories of both pastiche and fanfiction (and who wrote for the *Watson and Holmes* comic series discussed earlier), sums up this difference as that between works "made for the pleasure of the creator and his or her community and never for fiscal profit, while the writers of pastiche hope to see work published commercially" (3). She also adds that the differentiation between the two is far more complex than a simple division between commercial and noncommercial: instead, she contends that "fandom is a living culture as much as it is a repository for creative effort, highly focused on participatory commentary and meritocratic feedback, and thus to conflate the democracy of fandom with pecuniary pastiche marketing would be injudicious and offensive" (Faye 3). This is an angle that critics such as Redmond rarely if ever mention: fannish cultural values differ from their mainstream (if also niche) commercial counterparts as much as those counterparts would want to hold themselves apart, but this difference concerns the transmission and reception of narratives rather than a "worse" rescription or a lower value on the shared source text(s). Despite the assumptions inherent in this valuative angle, though, rescriptions of Holmes and Watson are typically judged as to which side of the presumed divide they "belong" to – which is to say, that of "amateur" fanfiction if not of "faithful" pastiche.

While critical reviews of Neil Gaiman's "Study in Emerald" always privilege the term "pastiche," it is also notable that they rarely even venture into this discussion of fanfiction – which, as we will later see in M_Leigh's "Study in Midnight," commands its own cultural baggage. Ultimately, it would seem that much of this sharp delineation stems as much from Gaiman's reputation as a respected and award-winning male fantasy author as from the text's own commercial history or engagement with Doyle's source material. After all,

“Emerald”’s rescription of Holmes and Watson as criminals moves far from the law of Doyle’s original – and thus, would actually seem to be deliberately playing on or even departing from many of the traditional requirements for the term “pastiche.”

This contradiction between definition and application for “Emerald” thus demonstrates how one form of rescription is more valued than the other, even as both often make the same narrative moves: here the difference might be attributed to rescriptions’ different audiences, purposes, and eventual outcomes. As mentioned earlier, the intersections between rescription and convergence culture often reincode a new and more elusive brand of elitism among readers even as such elitism is broken down within the text and supposedly among potential producers. Much as the penny papers of Doyle’s time were seen as the necessary but “cheap” way to educate the lower classes (Weller 201), or the infamous “penny dreadfuls” sold to young working-class men “set out to supply the popular imagination with what it craved” (Springhall 224), so too anything that does not somehow “earn” the literary term “pastiche” – whether through authorial reputation or its own innate writing and content – might be imagined to run the risk of being low-brow fanfiction.

CHAPTER V

"POTENTIAL FLATMATES SHOULD KNOW THE WORST ABOUT EACH OTHER": PARTNERS IN "A STUDY IN PINK"

Where Karl Bollers's "Study in Black" and Neil Gaiman's "Study in Scarlet" each rescript the characters of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson and their relationship to one another through various interactions with Jenkins's convergence culture, Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat's "Study in Pink" also offers a compelling example of further complications. As we have already seen, Karl Bollers rescripts Holmes and Watson as black New Yorkers through a type of serialization quite different from Doyle's initial experience; similarly, the "pastiche" classification of "Emerald" has been contested for its distance from the reality of Gaiman's alternate-universe rescription as well as for the extremely subjective nature of that term and its underlying cultural penalties. "Study in Pink" further muddies things, though, as its self-avowed "fanboy" creators ("Sherlock Video Q&A") have produced a rescriptive artefact that directly encourages, and even requires, Watson's and Holmes's interactions with convergence culture and one another in order to further its own narrative.

Set in twenty-first century London, Moffat and Gatiss's "Study in Pink" follows the first meetings of Afghanistan War veteran John Watson and consulting detective Sherlock Holmes as Holmes tries to solve a series of "serial suicides" ("Pink") taking place across London. Though initially just Holmes's prospective flatmate, this Watson is intrigued by Holmes's deductions about him and becomes actively involved in the suicides case as Holmes appropriates evidence, blindly contacts a murderer, and leaves Baker Street without warning. "Pink" eventually concludes with Holmes identifying the supposed suicides as the work of a single man and Watson protecting his new flatmate with an illegal handgun even as Holmes risks his life to learn about the serial killer's mysterious sponsor. Originally filmed as a 60-minute pilot episode, "Pink" was later re-shot entirely when the BBC picked up *Sherlock* as a multi-episode television series (Wightman; Lawson "Rebirth"), and *Sherlock* has since become one of the BBC's most awarded television shows, with 42 nominations and 24 accolades as of early 2016.

As a media artefact, the show *Sherlock* has come to occupy a significant place in media, fandom, and Holmesian studies alike for its success in finessing the demands of Doyle's texts and contemporary viewership as well as of twenty-first century technological and narratorial conventions. The precise nature of this success, though, also bears complex subjective, fidelitous, and even commercial implications. Nicol, for instance, argues that *Sherlock* and its American counterparts from Guy Ritchie are both:

> symptomatic of how the classic 'logic-and-deduction' model of detective fiction, which Doyle was so instrumental in establishing, has, on screen, mutated into a variety of 'crime thriller' which blends the traditional indulgence in esoteric puzzles with dramatic action and suspense. (125)

Although he rightly notes that genre is typically a significant change in most visibly-successful adaptations of Sherlock Holmes, Nicol overlooks the ways in which the success of contemporary television shows, the various film-based media themselves, and even genre as a general concept are all dependent on audience. Even though studio demands and genre conventions dictate filming choices such as what narratives to (re)produce and how, the "success" of such choices ultimately depends on the commercial power of audiences: for instance, even the simple act of viewing can drive up ratings, therefore increasing network and airtime value and in turn making both the artefact and the producer more commercially viable and valuable. While the effectiveness of Nielsen ratings and similar "top 10" systems have decreased since the advent and increased popularity of online viewing alternatives, they are still viable systems, and their online counterparts can be measured even more directly by numbers of subscribers and viewers.

