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Fan Fiction and Authorship

*Secondary Authors and Their Role in the Evolution of the Author Construct
and Canonicity*

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Abstract

This thesis explores the author role as a complex construct in relation to the notion of canonicity, investigating the relationship between authors, their original works, fan authors and fan authors' works of fan fiction. Four major works have been chosen for analysis, Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study In Scarlet* (1887), J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007), Anthony Horowitz' *The House of Silk* (2011) and an online work of fan fiction by "gyzym" called *What We Pretend We Can't See* (2017). Through the analysis of two original works and works of fan fiction derived from each, as well as the author role, copyright concerns, and the challenges of defining canonicity, this thesis seeks to show that fan fiction is productive and useful for the core text, and that secondary authors have the capacity to produce texts that can qualify as canonical to the original works according to certain criteria.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Table of Contents.....	4
1. Introduction.....	6
1.1 Fan Fiction.....	7
1.2 A Working Definition of “Fan”.....	13
1.3 Fandoms.....	16
1.4 The Relevance of Sherlock Holmes.....	18
1.5 The Relevance of Harry Potter.....	22
1.6 Studies in the Field So Far.....	23
2. Canonical Holmes.....	26
2.1 Blood and Law.....	28
2.2 A Study in Scarlet, Characters and Vigilantism.....	33
2.3 Identifiers and Canonicity.....	37
3. Horowitz and the Doyle Estate.....	41
3.1 The House of Silk and Vigilantism.....	43
3.2 The House of Silk as a Fanfic.....	47
3.3 The Author Function and Truth in Holmes.....	52
4. The Choice of Potter and Rowling.....	55
4.1 Destiny, Death and Class Divides.....	57
4.2 The Deathly Hallows and Evolution.....	60
4.3 Epilogue? What Epilogue?.....	63
5. The Anatomy of a Web-Published Fanfic.....	68
5.1 What We Pretend We Can’t See.....	71
5.2 The Specific Fanfic’s Own Additions.....	75
5.3 Fan Works as Expansive, Useful and Canonical.....	78
Conclusion.....	82
Works Cited.....	84

1: Introduction

In this thesis, I will show that fan fiction is productive and creative, useful for extracting further meaning from its parent text and not restricted to the realms of parody, pastiche and spoof. The dearth of work on this topic within literary studies is lamentable, as the field of fanfic production is vast and growing, and this growth suggests another step in the ever-changing relationship between a text's original author, the text itself, and its readers.

Fan fiction is not the deliberate attempts of amateur writers to co-opt or subvert a canonical text. Rather, its writing is the natural result of proficient readers in deep engagement with a work, tied to what Barthes calls in his *S/Z* a "writerly" text, that which rejects simple interpretation in light of a text's "(...) perpetual present, upon which no *consequent* language can be superimposed; the writerly text is *ourselves writing*, before the infinite play of the world" (5). Though Barthes refers to the power of subjectivity and interpretation at play rather than the production of a text, I will show that the engagement with a text may take the form of actual writing rather than simple interpretation and processing on the spot, and this is a fluid spill-over rather than the crossing of a significant barrier: writing fan fiction is an extension of a deep reading process that happens when an individual's appreciation for a text and its story world meets with an understanding of its underlying principles. If Barthes is right when he says that "to rewrite the writerly text would consist only in disseminating it, in dispersing it within the field of infinite difference" (5), then fan fiction is not rewriting, but writing, and I propose that if "The true locus of writing is reading" (5), the opposite is equally true. The discourse on reader response and reader engagement may be one of interpretation and processing, but I will suggest that physically putting pen to paper is an extension of this engagement, making the true locus of reading, writing.

I seek to show that fan fiction, through questioning, exploring, expanding and purposefully altering details of an original work's contents, can continue the core work's ideals separate from the already failing hegemony of the author, as part of a complex but fluid dynamic between original author, original work, fan author and fan work. In order to do this, I have chosen two original published works, Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* and J.K. Rowling's *The Deathly Hallows*, and two derivative works, Anthony Horowitz's *The*

House of Silk and the unfortunately named gyzym's *What We Pretend We Can't See*. Before attending the chosen works, I will establish working definitions of the terms "fan fiction," "fan," and "fandom" to clear up any ambiguities or uncertainty in their use, and throughout this introductory chapter I will present the basis upon which my arguments for the function of fan fiction is built. I will then move on the works chosen, explaining their relevance to my arguments, and close out the introduction by summarising and situating this thesis in the field of studies related to fan fiction. The term "author" will be used to generally refer to the individual who created a work, interchangeable with "writer" except where it relates to discussions on an author *function*, clearly marked as such.

1.1: Fan Fiction

Fan fiction authors create works that by themselves can continue or evolve and improve upon messages, standards and traditions established by original works' authors. They can craft texts that possess the literary qualities found in canonized works, and furthermore, the deep textual engagement that leads to the creation of fan fiction allows an original text to approach a fuller breadth of its potential meanings. Fan fiction is the endgame of literature, and I will expand upon the arguments laid forth by Rachel Barenblat in "Fan fiction and midrash: Making meaning," showing that fan fiction aids in unfolding a work, just as the Torah grows through midrash: "Just as Jews interpret Torah through midrash (exegetical stories that explore and explain the text), fans interpret contemporary source texts through fan fiction" (par. 0.1). Describing their own work, fans suggest the following:

Fanfiction (fanfic, fic) is a work of fiction written by fans for other fans, taking a source text or a famous person as a point of departure. It is most commonly produced within the context of a fannish community and can be shared online such as in archives or in print such as in zines. Fanfiction is also written by fans in isolation, perhaps shared with a few friends or no one at all. Writing fanfiction is an extremely widespread fannish activity; millions of stories have been written, and thousands more are written daily. ("Fanfiction" fanlore.org)

This explains that a work of fan fiction (hereafter "fanfic") is a text produced in response to another text, TV show, film or any other form of media, where the original work is written by

a different author and provides the strict or loose basis for a following work. Dissolving the unique position of the original author in this manner, there is a link between fanfic and zero-author works, whose history stretches all the way back to the Greek classics, and claims that recent expressions of fanfic stem from pre-copyright traditions are, according to Kahane's "Fan Fiction, Early Greece and the Historicity of Canon," "(...) less provocative than they first appear (...) Virgil, Dante and Joyce are as much fans of Homer and the epic tradition and as much textual poachers (de Certeau [1975] 2000; Jenkins 1992) as self-professed 16-year-old fan Avaron, who posts a fan fiction response to the *Iliad*" (par. 1.1). Thus, modern fanfics are part of an old tradition wherein derivative plots have long been the norm, and though I will not commit to directly discussing the full, chronological evolution of modern capitalist trends that run contrary to this tradition, it is highly relevant for this thesis to show how broad the definition of fanfics can be. Milton's *Paradise Lost* fits with the examples given by Kahane, but for those who desire a more recent, secular example, Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* fits the same description.

The divides between inspiration and derivation, between repetition and continuation, are never clear-cut, however. Whether certain canonised works of literature are fanfic because of imagined technicalities will not aid this thesis, so instead I will seek to establish that fanfic in a modern context can be more than pastiche or spoof. Especially with the advent of the internet, fanfics today are often considered the realm of amateur writers and the absurd. The intent is to prove that a fanfic is a derivative work that has the potential to enrich a canon work by exploring new facets or highlighting unexplored aspects of that which exists. This is by itself indubitably accomplished by Milton, Virgil, Dante and others. Many of the authors of the great literary canon have added to the Bible in the same way that Barenblat suggests the Torah grows through Midrash, and these principles apply to modern fanfics despite the lack of a barrier to entry that has given them a dubious reputation. To say that a fanfic has the *potential* of assisting a core text in achieving its full potential is not just hedging my bets in case some fail to do so, but acknowledging the breadth of fanfics. Though the lack of a publisher or other controlling party with "money to lose" means that the quality of fanfics is highly variable, another part of the reason why fanfics are maligned may be because this unbounded fan creativity is outside the grasp of corporations' monetization efforts. Axel Bruns suggests that "the role of consumer and even that of end user have long disappeared, and the distinctions between producers and users of content have faded (...)" (*The Handbook*

of *Media Audiences* 2). Fanfics, at their core, are free not just of monetary cost, but in every other sense of the word except for their attachment to a canon from which they spring.

Why are fanfics important in a modern society that emphasises the production of new and unique works? Busse & Grey quote Penley saying that fandom—and thus fanfic—is like “(...) a vigorous massage that might hurt the text in the short run, yet ultimately was done for that text’s sake” (428). Rather than seek an answer on a sociological level, I will argue that fanfics are important to the parental text not only because they are critical as part of an ever growing culture of literature—and they *are* largely critical, if not automatically so—but also because, as the above quote suggests, they are *noncompliant*. The summarised description that Busse and Gray give of fanfic authors in “Fan Cultures and Fan Communities” is key:

All three writers [referring to Jenkins, Bacon-Smith and Penley] offered a picture of fandom as never necessarily passive or compliant, as thoughtful and deliberative (...) engaged and intelligent individuals, and as a legitimate source of production of meaning and value in and of itself. (428)

The importance of this can not be overstated: compliance is inherently antithetical to creating new meaning, and thus to expanding the understanding of a work of literature. In fanfics there exists both a potential future wherein authorship is freed from publishers and estates for whom fanfics are a threat, and a link to the past and the classical era where the specificity of a singular author has not yet arisen, changing, as Foucault would say, “(...) when the author became subject to punishment and to the extent that his discourse was considered transgressive” (305). In both, a true evaluation of the potential of a text is understood only once we surrender its ownership. Fans are extreme examples of the power shift to the reader, this time as writers.

In this sense, fanfics are important because they serve as a counterpoint to the author- and estate-driven economies surrounding modern published texts. If we consider the Statute of Anne the first form of copyright, it was established three hundred years ago, and the negative perception of derivative works in the expression called “fan fiction” is very recent on a literary scale. If author and estate copyrights control all original works that are created, this can only limit possible creative expressions. It is well beyond the scope of this thesis to discover the relationship between the advent of, and increasing choke-hold of copyright and the proliferation of fanfics, but my argument is that the very same reader engagement that

brought Barthes and Foucault to discuss the role of the author cannot be unrelated to the birth of modern fanfics.

Fanfics have a multitude of expressions beyond what I will focus on, and next, I will lay down some simple boundaries to limit the discussion. The fanfic communities surrounding popular works or subjects, from Harry Potter to the Marvel Cinematic Universe to Mozart all have their own terminology. An extremely short story, no more than a page or two, might be called a “shortfic” in one community, and a “drabble” in another, for instance. Other things remain fairly universal, such as the existence of a divide between what is and is not “AU,” or “alternate universe.” This distinction is important for this thesis. AU stories include those that exist in a hypothetical “what if” scenario sidelined from the original work (“what if Harry Potter never went to Hogwarts”), diverges from canon at some point (“what if Boromir had never died by the river Anduin”), or transports one element of the work to a different arena (“what if Austen’s Dashwoods lived in contemporary London instead”). Needless to say, this is a non-exhaustive list of examples. For the purposes of this thesis, while acknowledging that hypothetical and divergent stories can usefully explore themes and concepts pertaining to another work, I will not be talking about AU fanfics except as a counter-example. One of the primary texts of this thesis, *What We Pretend We Can’t See*, is part of the “EWE” (“Epilogue? What epilogue?”) phenomenon wherein, in the same vein as a later example with the *Beauty and the Beast* fandom, the Harry Potter fandom shows disdain for a small portion of canon, but the relationship between AU and EWE will be discussed in depth in chapters 4 and 5. Mainly, I will focus on fanfics that accept their parental core text as canon, and thus are “fanfic” either because they continue a work where it has canonically ended, or expand upon something the original author has not “filled in,” creating new meaning where there is already room to do so.

The modern reader is increasingly aware of their authority to create meaning, especially where they are familiar with reader-response criticism. The literary theory and criticism that has created the reader of today also contains latent arguments for the value of fanfics: Barthes and Foucault have delineated the shift away from the genius author, and while the degree to which fanfics as a phenomenon are a force acting *upon* this process or a force resulting *from* the shift is not within the scope of this thesis, fanfics are highly interesting in context of what they say of the what lies between the author and his work.

(...) all writing is itself this special voice, consisting of several indiscernible voices
(...) literature is precisely the invention of this voice, to which we cannot assign a specific origin: literature is that neuter, that composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes. (1)

This is part of Barthes' introduction to "The Death of the Author," suggesting that writing is a unique voice without a point of origin. Whether or not we subscribe to this attempted polymorphing of the author into a conduit rather than a craftsman, Foucault also agrees that there is a plurality of voices, or at the very least, that an author is not simply a person who writes some words. In "What is an Author," he problematizes Saint Jerome's criteria for what makes an author (307), and suggests that "(...) all discourse that supports this 'author-function' is characterised by this plurality of egos" (308), describing the author as a cobbled-together construct.

Even if "an author" is a quantifiable creature (of quantity: *one*) in the flesh, and whether we understand this multiplicity as a chorus of divine voices or the many functions a complicated person inhabits all at once while trying to write a work of literature, we must accept that no written work *contains* only a single voice: the strengthened license and ability of a modern reader to engage with a work and extract their own meaning comes in part from the ability to recognise the complexity of both a work and of the human selves that wrote and read it. To read, listen to or watch the work of another is to unravel and knit something back together, and Barthes says—using the example of the Greek tragedy—that there is one who understands this: the reader:

(...) there is someone who understands each word in its duplicity, and understands further, one might say, the very deafness of the characters speaking in front of him: this someone is precisely the reader (...). In this way is revealed the whole being of writing: a text consists of multiple writings (...). (5-6)

Barthes thus draws the link between viewing a tragic play wherein characters' lines are intentionally ambiguous and meant to confuse, and reading a written work where the ambiguities exist—potentially unintentionally—in the format. Reading a text is interpreting a text, or "writing" it.

One of the valuable functions of fanfics is giving access to *multiple* readers' understandings of the original work. This is more complex than merely discussing a work

with another reader as mutually interested parties. New or expanded meanings can only be created through writing fanfics that an appreciator of the original work recognises as possible within the canon, and this requires the writer and the reader of such a fanfic to possess a shared understanding of the truth of the work. The word “truth” may seem arbitrary in this context, but the intent of this thesis is not to put forth any mystical theories. In the context of what has earlier been said about the fanfic concept of “AU”—of a story being marked as “alternate universe” and willfully separated from canon—it is worth noting that a fanfic can fail to achieve its aims of *not* being AU. A fanfic author can attempt to write something that is in line with canon, and then have their text fail to convince its audience that it belongs to the same tradition. This suggests that in all possible variants of, for example, a story that purports to be a continuation of a core text after its natural endpoint, there are many stories that are deemed *inconsistent* with the groundwork laid by the canon text. A fan-written eighth book in the main Harry Potter series of seven could face criticism and be deemed wrong or incompatible with canon by not only the invested “fan” reader, but also the average reader who would instantly recognise that the text does not present a believable continuation. Consider also that even if the author was J.K. Rowling herself, a portion of the readers would likely react in the same way despite its official status.

Keeping in mind Barthes and Foucault’s acknowledgment of the inherent complexities not just contained within a specific work, but in the processes and decisions that go into writing, the word “truth” is simply a less airy term for what some might call the “soul” or the “essence” of the work as its combination of implicit values, aims and general tone. There is an inherent tension between the nature of even non-AU fanfics as automatically “branching off” the parent work by virtue of creating something new, and my claim that there are fanfics aimed at staying close to the original work and directly add value to it rather than explore the possibility of what would happen if Mickey Mouse met Mozart in *Jurassic Park’s* Isla Nublar. I will address this by showing how works belonging to the same canon under the same author also “branch off,” and that it is possible for a fanfic closely observing the rules of the parental canon to be compliant while being original, often to a positive effect upon the parental work.

My argument will be the following: regardless of whether the author of a related work is the same as the original author, there is only ever a narrow band of possible events, styles and techniques that would be acceptable to the majority of readers, let alone dedicated fans

whose scrutiny is greater. Every written work needs to be internally consistent to be convincing and compelling, and fanfics have the additional constraints of needing to understand the underlying principles, rules and ideals of the core work. The truths of the work act as another hoop through which fanfics must jump to achieve authenticity. In “Disappointing Fans: Fandom, Fictional Theory and the Death of the Author,” Goodman highlights how, in the same way that the real world is the assumed default for missing details in a work, further works in the same universe expand and complicate the frame of reference: “*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* expands the fictional universe. The two novels are two texts about a single universe, and there is now room for contradiction and inaccuracy” (665). The fan author must always contend with this extra level of potential inaccuracy, and what I will show is that in order to overcome this barrier, fanfic authors have a capacity for tapping into these Barthesian “authorial voices”—the truth—behind the canon work to create fanfics that continue the traditions of the original work in both content and form. In saying this, I have acknowledged that fanfic authors and regular readers are not always the same, and I must define what the word “fan” means in this context.

1.2: A Working Definition of “Fan”

“Fan” is commonly held to be a clipping of “fanatic,” which according to Merriam-Webster.com suggests “excessive enthusiasm.” While this may certainly be true of many self-styled fans who engage with books or other media, the search for a working definition reveals the sheer size and variety of “fans” if it is taken to mean everyone who has a deep appreciation for something. There is a need to separate fans into at least two separate categories.

First, fans themselves often discuss two separate approaches to fandom, differentiating those for whom “Fandom Is a Way Of Life”(“FIAWOL”) versus “Fandom Is Just a Goddamned Hobby”(“FIJAGH”), which may be “tongue in cheek” (“Fandom Is A Way Of Life” fanlore.org), but is still broadly used. Busse and Gray propose another possible divide in “Fan Cultures and Fan Communities,” where they attempt to separate fans according to what creates them, suggesting there is a difference between fans produced by those who control the media—encouraged and mainstreamed by official secondary

content—and fans who are not. They further note “(...) the similarity in terms of behaviour and textual productions obscures the clear differences between traditional fan communities and new industry-driven fans (...)” (431).

While FIAWOL vs FIJAGH concerns itself with lifestyle and engagement level, and Busse and Gray emphasise the fans’ origin points, neither of these separations directly address the fan as author. I wish to add my own definitions, tailored to my specific purpose, in “fans of the thing” versus “fans of the fandom.” Within the first group, I place fans who are considered such because of their deep engagement with a “thing,” which for the purposes of this thesis will always refer to a novel or novels but can in theory be literally anything that inspires an individual to reach the state of being a self-described fan, such as a TV show, a movie or a theater play. The second group, “fans of the fandom,” are those who are *comparatively* less interested in the “thing” itself, but to a higher degree drawn to the social aspect of a fandom. While a certain overlap with the other two theories is expected, I will focus on the former group according to this definition.

This is not an act of exclusion by way of a value judgment, nor will the difference between two “types” of fans be very relevant for the thesis itself. Rather, this is to specify that just as I emphasise canon-compatible texts for their increased relevance to the field of literature—perhaps at the expense of social studies value—I also emphasise those fans for whom the core work is the point of interest rather than those who, in a very human and understandable manner, are drawn to the energy of a community. Making this separation aligns us with Steenhuyse, whose “The Writing and Reading of Fan Fiction and Transformation Theory” helps establish a connection between fan author and core work. Though her article is based on fanfics of *House, M.D.*, a TV series, the ideas are the same: fanfics are what happen when readers find themselves in a world larger and more vivid than just the text that happens in it. She suggests that “To fully understand these texts, one needs to understand immersion, and its importance for fan fiction. (...) they do not simply open a window onto the universe of the primary text; rather, they draw readers into a transformed universe” (7), and my argument is that this immersion and the attunement to a text that Steenhuyse describes is an extension of Barthes’ “writerly” traits, and that both are the key to what leads to the creation of fanfics.