This cycle of demand to genre to success and then back to demand, and its source in consumers and audience(s), is very clear in *Sherlock* – a show that instantly became, and still remains, immensely popular despite what critics bemoan as becoming "skewed" toward fans, and therefore Holmesian fanfiction rather than serious television (Lawson "Beware" par. 7) in another instance of rescriptive elitism despite apparent democracy. With the BBC's *Sherlock*, then, the challenge is one of reaching contemporary audiences who expect certain things that Doyle's original texts do not provide, and more than just reaching them, retaining their attention enough to render them returning consumers. Elsewhere I have indicated that one answer to this challenge has been a type of "cyclical fannishness" that *Sherlock* producers continued utilizing, to greater extent and mixed

success, in later seasons by reacting to the demands of their fans ("Everything was Anticipated"). However, this strategy of fan appeal and its mixed reception by audiences and critics alike also demonstrates that for a contemporary, non-textual adaptation of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, success must be reflected in terms of the rescripted character. In other words, the Holmes of a non-textual medium must be recognizable as Doyle's detective while also being a character that audiences will not just like, but also find exciting or enjoyable enough that they continue returning to this new other-media serialization of his adventures. Nicol, for instance, argues that from recent developments in crime fiction such as serial killer narratives (128-9), contemporary adaptations of Holmes are faced with the issue of "how to present an appealing yet reassuring picture of the eccentric genius who does not conform to social norms after the Other has become integrated in crime fiction" (128). He also suggests that this need to balance between a recognizable Holmes and a modernized rescription of the detective figure is further complicated by the many "memorable" times that Holmes himself had already been portrayed on film prior to the twenty-first century (Nicol 128-30). While there are many comic books and short stories that portray Holmes besides Bollers's "Black" and Gaiman's "Emerald," the films that portray Holmes are more visible and have done more to shape visual and auditory aspects of the detective's popular consciousness, and contemporary filmic forms that portray Holmes must simultaneously acknowledge and distance themselves from this history.

In their "Study in Pink," Moffat and Gatiss manage this dual need for a filmic Holmes by rescripting their detective in the context of a developing but ambiguous bond with Watson. Critics have noted that for *Sherlock* as a whole, this Holmes's genius figures

primarily "in his relationship with John [Watson]" (Evans 110). Carlen Lavigne, though, takes this observation a step further by arguing that as a media artefact, the show *Sherlock* "makes no attempt to hide the potential homoeroticism innate in the relationship between Holmes and Watson" (13) even as it also seems to renounce these possibilities. Specifically, Lavigne points out that

> characters consistently and openly question the partnership between Holmes and Watson – noted bachelors who live together, work together, exchange frequent meaningful glances, and obviously share a deep and satisfying rapport. . . [yet] Holmes and Watson, we are to understand, are certainly not gay, as Watson's frequent protests and Holmes's declared asexuality are meant to reinforce. The series brings its queer subtexts to the surface only to disavow them; [reinforcing a] dogged preservation of heteronormative paradigms. (13)

Elsewhere Lavigne also points to the similarities that *Sherlock* shares with most "buddy cop" narratives, which all "center on a closely bonded platonic relationship between two men who share professional and domestic intimacy, who form two halves of one powerhouse whole, but whose frequent looks and physical proximity must constantly struggle against their own romantic relationships" (17). However, she does admit that *Sherlock*, unlike most such narratives, also exhibits more of "a playful willingness to highlight and explores its own 'bromance' tropes, creating a persistent, open tease of queer possibilities" (Lavigne 13). Her observations about the similarities *Sherlock*'s rescripted Holmes and Watson do and do not share with popular "buddy cop" narratives are most notable for the fact that Lavigne is not actually arguing for or against the queerness of Moffat and Gatiss's Holmes and Watson, as both critics and fans have often tried to do. Instead, Lavigne simply demonstrates that the show can be construed that

way, and more importantly, that "the scripts demonstrate the writers' explicit awareness" (Lavigne 20) of this potential.

What Lavigne calls a simultaneous tease and "playful willingness to highlight and explores its own 'bromance' tropes" (13) can be seen throughout "Pink" as Moffat and Gatiss's rescription of both Holmes and Watson as well as the contemporary crime/forensics drama involves acknowledging the homosocial structure underpinning both traditions. About halfway through "Pink," for instance, Holmes and Watson end up in a local restaurant while staking out the building across the street, and Moffat and Gatiss's script immediately exploits the potential of this setting. The restaurant owner assumes the two men are on a date and brings them a candle because, as he assures Holmes "It's more romantic" ("Study in Pink): meanwhile Watson protests twice that "I'm not his date!" and Holmes completely ignores the assumption ("Study in Pink"). A few minutes later, Holmes and Watson also have this exchange:

> HOLMES: What do real people have, then, in their 'real lives'?
> WATSON: Friends, people they know, people they like, people they don't like. Girlfriends, boyfriends.
> HOLMES: Yes, well, as I was saying – dull.
> WATSON: You don't have a girlfriend, then?
> HOLMES: Girlfriend? No, not really my area.
> WATSON: Mmmmm. Oh, right. Do you have a boyfriend? Which is fine, by the way.
> HOLMES: I know it's fine.
> WATSON: So you've got a boyfriend then?
> HOLMES: No.
> WATSON: Right. Okay. You're unattached. Like me. Fine. Good.
> HOLMES: John, um, I think you should know that I consider myself married to my work, and while I'm flattered by your interest, I'm really not looking for any-
> WATSON: No! No, I'm not asking. No. I'm just saying, it's all fine.
> HOLMES: Good. Thank you. ("A Study in Pink")

While interesting in themselves, what these subtitles fail to convey are the many ways in which the visual aspect of a multimodal medium like television can add to or change the emphasis of a narrative: most notably here, conversational pauses and actors' body language become prominent parts of the dialogue. Benedict Cumberbatch's Holmes looks uninterested in the conversation specifically until Martin Freeman's Watson asks "Do you have a boyfriend?," at which point he seems sharply surprised. Freeman's Watson alternates between nervous smiles, throat-clearing, and awkward but assured eye contact until he gets the unequivocal "No," at which point he looks away and Cumberbatch's Holmes seems compelled to add that he considers himself "married to my work": here Freeman's Watson is compelled in turn to interrupt that he wasn't "looking for anything," as he seems to worry that Holmes is worrying. ("Study in Pink")

These are just the visual complications, though, to a dialogue that already appears to acknowledge but dismiss anything beyond the usual homosocial bond (Sedgwick 38) that characterizes crime fiction of most subgenres (Kolsky 42). The mixed message is further compounded by "Pink"'s next narrative reveal. Ultimately, it turns out that Holmes did not actually need to stake out the location, and more, that he had not expected to find anything helpful there: instead, he took Watson out to eat at a favorite restaurant to impress the doctor with his deductive skills, address his psychosomatic limp, and persuade him to take up the lease at Baker Street ("Pink"), even though they leave the restaurant for another familiar element of crime fiction, the episode's first chase scene.

While this point of acknowledging but not resolving the homoerotic potential both of Holmesian narratives and of crime fiction such as "buddy cop" narratives (Lavigne 17) continues throughout *Sherlock*'s entire run to date, the "almost-there" nature of a sexual

or romantic partnership between Holmes and Watson in "Pink" specifically is further complicated by the unaired pilot episode mentioned earlier – or, as fans quickly took to calling it, the "gay pilot," an affectionate nickname referring to the even more charged and ambiguous relationship between its Holmes and Watson.

This initial form of "Pink" is a 60-minute version filmed in 2009-10 as a test encouraging the BBC to commission and run *Sherlock* as a full television series. However, it was not aired as part of the eventual show, and today is available only as an online bootleg or a special bonus feature on certain DVD sets. Notable differences between the final version and this pilot include plot developments, filming and lighting techniques, and significant changes in dialogue, setting, and characterization:[12] in the pilot the plot is simpler, the filming and lighting are less sophisticated, and Holmes and Watson are more unsure around one another. This last is a difference that stands out almost more than the technical filmic differences, as demonstrated in an early scene after Holmes and Watson visit their first crime scene together.

In both versions, Holmes has just dashed away, leaving the slower Watson behind to be told "Stay away from Sherlock Holmes" by a policewoman who has known the detective for several years. Here, though, the two versions diverge. In the final version, Watson doesn't respond but limps away slowly down the dark street, ignoring a ringing phone in a nearby booth: in the pilot version, though, he acknowledges the sergeant's warning and begins to limp away, stopping when a glance up reveals Holmes on a nearby rooftop. As the score swells, the camera cuts from this dramatic shot of Holmes backlit

[12] For a comprehensive comparison of the narrative differences between the pilot and the final version, see the transcript compiled by Ariane Devere (http://arianedevere.livejournal.com/51075.html): this document offers a side-by-side comparison of all dialogue, action, and settings from both versions of the episode.

against a full moon to Watson's admiring gaze and furtive glances around street level to see if that admiration has been noticed. Finally, the camera cuts back to Holmes, who is surveying London and may be either posing for or oblivious to Watson's admiration before disappearing again. (unaired pilot, "Study in Pink")

In light of such differences, the unaired pilot is worth mentioning not so much for its existence – most television shows prepare and/or premier at least one test episode either to sell the entire series to networks or to gage potential audience response – and more because of its cultural relationship to the finalized version of the same episode. While criticisms have already compared the technical and developmental improvement visible between the initial 2009-2010 pilot and the ultimate 2010 version of "Study in Pink" (Lawson "Rebirth"), the continued fan response to the unaired pilot testifies to the popularity of a specific rescription of Moffat and Gatiss's Holmes and Watson.[13] Some see it as a separate, alternative option to both the final version of the episode, and more recently, as indicatively opposite the rest of the show *Sherlock* itself – thus providing an especially intriguing example of convergence culture by demonstrating how audience values are not necessarily limited to the same canon, viewpoint, or even media artefact. For instance, the unaired pilot version of "Pink" and its still-considerable popularity for a slightly more charged relationship between Holmes and Watson also become more interesting when considering that audience response to *Sherlock* has recently devolved into accusations of queer-baiting, or teasing at and then denying the possibility of queer character(s) or relationship(s) in order to attract and stir up audiences.

[13] For some review-level examples of fan responses to the unaired pilot, see:
- http://inevitably-johnlocked.tumblr.com/post/108780836445/a-study-in-characterization-the-unaired-pilot-vs
- http://madlori.tumblr.com/post/7288383030/a-study-in-pink-version-1-vs-version-2
- http://nyah86.tumblr.com/post/15581802344/the-unaired-pilot-of-bbc-sherlock-a-review-and

Since its 2010 inception, some argue, *Sherlock* has become further:

> stuffed with an abundance of subtext, with heterosexual male bonds replacing numerous romantic tropes. On the one hand, the evidence that the writers are responding to popular fandom pairings is a form of validation; on the other hand, the constant denial of queer identity while exploiting gay subtext as a way to draw in viewers is a deeply offensive tactic to many fans. (Romano par. 4-5)

In this passage Romano is referring to further occurrences of that same self-aware but soon-dismissed acknowledgement of potential queerness. This presumed failure to address the possibility, though, provides an additional example of the intersection I posit between rescription and convergence culture: as Romano points out, the main reason that the show's creators keep returning to this particular method of rescripting Holmes and Watson is because their audiences react to it. According to some *Sherlock* viewers, though, this is not necessarily a desirable or even a sound narrative choice on Moffat and Gatiss's part, especially as their rescriptions of the relationship between Holmes and Watson are always relegated to jokes and titillations. However, it is also worthwhile to point out how Jenkins's circular "participatory culture" (*Convergence* 2) is at play in the way that consumer or audience input influences these producers' choice to continue rescripting Holmes and Watson in a certain way.

Notably, the elitism and purity panic that convergence culture can reincode beyond the narrative also come into play in such instances. Critics and audiences uncomfortable with the moments of "almost there" sexual or romantic partnership between *Sherlock*'s rescriptions of Holmes and Watson often condemn them as "slash-y," derisively reducing them to shoddy fan-created narratives resulting when "the homosocial desires of series characters" is transformed into "homoerotic passion" (*Poachers* 175). This term and its

baggage will be revisited with "Study in Midnight," but in the meantime, it is worth noting that the same fidelitous values driving the "pastiche" debate surrounding Gaiman's "Emerald" resurface under new terminology here: detractors of *Sherlock* as either a genre television show or a rescription of Holmes and Watson articulate their displeasure by framing it in terms of infidelity to Doyle's canon. By arguing that *Sherlock* or an element of it is too "slash-y," such detractors position their concerns as motivated for and by the "purity" of the original, and conversely, the undesirable element(s) as something ideologically suspect by measure of its amateurishness and borderline obscenity.