Busse and Gray’s fans who are *not* media-endorsed loosely align with my own definition of “fans of the thing,” but I will argue that for the purpose of my discussion on

fanfic, fans are less important for from whence they came, more important depending upon whether or not their focus is on the core work. These fans are the ones who have the desire and ability for deep engagement with a work, capable of a near-savant understanding of the canon work, allowing them to act in the stead of the author, given an equally deep, or deeper engagement with the text. They tap into not the author's mind to understand what they were thinking as they wrote their text, but into the truth of the text itself. When such fans then pick up the pen or the keyboard, it is no surprise that their texts can be convincing, as though the story world now has two authors sharing a space.

This is not, I will argue, a disagreement with Foucault declaring in “What is an Author” that there is a “(...) singular relationship that holds between an author and a text (...)” (300). Foucault refers to a theoretical instance of the *text* pointing to its creator—and our discussion is one of expanded works. In fact, further support may be found in Foucault's ideas when discussing serialised or larger bodies of works, something I will return to in the later chapters when discussing canonicity. Regardless, fanfics by their nature cannot alter the original work or works as they were made, except to change how they are read. What I argue is that while the relationship between the original author and a text is complex, the fanfic author taps into the complexity of the work itself *like* the original, fractured author, but not *as* the original author. My proposition is that rather than seek to supplant the original author, through fan authors, an expanded text can have multiple married-in parents.

In his *Textual Poachers*, Henry Jenkins, one of the most prominent media scholars on the topic, suggests that being a “fan” of one particular work is not a comprehensive identity. When he suggests that fans are “‘nomads,’ always in movement” (32), I fundamentally agree not as an argument for diminishing the connection between a fan and a work, but for understanding that despite their small numbers when compared to those who enjoy media more casually, fans are simply people possessing the predisposition towards this deep reading and engagement with one or many works—not obsessive outliers to be dismissed. Furthermore, where Jenkins' *Textual Poachers* is among other things a re-evaluation of de Certeau's “Practice of Everyday Life” and is productive for this thesis because his models are useful for discussing disparities between engagement levels and cultural impact as it pertains to fans, I will categorically reject Jenkins' continued application of the terms “poacher” and “poaching” as established by de Certeau as a descriptor of consumers applied to fans as authors. While Jenkins lauds de Certeau's model as more flexible, saying that it—”remains

agnostic about the nature of textual meaning, allows for the validity of competing and contradictory interpretations (...)” (30)—I will argue that this implied separation between fanfic authors’ meanings and original authors’ meanings are not a necessary divide when discussing the canonicity of a work. I will also repeat, while keeping in mind that this is a process of positioning a thesis of literary studies in relation to sociologists and media scholars, that there is a divide between general consumers and fanfic authors. The image of the fanfic author as the consumer described in “Practice of Everyday Life” as an embattled and besieged person fighting a greater authority perpetually losing but never defeated—“(…) a common hero, an ubiquitous character, walking in countless thousands on the streets” (de Certeau “Preface”)—is needlessly romantic and false as it treats the original author’s authority over the text as absolute, as a binary matter for purposes of producing canonical meaning. I will challenge this notion.

1.3: Fandoms

Having established working definitions of “fan” and “fanfic” as they will be discussed, I need to address that both of these terms exist within what I earlier called a “fandom.” Fandom is the community of those who have a more than passing interest in a work, the umbrella under which all things fannish happen. Fanlore.org, a self-styled “multi-authored website that any fan can easily contribute to” (“Fanlore:About”), defines a fandom as “(...) a community of fans, participating in fanac[fan activities], and interacting in some way, whether through discussions or creative works” (“Fandom”).

To study a fandom is the realm of sociology, but bears mentioning both because it would be conspicuous by its absence, and because fandoms and fandom subgroups possess the potential to have their own “canon.” This thesis concerns itself specifically with fan authors who write canon-centric texts and fanfics where they are closely tied to “official” canon—meaning that which is laid down by the original author of a work—as the thesis is an exploration of their relationship. However, it’s important to recognise that there are examples of fandoms who have collectively rejected clarifications and addendums delivered through official but non-primary channels. Jenkins relates how in the *The Beauty and the Beast* fandom, “fans moved in and out of harmony with the producers, came to feel progressively

less satisfied with the program narratives, and finally, many, though not all, of them rejected certain plot developments in favor of their own right to determine the outcome of the story” (30-31). This capacity for large sections of a fandom to categorically reject authoritative statements sets the tone for the willingness of fans to be noncompliant and determine that, in simple terms, “they know better.” For every author who spends thousands of hours with their work, there will necessarily be fans who spend an equal or greater amount of time engaging with the finished text as long as the fandom is of a large enough size that such individuals appear through mathematical chance. Where a critic can claim that characterisation is poorly done or inconsistent, a fan whose familiarity with characters and setting matches the author’s own might claim that said characters are “out of character,” the difference being that the latter suggests knowledge of what said character “should” act like.

Fandoms are diverse, and can act as interpretive circles in their own right, but the emphasis of this thesis is not the behaviour of fandom at large. Rather, I seek to explain the interactions between authors and works. Where Barenblat’s emphasis is on the community function of midrash, I will argue further for the effects of the exegetical upon the body of canon itself, investigating the changing role of the authors where relevant, with focus on the relationship between the texts and their authors as individuals whose roles are indicative of general trends and shifts rather than as members of communities or trendsetters. Through the works I have chosen for this thesis, I will establish the importance, and potential of readers as writers in fans creating fanfics. The majority of this thesis will be a close reading of the four works and a discussion in relation to the points raised in this introduction. The chosen works will be studied in pairs, core work followed by derived work ordered based on the chronology of the core works because the discussion involves the evolution of the relationship between author, reader and fanfic writer. The choice to study the works in pairs is due to the proximity of the arguments: while a pure chronology would place both canonical works ahead of both derived works, the relationship between the paired works need to be established before arguments can be made for the similarities between the two derived works.

1.4: The Relevance of Sherlock Holmes

The first pair of works I will investigate provide an ideal platform for discussing the idea of canonicity and ownership in writing. Specifically, I will look at the relationship between the Conan Doyle Estate and other writers of Sherlock Holmes fanfics and novels. Extraneous stories do not always register as “fanfics” to the average person, however, and the majority of works inspired by the original works of the master detective are called by a different name, and their separation is one that I seek to contest. Sanna Nyqvist establishes in “Authorship and authenticity in Sherlock Holmes pastiches” that “In the Sherlock Holmes fandom, the literary rewritings of the original canon (the corpus of Conan Doyle’s Holmes stories) have traditionally been called pastiches” (par. 1.1). There is some overlap between the definition of “pastiche” as used by the Sherlock fandom and the more modern definition given by Jameson:

Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists.

Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs: it is to parody what that other interesting and historically original modern thing, the practice of a kind of blank irony, is to what Wayne Booth calls the "stable ironies" of the eighteenth century. (16)

While I cannot, and will not reject what, according to my ideals for fanfics would be a fairly damning description, my argument is not that fanfics have value *as* pastiche. Rather, I seek to show that fanfics are more than a “neutral practice of such mimicry.” That the Holmes fandom uses the word “pastiche” to describe what I will argue are their *fanfics*, my point of disagreement is not the one of terminology, but rather, value.

Returning to Nyqvist, she clarifies that in her above quote, she refers specifically to Arthur Conan Doyle’s (hereafter “Doyle”) stories to differentiate the derivative works that have sprung from his texts from those written based on the 2010 TV series. She also acknowledges what I have suggested: that fanfic writers prefer their own terminology. She also presents a possible divide that need to be addressed:

[P]ublished pastiches appear as solitary achievements and closed in form, while Web-based fan fiction is processual and communal. Moreover, pastiches tend to adhere to [the] world of the originals, while contemporary fan fiction favours crossovers and is increasingly inspired by film and TV adaptations rather than the original novels and stories. (1.2)

If all Nyqvist means to say here is that “pastiche” is a term that, when used in the Holmes fandom, describes fanfics that adhere to canon, and that the majority of fanfics in the general term—belonging to any fandom at all—tend to be lax about canon adherence, then she may be correct. In her follow up statement, however, she suggests, referring to the fandoms of the more modern expressions of Holmes, that in contrast to traditional pastiches, they “(...) adapt the characters and plot patterns of the original stories without much consideration for stylistic proximity (...)” (1.4). While fanfics may be subject to Sturgeon’s Law (“ninety percent of everything is crap”) as an activity with a low barrier to entry compared to published novels, I take issue with the insinuation that the “pastiches” she describes from the Sherlock fandom are significantly different from other fanfics, especially as far as potential is concerned. Whether the tendency towards abandoning “stylistic proximity” is more true for the fans of the Sherlock TV series than other fandoms is beyond my scope to research precisely, however, but establishing that Sherlock fanfics are not necessarily abnormal is important for my efforts of generalising my specific arguments about the fandoms wherein the two chosen fan works exist.

What she refers to as “crossovers” is a category of fanfics wherein one canon work is combined with another. For instance, Vixit’s *A Study in Magic* is a crossover between the Sherlock Holmes and Harry Potter universes, a story wherein the worlds intersect and characters of two different franchises interact. This implicitly belongs to the concept of AU, which has already been addressed, but it is worth mentioning that even in modern times marked by copyright and ownership debates, crossovers are not just the realm of fanfic writers in the classical definition. While *A Study in Magic* is an unpublished fanfic hosted on fanfiction.net, Neil Gaiman’s *A Study in Emerald* is a published novel and a crossover between the Sherlock Holmes universe and H. P. Lovecraft’s Cthulhu Mythos. Thus, while Nyqvist is of course correct in that a portion of fanfics will be irreverent towards canon—whether through crossover or other forms of AU, or by excessive “adaptation” as she calls it—I will show that Sherlock Holmes fanfics are not in a unique position. While a large

portion of the works produced by any fandom group will be AU or excessively amateurish—neither of which implies the other, as Gaiman’s novel suggests—due to a complete lack of barrier to entry, my focus is on the individual and on the potential of fanfics, not on tendencies and median efforts.

Nyqvist seems to tacitly agree that the very act of publishing changes how these stories are perceived. She cites Jamison saying that “Pastiche in print are now associated with prestige and power and seen as partaking in the same establishment of taste and economic credit as the originals” (par. 1.3), and I will address this point. However, while publishing can alter public perception and thus the reception of a text, and the process leading up to publishing may place constraints on a work, a format change does not inherently alter the text itself. Regardless of the term used for a fanfic, whether it’s “pastiche” in the context of Holmes or any other word, I will show that the surrogate author that is the fanfic writer—a term I will use instead of saying “the author of a pastiche”—has become an author of a continuation of the very same work. When Doyle admitted his failure to conclusively end Holmes, this was another sign of the shift in power, not just to the readers to whom Holmes was dear, but to the readers-as-writers who took up the mantle, an idea I will investigate more closely in the following chapters.

My close readings of *A Study in Scarlet* and Horowitz’s *The House of Silk* will look more closely at the notion of ownership with regards to Holmes. The choice of Holmes is not random or personal preference: the largest corpus of fan fiction follows the most popular works, and Lee Horsley’s “From Sherlock Holmes to the Present” makes the claim that Doyle through Holmes has essentially birthed the entire genre of modern crime fiction. Though the genre itself is irrelevant for my purposes, the growth of Holmes’ popularity and his strong appeal to fanfic writers make him a productive example. I will prove that the relationship between the two works signify a relationship in line with what I have discussed earlier in this introduction, one of a shared understanding of the truth of a work, of something beyond mere imitation. I will also show that Holmes himself is largely unbothered by the Conan Doyle Estate’s doings in attempting to control his copyright. The actions of both Arthur Conan Doyle and the estate illustrates a predictable failure of control, and though Doyle’s actions were his own—even if he did not “have to” revive Holmes—I theorise that his decision was ultimately irrelevant for the continued existence of Holmes. The Conan Doyle Estate’s later attempts to sanction and control some of the Holmes stories prove that

canon and the power over it rests with the reader—and by extension also with the reader-as-writer—rather than the copyright holder whose permission to write an officially sanctioned novel is a ritualistic blessing rather than a marker of quality or connection to the original author’s intent.

The second chapter will thus look at *A Study in Scarlet* as the first Holmes novel, important for setting a baseline for the canon of the character and the universe wherein he exists, together with *The Sign of the Four* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* where relevant to show tendencies. I will investigate Holmesian identifiers to support my arguments for questioning the authority of the Conan Doyle Estate, and to further the chapter’s discussion on canonicity.

Choosing an officially commissioned Holmes novel as a supporting work—something that is either “official secondary canon” or “pastiche” in the eye of the public—for a thesis on fanfics may seem counterproductive at first, but the limited scope of this thesis sadly does not allow for an infinite body of works. In the third chapter, *The House of Silk* will be used to show how the novel fulfils the criteria of a “fanfic” as much as anything from *Paradise Lost* through to modern, non-published, fan-authored works. All fanfics should be afforded the respect and research of published derivative works, whether they are called “pastiche” in the context of the Sherlock fandom, or not. *The House of Silk* will be compared to Doyle’s original novels, seeking to prove the presence of both that which is necessary to emulate Doyle, but also homages, references and—crucially—differences, all of which I will seek in the relationship between the two Harry Potter works where one is a clear and “obvious” fanfic never published in print. By showing the significant similarities between the two sets of works, I will show that being published does not change the nature of a work. Furthermore, by showing how *The House of Silk* treats established canon, successfully extrapolating a logically sound work, I intend to demonstrate how readers, as writers—or fans as fanfic authors—are qualified to make authoritative statements on what is Holmes and what is not. For further support, I will also look to the realm of law, where copyright law backs the general claim made by many of the scholars I have cited so far, which is that fanfics are productive.

1.5: The Relevance of Harry Potter

For the second set of works, I have chosen the Harry Potter series due to their ubiquity and recognisability. The sheer amount of Harry Potter fanfics in existence is staggering. At the moment of writing, over 30 Harry Potter fanfic stories have been published or updated in the past three hours on fanfiction.net, a popular fanfic hosting website but by no means the only source for fanfic. While quantity itself does not prove anything but sheer enthusiasm, Harry Potter is one of the most popular subjects of fanfic writing, and within the Harry Potter fandom exists a phenomenon that warrants further investigation.

“EWE,” or “Epilogue? What Epilogue?” is described as “Harry Potter fanfiction that ignores the epilogue of book 7” (Fanlore.org “Epilogue? What Epilogue?”). As I have mentioned, the concept of fans ignoring a portion of canon is not unprecedented, and among the seven main Harry Potter novels, I have chosen for scrutiny *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the final novel wherein said contentious epilogue resides. I have also picked, as my fourth and final primary text, a fanfic that—to put it mildly—disagrees with the epilogue of *Deathly Hallows*. “Gyzym”’s *What We Pretend We Can’t See*. This is an ideal discussion candidate because to all outward appearances, *What We Pretend We Can’t See* is exactly what most think of when they hear the word “fanfic.” It is a novel-length fanfic story that does not exist in print, but rather, is hosted on archiveofourown.org, a major fanfic website.

The fourth chapter, primarily concerned with Rowling’s Potter, shows how the notion of the original author’s published works as the sole source of “canon” is problematic, investigating the EWE phenomenon in depth. Like with *A Study in Scarlet*, I will point to identifiers both in style and in setting, though as I will show, the task is very different in a chronologically linear series with an end-point as opposed to the timeless and unbound Holmes’ episodic appearances. These identifiers are vital to show that for all of *What We Pretend We Can’t See*’s divergent elements, it is as inextricably linked to an understanding of the core work’s “truth” as *The House of Silk*. Where the second chapter will look at the Doyle estate and ownership debates where relevant, the secondary foci of the fourth chapter are the issue of canonicity as it pertains to both Holmes and Rowling, the epilogue itself, and the EWE phenomenon.

The fifth chapter looking specifically at *What We Pretend We Can't See* brings all the earlier chapters together by showing how the individual fanfic author can have the authority to dismiss canon. I will suggest that the final fan work, though it is divergent in certain stylistic elements, is more important for all that it has in common with *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, and that the relationship between the two works of each set is significantly similar, blurring the lines between what is “fanfic” and what is “canon.” Through the example of *What We Pretend We Can't See* and its relationship to Rowling’s Potter as similar to that between the Holmesian works, I make an argument for the value of fanfics.

1.6: Studies in the Field So Far

In his “What is Fanfiction and Why Are People Saying Such Nice Things about It?” Thomas Bronwen outlines three distinct “waves” of modern studies of fanfics, suggesting that Henry Jenkins’ *Textual Poachers* belongs to a first wave inspired by de Certeau, and that Jenkins “(...) attempts to redefine the terms on which the activity of fans is understood” (3). Many of the theorists I have mentioned so far are primarily sociologically focused media scholars like Jenkins, and Jenkins in particular later acknowledged that in *Textual Poachers* “(...) he ‘accented the positive rather than the negative,’ a ‘tactically necessary’ move as academic discourse on fandom tended to reinforce negative stereotypes” (Hills 26). In short, while I do not disagree with the decision to do so, one of the foundational texts of fandom studies was skewed by a desire to shape the discourse. This thesis is not focused on the sociological impact of fans, however, but on the literary impact and value of fanfics and fan authors, topics on which there is a serious lack of scholarly writing. Bronwen suggests of the next two waves of fanfic scholars that they

(...) take a more complex approach to the issue of power, influenced by Foucault and Bourdieu. The second wave, exemplified by studies such as Cheryl Harris (1998) and Mark Janovich (2002), is mainly preoccupied with responding to the emergence of new media forms that contributed to the explosion in fan activity (4).

Though these are ostensibly discussions on fanfic scholars and fanfics, the slant is decidedly one towards fanfics in relation to fandom. Furthermore, Bronwen suggests that “the third wave is distinguished by a greater self-reflexivity about the theorist’s own motives and

positions and by a shift in emphasis towards exploring the contributions of fans to contemporary culture” (4). Though this thesis will engage with the power dynamic of original authors, fan authors, canon and public perception, this is largely because such a discussion is inescapable when dealing with fanfics. My arguments about the role of the author are rooted in Foucault and Barthes, but extend beyond the three waves outlined by Bronwen by incorporating methods from literary criticism and focusing on the idea of a “truth” tied closely to problematising the term “canon.”

The discussion on fans and fandom now belongs to the likes of Busse and Gray, to Jenkins and Steenhuyse, and though they are useful for my purposes of explaining and discussing the fanfic author, the aim of this thesis is to construct an argument for the literary value of fanfics, somewhat removed from Bronwen’s assessment of the three waves of fanfic studies. The works closest to my arguments are those of Rachel Barenblat—however, in referencing and replying to Henry Jenkins in her comparisons between Midrash and fanfics, she demonstrates how interrelated all discussions on fanfics are. Though I am in agreement with Barenblat’s core arguments, this thesis is written because there is room for a longer, in-depth study of fanfics as a process of expanding upon the meanings of a core text. Though there is a wealth of scholarly writing about both Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes novels and Rowling’s Harry Potter series, no one has focused on fan works of each canon to juxtapose their relationships with outside authors of the original canon.

To delve briefly into specifics, I am in alignment with Jenkins in the belief that reader and writer are not sharply divided. As we have seen from the French literary theorists of the previous century, this is not a novel idea, and though it is interesting to look at the writer and the reader and how they may be the same individual, I am more concerned with where the two processes of reading and writing interact. Jenkins suggests that in attempting to understand the phenomenon of fanfic, we should look to the specifics of each individual case (32). While this may be useful for the purposes of investigating fandom and fans as a sociological phenomenon, my intention is instead to extrapolate from the specific to the literary and theoretically general. Jenkins’ concern is investigating the relationships and intricacies of a fan as a consumer or a producer, distinctions that are not useful for my purposes. Barenblat’s angle of understanding fanfics compared to midrash suits my line of research better. While fandom and the fanfic creation processes may be, as Jenkin suggests, “their own culture built from the semiotic raw materials the media provides” (42-3), the core

of my thesis is the suggestion that fanfics are not limited to building ramshackle constructs from leftovers, but rather, create new and useful texts built on the same foundation. These materials are then used to explain or to explore, as Barenblat says, not necessarily to tear down in order to create something entirely new. One of her final statements in the symposium notes for “Fan fiction and midrash: making meaning” align closely with what I seek to prove: “Not only do fanworks not impinge negatively on the source texts of our time, they add value and bring meaning to those source texts” (par. 17). This statement by Barenblat is foundational for my thesis and the core of what I hope to conclude. One of the major challenges of fanfics achieving legitimacy in the public eye is tied to proving purpose and value beyond idle, amateurish writing, and assisting in this is one of my aims.

Through the next four chapters, one dedicated to each of the primary texts I am working with, this thesis will show that fanfics are what happens when a reader engages with a work for which they have an affinity, and the deep reading process grants an understanding of the truth of the work that may spill over into writing, resulting in a fanfics that can possess the literary qualities and canon-compatible markers of the original work. Thus, fanfics are highly productive for creating additional meaning, and are the ultimate expression of readers’ authority over the text. I will argue that the prevalence and popularity of fanfics today is a natural continuation of the shift away from the author.

2: Canonical Holmes

In seeking to discuss a shift away from the modern hegemony of a single author, it is useful to begin with Doyle's Holmes, showing the sheer impact of both author and character subject upon the topic before we move on to *A Study in Scarlet*. In the eyes of many, Sherlock Holmes has birthed a wide genre, or at the very least served as the springboard from which modern crime fiction has leapt into rapid evolution. As Lee Horsley says in "From Sherlock Holmes to the Present," "(...) for over a hundred years now, Doyle's stories have both influenced the development of crime fiction and created an invariable point of reference" (29). The impact of Holmes extends past the realm of genre, however, and both Doyle and Holmes have been instrumental for the modern expression of fanfics. Nyqvist explains that "The earliest rewritings appeared in the 19th century, making Sherlock Holmes rewriters 'the first fanwriting community'" (par. 1.1), referring to the throngs of people who were at the time writing their own stories in the Holmes canon, supported by Lantagne's assertion that "Holmes is, and always has been, one of the world's most enduring fandoms. Holmes fans began producing fanfics as early as 1897 and have never stopped" (269). While I take issue with the assertion that the Holmes fandom has "always" been as important as it is—given that I've presented arguments for fanfic traditions stretching as far back as certain works of the older literary canon "fanfic" of the Bible—this is true if we take Lantagne to mean the *modern* expression of fandom in the context of a world with a different relationship to authorship compared to the pre-copyright era. While Nyqvist and Lantagne both seek to elevate the Holmes fandom and place it upon a pedestal for its then perceived as unique characteristics, this proto-fandom and these first modern fans and fanfic writers are tapping into an older tradition which some of the great older works such as *Paradise Lost* rests upon. The natural state of the written work and its canon is not to have a single author whose control is absolute—a point to which I will return. Instead of further debating the merits of Nyqvist and Lantagne's claims about the importance of the Holmes fandom in specific, I first wish to look at the events that led to the fandom's inception, to Holmes' death and the resurgence of what is called "fanfic" in the modern era.

Though we will never know what would have happened had Doyle not tired of his creation, Holmes' rampant popularity can not be seen as disconnected from the circumstances

of his “death.” When Doyle famously said “I am weary of his name (...) I think of slaying Holmes . . . and winding him up for good and all. He takes my mind from better things” (Lantagne 268), he made his motivations for then killing Holmes in “The Adventure of the Final Problem” plain. We can only speculate as to his motivation for resurrecting Holmes—an act I will look more closely at in a moment—but whether it was economically motivated or not, Doyle’s choice to bring Holmes back caused a stir, just as Holmes’ death had done in the first place: “The original stories and their improbable solutions to the disappearance and return of Holmes become the mystery to be solved in the pastiches (...)” (Nyqvist par. 2.3). What Nyqvist refers to is not only isolated to the years where Holmes was canonically dead. Lantagne identified 1897 as a possible date of the beginning for fanfics surrounding Holmes, but stories explaining or rejecting Holmes’ death and the terms of his resurrection are being written to this day.

Doyle’s resurrection of Holmes in “The Adventure of the Final Problem” is less important than *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the third official Holmes novel published two years prior. By publishing a serialised novel set before the death of Sherlock Holmes in the later “The Adventure of the Final Problem,” Doyle proved that more stories could be fit into the Holmes canon despite the presence of the story that included his death. Certainly, the format of Holmes’ stories as episodic adventures aids in this, but this is also how most fanfics work by nature, injecting additional canon by way of horizontal expansion, creating “optional” content rather than seeking to push the boundaries at the beginning or the end of the established canon. The fact that Holmes was mortal and would eventually die were someone to write the full chronology of his life was always obvious, but *The Hound of the Baskerville* showed that even for Doyle, the scope of the adventures contained within his own canonical timeline was non-rigid even before the actual resurrection.

This resurrective effort can be usefully discussed in the context of alternate universe stories. To continue writing about Sherlock Holmes after his death and to provide a story that contradicts another, those new elements need some form of authority to be accepted into canon regardless of who authored them. As we have already seen in the case of the example with *The Beauty and the Beast*, and as I will investigate more in depth in chapters 4 and 5 when we look at a more non-compliant piece of fan fiction belonging to another fandom, the original author does not get unlimited “free authority” to have their work instantly accepted as canon within a world they themselves have created. We have seen, and will see, that fans

can detect and reject ill-fitting works from what they accept as canon. Doyle needed to write in line with Holmes' truths, and this was something he could have failed at. Despite picking an ostensibly fitting vehicle for Holmes' return in the form of a ruse ("he was actually never dead"), the continued efforts to explain, explore and patch the holes left by the resurrection suggests that Doyle came close to dissatisfying. Part of the reason the Sherlock Holmes fans—in this case speaking not just of the fandom in the communal sense, but more importantly those who themselves write stories of Holmes—did not outright reject canon may be because Doyle's relationship with truth and canonicity is itself complicated. Nyqvist suggests that when Doyle, as Watson, says—

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

—this works to the advantage of the “corrective pasticheur,” because it “illustrates the power of rewritings or fictions of rewritings” (par. 2.8), and I agree with this assertion. This effect is only strengthened by Doyle's writing of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* before the retraction of Holmes' death. The outcry of fans who objected to Holmes' death in “The Adventure of the Final Problem” and whether or not Doyle resurrected him as a direct result is irrelevant next to the fact that said fans recognised Doyle's power as non-absolute (in writing fanfics in the intermediate years before his resurrection) and Doyle himself—perhaps unintentionally—demonstrating the elasticity of canon by creating stories placed inside a timeline that could have closed with Holmes' death. Thus, Doyle sowed the seeds of doubt with regards to his own absolute authority over his story world wherein Holmes resides.

2.1: Blood and Law

Whether Doyle's killing and resurrection of Holmes is held up as an example of the power of the fans or simply taken as an economically motivated move, it certainly shows that the original author's relationship to the canon body of their own work is not perfect. Original authors can be out of alignment with their own truths and the expected possible expressions

and continuations of the canon body they have established. By noncompliance and precise, willful divergence, the capable author—whether they are the original author of the canon or not—is tasked with getting closer to the truth of the work, or at the very least, with not departing from the truth entirely. In its simplest form, this means that stories need to fit in with the others. Alternatively, recognising the work of those fan authors who task themselves with repairing canon itself—suggesting an imagined better understanding of canon than the original author—approaching the truth means to make everything cohesive. To expand upon the earlier quote about “The original stories and their improbable solutions (...) the gaps and gaffes function as clues to the fuller narrative behind the unsatisfactory account provided by Watson/Conan Doyle” (Nyqvist par. 2.3). If Nyqvist is partial to envisioning the fan author as one who fills these gaps, then I agree: one of the possible roles of a fanfic is to explore new facets of characters or a story world to show the potential of that which the original author has laid down. Another possible purpose is to mend that which is not “correct” according to the examples provided by the remaining (majority) of canon, and both of these require access to the underlying concepts that led to the creation of the original story. It is in this manner that the fan author seeks the “truth,” the ideal canon, what the story can be or was supposed to be, not necessarily altered for the sake of pleasure as though they were a cosmetic surgeon so much as unfolded or healed.

In seeking to investigate the relationship between the original author and those who seek to tap into the truth of the same work, the question of legitimacy, of “right,” is inextricably linked with the question of “what is truly canon?” I have already given mention to the fact that tight-fisted ownership of a work is a modern concept. The debates between individual authors of original works and fans seeking to create derivative works are many, and the most common stances among those who discourage fanfics of their works is that it is illegal or immoral. In her blog post “Fan-Fiction and Moral Conundrums,” Diana Gabaldon said “OK, my position on fan-fic is pretty clear: I think it’s immoral, I know it’s illegal, and it makes me want to barf whenever I’ve inadvertently encountered some of it involving my characters” (“Diana Gabaldon” fanlore.org). Though it may be taken as little more than an impassioned rant, and there are factual inaccuracies with regards to the legality of fan fiction in her essay, the sentiment is far from unique. Numerous authors disapprove of fanfics being created of their works, while other authors allow or approve of it, but in either case, the

fact that approval or rejection is called for is a very recent issue in the grander literary context.

In the case of Sherlock Holmes, the avatar of this notion of ownership takes the form of the Conan Doyle Estate. For the purposes of discussing canonicity and “truths” inherent to the character of Holmes and the world which he inhabits, it’s easy to suggest that an estate—necessarily comprised of multiple people of varying levels of interest in what I try to explain as the truth of a work—is not a useful construct for furthering understanding of Holmes. This is not to say that the Conan Doyle Estate has not taken an active hand in trying to shape the Holmes canon. The 1952 *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* by Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickinson Carr

(...) seeks to explain and justify the pastiche stories and thus direct the way in which the stories are read. It begins as a protracted eulogy to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (...) who is straightforwardly identified with the hero of the stories (...) The identification of the author [Arthur Conan Doyle] with his protagonist (which he never suggested in the source texts) is a means of reinforcing [Adrian] Conan Doyle’s authority (...) (Nyqvist par. 5.1)

Nyqvist suggests a focus on elevating Arthur Conan Doyle post-mortem, and on Adrian Conan Doyle’s authenticity. While the latter may in part have been to prove his eligibility to create further canonical Holmes works, the ability to create texts that are productive for the Holmes canon depends not upon pedigree—a claim I make based upon the fact that the tradition of derivative works is more ancient by an order of magnitude than the gap between Adrian Conan Doyle and his father. Though Milton calls upon the heavenly muse to write *Paradise Lost*, he did not spring directly from the loins of those who created the Bible—whether one believes the author is God or not. Blood does not fuel Milton, a link to the same divine power that created the bible, does. Nyqvist suggests that this “Collaboration between the son of the original author and a prominent mystery writer was meant to provide an authoritative sequel to the originals” (par. 1.7), and the best-case scenario of this as an attempted expansion of canon is harmed by these appeals to authority outside of the core canon of Doyle’s original texts, because it emphasises blood and law as the source of “true” Holmes stories. The worst case scenario is that the “authoritative sequel” is meant to displace those sequels that are not blessed by the Conan Doyle Estate, in fitting with a copyright vigilance that has only recently relaxed (Nyqvist par. 1.1).

The Conan Doyle Estate looks to copyright law to ensure that those who wish to utilise the Holmes “license” their works with the Estate. While this is common today, copyright law in particular is also useful for my purposes of proving the value of derivative works, thereunder modern fanfics. When attempting to determine whether or not something is copyright infringement, United States courts utilise four factors, and though the US is only one nation amongst many, it is useful to discuss the application of US law due to their longer copyright protection. In the United Kingdom, birthplace of Holmes, copyright laws afford original literary works 70 years of copyright past the death of the author. In the United States, this period can be 70, 95 or 120 years (“Duration of Copyright” copyright.gov). This means that the question of whether or not Holmes is still within copyright has been tried in US courts multiple times in recent years, culminating in a 2014 summary judgment declaring Holmes out of copyright (“Sherlock Out of Copyright” uscourts.gov).

The fact that Sherlock Holmes is no longer a copyrightable entity or story world is not as important for my purposes as the fact that Holmes has been tried under the four factors that guide US copyright, one of which is the test of whether or not a potentially infringing work is transformative. There has been no case to conclusively try the general concept of fanfics before US courts to set a precedent: each case is still being resolved separately. In her “Fan Fiction and the Fair Use Doctrine,” Kaelyn Christian says:

According to Chander and Sunder ‘Literary criticism does not seek to uncover the authentic meaning of a text, but rather understands that it can accommodate multiple interpretations.’ In this vein, fan fiction would count as a transformative work because it offers multiple situations for the characters to be involved in. (278)

Though Christian also says of works that are “true to the source material” that they “may not be considered transformative because they are more imitation than transformation” (279), I have so far taken pains to delineate the divide between imitation and useful production, and will go forward on the assumption that the definition of canon-close and productive fanfics that I work with fit better in the category she describes as “stories that take characters into new territory” than that which is imitation.

The argument for transformation is simple. In the case of character-centric works such as Holmes, fanfics are inherently transformative because they provide new arenas or situations for Holmes, creating unique results, and fanfics are always an interpretive act. Says Christian, “It could be argued that copyright law was established not only to protect

individuals' creations but also to promote new creations that may be inspired by them" (278). While we will likely never see the Conan Doyle Estate vs. "Fanfic" in court, particularly now that the copyright on Sherlock Holmes is lost even in the US, it is important to note that copyright law exists in part to promote creativity because the option would be limitless protection only for the creators of original works, and as such, US copyright law involves elements that can be employed to protect fanfics as something creative worth defending against charges brought by the copyright holders.

It is not within the scope of this paper to investigate or disseminate findings on the role of estates as copyright holders beyond to say that their interests include economical concerns, and thus are not necessarily the same as those of fans whose primary motivation is in furthering the work(s) of which they are a fan. In suggesting that the unlicensed authors who attempt to write themselves into the same tradition as Doyle do so to add value to the original works, we find further support in US copyright law that, doubtless contrary to some people's expectations, was created in part to allow for the ancient traditions of creativity and derivation to continue: "The courts' ultimate goal when deciding IP [intellectual property] cases generally, and, in the future fan fiction cases specifically, is finding a balance between these interests. This balance should ensure creators a financial incentive to create, without limiting others' access to use that property and restricting new creations" (Nolan 3).

Even canonical texts written by the original author will necessarily involve characters in new situations. To claim anything else would be absurd, and I've already mentioned the upheaval resulting from the death and resurrection of Holmes, events that fans still seek to explore a hundred years later. What I question is the Conan Doyle Estate's right to, or capacity for defining what is or is not canon, be it through withholding licensing rights up until their copyright expired, or through selective sanctioning or blessing of further works. The Conan Doyle Estate does not own Holmes any more than they own the genres that Holmes and Doyle together birthed. Lee Horsley claims of Doyle's "numerous imitators" that they are "varying the formula and establishing different character types for the figure of the detective – there are several who in their own ways disrupt the neat pattern of death - detection - resolution, bringing to the fore the divergent possibilities contained within the genre" (30). What he describes here are potential values of fanfics which border on AU, but my argument is that claiming those who explore the possible breadth of an original work and/or character are not imitators, but creators of further possible canon. Doyle's own control

over Holmes was slipping even during his lifetime. When contemplating killing off Holmes, his mother said “[Y]ou may do what you deem fit, but the crowds will not take this lightheartedly” (Lantagne 268), and the result of Holmes temporary death proved the obvious. “Doyle had, in effect, completely lost control of his own creation” (269). If Doyle could not control expressions of Holmes during his lifetime, and with the growth of the fans and fandom of Sherlock Holmes, it is hard to imagine why the Conan Doyle estate would fare any better.

Yet, despite this, it’s equally obvious that anyone can write what they wish and call it “The Next Sherlock Holmes Story.” I have stated that many works seeking admission to canon unofficially curated by even the most discerning fans will fail to gain entry. If the Conan Doyle Estate does not currently decide what is and is not Holmes—or more generally, if the lawful owner of a canonical work, be they the original author or an estate, does not control what is canon and what is not—who does? In the specific case of Sherlock Holmes, what identifies a work that has the potential to be accepted into the canon of Holmes?

2.2: A Study in Scarlet, Characters and Vigilantism

A Study in Scarlet, as the first of Arthur Conan Doyle’s novels, is first and foremost a study of characters, and if the intent is to show secondary authors’ understanding of what is “Holmes”—and the possible venues for evolution and enrichment of Holmes—this character-focused approach is doubly relevant. The very beginning of *A Study in Scarlet* shows the framework that will mark all of Holmes’ adventures in novel form, and this is the narrator, Watson. The first novel is presented as “(Being a reprint from the reminiscences of JOHN H. WATSON, M.D., late of the Army Medical Department.) (n. pag). Despite being the the sidekick to the main character, Watson’s presence in terms of sheer word count eclipses even that of Sherlock Holmes himself, and though the title of the very first chapter is “Mr Sherlock Holmes,” we are first given with an overview of Dr. Watson’s past and current circumstance before we get to meet Sherlock Holmes himself (“IN the year 1878, I took my degree (...)” (ch. 1)). This immediately reinforces the idea of the text as Watson’s reminiscences, including mention of his time in the army where he “(...) was struck on the

shoulder by a Jezail bullet” (ch. 1), a fact that, when mentioned in future works, serves as a reminder of the constructed framework.

Doyle shows that Watson is far from a neutral reporter or an idle mouthpiece, however. He is also an actor upon the events of the story with his own peculiarities that must be observed. Upon his first meeting with Holmes, Watson recounts what he considers his own flaws: ““I keep a bull pup,’ I said, ‘and I object to rows because my nerves are shaken, and I get up at all sorts of ungodly hours, and I am extremely lazy. I have another set of vices when I’m well, but those are the principal ones at present”” (ch. 1). This self-analysis, though it is an important quality of Watson’s, is not as important as the composite picture the reader is encouraged to paint of a character who is just and honourable, yet never achieves Sherlock’s sheer brilliance. In addition to being a character worthy of study himself, Watson is a student *of* characters, much quoted as saying “The proper study of mankind is man” (ch. 1). Watson thus joins us in studying Sherlock, but he is not impartial, and in fact, he is given cause to regret his statement in the very next chapter: ““But the Solar System!’ I protested” (ch. 2), Watson exclaims, frustrated by the highly specific expertise of a Holmes described by their mutual acquaintance Stamford as “a little too scientific for my tastes” (ch. 1), and a moment later in the very same chapter, Watson throws his own self-made list of Holmes’ areas of knowledge into the fire in despair.

The reader is also given cause to consider Watson self-describing as “lazy” contrasted with the events of the Sherlock Holmes novels, frequently involving heavy activity or even foot chases. At the onset of the events of *A Study in Scarlet*, he is a “lazy” retired war veteran, but he is the one who repeatedly prompts Holmes to attend the novel’s mystery: “Why, it is just such a chance as you have been longing for,” and “he begs you to help him” (ch. 3) Watson says, and though it’s at Holmes’ suggestion that Watson joins him, he needs no more than a “Yes, if you have nothing better to do” (ch. 3) before he is on board. His lack of resistance to adventure aside, I will argue that the most salient trait of Watson is his integrity. He is the trusted companion to Sherlock Holmes, and the dutiful chronicler who says that “I have all the facts in my journal, and the public shall know them” (ch. 7), a role I will revisit when we analyse *The House of Silk*: the character of Watson is not a license for a writer to don the mantle unthinkingly, and one cannot do Watson justice simply by signing a Sherlock Holmes story in his name.