This kind of judgment, though, often seems to be based less on the actual value or sexual substance of such "slash-y" moments, and more on the way that they become a part of Moffat and Gatiss's rescription of Holmes and Watson. As a further agitation for such purists: unlike Bollers's "Study in Black" and Gaiman's "Study in Emerald," Moffat and Gatiss's "Study in Pink" does not require extensive audience familiarity with Doyle's original characters, and instead works more on setting up its own rescriptions of Holmes and Watson as stand-alone characters. Their respective media forms mean that the comic book "Black" and the short story "Emerald" each have limited space and resources to develop their rescriptions of Holmes and Watson: as a result, it is doubtful that their readers will not be at least familiar with Doyle's Holmes and Watson before venturing to pick up these rescriptive texts. Not so with *Sherlock* – as a television show with considerable cultural heft, *Sherlock* brings in long-time Holmesians as well as those who may not have read all or even any of Doyle's work. It is this second category that encourages a reincoded extra-narrative elitism: Holmesian viewers might be concerned

that their non-Holmesian counterparts are valuing the rescripted Holmes and Watson – and any non-canonical addition(s) such as the rescripted "slashiness" – without enough tempering knowledge of the original characters. For instance, viewers who watch *Sherlock* without the background of Doyle's *Adventures* might include those watching for the type of show, namely, crime fiction aficionados; those watching for its starring actors, especially Freeman and Cumberbatch, for whom *Sherlock* was the break into American cultural consciousness and, by extension, mainstream Hollywood; or, those watching for the show's own cultural presence and hype, especially in later seasons as unofficial *Sherlock* promotion flourished in fan channels such as tumblr. For any of these non-Doylean viewers, it may be easier to value *Sherlock* and its particular rescriptions of Holmes and Watson on their own merits rather than for their increasingly-tenuous link to Doyle's original characters, and as a result, the tension between this Holmes and Watson, whether queerbaiting or slash-y or neither, can become the mystery of the narrative rather than the crime(s) and/or Holmes's deductive processes.

This becomes a useful place to reference Robert Elliot's idea of "character purpose," with which he maintains that for genres such as satire, "characters may be amusing, likable, touching – even 'consistent' – but almost as by-products of their primary function. They are first of all agents of [the genre], and the ordinary criteria by which we judge character[s] do not apply" (Elliot 192). If canonically-protective detractors insist that there is a "correct" way to rescript and then consume literary canons, then, genre changes such as that noted by Elliot might pose the next hurdle. In *Sherlock*'s case, for instance, Moffat and Gatiss's rescriptions of Doyle's Holmes, Watson, and their relationship seem to have morphed from being the arbiter and mediator of the central

mystery, and instead, to have themselves become the work-in-progress that audiences are there to see.

All of this, though, stems from the ways in which Moffat and Gatiss rescript their Holmes and Watson as two men trying to define their relationship to one another (rather than simply as Doyle's famous doctor and detective) as well as from the circular influence of audience and producer that has led these producers to continue certain aspects of their rescription in response to viewer demands. As already noted, a considerable difference between "Pink" and the two media artefacts previously examined stems from the ways in which their respective media have encouraged hands-on audience participation that extends beyond simply solving a mystery within the narrative. As part of a comic series and a single short story, respectively, "Black" and "Emerald" are more limited and less sustainable than "Pink" became, which in turn influenced how their focal characters were developed differently. With their inherently smaller audiences due to the limited modality and serialization of "Black" and "Emerald," these rescriptions of Holmes and Watson may be significantly adapted from their predecessors in Doyle's *Adventures*, but they have not faced the necessity of evolving to keep up with audience expectation and demand as the Holmes and Watson of "Pink" have. Where "Black" and "Emerald" each rescript Doyle's Holmes and Watson, then, "Pink" and its successive episodes seem positioned to eventually rescript the mythos and characters of *Sherlock* itself.

CHAPTER VI

"PATRON CRIMINAL OF THIS GREAT CITY": ROMANTIC PARTNERS IN "A STUDY IN MIDNIGHT"

In addition to their longstanding association with one another, the characters of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson also have an extensive history of this connection being adapted for and rescripted in different media: we have already seen this in the different approaches favored by Bollers, Gaiman, and Moffat and Gatiss respectively, as well as in the ways that each rescription also intersects with Jenkins's idea of convergence culture as produced for, by, and through multiple users and media. However, the final artefact under consideration in this investigation offers the most complicated take yet: M_Leigh's 2011 "Study In Midnight" is a fanfiction that adopts the concepts and setting of Gaiman's "Study in Emerald" and extends its action and backstory in order to rescript a Holmes and Watson who become romantic partners as well as literal and figurative partners in crime.

"Midnight" follows John Watson and Sherlock Holmes as Holmes becomes associated with the movement to destroy a Lovecraftian alien monarchy and Watson tries

to determine why he follows the detective. The narrative, which is divided into four "movements" narrated primarily by Leigh's first-person Watson, opens with Watson's hints that he is not actually an Afghanistan war veteran and then continues with his and Holmes's first meeting. When Holmes realizes that opera singer Irene Adler is being held and brutalized by one of Britain's monstrous rulers, the former detective reveals to Watson that he is a Restorationist, or a believer in human-led democratic government: the two men then plan and carry out the murder of the prince before founding a more organized branch of London Restorationists. After their new organization is betrayed and several members killed, Holmes is driven to more and more desperate measures, and eventually turns on Watson as the suspected traitor. When the detective finally learns of Watson's innocence as well as his hidden homosexuality through Moran, a secondary narrator, Holmes rescues his friend and the two men go into hiding with plans to retake their fight when Watson has healed.

While "Midnight" makes use of elements both from Doyle's own "Scarlet" and from Gaiman's "Emerald," it also rescripts several aspects of both the initial meeting and the evolving relationship/partnership between Holmes and Watson. To begin outlining the significant differences between "Midnight" and its predecessors, though, requires us to first define the terms at play, particularly the controversial "fanfiction." Put most simply, fanfiction involves fans of a text or media artefact creating stories with or from the character(s), plot(s), and/or concept(s) of the original, itself often called the "canon" (Pugh 26). In his 1992 *Textual Poachers*, Jenkins identifies the background drive for such fanworks as that resulting when "fans assert their own right to form interpretation, to offer evaluations, and to construct [new] cultural canons" (18). Here he also proposes the

term "textual poaching" as "a theory of appropriation, not of 'misreading' because the term 'misreading' implies that there are right and wrong ways dictated and authorized by someone" (*Poachers* 33), though more recently critics have contested even this definition for resting on the fallacious basis of a single producer's – or, I would add, rescriptor's – complete ownership (Coker).