Moving on to Holmes, I have already suggested that he is the subject of Watson's study, and the reader is invited to study him as well. In this sense, the answer to the question of "what is Holmes?" is, for a great part, Sherlock Holmes himself. The central—and certainly the most famous—of Holmes' characteristics is his skill at logical deduction, and the core of this deductive process that is at times demonstrated like a magic trick by the seemingly-impassive detective is observation. "Observation with me is second nature" (ch. 2) says Holmes, and combined with Stamford's explanation of Holmes as a man with "(...) a passion for definite and exact knowledge" (ch. 1), we are pitched an ostensibly passive and rigid character whose name is synonymous with an abundance of logic. This observational skill is a core trait, but certain specific expressions of his keen eyes and logical thinking are notable because they have become identifiers of Holmesian works. One example of such an expression is the recurring investigation of cigar ashes. "I have made a special study of cigar ashes—in fact, I have written a monograph upon the subject. I flatter myself that I can distinguish at a glance the ash of any known brand, either of cigar or of tobacco" (ch. 4) says Holmes, suggesting that it is more than just an extension of his detective's skill set, but rather, a defining interest. In fact, that very monograph is referenced in *The Sign of the Four* as though Holmes expects Watson to have forgotten, repeated and explained for the reader's pleasure. "Here, for example, is one 'Upon the Distinction between the Ashes of the Various Tobaccos.' In it I enumerate a hundred and forty forms of cigar-, cigarette-, and pipe-tobacco (...)" (ch. 1).

This is one expression of Holmes' logic at work, an obsessive, specialised focus that fits with a stereotype, but I will show that one has to read Sherlock Holmes novels with both eyes closed to think that that he is unfeeling or as cold as Watson sometimes claims. In the later *The Sign of the Four*, Watson says:

"You really are an automaton,—a calculating-machine!" I cried. "There is something positively inhuman in you at times."

He smiled gently. "It is of the first importance," he said, "not to allow your judgment to be biased by personal qualities (...)" (ch. 2)

Though he is certainly often unemotional and detached, and Watson plays the foil for his frequently dispassionate demeanour, there is clear evidence that Sherlock Holmes does not answer to this judgment, and the perhaps clearest indication of this comes in the form of Sherlock Holmes' relationship with the Baker Street Irregulars and Holmes as a vigilante.

In chapter 7 of *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes expresses displeasure at the injustice of his small dues in the aftermath of the capture of Jefferson Hope:

“What you do in this world is a matter of no consequence,” returned my companion, bitterly. “The question is, what can you make people believe that you have done. Never mind,” he continued, more brightly, after a pause. “I would not have missed the investigation for anything. There has been no better case within my recollection. Simple as it was, there were several most instructive points about it.” (ch. 7)

For all his bitterness, Holmes is very much in his position by choice. His title of consulting detective is deliberate, but also beneath him. “If there’s a vacant place for a chief of the police, I reckon you’re the man for it” (ch. 6) says Jefferson Hope to the man who captured him, to no acknowledgment: “‘You had better come with me,’ said Holmes to the two detectives” (ch. 6). If Sherlock Holmes wanted to work directly for the police rather than *with* the police, he could. Furthermore, though Holmes is pleased that the case itself was “instructive” to him, and his very spotty history with reading somehow includes all other fictional detectives so that he may dismiss them (“Lecoq was a miserable bungler” (ch. 3)), Sherlock’s involvement with detective cases is not as simple as an attempt to feed an oversized ego. I will argue that his relationship with the Baker Street Irregulars is indicative of a sense of social responsibility.

The arrival of the Irregulars is heralded by “the pattering of many steps in the halls and on the stairs,” evoking images of the children that they are by age, rather than the adults that street life forces them to become. They are also “accompanied by audible expressions of disgust upon the part of our landlady” (ch. 6), which is the reaction of society in general. Even to Watson’s eyes, these are “half a dozen of the dirtiest and most ragged street Arabs that I ever clapped eyes on” (ch. 6), but to Holmes, the dirt and grime of beggar children marked as social outcasts is a non-issue. To him, they are valued allies to be rewarded: “‘Here are your wages.’ He handed each of them a shilling” (ch. 6). In both the willingness to work with a marginalised group and in the lack of prejudice there is an implicit critique of their treatment by contemporary society. Whether motivated by logical utilitarianism (“the neglect of these children is a waste of a resource”) or repressed but earnest sympathy (“treating children like this is wrong”), Holmes puts them to use as a workforce—as allies on a steady wage, rather than subjects of charity. Thus, he does not rely upon the resources of the police in order to do his detective work, but nor is he as independent as one might think:

there are things that he himself cannot do, and for these tasks he utilises others who occupy the fringes of society. “I therefore organised my Street Arab detective corps, and sent them systematically to every cap proprietor in London until they ferreted out the man that I wanted” (ch. 7).

I will argue that this is related to his preference for working *with* rather than *for* the police. Holmes prefers to make his own judgment, and we see this in how he judges—or abstains from judging—the criminals he chases. Though Jefferson Hope is arrested, the above quote suggests that, despite the fact that “Gregson and Lestrade will be wild about his death” (ch. 7) according to Holmes, Holmes’ own interest ends with the resolution of the mystery. Hope escapes vigilante justice because in this particular case, the villain’s actions were not offensive to Holmes’ senses, as someone who has chosen to exist closer to the margins of society. Further evidence for Holmes’ penchant for taking justice into his own hands can be found in “The Adventure of the Devil’s Foot” where he lets Dr. Leon Sterndale go despite his guilt, suggesting that Holmes sometimes considers himself above the law. Though Sherlock Holmes never commits open murder and otherwise doesn’t act in a manner concordant with what the word “vigilante” may evoke in a modern reader, I will argue that his relationship with the police and the Irregulars suggests that Holmes is open to vigilantism in canon works, and as I will show later, Horowitz recognises this fertile ground and puts it to use in *The House of Silk*.

2.3: Identifiers and Canonicity

I have argued for the concept of vigilantism in Holmes, and I will return to this in the next chapter where I’ll show that Horowitz successfully identified, extracted and expanded upon canon laid down by Doyle. In order to create a new work that registers as “Holmes,” however, it is not enough to follow the greater themes. The identifiers that are common to the Sherlock Holmes novels and short stories must be understood perfectly. As an example, we pick up the ashen trail where we left it in *The Sign of the Four*. Moving on to the third of Doyle’s novels, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the tradition continues, this time employed not by Holmes directly, but by Dr. Mortimer. Holmes interrogates him on his findings:

“How do you know that?”

“Because the ash had twice dropped from his cigar.”

“Excellent! This is a colleague, Watson, after our own heart (...)” (ch. 3)

The application of more of these Holmesian identifiers will be investigated in more detail in the next chapter where they can be discussed in relation to *The House of Silk*, including further examples of the power of deduction, references to external works and to his cocaine addiction. Before that, however, I wish to discuss the *application* of these cigar-based investigations that feature in most Holmesian works, including Doyle’s novels. The cigar ash was introduced in *A Study in Scarlet*, is repeated and expanded upon in *The Sign of the Four*, then treated as obvious in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. As is natural with any serialised work, the story world grows, with new elements introduced to allow for the new plot of the next story, but the reuse of elements that are already present does not necessarily mean a perfect re-introduction. Though the Baker Street Irregulars’ second appearance is much like their first, the combination of these recurring elements is treated with ever increasing obviousness and belonging. Where Holmes’ powers of deduction is treated like a magic trick that needs to be explained at length in *A Study in Scarlet*, there is no such demonstration in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

In its simplest form, treating simple character traits and recurring locations in this manner stems from the expectation that readers have an understanding of previous Holmes works that gives them the key to the importance of cigar-sniffing, cocaine and the power of deduction. I will argue that this increasing obviousness also speaks to the story “inhabiting” the story world to a greater degree. Anyone can pick up the pen and write something that involves an individual called Sherlock Holmes, a deductive, addicted genius with a violin and a fancy slipper. It is a simple process to scan the body of Doyle’s works and note down all story elements, sorting them in a descending order of times-used, but in order to create something that will see acceptance as potentially canonical—as reading as “Holmes”—the story also needs to inhabit the world. This is not a secondary list of items to include like so much seasoning for Horowitz to apply atop a deep understanding of the character of Sherlock Holmes. Rather, it is a reference to one of the things that defines a fanfic: familiarity.

When Doyle compressed the knowledge of cigar ashes from an item to be explained—a new fact—down to a fact to be *referenced* in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the cigar ash affinity was relegated to the realm of the obvious just like with the science of

deduction, inherent to Holmes four novels and fifty-six short stories in. Not every story needs to reference every previous element—the Baker Street Irregulars do not feature in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, for instance—but where there is room to include them, they cannot be ignored. Had the entirety of the plot of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* happened in central London, and had there been a task with which the Irregulars could have helped, they would have been conspicuous by their absence. New canon must treat old canon not just as correct, but as *obvious*. Naturally, this only holds true for series and enduring story worlds wherein consistency is desirable, but it holds true both for fanfics and for further works created by the original author. Correct application of existing canon is necessary because believability will always be stretched by the introduction of new content, which will be scrutinised for belonging.

A text seeking belonging within established canon cannot be static. A novel that copies elements of previous canon to generate another feasible novel without any innovation is in line with what Kaelyn described as “imitation.” Such a text would find less protection under the “four factor defense.” In addition, this thesis emphasises the importance of fanfics precisely because of their noncompliance, and I would question whether even Doyle himself would have received a favourable reception had he published a work without defining features to set itself apart, opting instead to produce a mechanically perfect but unidentifiably bland work of Holmes. In short, being “different” is not an automatic failure to adhere to canon. In seeking to show that any series, persistent character or story world has its own accepted level of deviation without violating its own core tenets, one needs look no further than Doyle’s own Holmes novels. *A Study in Scarlet* is separated into two discrete parts, with the second part starting anew as would a separate novel, a self-contained story with its second “Chapter I” in “Part II. The Country of the Saints” beginning “IN the central portion of the great North American Continent.” This seems to be a non-sequitur at first, rejoining later with the story of Holmes and Watson, but despite how distinct this manner of organising chapters is, this particular manner of presenting a story-within-a-story does not become a defining feature of Holmes. In *The Sign of the Four*, Jonathan Small’s story is told to Holmes and Watson by the character of Small himself, and in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the presentation of the novel as written by the narrator of Watson is more intrusive than in any of the other two novels. Holmes himself is absent for portions of the novel, and numerous, long

letters are included, showing significant variation in format and continuity. Thus, anyone seeking to write further canonical Holmes works will need to intuit which variations in format will be accepted whilst trying to identify general tendencies and evolutions that the attentive reader will identify. The goal is not to repeat, but rather, extrapolate and inhabit.

In many ways, Holmes seems to beg for other authors to pick up the pen and write their own stories, owing in part due to the master detective's fragmented and episodic nature, as a character spread over many separate cases and with a history thrown into doubt by its own original author who killed him and brought him back again, proving how malleable canon can be. Holmes also provides an excellent example of the path from reader to writer in the "Great Game," which is about:

(...) imagining that Holmes and Watson were real people and that Doyle merely acted as Watson's literary agent.[quoting Sean Cole] At its heart, this was an invitation to produce fanfiction (...) In fact, the playful essay, ["Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes"] which compared Doyle's writings to the Bible, resulted in fans eventually referring to the work as canon, a term that is more generally used today by fandoms everywhere to refer to the originating work (...) the fandom began creating encyclopedias of their canon, to aid the fan 'with the creative urge full upon him.'

Today, we would call it aiding fancickers. (Lantagne 270)

That a fandom can decide to include a text as "canon" is significant. This openness to interpretation and expansion is not unique, but the Holmes fandom is certainly one of the first of—and certainly defining for—fandom(s) in the modern era where we talk of "fanfic" instead of treating derived works as natural and acceptable. For that which is specific to Holmes, I will next look at Anthony Horowitz's *The House of Silk*. Nyqvist suggests that the novel does "(...) supplement the cultural context of the originals by introducing new phenomena, such as organized pedophilia, but they don't identify particular gaps or mistakes in the originals in the manner of corrective pastiches" (par. 2.4). I will show that Horowitz is not necessarily as compliant as Nyqvist suggests, but that he expands upon a vigilante streak of Holmes that is already extant whilst also introducing new phenomena and variations in a manner identical to what is done by fanfics, setting up for my later conclusion that *The House of Silk* is, in fact, fan fiction.

3: Horowitz and the Doyle Estate

I have suggested that there is no difference between what is called by the veteran Sherlock Holmes fan a “pastiche” (by the fandom’s own definition) and a fanfic. Anthony Horowitz’ *The House of Silk* is unique in that it was the first Holmes novel blessed by the Doyle Estate: not only did the estate sanction the novel by placing their physical seal upon the book’s covers, but it was a commissioned work (Alexander par. 3). I will argue that this fact and any possible emphasis placed upon it by critics and readers is misplaced, showing that the novel’s relationship with the Doyle Estate is irrelevant for the purposes of determining to which degree this novel belongs to the canon of Holmes. The link to Arthur Conan Doyle through his family as represented by the Conan Doyle Estate is less significant than the understanding of the Holmes characters and the story world shared by Doyle and Horowitz. Though *The House of Silk* is more overtly compliant with the canon upon which it relies than *What We Pretend We Can’t See*—the other fan work to be discussed in chapter 5—because the former is not explicitly corrective, Horowitz’ novel features variations, extrapolations and new designs well outside the territory delineated by Doyle. Despite this, *The House of Silk* is a fanfic. This point will be made again later by way of comparison, but trying to draw a link to fan-written works through Horowitz’ novel is easy enough without having to refer to external or speculative texts. As I will show, Horowitz himself admits both in his acknowledgments and his afterword that his relationship to Arthur Conan Doyle’s Holmes is fannish.

The dividing line between professional courtesy and fan-like behaviour may not always be easily distinguished. Furthermore, it is to be expected that at a bare minimum, someone tasked to write something in an established tradition or intellectual property would need a familiarity with, and an appreciation for the subject matter. However, in chapter 2, I discussed the concept of the Doyle Estate’s perceived “right” to decide upon what is or is not Holmes, and continuing that discussion, it’s worth noting that the Conan Doyles approached Horowitz whilst unaware that he was a Sherlock Holmes fan in the first place. As the afterword explains: “At the time, they weren’t even aware that I have long been an admirer of the Sherlock Holmes novels and short stories” (391). While I will not speculate too much on the Conan Doyle estate’s motivations in approaching a popular crime fiction author for a commissioned work as economical versus the potentially more altruistic desire to further the

legacy of Holmes and bring the master detective into the new millenium, fact remains that even though any reasonable person would expect Horowitz to reject the commission if he did not care for Holmes, his level of understanding of the Holmes canon was a non-factor to the Conan Doyles. In contrast, upon being approached and given this chance, Horowitz completely restructured his writing process to accommodate the subject. His afterword goes into detail on how he worked to identify the challenges he needed to overcome, realising his tendencies as a crime fiction author ran contrary to the spirit of Holmes. “When I was asked to write *The House of Silk*, I realised that this would be the key. I had to become invisible. I had to find that extraordinary, authentic voice” (397). While Horowitz does not explicitly refer to the same “special voice” that I quoted from Barthes in the introductory chapter, the hunt for the correct voice—and Horowitz being the one to emphasise this instead of the estate—is worth noting. Horowitz understood that he had to harmonise with the core works of Doyle, and this weighed heavier than the charge that came from the Conan Doyle Estate:

(...) it seemed important to me to reassure them [the Sherlock Holmes Society, a group of Holmes fans] that I was not going to play fast and loose with their beloved creation. Part of this was good commercial sense. If you annoy the core enthusiasts, you’re going to make enemies you don’t need. I have had contact with several estates (...) and know this to be true. But I was more swayed by a sense of personal responsibility. I liked Sherlock Holmes much too much to want to muck him up. (399)

Horowitz shows an understanding of, and a desire to continue *Holmes* and his story world due to a personal appreciation for the core works. The unspoken alternative emphasis is to continue the legacy of Arthur Conan Doyle, or the Conan Doyle family name as represented by the Conan Doyle Estate.

My argument is that Horowitz’ partial ownership of Holmes is dependant not upon whether he was licensed and commissioned to write *The House of Silk*, but rather, qualifies as possible canon—that is, it “fits” with the original works—because of his deep understanding of Holmes through his deep dive into extant canon to understand how to situate his own contribution, and I will address this in the next segment. While official licensing and the ceremonial affixing of a seal of approval to a dust jacket will still be observed as meaningful acts even now after the 2014 expiration of Sherlock Holmes’ copyright in the US, I will suggest that this is only because of the stigma associated with modern fan fiction. *The House of Silk* escapes such stigmatisation because it is not considered a fanfic by the public, having

been published through traditional channels rather than being posted online like *What We Pretend We Can't See*. As a consequence, people might not consider the fannishness of Horowitz' work as strange or abnormal. Horowitz' own attitude is drowned out by the seal of approval marking the work as canon. My argument is that the physical publishing and the estate's opinion are both immaterial. The question of canonicity becomes muddled by a question of "worth." In her "Transformative Work: Midrash and Fanfiction," Barenblat's midrash analogy is particularly elucidating, suggesting that "Most of us would agree that studying Torah intensely is laudable, but our culture teaches us to look askance at the fan who takes books, movies, comics or television shows so seriously" (176). Why, then, does this change the moment said "fan" is published with a sticker on the dust jacket?

In chapter 5, I will discuss another fanfic for which these criteria and the question of perceived worth are more relevant, but in this case, it is enough to remember that *The House of Silk* avoids this "look of askance" through factors whose value I wish to throw into doubt. For the purposes of potential canonicity and level of canon adherence, there are no significant differences between fanfics—by any name—and licensed, "official" works, all written by authors other than the original author of the parent work or works.

3.1: The House of Silk and Vigilantism

The House of Silk by Anthony Horowitz is a novel in two parts, but it is not separated in the same manner as *A Study in Scarlet* by a narrative shift. Rather than divide what seems like two cases into two parts, *The House of Silk* transitions smoothly from "The Flat Cap case" into the greater mystery of the House of Silk, an organised pedophilia ring involving high-ranking city officials. This topic is far more serious by nature than the crimes that Holmes investigates under Doyle's pen, and while tackling new subjects doesn't implicitly disqualify a work from belonging to a canonical grouping, Horowitz chooses to employ Watson to help bridge this gap. I have suggested in the previous chapter that the character of Dr. Watson and his role as the narrator is integral to the Sherlock Holmes novel. This is true even where it isn't as obvious as I have shown it to be in *A Study in Scarlet*. Both *The Sign of the Four* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, for instance, open with the actions of Sherlock himself, but Watson never shows up more than half a breath later to give his context for the

scene. If Sherlock Holmes is taking liquid cocaine out of sheer boredom in *The Sign of the Four*, Watson is there to comment that “Three times a day for many months I had witnessed this performance, but custom had not reconciled my mind to it” (ch. 1).

Horowitz remembers Watson’s closing statement in *A Study in Scarlet*: “I have all the facts in my journal, and the public shall know them” (ch. 7). In putting him to task as the chronicler of impeccable integrity he has shown himself to be, Horowitz investigates the most extreme example of Watson’s commitment yet. He explains why he writes: as a compulsion because he is like “(...) a collector of rare stamps who cannot take full pride in his catalogue, knowing there to be two or three specimens that have evaded his grasp. I cannot prevent myself. It must be done” (6), but Horowitz through Watson also emphasises the separation of these two adventures from the rest of Holmes’ canon. “No, the events which I am about to describe were simply too monstrous, too shocking to appear in print. They still are (...)” (6). Where Watson has ever been the one to write and publish the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, he has now become a custodian of words. “The Flat Cap case” by itself is—or would be—a mystery worthy of Holmes in isolation. Cut from the greater context, an argument could be made for “The Flat Cap Case, a Sherlock Holmes short story,” but the familiar beginnings of the Flat Cap case part of *The House of Silk* are instrumental to build up to its crescendo where it both diverges from known Holmes, and successfully adds to the Holmes canon. In discussing the simple, initially innocuous inclusion of familiar elements, I will begin with the role of the Baker Street Irregulars.

The arrival of the Irregulars in *The House of Silk* is foreshadowed by the fourth chapter’s name, “The Unofficial Police Force.” Therein, “half a dozen street Arabs burst into the room and formed themselves into something resembling an orderly line (...)” (68), still recognisable by their “patter of many feet,” and equally familiar in Mrs Hudson’s—and by extension, society’s—judgment upon them: “I won’t have it, Mr Holmes. I’ve told you before. This is a respectable house in which to invite a gang of ragamuffins. Heaven knows what diseases they’ll have brought in with them nor what items of silver or linen will be gone when they depart” (69). Holmes cedes the point by suggesting only Wiggins “reports” the next time, but this is a repetition of his and Mrs Hudson’s very first interaction on the topic in *A Study in Scarlet*, and there is still no judgment upon their appearance by Holmes. His continued—and unfulfilled—promise to Mrs Hudson is out of respect for her as a landlady, but said respect is clearly not greater than his love for the Irregulars. Watson, as a third party,

appears sympathetic, observing that “Childhood, after all, is the first precious coin that poverty steals from a child” (69).

In the earlier parts of the book where the mystery of the eponymous organisation has yet to reveal itself, the Irregulars perform their usual role of providing manpower for Holmes when he needs a city-wide search performed. The reliance upon the Irregulars is indicative of Holmes’ rejection of societal norms, but also shows that genius is not perfect by itself. He needs a support structure, and Holmes recognises this by paying the Irregulars for their work, suggesting they have value, and are to *be* valued. The alternative interpretation of Holmes disapproving of the way society treats the child beggars as part of a utilitarian mindset does not fit with the vigilantism streak I have shown in the previous chapter, but while the desire to pay the children for their work may be noble, the purported genius fails to realise the consequences of putting children at risk. Through the death of Ross Dixon, Horowitz fulfils the primary mission of fanfics—to mix the new with the old, in this case bringing Holmes face to face with the consequences of his actions. In doing so, he does not step away from Doyle’s Holmes, however. Rather, he awakens what already lies latent.

When the body of Ross is found, Watson observes Holmes’ silence, thinking that “Perhaps he did not trust himself to speak” (127), and while Holmes is certainly not devoid of emotion in the first place—displaying everything from brooding moods via frustration to sheer joy—the business with Ross has a notably different tone, problematising that which was unproblematic in Doyle’s Holmes. “I warned you about mixing with these children. You employed the boy. You set him on the trail of a known criminal. I grant you, he may have had his own ideas and they may have been the ruin of him. But this is the result” says Lestrade (128-9), and the gravity of the situation is not lost on Holmes who seems physically ill as a result. He accepts the blame and suggests that “Wiggins, Ross and the rest of them were nothing to me, just as they are nothing to the society that has abandoned them to the streets” (129).

The damnation of society certainly holds up. This fits with Holmes as a detective who refuses to work for the police and prefers his position outside the bounds of procedure and societal norm. He writes papers on tobacco ashes, he shows no interest in marrying, and he takes justice into his own hands when it conflicts with the justice of the police. As to the first part, I will argue Holmes is being dramatic. Sherlock Holmes has cared more for the Irregulars than any other party in the Holmes canon. Furthermore, his subsequent actions and

emotions—grief, considering disbanding the Irregulars, and his ultimate act of vigilantism—are not the actions of a man for whom the children were “nothing.” Lestrade’s admonitions ring hollow when we consider that he is powerless to stop, and indeed generally clueless about the House of Silk—”Is it a factory? I’ve never heard of it” (128) is the leading line on the topic from one of Scotland Yard’s finest. If he is supposed to act as a moral guardian, we note that Lestrade offers no solution to the problem of the homeless children, and as we learn in the afterword, the system’s handling of the House of Silk is everything but perfect. Fitzsimmons has an “accident” in prison (384) and Lord Ravenshaw commits suicide (385)—”There may have been one or two other suicides, too, but Lord Horace Blackwater and Dr Thomas Ackland both escaped justice. I suppose one has to be pragmatic about these things, but it still annoys me (...)” (385) says Watson, summarising the lack of justice despite how he and Holmes delivered the organisation to the law on a silver platter. Watson also reveals his mysterious benefactor who attempted to aid in Sherlock Holmes’ escape from prison, “(...) none other than Professor James Moriarty” (385), who he believes “(...) genuinely wanted to help Holmes and wanted to see the House of Silk shut down” (385-6). In this case, there is more in common between the Moriarty, criminal mastermind, and Holmes, consulting detective, than there is between the police and Holmes: the murder and the House of Silk has a profound effect upon Holmes, a hammer-blow to the already cracked shell that separated Holmes from full vigilantism. “(...) it was only as we were returning home that I saw in the newspapers a report of the great fire on Hamworth Hill A building that had once been occupied by a charitable school had been razed to the ground (...) That evening, Holmes played his Stradivarius for the first time in a while” (388). Holmes commits a crime independent of his investigation. With arson, a wrong has been righted in accordance with Holmes’ personal sense of justice and his private sensibilities. This is an extreme expression of the vigilante streak that lay latent when Holmes let a criminal go free in “The Adventure in the Devil’s Foot,” the seeds of which were shown as early as *A Study in Scarlet* despite the fact that the crime of Doyle’s first novel contained no tension between Sherlock’s own sense of justice and justice as performed by the police.

3.2: The House of Silk as a Fanfic

Having established that *The House of Silk* usefully identifies and extrapolates from *A Study in Scarlet* and the body of Doyle's canonical Holmes a productive work of literature, we must also discuss the "fannish" elements of *The House of Silk*. Even if Horowitz did not gainfully stretch the boundaries of Holmes—even if we were discussing a theoretical "The Flat Cap case" short story somehow separated from *The House of Silk*—his novel is not limited to mere homage or to observing the same traditions that Doyle established through his works. Horowitz utilises the identifiers continuously adapted by Doyle himself for his purposes, and simultaneously declares himself to be a fan. What prevents Horowitz' style from being imitation—and Doyle from being repetitive—is finding new purpose for established elements. Before *The House of Silk* can be considered as an expansion of the Holmes canon, it must meet the criteria for good Holmes by ticking the same boxes and meeting expectations, as must every book in a series, and as must every fanfic.

The uncanny cigar expertise, running through all of Doyle's novels up to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, continues in *The House of Silk*: "Holmes crouched down and seized hold of the butt of a cigarette which he showed to me. 'An American cigarette, Watson. There is no mistaking the tobacco. You will notice that there is no ash in this immediate area'" (61). As we saw in the previous chapter, Doyle himself did not introduce Holmes' powers of divination through cigar ashes as a new fact in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. After the second novel, many of Holmes' skills were treated as a known quantity, and in the same manner that his third novel treated it as a fact, it's likely that the same would hold true for a theoretical fifth novel by Doyle—and so Horowitz treats it thus. Holmes' powers of deduction are similarly treated as a known quantity, but they are still showcased for the pleasure of the reader in a four-page example including a very iconic phrase.

"(...) I can see that I had no reason to worry about your health. You are as remarkable as ever."

"It was quite elementary," returned the detective with a languid gesture of one hand. (15)

Horowitz also refers to contemporary works read by Holmes and Watson, and this is a staple of Holmes, prominently featured here in the opening of chapter four: "Holmes slept in late

the next morning and I was sitting on my own, reading *The Martyrdom of Man* by Winwood Reade” (67), and as we have seen, when the Baker Street Irregulars show up a minute later they use the same description of the “half a dozen street Arabs” (68) as Doyle because this description is exactly the same in both *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of the Four*.

In order to create a new work of Holmes, however, it is not enough to observe the same salient descriptors of the story world that Doyle used. The novel needs both to possess a unique plot, and to logically extrapolate how the old will act in meeting with the new. *The House of Silk* ticks the boxes it needs to tick, and then expands upon the familiar elements in the same way as any derivative work that wishes to remain close to canon, i.e. non-AU fanfics. Referring back to our working definition of fanfics from fanlore.org, it treats the original work—works in this instance—as a point of *departure*. I have already discussed how Horowitz treats the themes of vigilantism and social critique, but only where it pertains to the novel itself. It’s interesting to note that Horowitz also writes the Irregulars out of future canon: “(...) he mentioned, for example, that he might never call upon the services of the Baker Street Irregulars again (...)” (387). Holmes novels are already somewhat disconnected from each other in that they do not belong to a linear series, so it is unclear who (if any) will have to adhere to the propositions of Horowitz with regards to future works. One might expect an author who obviously reveres Doyle’s canon to be respectful of it to the point of not wishing to permanently change it. Horowitz does the opposite because his aim was to add to canon, not merely co-exist with it, and as we’ve seen, the Irregulars become the vehicle for his examination of an unexplored facet of the master detective. The same holds true for the question of Holmes’ sanity after the ordeal with the House of Silk. Watson suggests that “(...) the scenes we had witnessed that night on Hamworth Hill had left an indelible mark on his consciousness”(387), and though this is before his act of arson, it is unclear whether the fire purged this “mark.”

I have earlier cited Nyqvist as saying that Horowitz’ is a complementary pastiche, and though it is true that *The House of Silk* does not pick elements of established Holmes canon with which to go to war, its changes are never insignificant, either. Perhaps the most obvious difference upon picking up the novel is the format. Holmes’ original existence is confined to short stories and short novels eclipsed by the sheer length of Horowitz’ novel, a fact that Horowitz himself acknowledges: “(...) this goes quite against the spirit of Doyle’s originals which barely run to half that length” (397). His efforts were to create something that would

be recognised as Holmes despite obvious elements that set it apart from the original author of the subject, and there are numerous other, smaller adjustments made by Horowitz, interesting from the perspective of fannishness because it is easy to appreciate the need for a unique storyline, harder to understand the “why” behind smaller adjustments that are non-critical to the story and the story world, clearly in the realm of preference. For instance, Horowitz includes Watson’s wife, Mary. Doyle introduced her in *The Sign of Four*, but despite her absence from *The Hound of the Baskervilles* signalling Doyle’s disinterest with her character, Horowitz does not feel compelled to leave her out of the novel simply because she does not play as important a role in the greater narrative as in *The Sign of Four*. Horowitz’ efforts to create space for his own story to co-exist with canon is also both aided by, yet also made more difficult by the necessary presence of Watson. We’ve seen that Watson as the narrator is the framework for Holmes fiction, but Horowitz also uses him to explain some of the differences between Doyle’s originals and Horowitz’ Holmes. Given that Doyle varied his canonical texts quite a bit, it is impossible to say how the original author would write *The House of Silk* himself, but Horowitz utilises Watson to blur the lines between reality and fiction. Why is there a hundred-year gap? “The adventures of *The Man in the Flat Cap* and *The House of Silk* were, in some respects, the most sensational of Sherlock Holmes’ career, but at the time it was impossible for me to tell them (...) I will give instructions that for one hundred years, the packet must not be opened” (6). It’s a simple narrative device that ties Horowitz’ novel to Doyle’s own, not necessarily because of the ties to Doyle himself so much as to the time period in which Holmes lived, all the while tackling subject matter which holds horror to the modern reader and would perhaps not bear publishing at the turn of last century at all. Common to all of these examples is this: it is essential for all fanfics seeking admittance to canon that they build these bridges to that which lies behind the original, whilst also extending beyond the current canon body of works.

This is not to say that Horowitz does not seek belonging to the canonical Holmes works in addition to accessing the same truths that led to their creation. *The House of Silk* is also replete with references to other Doyle works, more so than Doyle’s own novels ever were. “I have just finished this one here, the *Adventure of the Copper Beeches*” (257) says Watson, and he references many more official Holmes short stories throughout: “Only a week before, indeed, I had observed him helpless and delirious, supposedly the victim of a coolie disease from Sumatra (...) Then there was that time at Poldhu Bay in Cornwall (...)” (187). I

will argue that in addition to being a nod of the head to the original author, whether motivated by gratitude towards the estate for the “permission” to write the novel or out of fondness towards Doyle, it also creates space for Horowitz himself. Indeed, at the very end of the novel, Watson hears Holmes playing his famous Stradivarius:

As I lay down my pen and take to my bed, I am aware of the bow being drawn across the bridge and the music rises into the night sky. It is far away, and barely audible but - there it is! A pizzicato. Then a tremolo. The style is unmistakable. It is Sherlock Holmes who is playing. It must be. I hope with all my heart that he is playing for me . . . (389)

He hopes Holmes is playing for him, speaking as Watson, who is both author and subject, and as Horowitz who has made his contribution to the Holmes canon, laying down his pen and hoping to have achieved the goal of creating a canonical work. He acknowledges that it is not a surety, not an automatic result of the Doyle Estate’s blessing. It is natural that he did not want to “muck up” Holmes, but he certainly made a wealth of changes and innovations for someone tasked with writing the first officially sanctioned Holmes novel since Doyle’s death.

While there is no indication of any restrictions put upon Horowitz by the estate—though it is hard to imagine that there were none—his own ten rules are pertinent (400-405). These are personal, and in the absence of the Doyle Estate publicly declaring what constraints they envision for further novels of Sherlock Holmes, Horowitz created a combination of a plan for adaptation and rules for self-policing of what he sees as the correct way to write Holmes, matching more than anything a fanfic writer’s individual creed, because these are all steeped in personal preference and conviction. Among his rules are “No over-the-top action” (400), wherein he explains his own “image” of Holmes and how it conflicts with his own tendencies as a writer, and the compromises he had to make. Furthermore, he declares that he will include “(...) no gay references either overt or implied” where he disagrees with what he perceives as “(...) hinted at in Billy Wilder’s film, *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*” (401). Some of these rules may seem like obvious necessities to write something that fits with Holmes, (“Use the right language” (403)), and others seem to flat out disagree with Doyle: “No drugs - at least, none to be taken by Sherlock Holmes (...) it struck me that to have him ravaged by cocaine would only detract from the storytelling” (402). While the last part is a sensible decision, the absolute “no drugs”

policy for a detective who indulges in the very opening lines of *The Sign of the Four*, is most certainly Horowitz' own restriction.

Rather than a to-do list on how to write official Holmes that anyone can follow to success, this is Horowitz' personal gateway to canonicity. The estate-blessed author may view this as a golden opportunity, but my argument is that *The House of Silk*'s canonicity is contingent not upon the Conan Doyle Estate's blessed hand-wave, but rather upon his shared authorship with Doyle by way of understanding the core of what constitutes a Sherlock Holmes novel, or his access to the "truth." This is proven by a combination of introducing new elements, formats and styles whilst adhering to extant canon and utilising the constituent elements of the story world created by the original author. Jenkins says that "(...) consumers are selective users of a vast media culture whose treasures, though corrupt, hold wealth that can be mined and refined for alternative uses" (29). I would like to emphasise the "selective" part. There is no reason to separate Horowitz and his personal rules for engagement with the canon of Holmes from other fanfic authors who expand upon other works with their own emphases and their own rules.

Instead of framing fanfic authors, amongst them Horowitz, as "poachers of old" who "operate from a position of cultural marginality and social weakness" (28), I will argue it makes more sense to utilise Barenblat's analogy of "respected interpreters, analogous both to the classical rabbis who for centuries interpreted scripture and to the modern midrashists who continue that work today" ("Fan Fiction and midrash: Making meaning" 17). Certainly, Horowitz—specifically—has the "direct access to the means of commercial cultural production" (28) Jenkins mentions, but though his position is unique, his methods are not. His "access" matters for purposes of reception, but not for the value of the text itself as productive and useful in expanding canon. The analogy of fan authors as poachers is mired in the modern interpretation of the original author's relationship to the text as unique and inherently valuable, a value inflated by, among other things, copyright laws, inserting the concept of ownership into the discourse of authors and writing.

The notion that the author of a novel expands upon the topic of their writing may seem obvious, as Doyle's novels each have significant differences, and this is in part my point. The original author of a series, whether that series is chronological and formally serialised or a body of works in the same story world, will necessarily depart from their own work, but despite this, their body of canonical works can still be accepted as cohesive. The

most significant difference between the original author creating a new written work to be added to their canon, and a reader with equal capabilities who becomes a fan author intending to expand upon the same canon “unofficially,” is their reception due to modern copyright law and public perception possessing an awareness of an author construct whose role is ever changing.

3.3: The Author Function and Truth in Holmes

In the interest of investigating the bonds between Doyle and Holmes and proving that they are not unique, we may look again to Foucault, who considered the criteria set down by Saint Jerome for which works could be considered canonical to an author. Foucault says that though “(...) modern criticism does not appear to have these same suspicions concerning authentication, its strategies for defining the author present striking similarities” (308). Looking at Saint Jerome’s criteria, interpreted by Foucault as “(...) a standard level of quality (...) a certain field of conceptual or theoretical coherence (...) a stylistic uniformity (...) [and a] definite historical figure in which a series of events converge” (307-8), I would take this one step further in adapting critique of the conceptual author and say that the criteria by which people might declare fanfics by any name as non-canonical and belonging to a different author are criteria by which multiple works belonging to the same, the original author might also fail. *A Study in Scarlet* versus *The Hound of the Baskervilles* serves as an example. We have seen how, if we expect all elements to continue along a linear path, Doyle’s third novel fails to include the Irregulars who have featured in both earlier novels. It also discards the fact of Watson’s relationship with Mary from *The Sign of the Four* and further varies the presentation of the embedded villain narrative, instead featuring long, embedded letters. Despite these facts, its canonicity is not in doubt. It is certainly not the subject of the same level of ongoing corrective fan literature as “The Final Problem.” I will suggest that if *The Hound of the Baskervilles* had been a fan-authored work—especially given that it was produced after Doyle’s decision to retire Holmes, and before his retraction of that decision which led to a significant gap in the Holmes canon—the only way in which it might have failed to meet canonical standard would be because of the importance modern readers attach to the name upon the cover. Based on what makes Holmes, *Holmes, The*

Hound of the Baskervilles and *The House of Silk* can be considered equally canonical to *Holmes*—if not to the Conan Doyle Estate. So long as both novels adhere to the same story world, inhabit it with the same authorial ability, and convince those who hold the ultimate authority over canon—the readers—then an author’s authority to write Holmes does not hinge upon possessing the surname of “Conan Doyle.”