This debate aside, though, the practice of writing fanfiction, and the texts that it produces, both show that the reality is more complicated than a delineation between commercial and noncommercial work might lead the unfamiliar to believe. Instead, fanfiction involves many of the same questions of legality, commerciality, and canonicity that we have already seen at play in critical reactions to other media artefacts: who has the right to rescript a classic story or its characters, how and why, and who makes these decisions? In a 1997 interview for the *New York Times*, Jenkins famously reiterates the idea that fan fiction is rooted in traditions such as mythmaking and participatory storytelling, maintaining that "If you go back, the key stories we told ourselves were stories that were important to everyone and belonged to everyone. . . Fan fiction is a way of the culture repairing the damage done in a system where contemporary myths are owned by corporations instead of owned by the folk" (par 9). Fans interviewed by Sheenagh Pugh would seem to agree, saying that they write fanfiction "because they wanted either 'more of' their source material or 'more from' it" (19).

On a surface level, then, debates over fanfiction involve the question of wronging the original producer, copyright holder, et cetera. Deeper, though, debates over fanfiction often reveal their apologists' values in items such as textual fidelity and traditional storytelling media: what initially seems like a reasonable argument against poor writing,

low narrative quality, and focus on sexual narratives soon reveals its source in something much like Leitch's textual "fidelity" (6). Strictly speaking, this is not to say that fanfiction is not often poorly written, unfortunately trite, or even conforming to what is called the "PWP" structure: "plot what plot?" or "porn without plot." However, this *is* to say that most discussions of fanfiction staged beyond fannish spaces either stem from or fall into *a priori* assumptions of content, purpose, and value – and that these are assumptions that completely bypass the intriguing culture actually at play behind this form of rescription. Briefly and broadly, then, a less biased definition would simply conclude that fanfiction is a type of rescription that is noncommercial, oblique, and producer-unsanctioned, and is created in particular spaces for specific, self-aware audiences.[14] Put another way still, fanfiction is produced and made available without monetary compensation, addresses or references only the parts of the textual "canon" that the fan-author wishes, and undertakes these objectives without the sanction of the original or otherwise "authorized" producers.

Leigh is unmistakably aware of "Midnight" as a fanfiction of both Doyle's and Gaiman's work, stressing upfront that this is an "AU [alternate universe] based on Neil Gaiman's phenomenal short story 'A Study in Emerald'" ("Summary") and that "I have made certain small changes to Gaiman's universe in order to better serve my story, but they are fairly minor" ("Notes"). Sabine Vanacker assumes Abigail Derecho's term

[14] There are exceptions, of course, such as E.L. James's controversial *50 Shades of Grey* trilogy. Originally published on fanfiction.net as a Twilight fanfiction titled "Master of the Universe," *50 Shades* was then moved to James's private website, then "scrubbed" of fandom names and references, and finally published commercially, first as a print-on-demand and e-book from a small publisher, and then reprinted by a larger publisher to meet the growing demand (Boog). Texts such as these face their own unique challenges, including backlash from within their original fannish communities for "selling out" the culture, moving beyond the beleaguered space, and perpetuating negative stereotypes, particularly of female fans as "orgiastic" (*Poachers* 12) and of fanfiction writers as amateurish porn writers.

“achrontic” to describe this type of rescriptive phenomenon, originally proposed to describe fanfiction’s oblique approach to an existing textual canon (Derecho 63-4): according to Vanacker, writers in the Holmesian tradition of such writing “often choose to focus on scenes not described in the canonic series. . . [or] may ‘mine’ the Doyle canon searching for its gaps, omissions or contradictions” (97). Leigh, however, further complicates the tradition of achrontic Holmesian writing by practicing it upon a text, Gaiman’s “Study in Emerald,” that itself is already rescripting from Doyle. Where Gaiman had re-envisioned Doyle’s Holmes and Watson in order to render his versions the “criminals” of a morally-inverted Cthulhuian universe, though, Leigh expands upon Gaiman’s revisions in order to get both “more of” and “more from” (Pugh 19) both “Scarlet” *and* “Emerald.”

The prince’s murder provides a striking example of achrontic expansion in “Midnight.” In Gaiman’s “Emerald,” the murder of a monstrous prince drives the narrative, giving Gaiman’s narrator and detective a crime to investigate while also setting up the eventual revelation that in this alternate universe, Holmes and Watson are the murderers. As a plot device, then, the murder is presented second-hand, and the most readers really learn is that it was executed by two men with knives (Gaiman 5, 8-9) and planned to leave a message for Moriarty (Gaiman 3). In “Midnight,” though, the murder is not the narrative’s driving force, both because readers are expected to be familiar with “Emerald” and thus with its twist ending (“Summary”; “Notes”), and because here Leigh intends her rescripted characters of Holmes and Watson as the narrative’s main focus, rather than the mystery of who killed the prince or who is the narrator.

Because Leigh approaches the murder with completely different aims than Gaiman had, then, the deed itself becomes significant in a different way than it had been for "Emerald." Where Gaiman used the prince's murder to begin introducing his "criminal" Holmes and Watson to unsuspecting readers, Leigh uses the same event to establish how well her Watson has come to know Holmes and how far he has decided to trust and follow him. As a result of this alternate approach, "Midnight" readers are shown how Watson discovered his friend's "criminal" past, how he felt about it, why he joined Holmes in further criminality, and how the murder itself proceeded. Here, then, Leigh rescripts significant portions of Gaiman's "Emerald" in order to create and include a wealth of personal, emotional, and tangible details that Gaiman does not even consider – both because his first-person narrator Moran sees Holmes and Watson as ancillary to his own partnership with Moriarty, and because in "Emerald" the solution of the crime and the revelation of Holmes and Watson's inverted morality is more important to Gaiman's twist ending.

In "Midnight," for instance, the prince's murder is first brought up with this exchange, initiated by Watson:

> "What do you plan to do?" I asked him.
> He looked somewhat surprised. "How do you know that I plan to do anything?"
> I shrugged. "I know you," I said simply. He wore a guarded look that I was not used to, and I found myself wondering how much of this business he had managed to keep hidden from me the past two years. Upon reflection, I thought it was probably not so very much: there was a difference, after all, in receiving occasional documents and taking concrete action against the monarchy.
> (Leigh 19)

With this introduction to her Holmes's past "criminal" activities and current plans, Leigh also shows how well her Watson has come to know the detective – enough to realize from a "guarded look" (19) that he is keeping secrets, and to discover that Watson himself is dedicated to helping in any way he can.

In addition to a different manner of introduction, though, Leigh also approaches the murder itself differently than Gaiman had when first creating it in "Emerald," since in both cases she is emphasizing the developing relationship between Holmes and Watson rather than hinting to readers that there is a mystery of identity to be solved. Where Gaiman simply had his "consulting detective" Moriarty observe the use of knives to kill the prince (5, 7-8) and his criminal Holmes leave a note condemning Britain's monstrous royalty (8-9), Leigh instead has her Watson detail how, remembering what he has seen of the prince's handiwork, "I experienced no feeling of nerves as I walked forward, smiling pleasantly at him, and drove the long knife I had concealed in my jacket into his chest" (21). In having her first-person narrator describe actually committing the murder, rather than observing the day-old results of it as Gaiman's narrator had, Leigh is able to bring "Midnight" 's readers a much closer view of the inverted morality originally introduced by Gaiman in "Emerald." Where Gaiman banks on readers' automatic support for Holmes and Watson, and on Holmes's rousing last-page letter, to accept that their criminality and murder are actually acceptable, Leigh instead walks readers through this acceptance.

Despite this difference, and Leigh's own awareness and delineation of her "Midnight" as a fanfiction of both Doyle's and Gaiman's work, readers might easily note the many similarities, and in some cases even parallels, between the rescriptive process of

“Midnight” and those rescriptions in Bollers’s, Gaiman’s, and Moffat and Gatiss’s respective media artefacts. Briefly: all four “Studies” offer their respective authors’ rescriptions of, or changes to, well-known characters created by someone else (whether these changes involve race, location, era, and/or sexual orientation) as well as their first meeting and developing partnership. In addition too, all four artefacts clearly depend on their readers realizing that such changes are being made – i.e., that these particular Holmeses and Watsons are rescriptions rather than simply reproductions of Doyle’s characters. In the end, though, Leigh’s “Midnight” is deemed fanfiction while “Black,” “Emerald,” and “Pink” are called award-winning media artefacts.

A brief list of surface differences among the four will correlate to many of the stereotypes attributed to fanfiction: “Midnight” is by an amateur female author who is writing about other producers’ characters under a pseudonym, for no financial profit, and with a focus on inner life, character development, and identity formation as much as on traditional plot-driven narrative structure. A closer look, though, will reveal fallacies, or at least unsound assumptions, about the way this list might be compiled to determine that “Midnight” is somehow lesser than the other three artefacts due to one or more of the characteristics noted above. This is not to say that the label of fanfiction is incorrect for “Midnight,” or that any of the other three – “Black,” “Emerald,” and “Pink” – must be labeled fanfiction as well: instead, though, we might use it to examine the way in which that term is used as a standard of value.

As noted earlier with the debates surrounding the use of “pastiche” to delineate Gaiman’s “Emerald,” there is considerable cultural baggage attached to the term “fanfiction” and its use, beyond even the definition that most critics can bring themselves

to agree upon – or, to reference Pugh's ironic aside, "Perhaps we have here a case of one of those irregular verbs: my novel makes creative use of literary reference, yours is derivative, hers is fan fiction" (25). The previous list of characteristics for "Midnight" might benefit from a comparable scrutiny, and in fact, some of the difference in delineation between "Midnight" as a fanfiction on the one hand and "Black," "Emerald," and "Pink" as media artefacts on the other could be put down to the delineation between the terms "transformative" and "affirmative," each of which describe a particular type of fannish activity but might just as easily apply to rescription. Transformative fannish activity, which is often seen as troublesome and even threatening to the original text and its producer, has been called the "unsanctioned" side of fandom: this type of fanwork involves fans' direct interaction with the source material, "whether that is to fix a disappointing issue . . . in the source material, or using the source material to illustrate a point, or just to have a whale of a good time" (obsession-inc par. 6). On the hand, affirmative fandom is the "sanctioned" side, or the type of fanwork that holds the original producer as the first and only authority on the material and in its own work "the source material is re-stated [and] the author's purpose divined to the community's satisfaction" (obsession-inc par. 4). Unlike transformative works, affirmative or affirmational works are typically seen more positively in mainstream media, since they confirm the inalienable rights – to profit, yes, but often just as importantly, to define and interpret – of the original producer. Comparatively speaking, "The affirmational school focuses on privileging [the original producer(s)] and their feelings; the transformational school, on open discussion and critique" (alixtii par. 4). In this sense, fanfiction is typically a

transformative artefact, as it reinterprets, troubles, or even questions some aspect of the original text or production.

If we were to consider the four "Studies" of this investigation under this model, it would seem fairly easy to conclude that each of their rescriptions is transformative: each adds some twist to the originally Victorian figures of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, places them in some entirely new environment, and, to adopt current film parlance, creates some new twist on their first meeting or "origin story" as a crime-solving duo. Yet "Black," "Emerald," and "Pink" are not faced with identification as fanfiction unless by detractors, while "Midnight" is termed fanfiction from the beginning.

The most obvious solution to this dichotomy might be to point out that the first three were published for profit, their creators' admiration for Doyle's work notwithstanding. We have already seen hints of this with the debate over whether "Emerald" is a pastiche: those who wish to malign Gaiman reduce "Emerald" to being a piece of fanfiction, or amateur work. Similarly, critics who dislike the later seasons of Moffat and Gatiss's *Sherlock* dismiss the more recent episodes as fan service or outright fanfiction (Lawson "Beware"). As a specific fanfiction, then, "Midnight" offers an especially effective example of transformative fanwork because it engages with the same items as the commercially- and authoritatively-sanctioned narratives of "Black," "Emerald," and "Pink" – which, as we have already seen, are never termed fanfiction unless being disparaged.