Foucault recognises the shift that has happened in modern times, placing the modern author in opposition to old rules. “This relationship inverts the age-old conception of Greek narrative or epic, which was designed to guarantee the immortality of a hero” (301). To Foucault, the very act of writing erases the writer:

(...) we find the link between writing and death manifested in the total effacement of the individual characteristics of the writer; the quibbling and confrontations that a writer generates between himself and his text cancel out the signs of his particular individuality. If we wish to know the writer in our day, it will be through the singularity of his absence and in his link to death, which has transformed him into a victim of his own writing. (301)

Whether or not the author’s true character is represented by the work that he or she creates, my argument is that the work itself gains immortality in its infinite, expanded works created by readers become writers, and *The House of Silk* is an example of this. Foucault already throws into question the feasibility of collecting any author’s “works,” makes impossible the notion of viewing all that one person has made as a cohesive collection: “(...) is everything he wrote and said, everything he left behind, to be included in his work?” (302) When I have used the word “canon” so far, it is to refer to the sum of published works and for the ease of discussion, but there lies something between that which is published and the totality of written words were one to invade the original author’s study and cross-reference all their notes, whether discarded, gainfully used to produce a published text, or ideas for future use. As the reader becomes empowered, the author dies creating his or her work, and the result is not just a set of weighty, canonical tomes, but the truth behind them. This is not holy scripture, *écriture* that is “the aesthetic principle that proclaims the survival of the work as a kind of enigmatic supplement of the author beyond his own death” (303), but rather that which survives and inspires. These are the inferred values of a text, a combination of understanding the characters well enough that their likely reactions to new stimuli can be predicted with such accuracy that others who have read the same canon literature do not find

fault with it, and a capacity for not merely using, but inhabiting the very same story world in which the characters exist. It is through that truth that the reader becomes a writer.

Horowitz' novel transports the Sherlock Holmes story world to a longer format, and explores new facets of the Holmes character that already lay latent in Doyle's own works. *The House of Silk* is also a fanfic, seen in Horowitz' own attitude, in its own subtle adjustments and in tackling unique subject matter that Doyle never showed any inclination towards exploring. While I have argued for the vigilante streak in Sherlock Holmes, I do not think there is any evidence that Holmes was on a path to expressing that predilection for vigilantism in arson, nor do I think that Doyle would have written *The House of Silk* given another hundred years to do so. Thus, Horowitz' novel supports my argument about the value of fanfics by exploring a unique, yet canon-compatible facet. Texts written by authors with a deep understanding of the truth behind a canon work are productive, and we have already seen that law may support the notion of the value of fanfics even if public perception lags behind and still subscribes to the author worship encouraged by corporations and copyright holders. Fan works, whether blessed by the copyright holders or not, can have positive effects upon the original work, and this is the basis for my claim that readers, as writers, are qualified to say what is or is not Holmes. In chapter 5, I will investigate the general application of what we have seen in the specific case of Horowitz' contribution to the Holmes canon, but first we must return to the second canonical work to establish that what I have shown in the relationship between Doyle and Holmes, specifically a tenuous grasp on canon, is not unique, but rather, a tendency.

4: The Choice of Potter and Rowling

Having looked at the relationship between Doyle's own Holmes and another author's contribution to the Holmes canon, I will now turn to the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling. The first task is establishing the relevance and importance of a book series started more than a full century later than Doyle's Holmes. In the introduction, I suggested that the Harry Potter series is ubiquitous from a fan studies point of view for the sheer size and variety of its fan expressions, and the series is important as a modern mirror to the massive wealth of Holmes fanfics, and differences, where they exist, help transform my arguments from the specific to the general. In his "Textual Poachers," Jenkins says that "(...) we must be careful to attend the particularities of specific instances of critical reception, cultural appropriation, and popular pleasure—their precise historical context, their concrete social circumstances(...)" (32), and though his angle is one of fan studies rather than fan *fiction* studies—sociology rather than pure literary theory—it is in observing the same tendency across a broader spectrum made up of multiple points of interest that this thesis' argument takes shape. Both the Harry Potter novels and Doyle's Holmes have been critiqued by fans—their most proficient and invested readers—for phenomena objected to, or outright rejected by many. Though the scope of the protests might not have been the same, there are similarities in the reactions to the official epilogue of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* and the death of Sherlock Holmes. Of the two, only the latter was retracted, in that case by Doyle's revival of Holmes, whereas Rowling's epilogue still stands to this day. Furthermore, of the two original authors, only Rowling is alive to comment upon modern fans and fanfics—"modern" here meaning today at the time of writing rather than "modern" in the sense of "within the time frame of established copyright" opposed to a pre-copyright society.

Of the Harry Potter novels, *The Deathly Hallows* was picked specifically for deeper scrutiny because the EWE phenomenon relates to the epilogue present at the end of that novel, but I will also look to the remaining six Harry Potter novels in the full series of seven to show tendencies observed in their progression, using supporting examples from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Material that is not part of the main series, such as the eight motion picture adaptations of the novels, the separate *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* film, or video games based on Harry Potter, will all be set aside for the purposes

of this thesis as it is concerned with the relationship between author(s) and text. The three secondary books Rowling has since released will similarly not be discussed in this thesis, but the reasons for this may not be as obvious. Still, I must acknowledge that in her three following novels, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, *Quidditch Through the Ages* and *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, Rowling expands her own story world massively. These books are signed not by the name J.K. Rowling, but by in-universe character names referenced in the original novels. While it would undoubtedly be interesting to discuss the role of supplementary “world building” novels and reference works created by the original author in a more fan-centric thesis for their impact upon the story world in which Harry Potter fanfic authors write, as well as fan reception to said works where fans have become authors whose writing efforts are disrupted by these additions, this falls outside the scope of this thesis. I will instead sharpen my focus to discuss only the universe of Harry Potter as portrayed in the main series, and any fan use or acknowledgment of content contained within these three novels will be sidelined.

Though this thesis is primarily concerned with the literature itself and how it interacts with multiple authors, treating the latter as constructs rather than living, breathing individuals, it is nevertheless helpful to have access to a living original author for the fact that her stance on the topic of fanfics can be observed. A spokesperson for Rowling said the following:

“JK Rowling’s reaction is that she is very flattered by the fact there is such great interest in her Harry Potter series and that people take time to write their own stories.”

“Her concern would be to make sure that it remains a non-commercial activity to ensure fans are not being exploited and it is not being published in the strict sense of traditional print publishing.” (“Rowling backs Potter fan fiction” bbc.co.uk)

In the same way that this thesis discussed Horowitz’ novel’s bid for canonicity separately from his own notion of what makes a canonical Holmes work, Rowling’s thoughts on fanfics and fan expression may seem irrelevant. However, in a space where we’ve acknowledged that public perception of canon ownership is shaped by a western society under the rule of copyright law, it is worth considering that Rowling’s opinion on fanfics is necessarily a product of the same forces. Conventional wisdom suggests that alienating your biggest fans is

not a good commercial tactic. My main point here is an extension of this: as we have briefly touched upon in the previous chapters, by law, the author does not have the provable power to stop other authors from writing in their story worlds unless the secondary authors attempt to publish competing works for commercial profit.

One example of an author of original works who disapproved of fanfics is Marion Zimmer Bradley who, after a long history of close interactions with fans changed her stance on “allowing” fanfics to be written about her Darkover novel series, and where she had originally cited Doyle as a negative example for his “selfish exclusiveness,” she later stated “I know now why Arthur Conan Doyle refused to allow anyone to write about Sherlock Holmes” (“Marion Zimmer Bradley Fanfiction Controversy” fanlore.org). The details surrounding this controversy and the status of certain authors as declaring themselves pro- or anti-fanfic are not important by themselves. What is interesting is the notion that Rowling’s stance, simplified as “pro fanfic” at least by comparison, is desirable for someone who wishes to maintain a positive relationship with their fans, but also irrelevant, as threats of legal action and a disapproving stance towards exegetical texts do not necessarily stop their production. Rowling’s stance does not matter because unless she wishes to try to stop people from reading her novels altogether, she cannot stop people from accessing the underlying principles—the truths—of her novels by reading them, and as long as people find them consistent and compelling, their reading will become writing. Diana Gabaldon’s fanfic-hostile stance from “Fan-Fiction and Moral Conundrums” cited in chapter 2 does not prevent archiveofourown.org from currently hosting over 1300 works based on her Outlander series. The attempts of controlling the right to create fanfics is a modern, unsuccessful way to lose a modern right that the author did not have three hundred years ago, an attempt at control guided by—and relevant only for the purposes of—the commercial interest of preventing competition that is provable by copyright law.

4.1: Destiny, Death and Class Divides

The Deathly Hallows is a typical young adult fantasy novel in some respects, written in simple past tense, third person perspective, with a linear chronology. Though there are few surprises in the format itself, there are early signs of what its role as the endpoint of the series

means for Harry Potter. The 2007 Bloomsbury edition I possess is prefaced, post-dedication, with quotes from “The Libation Bearers” by Aeschylus and “More Fruits of Solitude” by William Penn, featuring strong themes of death, friendship and release. This inclusion of death, in Penn’s “Death is but crossing the world” and Aeschylus’ darker “Oh, the torment bred in the race, the grinding scream of death” is not new to the series, but rather, reaches its apex here. The very first chapter of *The Deathly Hallows* opens with murder:

Tears were pouring from her eyes into her hair. Snape looked back at her, quite impassive, as she turned slowly away from him again.

‘Avada Kedavra’

The flash of green light illuminated every corner of the room. Charity fell (...) (18).

Though the character of Charity is unimportant in the grand scheme of things, this scene, at first glance, stands in stark contrast to the opening of the first novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, with its whimsical and modern fairy-tale-like “Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you’d expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn’t hold with such nonsense” (1). However, we soon after learn of Harry’s circumstance as an orphan as the result of his parents’ murder, and he is constantly referred to as “the boy who lived,” his very existence defined by his escape from death, and this title suggests that his identity in the eyes of others is constructed from the death of his parents. Thus, the threat of death is forever Harry’s companion, even beyond what one might expect of an action-filled adventure series where every novel is mandated to feature at least one serious brush with death, whether it’s a fight with a dreadful basilisk or a battle with the Death Eaters in the Department of Mysteries. The main antagonist—Lord Voldemort—is dangerous because he is beyond death, having fragmented his soul into multiple pieces, “horcruxes” that need to be destroyed before he himself can be slain and his threat ended. In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Horace Slughorn says of the concept of placing oneself beyond death in such a manner that “(...) existence in such a form ... (...) few would want it, Tom, very few. Death would be preferable” (465).

Through Harry’s orphaning, the hunt for the horcruxes, and a great number of character deaths in the war against Lord Voldemort throughout the *Harry Potter* novels, death is always near, but the real reason for its importance to Harry is that it is tied to his

destiny, both as a concept and as a force present in its naked form of prophecy. In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, the prophecy that has guided Harry's life with an unseen hand is revealed, explaining the Dark Lord's rise to power, and that Harry Potter is destined to face him in the end. Specifically, "(...) either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives (...)" (774), and it is in *The Deathly Hallows* that the prophecy laid down by Trelawney comes to its full fruition. Before the death of Lord Voldemort, however, Harry "dies," transported to a purgatory realm where he is taught that at least in the context of sacrificing yourself for a good cause, death is not to be feared. Lord Voldemort curses Harry, and he falls, but for Harry, what should be death is treated as a transitory state.

"But you're dead," said Harry.

"Oh, yes," said Dumbledore matter-of-factly.

"Then ... I'm dead too?"

"Ah," said Dumbledore, smiling still more broadly. "That is the question, isn't it? On the whole, dear boy, I think not." (567)

Harry returns from this near-death experience, surviving for the second time a curse that should have slain him, and Dumbledore explains why, honouring Harry in the same breath that he explains Voldemort's mistake: "You are the true master of death, because the true master does not seek to run away from Death. He accepts that he must die, and understands that there are far, far worse things in the living world than dying" (577). Thus, the boy who lived, and his destiny as linked to death, comes to an end in *The Deathly Hallows* with his acceptance of death, which includes not only fallen friends but the loss of his parents.

The Harry Potter series also provides commentary on class divides. The relationship between wizards born from other wizards and wizards born from one or two non-magic-wielding humans ("muggles") can be read as a metaphor for any conflicted division in human history. Given that it pertains to lineage, it's easy to assume that it only refers to race, and some of the terminology used supports this: it's "purebloods" versus "mudbloods" in this world, but the tone of this conflict changes drastically over the course of the series. In the earlier novels, this is presented as an issue of have-and-have-not, a matter of class or social standing by way of nobility versus peasantry. Draco Malfoy explains in the first book, *The Philosopher's Stone*: "You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much

better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there (...) You hang around riff-raff like the Weasleys and that Hagrid and it'll rub off on you" (116). This is important because though Draco calls Hermione by the derogatory "mudblood" term multiple times (ex. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* 117) the Weasleys that he sneers at are, in fact, a "pureblood" family, judged because of their low social standing and poverty. The entirety of *Wizards vs Muggles: Essays on Identity and the Harry Potter Universe* is dedicated to investigating the relationship between these two, but in general terms, the quoted parts suggest that the divide between "muggles" and "purebloods" is a class divide that *includes* race as a factor, rather than being a issue of race alone.

In the same way that *The Deathly Hallows* continues and amplifies the themes of death and destiny, what was first expressed through the mouthpiece of a rich child's judgmental attitude has a greater reach in the final novel. The reader learns that the then-late Albus Dumbledore, idolised as a hero for most of the series, had a problematic past in potentially encouraging the Hitler-like Grindelwald's plot, involving the latter building prisons to hold his enemies: "(...) it's an awful thought that Dumbledore's ideas helped Grindelwald rise to power. (...) there he was, in a huddle with his new best friend, plotting their rise to power over the Muggles" (294). Dumbledore repented and became a very different person, but it is from this same upper class and elitist thinking that Lord Voldemort draws his followers, most notably the wealthy Malfoys, whose youngest son Draco is Harry Potter's initial nemesis. Where Draco was born into wealth, Harry Potter grew up in a cupboard under the stairs. Though Harry comes into vast riches very suddenly, he befriends Ron Weasley who has a rat as a pet because Harry "(...) didn't think there was anything wrong with not being able to afford an owl" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 106) instead of Draco Malfoy who claims they are the "wrong sort." With the defeat of Lord Voldemort and the disbanding of his followers, final judgment is cast upon this attitude.

4.2: The Deathly Hallows and Evolution

The choice of the twinned examples of Doyle-Horowitz and Rowling-gyzym is to highlight similarities between their relationships despite the apparent disparities between the "obvious" fanfic in the web-published *What We Pretend We Can't See*, and Horowitz' officially

sanctioned, licensed, approved and published *The House of Silk*. With this in mind, the differences between the Harry Potter series and Doyle's novels become all the more important for showing that the principles that permit fanfic creation hold true across as broad a spectrum as possible. On the surface level, Doyle's Holmes-centered writings are scattered and non-chronological, consisting of four novels and 56 short stories. Though they have significant variation, some of which I've mentioned in the previous chapters, and though their subject matter is stable as surrounding the core actors of Holmes and Watson, they are not linear, and we do not generally see the same level of intra-canonical references in Doyle's own texts as we did in Horowitz' contribution of *The House of Silk* with its mentions of Holmes' other exploits. The relationship between "The Final Problem" wherein Holmes seems to die at Reichenbach Falls, and "The Adventure of the Empty House" wherein he is "revived" by being revealed to never have died in the first place, suggests consequence and consistency, and Holmes' existence is contained within a single lifetime, but it is still significantly different from the seven Harry Potter novels.

Beginning with *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Rowling's septology is linear and chronological. Where the "canon" of Holmes is spread out and requires the reader to gather the pieces and make inferences separately to understand all that which is Holmes, Potter's is a clear continuity. Clear, however, does not necessarily mean that the relationship with Potter's canon for the purposes of inhabiting and adding to the world is simple. The presence of a simple continuity does not mean staticity, and in discussing the presence of death, destiny and class divides in the previous segment, I've hinted at how these themes evolve as the series progresses. This is in part because of the nature of Rowling's novels as children's books that "grew up" as its readers did, both necessitating and allowing for handling them differently. The evolution of the theme of death is an extreme example of the tonal shift that is gradual throughout the novel series, and the fact that Harry Potter grows up with his readers is obvious in the paratext. In contrast to the *Deathly Hallows* poems and first chapter quote already provided, the Bloomsbury-published September 2014 edition of *The Philosopher's Stone* is prefaced by a "What readers say" segment, featuring such endorsements as "It is very funny. I would love to be Harry and make up some magic spell to play on my teachers' Tom El-Shawk, 11 years old."

That a novel series written for children—or indeed any novel series—can change is not surprising, but in this case, the change is extreme, most noticeable when contrasting the first and last novels. The often grim *Deathly Hallows*' beginnings lie in a light-hearted modern fairy tale about a young boy who is famously told “yer a wizard” (55) by a cheerful giant with an umbrella. *Harry Potter* is very much a coming of age *series*, but the Harry Potter septology in subject matter and language covers a very broad spectrum. This matters as a piece in the discussion on accessing the core values of the work through a deep reading process. These values, or truths, lurk beneath the surface of a work or a body of works canonical to one story world—to one consistent universe—yet said canonical works can diverge significantly from its roots and still remain cohesive, in line with said truth. We have seen some of this already in the liberties taken by Horowitz' *The House of Silk*.

Returning then for a moment to J.K. Rowling and the process by which she wrote the Harry Potter novels, she has stated that she wrote the epilogue featured in *The Deathly Hallows* in the first year of her writing on her Harry Potter novels: “She told the Richard and Judy show that she had long known how the series would end, because she had written the last chapter ‘in something like 1990’” (“Rowling to Kill Two in Final Book” bbc.co.uk). While normally, investigating the creative processes of the individual author is beyond what is reasonable or relevant for a study of literature itself, this detail is interesting for the discussion on canonicity, the perceived value of published canon in specific, and the EWE phenomenon: the creation of the *Deathly Hallows* epilogue *before* the rest of the Harry Potter novels provides a very reasonable explanation for why it does not “fit” with the rest of the canonical text, and why the “Epilogue? What Epilogue?” phenomenon is as widespread as it is. Rowling wrote an epilogue, followed by seven novels to build up to that epilogue, which then did not necessarily fit with the tone of the novel wherein it is placed. The very last words of *The Deathly Hallows*' epilogue are these:

“He’ll be all right,” murmured Ginny.

As Harry looked at her, he lowered his hand absent-mindedly and touched the lightning scar on his forehead.

“I know he will.”

The scar had not pained Harry for nineteen years. All was well. (607)

I make mention of this tonal shift because while this thesis is not meant to be a critique of Rowling's writing, it is useful for our look at the EWE phenomenon to understand that the foundation of the protests is not necessarily—or at the very least not *only*—founded in protests against the events contained within. The tone of the original epilogue is problematic in context with the novel wherein it is placed, and that is what I will focus on, but in isolation, any number of “problems” arise: those who are familiar with the manner in which fans and fandom works will be aware that any time two characters become romantically engaged, there is an outcry of those who envisioned one of the paired characters becoming involved with another character. The novel discussed in chapter 5, *What We Pretend We Can't See*, for instance, dissolves the bonds between Harry and Ginny despite their canonical relationship, in favour of a relationship between Harry and his greatest rival, Draco Malfoy. I will argue that a *Harry Potter* fanfic that departs from the novels by disregarding the “Nineteen Years Later” epilogue is not the same as an “AU” fanfic that disregards published canon in favour of its own.

4.3: Epilogue? What Epilogue?

I have shown examples of the differences within the canonical *Harry Potter* novels written by J.K. Rowling. In the introductory chapter, I mentioned that within the realm of AU, any crossover or outlandish story concept imaginable likely already exists. The *Harry Potter/Lord of the Rings/Once Upon a Time/The Black Cauldron/The Unicorn Chronicles/Narnia* crossover fanfic “Strong Intentions” had its last update on archiveofourown.org on this day of writing, in fact. By the same token that the original *Harry Potter* novels each read as a cohesive unit canonical to the novels preceding them because of their incremental divergence—and because the focus of this thesis is on fanfics that purport to be canonically possible rather than AU—the total canon upon which any non-AU fanfic is predicated must be assembled by the reader. While an interesting case could be made for discussing the value and canonicity of fanfics written before the seventh and final *Harry Potter* novel was published, or even fanfics that slip in between the novels now that the series is complete—claiming for example that *Harry Potter* novels up to and including the fifth novel, *The Order of the Phoenix*, is “canonical for the purposes of this work”—those who wish to

write Harry Potter must through reading the septology understand the full canon upon which they intend to expand. On that topic, fanlore.org says of the Harry Potter fandom and many of its fans, and thus writers: “Some fans don’t consider EWE fics to be AUs” (“Epilogue? What Epilogue?” fanlore.org). Simply put, to many who write Harry Potter fanfics, Rowling’s own epilogue does not qualify as canon.