Even these delineations between commercial and noncommercial or between types of fan activity, though, are not quite enough to fully explain the split between "Midnight" on the one hand and "Black," "Emerald," and "Pink" on the other. As we have already seen,

successful (read: commercially viable) takes on Sherlock Holmes are best advised "to resist falling into mere historical pastiche" (Nicol 128) or simply imitating "the great Holmeses of the past, such as Rathbone or Brett" (Nicol 128). In addition, as we have also seen, "Black," "Emerald," and "Pink" all avoid these hazards by relocating Holmes and Watson temporally, geographically, lawfully, or some combination of the above, and often rescript fairly radical departures from Doyle's "Study in Scarlet" or his entire Holmesian canon. While "Midnight" makes the same moves, though, it is undeniably coded as fanfiction while the others are seen as pastiches or homages. What is different – or, put differently, what prevents Leigh from making the move from noncommercial to commercial, and thus out of the realm of fanfiction? Two insurmountable obstacles present themselves: sanction and slash.

Of the two, legal sanction is the perhaps the more visible in mainstream consciousness, as debates over who can write stories about Sherlock Holmes have persisted since J.M. Barrie's 1923 tongue-in-cheek "The Adventure of the Two Collaborators" (Haining 12). More recently, though, the difficulties surrounding Holmesian homage and adaption have become more strenuous. In the 2014 case *Klinger v. Conan Doyle Estate*, for instance, Doyle's legal heirs contended that they still held copyright on the later stories, and because of that, copyright on the final and "fully complexified'" (4) versions of Holmes and Watson was still in effect. As a result, the Estate argued that it was:

> entitled to judgment on the merits, because . . . copyright on a "complex" character in a story, such as Sherlock Holmes or Dr. Watson, whose full complexity is not revealed until a later story, remains under copyright until the later story falls into the public domain. The estate

> argues that the fact that early stories in which Holmes or Watson appeared are already in the public domain does not permit their less than fully "complexified" characters in the early stories to be copied even though the stories themselves are in the public domain. (4)

With this appeal, the Estate essentially argued that because Holmes and Watson develop as characters over the course of Doyle's writing career, "to write about the character[s] at all was to infringe the estate's copyright" (Kerridge par. 8). While the judge ruled in favor of the appellee, anthologist Leslie Klinger, the debate over legal and copyright issues persists: so although most commercial producers still avoid the conflict by paying token fees to the Estate when adapting or rescripting Sherlock Holmes, it is possible if difficult to write about Doyle's Sherlock Holmes without their sanction. Leigh, though, has the additional hurdle of working with Neil Gaiman's characterizations and concepts from "Study in Emerald," though, so legal sanction would seem an insurmountable obstacle to "Midnight"'s status as fanfiction.

The obstacle of "slash" is more complicated. As we saw earlier, Jenkins has defined slash somewhat sensationally as the fan-created narratives that result when "the homosocial desires of series characters erupt into homoerotic passion" (*Poachers* 175): more helpfully, if also still simplistically, he later contends that slash narratives "center on the relationship between male program characters, the obstacles they must overcome to achieve intimacy" (*Poachers* 189). As also noted earlier, slash occupies an uncomfortable place in fandom and fandom studies: fans are often divided into those not wanting their affection for the source material affiliated with this sexualized, and often highly-sexualized, type of writing, and on the other hand, those who contend that slash is a logical culmination to the fannish impulse to interrogate and transform the source.

Furthermore, those outside a specific fandom or even the idea of fandom in general can easily acquire a skewed perception of what fannish activity means, let alone the slash tradition. While other critics have recently provided more nuanced explorations of the slash tradition and community than Jenkins (Pugh; Woledge; Booth; Lothian, Busse, and Reid), *Poachers*' formative definition seems to have remained dominant for its simplicity and ease of application, and thus when the term "slash" is used to describe or denigrate a text or media artefact, the critic is typically referring to something like Jenkins's sensational definition.

Leigh's "Midnight," though, simultaneously fits and troubles this conception of slash narratives in the ways that it both addresses the concerns of homosocial desire but also avoids explicit or foregrounded enactment of the predicted "erupt[ion] into homoerotic passion" (*Poachers* 175). Leigh's first-person Watson continually hints at the way he has secrets he cannot tell Holmes (6) and that one of these is "one great thing that had forever separated us" (22), and readers familiar with the traditions of fanfiction may guess what this secret is from statements such as "I knew, somewhere deep within me, that my motivation was more firmly rooted in my dedication to Holmes himself than in any kind of revolutionary fire" (28). Even after the revelation that this rescripted Watson is a closeted homosexual man and a returned convict (Leigh 54, 58), the most overt references "Midnight" offers include Watson's thoughts upon rescue ("It only made me love him more. I know you, I thought, again and again," 59), Holmes's last-page disclosure that he learned about Watson's orientation and that "we have both been exceptionally stupid" (Leigh 69), and the concluding paragraph, their first kiss and the only actual depiction of sexual or romantic connection between the two men:

> I glance over at him, and he is gazing at me with his silver eyes all ablaze; they are brighter than the comet above us; brighter than the brightest light that has ever burned on this earth, and I know; I know; I know everything that is worth knowing, suddenly; it is beyond logic, this feeling, it is entirely different; and then as I kiss him like a bruise I feel my heart and my soul and everything I know about myself flowing into him; it is his now, and everything that makes him Sherlock Holmes is mine: his brilliance, his arrogance, his seven percent solution, his madness, his dedication to justice, which he has somehow abandoned for a while, for me; I know this from the feeling of his hand clutching desperately at the back of my waistcoat, and the other pulling insistently at my hair, and the soft sounds he is making in his throat, and the awkward impact of his teeth against mine as we push desperately closer, and closer. I close my eyes, and welcome the darkness. (Leigh 69)

While this concluding paragraph is somewhat flowery, it also emphasizes the long-dismissed connection and the long-dismissed culmination of Holmes and Watson's relationship over the sensational homoeroticism that Jenkins seems to expect. This is not to say that such sensationalism, or even a focus on sexuality, is nonexistent among Holmesian fan-writers – in fact, as of April 2016, there are 14445 pieces of fanfiction rated "Explicit" and 12837 rated "Mature" under the "Sherlock Holmes and Related Fandoms" tag on the fansite Archive of Our Own (Ao3), and earlier internet archives such as Fanfiction.net, Sacrilege, and less formal LiveJournal communities and Yahoo groups also feature considerable numbers. Despite this tradition, though, Leigh's "Midnight" is rated Mature according to Ao3's ratings for "graphic descriptions of violence" (Watson's capture and torture, a few shootings) rather than for overt slash.