Among fans, there are already multiple levels of canonicity, and in order to explain how these other levels of canonicity are not necessarily applicable with regards to EWE, they must be briefly explained. “Headcanon” is a fannish term for “(...) a fan’s personal, idiosyncratic interpretation of canon, such as the backstory of a character, or the nature of relationships between characters” (“Headcanon” fanlore.org), and it’s suggested that “If other fans share this interpretation, it may become fanon.” Fanon, then, according to the same source, is “(...) any element that is widely accepted among fans, but has little or no basis in canon” (“Fanon” fanlore.org). Fans operating fanlore.org, at least, thus separate both of these fan-levels of sub-canon from canon, but my argument is that in certain cases—such as with the “Nineteen Years Later” epilogue—fans who object to a piece of canon penned by the original author for its failure to adhere to the majority of the body of work to which it is attached, are not creating “headcanon” or “fanon,” they are arguing canon. This is not the same as the chapter 2 assertion that the reader can choose to add new elements to canon, but rather, concerns itself with rejection, with disregarding something that does not fit. Not only does the fan author *not* reject their membership of the story world of the canon works, they are in fact helping it stay as concordant as possible with the truth laid down by the majority of the works.

While this may seem like a dive into the realm of speculation and guesswork, and we certainly have to be wary of possible economic motivations whenever a popular author makes a public statement, Rowling herself has commented upon the epilogue whose tone is very different from the novel in which it is placed: “I wrote the Hermione/Ron relationship as a form of wish fulfillment (...) That’s how it was conceived, really. For reasons that have very little to do with literature and far more to do with me clinging to the plot as I first imagined it, Hermione ended up with Ron” (Nordyke). Rowling speaks here specifically to those who complained about the romantic pairings at the end of the novel series, but she also acknowledges the separation from the final novel, explaining why fans who seek to write

their own addition to the Harry Potter novels have keyed in to how ill-fitting the epilogue is. Another contentious part of the epilogue is the following: “‘Albus Severus,’ said Harry quietly (...) ‘you were named for two headmasters of Hogwarts. One of them was a Slytherin and he was probably the bravest man I ever knew’” (607). Harry supposedly having forgiven his long-standing teacher-nemesis Severus Snape may fit an idealised ending and an inferred wiser, older Harry Potter, but the gap between seven novels of sheer antagonism and naming a child after Snape is noticeable.

When discussing any long book series and the challenge of staying consistent, we may look to the concept of minimal departure discussed by Lesley Goodman in “Disappointing Fans: Fandom, Fictional Theory and the Death of the Author.” She summarises the concept as fictional universes presupposing the real world insofar as possible to “fill in the cracks,” suggesting that “Because a finite text is always necessarily incomplete, it is a standard part of any normative reading practice to imaginatively supply necessary information, to contribute to the formation of a fictional universe that is created by the text” (665). If something is not explicitly described, we construct from our knowledge of the real world all the pieces that are missing. Something that is not described as magical and wondrous in Harry Potter’s universe is assumed to be “normal,” conforming with our understanding of the baseline: our mundane reality. Goodman points out the potential problem with Harry Potter and any other series of works: “When an author expands a fiction, the ‘actual world’ as the frame of reference for filling in the incomplete text is replaced by the fictional universe, as projected by the prior text, as the frame of reference” (665). Where, for Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* the real world was the implied baseline, her next novel assumed the world of *The Philosopher’s Stone* as its baseline. We may imagine a set of concentric lenses, one lens for every further work in the continuity, and this comes with its own problems. Goodman even uses the Harry Potter novels as an example of this, though no specifics are given:

(...) for instance, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*—the text creates the fictional universe: “Harry Potter” is, basically, no more and no less than what (who) *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* says it (he) is. The fictional universe and the text are all but identical. But *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* expands the fictional universe. The two novels are two texts about a single universe, and there is

now room for contradiction and inaccuracy, room for other differences between one of the texts and the fictional universe. The text can now be evaluated with respect to the fictional universe. (665)

For Doyle's Holmes, this is less of an issue because while each work certainly adds to the fictional universe, and every event or location in the Holmes story world has a similar effect, it is counteracted by the near-total lack of linear continuity. A "forgotten" element may simply have happened after the conflicting material. In the case of Potter, every additional work needs to filter through the sum of canon works before we reach the baseline of the real world, and with each such filter, the odds of inconsistencies and inaccuracies increase. More lenses lead to a blurred final picture. This may seem like an argument for the impossibility of writing accurate fanfics: who other than Rowling could know the canonical truths upon which Harry Potter is written? The original author herself is fallible, at least, as shown by the epilogue. I propose that when these mistakes happen, it is because the author—original or fan—is not in line with the truth of the work, and Goodman suggests a possible stand-in, or a *source* for the word "truth" as I have used it, continuing after the above quoted example with: "This is, in fact, why many television shows use a 'show bible,' a document containing official decisions about the universe of the series, to maintain consistency of detail across the episodes" (665).

The notion of the "show bible" could easily replace my suggested term of "truth," but as Goodman acknowledges, this is mostly a concept in use in television series and film. While the answer to "what is X (a work) really about?" is forever subject to interpretation, the show bible is meant to ensure consistency when multiple script writers work with the same series, making coordination possible, and preventing contradictions. Rowling admitting that her epilogue was written at the same time as she began her first Harry Potter novel, and her decision to keep it, is much the same as her saying that it does not fit with the "show bible" of Harry Potter as it took shape. The epilogue does not belong to what she ended up predicating the novel series upon, and the reason that fans and fanfic writers do not necessarily feel they are going AU—or "off script"—when they write EWE fanfics, is because they recognise this. They, like Rowling, have access to the underlying principles of Harry Potter, its "show bible" or "truth," knowledge gained from a deep reading process. It is this insight that the able fan writer uses to create further works that co-exist with the author's own canon. If the notion of

rejecting part of canon seems hostile, Goodman explains the sometimes combative attitude of fans towards the original creators' decisions by saying:

Fans are hard on creators and source texts because the Fannish impulse is to maintain the integrity of the fictional universe at the expense of the integrity of the creator(s) and the text itself. This integrity entails both logical coherence (avoiding contradiction and maintaining continuity) and emotional, aesthetic and moral superiority, which is of course highly subjective. (669)

While she is of course correct in that “emotional, aesthetic and moral superiority” is subjective, the first part of the quote is important. Fans who become writers, and specifically those who write non-AU literary contributions to an extant story world, show their allegiance to the principles underlying the canon works at the expense of the original creator or slavish adherence to the specific text. Thus, when a body of works fails to be internally consistent, that allegiance may cause the fanfic author to excise the source of the errors made by the original author. In the case of Horowitz, we have already seen him declare his allegiance to Holmes first, implying that the Conan Doyle Estate is of secondary importance. In the case of *What We Pretend We Can't See*, we'll investigate a more extreme example of noncompliance.

5: The Anatomy of a Web-Published Fanfic

Nyqvist suggests of the assembled Sherlock Holmes film adaptations, non-Doyle publications and fanfics that “Probably no other modern writer has attracted imitators in the same scale” (par. 1.1). If this is true, it is true only by virtue of Holmes’ century-long head start over fandoms like Harry Potter’s. While it is impossible to get a total and authoritative count, fanfiction.net and archiveofourown.com are two of the largest fanfic websites on the internet, and Harry Potter’s popularity outstrips Sherlock Holmes’ on those platforms. At the time of writing, Harry Potter has 187,124 stories on Archive of Our Own, whereas Sherlock Holmes has a “mere” 117,002, and this count makes no distinction between Holmes fanfics based on the original novels and those based on the newer TV series or movies. On fanfiction.net, which allows sorting by media such as books only, Harry Potter has nearly eight hundred thousand to Holmes’ four thousand, with the latter adding another sixty thousand based on the 2010 TV series *Sherlock*. This is of course not a perfect indicator of overall “attraction of imitators,” but the fact that both Holmes and Potter have large and diverse fandoms is beyond question. Stories similar to the one I am looking at in this chapter—meaning unpublished, long-form fanfics that are close to canon rather than AU or crossovers—exist in both fandoms, and I have chosen *What We Pretend We Can’t See* because it is an example of a more classic “fanfic.” Not only does it meet all those criteria, but it’s also an example of the type of corrective pastiches Nyqvist mentions, the opposite number to Horowitz’ *The House of Silk* which is used by her as an example of a complementary pastiche. “Gyzym”’s fan work is corrective, and certainly lacks the estate-approved marker, the “blessed” status enjoyed by Horowitz’ novel. However, as we’ve seen in the previous chapter, Rowling is not opposed to the idea of fanfics, and as I will show in this chapter, these two derivative stories are far from polar opposites.

What We Pretend We Can’t See was written and published for free on the non-profit website Archive of Our Own by a fan of the Harry Potter novel series. “Publishing” in this environment is different from professionally publishing a novel. The general public that is not in the habit of reading fanfics will often be negatively inclined towards unofficially published works. Kaelyn, talking about a theoretical example where Rowling publishes her own competing work to a fanfic published in print, acknowledges that “(...) fans would have

chosen it[Rowling's work] over Vander Ark's simply because it was created by Rowling herself" (283). When speaking of fanfics that never leave their host website, chances are that most potential readers will never learn of their existence in the first place, either: fanfics are a niche interest. By the same token that people were unlikely to stumble into a Star Trek convention in the eighties by pure chance and pick up a fanzine to read fanfics, they are unlikely to randomly click their way to Archive of Our Own online and select a story to read today.

There are further and greater differences between the traditionally published novel and a fanfic hosted on an online archive: one of the major functions of websites such as Archive of Our Own is to provide a "comments" section, which provides a direct line of communication between (fan) authors and their readership, often in the form of feedback, praise or critique. The equivalent situation for print novels would be if authors of traditionally published works were bombarded with emails and letters suggesting changes, giving thanks for their writing efforts, and loudly arguing the merits of every story element. In addition, a story posted online can be edited on a whim, but the potential effects of post-publishing author access to a work would require a separate study. I will put forth that despite these elements, there are more similarities to be found here than there are differences. Using *What We Pretend We Can't See* as an example, this web-published fanfic uses Archive of Our Own's "Notes" field preceding the story in the same informal manner as most novels' forewords, complete with a dedication—in this case to another user of the same website, "For shecrows"—and the "Summary" field is a synopsis, briefer than the usual novel cover synopses because it is adapted to a web format. The aforementioned power of post-publishing edits has even been employed to explain the absence of yet another common element in published novels—a poem set before the first chapter: "ETA 4/12/17: This fic used to have a poem at the beginning called Musee Des Beaux Arts, by the incomparably talented W.H. Auden. Unfortunately, the Archive's copyright policies prevent it from serving as an epigraph any longer" ("Notes").

While these exact details vary from website to website, they perform the same function as the conventional paratext they replace, and there is one more salient trait of the fanfic website that needs addressing, and this is the precision with which stories are sorted. On Archive of Our Own, as with most fanfic websites past a certain size, it is convention to have a system of descriptors attached to each story. These can be separated into groups, in

this case—with *What We Pretend We Can't See* in parentheses to give examples—“Category” (“M/M,” referring to the sex of the characters in the story’s primary romantic relationship, if relevant), “Fandom” (“Harry Potter - J.K. Rowling,” sorted by media; this would, for instance, make a distinction between “Sherlock (TV)” and “Sherlock Holmes”), “Relationships” (“Draco Malfoy/Harry Potter,” “Hermione Granger/Ron Weasley” and “Neville Longbottom/Ginny Weasley” referring to all major relationships in the story), “Rating” (“Mature,” a self-policing system of age ratings referring to sexual and violent content) and “Archive Warnings,” which refers to highly explicit or upsetting content such as violent character deaths, none of which apply to this story. In addition to these pre-made categories, most fanfic websites also support user-created “tags,” a system by which every story can describe itself further. As an example, the newest Harry Potter story at the time of writing is “tagged” with “Fluff and Angst” and “Canon Divergence” in addition to a tag for each character involved in the story. An in depth discussion on the function of the tags is not the purpose of this thesis, though I firmly believe that much can be said about the effects of a tag system upon potential readers’ habits. Imagine a vast library where the shelves carry not only simple and broad genres such as “romance,” but are tagged with subgenres, nested subsections within subsections that let each reader find exactly what they wish to read—and avoid anything that they object to. It’s easy to suppose that reading practices therein are different from those of readers who must rely upon classic libraries with genre-based sorting and synopses alone.

Though I do not have the space to investigate the effect of these tags and how they shape reader habits, one detail about *writer* habits is conspicuous in this case. Taking another example from the first overview page of Harry Potter fanfics released within the last day on Archive of Our Own, stories feature tags such as “Alternate Universe - Modern Setting” or “Alternate Universe - Muggles.” These custom, user-made tags are the signals through which fan authors on this website mark their stories as AU, where on another website they might instead be a categorical matter like we just saw used for rating and relationships. In either case, *What We Pretend What We Can't See* features no such tags. Despite the author omitting an AU tag, the novel technically falls under that umbrella term according to the definition I presented in the introduction as “willfully separated from canon.” I must mention for completeness’ sake that the story does not carry the standard tag used for “Epilogue? What Epilogue?” stories on Archive of Our Own, either, that being “Harry Potter Epilogue What

Epilogue | EWE,” but these tags are applied by the users themselves and are not policed. As such, the fact that the author did not see fit to apply the EWE tag is not as important as *What We Pretend We Can't See* being a perfect example of the EWE subgenre.

5.1: What We Pretend We Can't See

In the previous chapter I pointed out that certain fans don't consider “Epilogue? What Epilogue?” fics to be AU, and why. Through the corrective story of *What We Pretend We Can't See*, I will revisit and reinforce that idea. Instead of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*' “Nineteen Years Later” epilogue, wherein married couples, all with children, meet upon a train platform in a reenactment of the first Harry Potter novel with all its childlike wonder, the fanfic's summary instead clarifies that most of its events happen “Seven years out from the war,” supplanting the official epilogue without further preamble or explanation. Despite this, it still presents a smoother transition than Rowling's own novel. *The Deathly Hallows* cuts abruptly from Harry's final, weary, almost noir words of “I've had enough trouble for a lifetime” (600)—very much appropriate for the tone of the final novel—to “Autumn seemed to arrive suddenly that year” (603) nearly two decades later. We are instantly transported to a fairytale-like happy ever after more in fitting with *The Philosopher's Stone*, the first Harry Potter novel. *What We Pretend We Can't See*'s first chapter (titled “Prologue”) begins “Twelve days after the Battle of Hogwarts” (ch. 1), giving some more insight into what happened shortly after the gruesome battle where a great many people died. Instead of suddenly arriving at the “happy ever after,” Harry returns to his late godfather's house—now owned by Harry—in a much more appropriate state of shock and grief. “He moves through the house systematically, almost blindly, picking up and packing away those things that are his or that he wants to keep. There aren't many of them; he can't so much as look around the place without being swamped with a memory of someone who just... isn't, anymore” (ch. 1). This signals the beginning of a novel-length alternative to a five-page epilogue, and while it might seem unfair to ever compare a work to something a fraction of its size, we'll see that the issues that *What We Pretend We Can't See* seeks to address aren't what's present in the official epilogue, but rather, what is lacking.

The Deathly Hallows is the final novel in a series steeped in death and destiny, and with the fall of Lord Voldemort in the very last pages, Harry Potter's destiny is fulfilled. He has made peace with death. According to *What We Pretend We Can't See*, one of the mistakes of the "Nineteen years later" epilogue is that it treats the end of the prophecy and the fulfilment of Harry Potter's purpose as the end of Harry Potter's character. Where *The Deathly Hallow* opens with Aeschylus and Penn, the fanfic's chosen poem by Auden sets quite a different tone. "Musee des Beaux Arts" presents mundanity juxtaposed with the exceptional: "In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away / Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may / Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry, / But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone." All throughout the *Harry Potter* novels as written by Rowling, Harry has been exceptional. *What We Pretend We Can't See* gives us additional insight into Harry as a character; where *The House of Silk* further explores the vigilante streak of Sherlock Holmes, this fanfic fills in the gap left by Rowling after the boy she wrote into existence has finally fulfilled his purpose and achieved his destiny. Harry works for the Ministry of Magic as an Auror, yet finds himself demotivated, dreaming now of a snack. "(...) if Harry finishes three more reports he can go get a gelato from the shop down the road. This is his life now, this sad little bargaining system he's set up with himself: do your work and get a treat (...)" (ch. 2). We're thrust into the least fantastical scenario imaginable despite being part of a magical world: his life no longer under threat, there is a dreary mundanity to Harry's existence, and he works as an Auror, it seems, out of a sense of aimless obligation. What was once his dream job is framed very differently in the wake of the battle at the end of *The Deathly Hallows*: "He gets a job as an Auror, because it's what he always said he would do" (ch. 1).

The peace does not last very long. Kreacher the house-elf arrives no more than three paragraphs later with an "ear-splitting crack" (ch. 2) to deliver news of an attack on his old house, and this opening sequence serves two purposes. The first is to recreate the opening of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, to reintroduce Harry to magical excitement in a reenactment of his first introduction to the world of magic. In this sense, it's homage to Rowling's own Potter. The second purpose is to provide a contrast to the ease with which *The Deathly Hallows* leaps from its final chapter to its epilogue. To the author of *What We Pretend We Can't See*, Harry Potter is a consistent, interesting and compelling character, but the epilogue is a non-obvious conclusion. Harry Potter, without his destiny, his

prophecy-given purpose, is adrift. Shortly after the life-or-death scuffle at 12 Grimmauld Place in chapter 2, the heavy cloak of mundanity settles back over Harry:

Harry ends up having dinner at Ron and Hermione's that night in the sort of absent-minded way he often does, where one minute he's talking about a case at the office with Ron and the next he's blinking and kissing Hermione on the cheek as he takes off his coat. He doesn't mind it — he's grateful for it — but he can't help but wonder some nights if he isn't... imposing on them. Forcing himself where he does not belong. (ch. 3)

Given how closely the narration follows Harry's thoughts and motivations, it is easy to diagnose him with a multitude of maladies. Harry's condition fits the description of a mid-life crisis or a depression, but in looking for an explanation for his malaise, the answer lies with someone who has an unusual view of Harry Potter, yet might know him best: his old nemesis, Draco Malfoy. "Does that satisfy your horrific savior complex, or shall I cry a bit about how desperately heroic I find you in your Golden Snitch pajamas? (...) Maybe I should build a shrine to your bravery out of medical supplies" (ch. 9), he retorts when Harry offers him aid, and whether Harry Potter has an actual hero complex or not, his continuous efforts to help and put himself in danger certainly fits with the image of a boy who has grown up under constant threat whilst being molded into a weapon or a tool to defeat Lord Voldemort. Harry is cut off from that destiny, from a clear purpose and a path to his own potential sacrifice and death. *What We Pretend We Can't See* shows his come-down, his process of accepting that his life does not have to be that of the lonely, self-flagellating martyr who lives below his means in a crummy apartment with "(...) pipes too loud and his kitchen too small" (ch. 1). The novel is one of adventure and danger the likes of which Harry seems to enjoy only because he keeps doing it, but at the end, that which has driven Harry is given voice. After a very traumatic case, Harry confirms the motivations that drive him not just through *What We Pretend We Can't See*, but all of the seven main novels as well, suggesting that his temper problems through Rowling's canon were more than mere teenage angst and growing pains.

"But it's - I have an obligation, you know? To these people. To *everyone*. I have to - fight, and defend them, and I can't just run out on that because I don't... enjoy it, or whatever."

After a long moment of silence, and in a strange voice, Draco said, “Good lord, Harry. Don’t you ever get tired of martyring yourself? ‘I have an obligation to all people in any kind of distress,’ honestly.” (ch. 14).

Harry quits his job as an Auror focuses on running his café flophouse. His victory is that he no longer has to be driven by a *need* to do what he thinks is expected of him, but rather, by want, a complete individual whose life is no longer marked by an absence of destiny or the vacuum of no longer being needed in the capacity as “the true master of death” (*The Deathly Hallows* 577).

The fanfic’s tidying-up and retroactive explanation of Harry’s character throughout the full canon is not limited to death and destiny. Draco and Harry’s conflict as mentioned in the previous chapter begun with a separation along class lines. Draco belongs to the upper class, and Harry, despite possessing massive wealth from his parents’ inheritance, sides with the lower class, represented by the Weasleys’ poverty and, where this divide intersects with blood, Hermione the muggle-born witch. In *What We Pretend We Can’t See*, Harry, who possesses enough wealth to do as he pleases, deprives himself of luxury by living in a run-down apartment, and when Draco sees it for the first time, his reaction speaks to the divide between them. “‘Oh my god,’ Malfoy says (...) ‘Potter,’ he demands, ‘do you live here?’ (...) ‘Oh my god,’ Malfoy repeats. He steps past Harry and, with an awfully cavalier disregard of basic courtesy for somebody who was raised in a manor house with peacocks, starts poking around (...)” (ch. 4). While some of this is explained by his general depression, Harry is also ignorant of the quirks of wizarding homes: “‘You talk about them like they’re alive,’ Harry says. Malfoy throws his hands in the air. ‘They *are* alive!’ (...)” (ch. 4). Draco has to teach him the rules and the particular magics inherent to wizarding homes, and thus, *What We Pretend We Can’t See* combines the romantic elements of Draco and Harry’s relationship with a progression from a Harry who is utterly clueless about one of the basic terms of wizard home-making, to Draco and Harry together creating a new wizarding home. This is a joint effort between them, and “They’re the only ones that know about the core they buried under the center of the floorboards - the knife that spent an afternoon inside of Harry, which Draco, the creepily foresighted little git, saved in case they ever wanted to do something like this, since blood magic was powerful and the damage had already been done” (ch. 14). Through blood and an ancient wizarding tradition, and through the union of Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy as partners, the rift between the two child-avatars symbolising either

side of the class divide at the opening of the first Harry Potter novel is closed, and the Hollow—the restaurant that is “(...) also a gathering place; a way station; a soup kitchen; a trading post” (ch. 14)—replaces the Leaky Cauldron, which has been gradually, organically phased out of existence. Draco and Harry’s new wizarding home that replaces the old canonical vestige of “The Leaky” defies tradition—as fanfics do—in this case by having started as a run-down muggle home, a joint project and a child of both factions put to use by wizards of all kind for all purposes. Thus, *What We Pretend We Can’t See* gives the conflict a resolution that is more idyllic, and, coming on the heels of the slow healing process of Harry Potter, perhaps more believable than the original epilogue.

5.2: The Specific Fanfic’s Own Additions

In the same way that it was not enough for *The House of Silk* to understand the character of Sherlock Holmes, for *What We Pretend We Can’t See* to register as a *Harry Potter* novel, it needs to *read* like a *Harry Potter* novel. The most obvious difference between the original canon and this particular fanfic is the tense change from the original novels’ third person simple past tense, to a third person simple present tense, but I will suggest that the writing style itself still adheres to Rowling’s, and that this is the more important factor. Rowling’s is a simple narrative style that prefers to “tell” actions rather than show them, and this continues all the way through to her final novel: “Harry had only persevered so as not to hurt Hermione’s feelings” (228), Rowling writes with an absolute minimum of subtlety. Emotions are explained or narrated rather than insinuated or signalled by actions, and the present tense of *What We Pretend We Can’t See* both includes and supports this approach: “Also: like hell is Harry going to tell Draco Malfoy he can’t put aside his own pride for the sake of some traumatized kids” (ch. 2) explains why Harry goes along with Draco’s plan to help the children despite Draco’s irritating demeanour, where the alternative would be to task the reader with guessing Harry’s motivations. Despite this arguably frivolous tense shift, *What We Pretend We Can’t See* still purports to know the core tenets of Harry Potter canon better than Rowling’s canon itself by presenting a supposedly non-Alternate Universe novel that replaces the canonical epilogue. We have already seen some examples of how the fanfic

disagrees with the original epilogue's handling of certain themes. Next, I will look at the direct relationship between the fanfic and the original canon.

For all the immediately apparent differences and liberties taken, *What We Pretend We Can't See* respects and adheres to the vast majority of the contents of the original seven novels. In fact, though the fan-written novel is very much incompatible with the original epilogue, it still includes elements sourced in the epilogue it supplants: Rose, shown in "Nineteen Years Later" as Ron and Hermione's child—then of age to attend Hogwarts—would have been born around this time, seven years after the end of the novels. She is present in *What We Pretend We Can't See* as an infant who "(...) laughs her sticky-fingered amusement right along with Ron" (ch. 3), a part of the same family. If the author's intention was to petulantly prove a point about how "wrong" the original epilogue was, one would not expect this nod to canon. Instead, this suggests something of either respect or appreciation, or at the very least, that some elements of canon past the conclusion of the seven-year timeline of the novels is redeemable. Instead of wielding their own understanding of canon like a weapon and flaunting the differences, the fan author seeks compatibility and belonging where possible. The points of contact with canon are many, and serve different roles. "I used to think that would be us" (ch. 5) says Ginny as she and Harry watch another happy couple, referencing the fact of their breakup presented in *What We Pretend We Can't See* as a natural progression of events between the end of *Deathly Hallows* and the present, more plausible to the author than a nineteen-year gap where Harry and Ginny are suddenly married with children. Other references to the canon are too many to usefully mention, but they all present a plausible continuation of past events: "'Hey!' calls George, sounding wounded. 'That's an insult to me! That's an insult to *Fred's memory!* Take it back or apologise to the great Fred in the sky!'" (ch. 5) shouts George, the sorrow of his brother's passing in *The Deathly Hallows* replaced with a very in-character irreverence and humour. The setting is also treated with increased familiarity. Seven years on, the Leaky Cauldron pub is no longer the Leaky Cauldron, but merely "The Leaky" (ch. 1).

With all this in mind, some of *What We Pretend We Can't See*'s additions still stand out, but I will argue that these are merely filling in blanks. Neither the fact of Harry's bisexuality in this story nor the potential for a relationship between Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy are explicitly impossible according to what has been laid down by canon, and in the same manner that I have suggested that the creation of new possible canon requires the extant

canon to be treated as obvious, the novel also treats Harry's bisexuality—and Draco's homosexuality—as facts equally as obvious as anything that is explicitly shown as true in canon. “Harry can't help it; he grins a little into his glass. ‘Whoa there, Malfoy. Who says I'm straight?’” (ch. 6) says Harry, responding to Draco's presumption, whereas Draco himself treats Harry's—and the reader's—surprise as ridiculous. “‘Am I gay?’ Draco repeats finally, voice cracking on the last word. ‘Am I — Potter, what the fuck, of course I'm gay! What have I ever done to send the impression I was anything but gay? Oh my god’” (ch. 6). Volume does not equate believability or potential for acceptance in the reader, but I will argue that the inclusion of non-heterosexual romance is merely taking advantage of Harry Potter freed from the confines of children's literature, shackles that were gradually being shed with every year as the novel series “grew up”—something we've looked at in the previous chapter. Keeping this in mind, *What We Pretend We Can't See* might seem to immediately disqualify itself from being published for the same audience due to repeated use of swear words that are absent in the original series, but I will argue that the saccharine original epilogue is *less* in tune with the natural progression of “growing up” that goes on between *The Philosopher's Stone* to *The Deathly Hallows*, and the use of adult language will not be considered shocking to the young adult who has finished the last of the official novels.

Most of *What We Pretend We Can't See*'s noncompliant elements are specifically targeted at the epilogue, but the pre-epilogue canon is not treated as a simple springboard from which a new story leaps, as facts and items that the story is under contract to merely avoid contradicting. Certain canonical events are emphasised, imbued with greater purpose. An example of this is Harry taking Draco's wand in *The Deathly Hallows*, given further purpose in the fanfic's machinations. In Chapter 8, “The wand flies through the air, and Harry can almost feel its allegiance tug loose from his fingertips with it, over to Draco, where it belongs,” observing Rowling's rules for how wands and ownership works and using it again as a story element. Even in cases where the fan author creates their own magics, this is in line with what the original novels do. Each novel introduces new spells or magical creatures, such as *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*'s Thestrals, and *What We Pretend We Can't See*'s decision to deepen the magical lore surrounding wizarding homes with the “cores” powering them is more in line with a theoretical, canonical eighth novel than creating nothing new at all. *What We Pretend We Can't See* clearly wishes to be a part of the same canon, and the only part it explicitly rewrites is the epilogue, seeking belonging with the remainder instead.

5.3: Fan Works As Expansive, Useful, and Canonical

The perpetually unfortunately named “gyzym”’s *What We Pretend We Can’t See* and Anthony Horowitz’ *The House of Silk* perform the same function with regards to their canonical inspirators, if on different scales. Though it is hard to draw perfect parallels due to how different their canons are, Horowitz’ decision to include Mary Watson as a character not a part of the major plot—something Doyle did not do, but might have done without people questioning it—is similar to gyzym’s treatment of 12 Grimmauld Place. Where it’s a central location in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, it is relatively unimportant for the later novels. *What We Pretend We Can’t See* revives it and treats it more akin to a main character, imbuing it with life through the magic of wizarding homes. Horowitz included an action-filled coach chase as part of adapting to a longer format and as a compromise with his own style despite acknowledging that it was a matter of *sneaking* it in: “I have to admit, though, that I was quite pleased to be able to sneak in the brief coach chase at the end” (Horowitz 400), and this is similar to how *What We Pretend We Can’t See* adapts to its author’s preferences in the online arena by allowing for a romantic relationship between two men, and all the while, both works—published novel and web novel—take care to observe canon where it matters. This last part is more obvious in Horowitz because he follows the canon closer, and it’s thus easier to point to divergent elements and suggest that *What We Pretend We Can’t See* comes up short in comparison, but this is only minimally true if we discount the epilogue. If we accept that because the most immediately obvious canonical difference—Harry becoming romantically involved with Draco Malfoy rather than Ginny Weasley—happens *after* the end of *The Deathly Hallows*, there is no point at which the author points to pre-epilogue canon and declares disagreement with, or an intent to rewrite any of it. *What We Pretend We Can’t See* acknowledges the events set in motion throughout the seven novels and all that which leads up to the epilogue, and I will argue that just like how Horowitz prioritised the consistency and truth of Holmes as a character and Sherlock Holmes as a story world, gyzym’s allegiance is to the consistency of pre-epilogue Harry Potter canon. The possibility of a breakup between Harry Potter, a troubled young man who’s had countless quarrels with his best friends and who has now “(...) had enough trouble for a lifetime” (600), and Ginny Weasley, a vivacious young lady with a temper, is not necessarily

breaking with canon any more than the vision of Harry and Ginny in a harmonious marriage with three children after a highly traumatic seven year long wizarding war. This is an expression of the malleability of canon, and this may be why, as we've discussed, EWE fics are not considered AU: *What We Pretend We Can't See* respects the core truth of the *Harry Potter* canon over the totality of the *published* canon, and if Rowling herself had post-publishing reservations with regards to the inclusion of the epilogue, it suggests that the original author recognises this. *What We Pretend We Can't See*, then, is an attempt at a more "true" ending.

In suggesting that these two works perform the same function, arguing for Horowitz' noncompliance is more difficult, but just like *What We Pretend We Can't See*, *The House of Silk* creates a larger world for Holmes to inhabit, and the vigilantism expressed in Horowitz' novel is much more repressed in Doyle's canon. The fact of *The House of Silk*'s published nature and *What We Pretend We Can't See*'s obvious "fanficness"—as a story that meets all the expected criteria for a fanfic—is less important than the manner in which they both base themselves fully in canon (or in the latter case, the "true" canon that fits with the rest) and create space for their own unique traits, extrapolating from existing themes and subject matter and adding their own, thus reflecting back upon the core text with new meaning. The value of this is at the core of this thesis. "Not only do fanworks not impinge negatively on the source texts of our time, they add value and bring meaning to those source texts" (par. 17) says Barenblat in her "Fan fiction and midrash: Making meaning," and I believe this shows in both these works. Just as Horowitz opened the door to viewing Holmes as an empathic figure capable of vengeful action on behalf of fellow people on the fringes of society without breaking character, so is Harry Potter re-framed as a compulsive hero who never had the chance to find personal happiness, instead simply doing what he thought that he must do to save the world.

Harry pats himself down with a towel afterward wondering why he never bothered to do anything about it before; wondering if he's just been here all these years, quietly and systematically ignoring things that were bothering him, when he could have fixed them with just a little attention. (ch. 10)

In this particular instance, Harry refers to the interim years between the novels' canonical events and the events of *What We Pretend We Can't See*, but it could just as well refer to the novel series, a comment upon the actions of Harry as a child. He is still very clearly the same

person, as evidenced in the many quarrels between Draco and Harry where they both understand the other, if not always themselves. Harry is “(...) trying not to think that maybe he’s never known himself very well at all” (ch. 11), but again, the subtext is not one of dismissing or implicitly critiquing canon as a whole. Rather, it’s about understanding, about explaining. In the “epilogue” chapter of this epilogue-turned-novel “(...) Harry thinks that he’s glad, actually, for the seven long, slow years that led to this wild one” (ch. 14), and in giving thanks to the unwritten seven years between the official canon and the fan author’s addition, the fact that the seven novels of Rowling total seven years as well is a little too conspicuous to ignore. *What We Pretend We Can’t See* is not compliant, but it is thankful, and both stories complete the essential function of non-AU fanfics of inhabiting an extant story world whilst adding to it and shining a new light upon that which came before them.

If we ignore any supposed value of the Conan Doyle Estate’s blessing and consider *What We Pretend We Can’t See* and *The House of Silk* as two fanfics of equal value, they both tread the line between “what if X” and “X is true.” They represent the former simply by existing as a theoretical scenario, and the latter by reducing friction points with canon until they are compatible. The question of “what is canon to Holmes or Potter” is easy to answer if we suppose that canonicity is defined as texts collated by author, but I have already suggested that the answer to “what is canon” lies with the reader. Merriam-Webster’s first entry, third sourced definition suggests both “b: the authentic works of a writer // the Chaucer *canon*” and “c: a sanctioned or accepted group of body of related works // the *canon* of great literature.” I have presented the idea of a “truth” to which both Horowitz and Gyzym adhere at the expense of the canon as under (b), and while a dictionary’s definition is of limited use in this instance, it’s worth noting that (c) makes a provision for my claim as separating the “sanctioned” from the “accepted” when creating a group of “related works.” Under the most strict, and perhaps most common definition of canon, however, new texts added after the fact by different authors will never truly be canon, they can only be *considered* canon. If this is the case, then this judgment should include “licensed” Holmes pastiches as well because of the arguments I have laid forth about authorship qualifications as separate from modern copyright. However, I have shown that both *What We Pretend We Can’t See* and *The House of Silk* tap into the core truth of their canonical parents, making alterations that are precise, or changes that the original authors themselves might have made. Horowitz’ Watson has been discussed in Chapter 3, used to explain away the hundred-year gap between Doyle’s own Holmes novels

and Horowitz', something that Doyle never did or had to do, but still does not register as "wrong" according to the assembled Doyle canon because Watson's use fits with his established, canonical usage. In the case of Harry Potter, the discussed fanfic's work is to create an epilogue that suits better the truth of the core work, arguing for the non-canonicity of the canonical epilogue, and the adult themes are a better fit for *What We Pretend We Can't See*'s setting of "seven years later" than the original's fairytale ending of "All was well."

If we say there is only ever one immutable canon, the two novels present their own possible venues for enrichment, two among many, and there's value to be had in what is both their writers' interpretations of the canon as readers, and their additions as authors-become-writers despite the vastly different methods through which these stories were published. If we instead subscribe to the second quoted definition of canon as a body of *related* works—even though this "body" then becomes excessively large—as something accessible and changeable by the fan author, then the bar is instead set by adherence to the old canon, by the texts' cohesion when married to canon. The value of fanfics will never be recognised on a technicality, but when we adopt this view, it makes no sense to bar a fanfic from canon simply because it does not come with a stamp of approval from the estate that no longer even holds the relevant copyright.

Conclusion

With this thesis I have attempted to prove that fanfics can be useful for extracting further meaning from, and for expanding upon a parent text. Through *The House of Silk* and *What We Pretend We Can't See* I have shown that fan authors are capable of identifying the core themes and extrapolating from the core works' characters and story worlds a logically sound continuation or addition to the extant, original canon. I have also shown how the ideals of the canon laid down by the original author is treated as more important than a slavish adherence to the author or copyright holder's wishes, and thus, that those who create fanfics are worthy keepers of canon, sometimes paradoxically enough by disregarding parts of it. In the case of the *Harry Potter* series, for instance, the reception of the original epilogue is less important for its antagonising effect than the fact that so many people rushed to write because J.K. Rowling created, if not a deep writerly text, certainly a world big enough for other texts—and she ended it “wrong.”

It is harder to prove that the process that leads to the creation of a fanfic is a fluid spillover from reading to writing, and pointing to a division between the two—or a lack thereof—has proven difficult. For this, I have looked to the paratext of *The House of Silk* wherein Horowitz speaks of his motivations and his excitement in writing “official” Sherlock Holmes, suggesting that a writer of fanfic is motivated by them being a reader in the first instance. The proof of Barthes' words turned on their head—that the true locus of reading is writing—is written every time a fanfic author expands upon canon in such a manner as tempts the reader to include it with the original canon.

“Fanfic” is a term by fans, for fans, touching upon, but not perfectly conforming to terms for other established types of derivative works such as Jameson's pastiches. Moving beyond the fan and fandom constructs, I have shown that readers who become writers hold canon in their grasp, and fanfic today is the ultimate expression of the reader's power. This is part of the continuous evolution of the author-reader relationship: Arthur Conan Doyle's attempted murder of Sherlock Holmes and J.K. Rowling's contentious epilogue are two examples, a hundred years apart, of power slipping back to the reader. This is a productive change, and this thesis supports treating each originally authored work as a potential subject for a Midrashistic process as outlined by Barenblat.

I have taken pains to highlight how many adjacent terms and fields were beyond the grasp of this thesis, but the greater loss of this thesis' limited scope lies in not having had the space to discuss non-Western cultures. Much could be learned from investigating the Japanese market and their treatment of "doujinshi," self-published amateur works that are often derivative. The largely Eurocentric nature of this thesis is unfortunate at best, and at worst presents an incomplete image of fanfic that needs further study.

Fans aren't poachers. Fanfic authors are readers who become creators with a deep understanding of how to evolve a parent work, producers of texts that, in certain cases, have the potential to qualify as canon, hampered by modern society's view on authorial authority and unproven copyright laws. As a consequence, those who wish to further study the evolution of the author construct should consider fanfic as an element or subject of their research.

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