As its relationship to fannish traditions such as transformative writing and slash has shown, Leigh's "Study in Midnight" rescripts the Holmes and Watson of both Doyle's

original “Scarlet” and Gaiman’s 2003 “Emerald” to offer readers something that neither of its predecessors had: more fully-explored reasons for Holmes and Watson to be in a relationship. However, the self- and community-driven categorization of Leigh’s work as fanfiction also provides perhaps the clearest example of the ways in which rescriptions driven by convergence culture paradoxically reincode a new elitism. By rescripting Holmes and Watson in a way that enables them to move beyond the relationship of friends and working partners, and on into an eventually sexual and romantic relationship, Leigh is subscribing to the particular norms and expectations of a specific subset of Holmesians: those who will read acknowledged fanfiction in addition to pastiches and the original canon. Though Leigh’s work shares many qualities with the artefacts examined earlier – such as temporal displacement and an examination of Holmes and Watson beyond what Doyle provided to drive his *Adventures* forward – the one or two specific differences ensure that only certain Holmesians will ever read, acknowledge, or even know of “Midnight.”

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION:

"THOUGH THE WORLD EXPLODE, THESE TWO SURVIVE"

Perhaps British poet, critic, and Holmesian Vincent Starrett sums up readers' continued and continuing interest in Sherlock Holmes and John Watson best with his memorializing poem "Always 1895," which concludes with the wistful note that "Though the world explode, these two survive / And it is always eighteen ninety-five" (ll. 13-14).[15] Although this 1942 poem was also conceived as a post-WWII elegy to a simpler time and nation, many of its sentiments concerning Holmes and Watson as symbols of something better still ring true for contemporary readers. In fact, looking back to Redmond's exhaustive lists of Holmesian adaptations as well as to the big-name versions of the past

[15] The entire poem: "Here dwell together still two men of note / Who never lived and so can never die: / How very near they seem, yet how remote / That age before the world went all awry. / But still the game's afoot for those with ears / Attuned to catch the distant view-halloo: / England is England yet, for all our fears– / Only those things the heart believes are true. / A yellow fog swirls past the window-pane / As night descends upon this fabled street: / A lonely hansom splashes through the rain, / The ghostly gas lamps fail at twenty feet. / Here, though the world explode, these two survive, / And it is always eighteen ninety-five."

ten years seems to reveal that the icons of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson have not only survived in popular imagination, as Starrett hopes in 1942, but even flourished.

As we have seen, the process of rescription – or "the changes made by a [producer] in the received text in response to a perceived problem or to achieve some agenda" (Dessen 3) – can often prove a valuable framework for considering the technical aspect of Holmes's continuing and even increased popularity. In particular, examples such as Karl Bollers's graphic novel "Study in Black," Neil Gaiman's short story "Study in Emerald," Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss's television episode "Study in Pink," and M_Leigh's fanfiction "Study in Midnight" certainly owe their existence and transmission to the idea that people other than Doyle can write about the Great Detective and the Army Doctor, and that audiences outside the Victorian era are fascinated by these two characters' essential personae even as attributes may be changed in various ways to suit different times, purposes, and audiences.

As tempting as it is to simply point to such examples of Holmesian adaptations and rescriptions and repeat along with Starrett that Holmes and Watson won't ever die, it is also worth noting that something like Starrett's own exclusionary nationalism also survives. Though readers' enjoyment of Holmes and Watson need no longer be limited to the leisurely Victorian or Edwardian presumptions of Starrett's verse, or even to the nation or language that remains "England yet, for all our fears" (l. 7), some troubling aspects of this view are still appended to Holmes and the contemporary rescriptions created through convergence culture.

While the combination of rescriptive power and convergent creation and transmission shatters the implicit elitism of Doyle's original text by giving any interested and invested

audience the ability to read, relate with, and rescript Holmes and Watson, any new text(s) or media artefact(s) produced through this union must then face the elitist judgment of the rescriptors' own peers through the same system. In other words: anyone can read or write about Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, technically speaking, but culturally speaking, only certain rescriptors really do it "well" (and thus, at all) by staying close to the majority's most valued attributes of Doyle's canon.

Further complications also ensue when neither rescriptors, readers, nor critics can agree on what "doing" Holmes and Watson or Doyle's canon "well" really means – with a few telling exceptions. From the works we have examined and the critical responses that they have provoked from others within the rescriptive Holmesian community, it does seem that trans-historical and transcultural differences are more easily acceptable than trans-racial shifts, and that sexual identity and its enactment(s) are only permissible in a culturally-acceptable (i.e. "pastiche") work as reader interpretations, rather than as intentional authorial inserts. In fact, in their denunciations some critical reactions to these four "Studies" veer uncomfortably close to suggesting that the only acceptable rescriptions of Holmes and Watson are those that derive – narratively, and perhaps even authorially – from a white, cis male, heterocentric viewpoint, even though so many rescriptions that acknowledge, utilize, or are produced beyond such viewpoints demonstrate equal literary achievement(s).

As Starrett had hoped, then, Holmes, Watson, and their relationship have survived long past the Gregorian calendar year 1895: whether their narratives remain stuck in 1895, though, remains to be seen. Our acknowledgement of the paradoxical reincoding that comes of rescripting Holmes and Watson through convergence culture might yet lead

to a more thorough examination of the fidelitous values that serve as its foundation, and from this, to a further acknowledgement that these values are not without their own implicit weaknesses. Ultimately, considering rather than simply inheriting our consumption values might yet prove that Starrett's "age before the world went all awry" (l. 4) need not be as remote as he fears. While Starrett's, and indeed Doyle's, Holmes and Watson may not always be exactly as either author would recognize them, these beloved characters need not be made "distant" (l. 6) through self-policed discourses either.

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