

Reimagining Sherlock Holmes: A Study in Gender Performativity

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Abstract

De verhalen van Sir Arthur Conan Doyle zijn al ontelbare keren opnieuw bekeken en opnieuw verteld. Er is echter nog geen onderzoek gedaan naar het vergelijken en contrasteren van de genderprestaties in Doyle's werken en geassocieerde fanfictions. Dit onderzoek richt zich op het analyseren van gender performativiteit in geselecteerde korte verhalen van Arthur Conan Doyle en kijkt ook naar de performatieve gender in de fanfiction teksten waarin gender op opmerkelijke manieren wordt uitgevoerd. Dit onderzoek schetst onder meer de narratologische mogelijkheden die fanfiction biedt en de manier waarop het al bestaande verhalen reconstrueert en herinterpreteert. Bovendien wordt de gender-performativiteitstheorie van Judith Butler toegepast op de bestaande werken van Doyle in een close reading van "A Scandal in Bohemia", waarbij zowel de conventionele als onconventionele genderprestaties van de personages in het korte verhaal worden verkend. De fanfiction titels "Equivalence" en de *Body of Evidency*-reeks worden ook onderzocht aan de hand van Butler's gender performativiteitstheorie. Vervolgens heeft dit onderzoek analyse gedaan naar fanfiction-praktijken zoals genderswapping en Omega!verse, waarin genderidentiteit en genderkwesties op innovatieve manieren worden gepresenteerd. Door de gender-performativiteitstheorie toe te passen op het werk van Doyle en de geselecteerde fanfiction-titels, wordt het duidelijk dat, hoewel het werk van Doyle ook onconventionele genderprestaties bevat, fanfiction beter in staat is om gendernormen in het traditionele verhaal op innovatieve manieren te bekritisieren.

Trefwoorden: Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle, fanfiction, Judith Butler, gender performativity, gender performance, gender identiteit, gender, narratologie.

Abstract

Sir Arthur Conan's works featuring Sherlock Holmes have been reimagined and retold countless times. There has not yet been a study comparing and contrasting the gender performance in Doyle's works and subsequent fanfiction written about the character of Sherlock Holmes, however. This research examines gender performativity in selected short stories from Doyle's works as well as the gender performance of characters in fanfiction titles wherein gender is performed in notable ways. This research delineates the narratological possibilities of fanfiction and the way it reconstructs and reinterprets established narrative frameworks. Additionally, Judith Butler's gender performativity theory is applied to Doyle's canonical works in a close textual analysis of "A Scandal in Bohemia", exploring the conventional versus unconventional gender performances of the characters in the short story. Introductory's fanfiction "Equivalence" and Ishmael's *Body of Evidence* series are also examined through the lens of Butler's gender performativity theory, which is also applied to reinterpreted transgender narratives. Subsequently, this research also explores fanfiction conventions such as genderswapping and the Omega!verse, which showcase innovative ways of presenting gender identity and gendered power issues. By applying Judith Butler's gender performativity theory on Doyle's canon and the selected fanfiction titles, it becomes evident that while Doyle's canon does contain unconventional gender performances, the narratological possibilities of fanfiction allow characters to better challenge and criticise established gender norms in the traditional narrative and perform gender in innovative ways.

Keywords: Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle, fanfiction, Judith Butler, gender performativity, gender performance, gender identity, gender, narratology.

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Introduction

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's (1859-1930) oeuvre contains historical novels such as *Micah Clarke* (1889) and *The White Company* (1891) that he personally regarded in high literary esteem; despite this fact, Doyle is best known for his series of works based around the fictional character of detective Sherlock Holmes (Burrow 309). Soon after the publication of the first novel *A Study in Scarlet* in 1887, the main protagonist, Sherlock Holmes, began gaining the interest of the reading public. In their introduction to *The Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Reader: From Sherlock Holmes to Spiritualism*, Jeffrey Meyers and Valery Meyers state that Holmes' rise in popularity particularly grew after the mass distribution of the Holmes short stories in *The Strand Magazine* (xiv), the first short story "A Scandal in Bohemia" having been published in 1891. The character's popularity grew to such heights that the reading public of the Holmes books were no longer satisfied with being passive consumers of fiction. The author, for example, states in "The Great Break" to have received many letters addressed to Holmes or Watson, requesting autographs or even "considerable offers . . . for Holmes to examine and solve various family mysteries" (Doyle 84).

The contemporary readers' level of involvement and interest in the fictional detective's life is noted by scholar Anne Jamison in the introduction to her book *Fic: Why Fanfiction is Taking Over the World*, in which Jamison contends that "Sherlock Holmes fueled the imaginations of the first fanfic fandom" (4). Consequently, the Holmesians, as the fans originally liked to call themselves, became known as one of the first communities of people to actively engage with the source material (Jamison 42). The reading public's attachment to the fictional detective was especially clear after the public outcry following publication of "The Final Problem" in 1893, depicting Holmes' fall to death into the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland. Doyle expresses in his biographical *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Memories and Adventures* that he sensed he "was in danger of being entirely identified with what [he] regarded as a lower stratum of literary achievement" and as a result felt "determined to end the life of [his] hero" (99). His dedicated readers, however, did not take well to this development. Obituaries appeared for the fictional character and people wore black in mourning, while others took matters into their own hands by "bringing Holmes to life in other ways: on the stage and in parodies and pastiches—some fully legal, some merely unchallenged" (Jamison 42), quickly seeing the creation of fanzines, pastiches, and a myriad of other forms of adaptations and retellings of the adventures of the fictional detective.

Once stories such as the Holmes works get picked up by creators or producers, they do not stay fixed; what follow are retellings or adaptations in the form of stage plays such as Charles Marowitz's *Sherlock's Last Case* (1984) or more contemporary television adaptations like the BBC's *Sherlock* (2010). However, alongside these types of retellings, there is also another way of increasing the longevity of the Holmes books: namely writing in the form of fanfiction. While often spelled as fan fiction in academic papers, and frequently abbreviated to 'fanfic' or 'fic' within online fan communities, the term that will be used for the rest of this thesis is 'fanfiction'. Fanfiction is, as its name suggests, fiction that is written by fans of a particular work. This applies to fiction that is written based on already existing source material, whether this is literature, a visual novel or Japanese manga, or other forms of media such as films, TV-series, games, and so forth. Bronwen Thomas defines fanfiction as "refer[ing] to stories produced by fans based on plot lines and characters either from a single source text or else a 'canon' of works" (1). However, scholars Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse's *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* point out that "[m]ost definitions emphasize the amateur aspect, the community that surrounds the production, dissemination, and consumption of fan fiction . . . [a]s such, fan fiction is defined as much by its context as its content" (26). Fans have continuously, as well as passionately, defended the value of fanfiction whether they are dedicated readers, members of the fan community, or authors of fan-written texts themselves.

In addition to these fan-centred definitions of fanfiction, Hellekson and Busse also discuss Abigail Derecho's "Archontic Literature: A Definition, a History, and Several Theories of Fan fiction", which proposes a definition that "delimits fan fiction as a concept by placing it in relation to modern concepts of authorship" (26). Derecho's definition places fanfiction alongside existing authorship terms. This definition is not just applicable to contemporary works, however, but could also be applied to canonical texts as early as the Arthurian Legends and Homer's epic poems. Applying the concept that "[t]he tradition of derivative works (artistic creations which are rooted in other people's art) is as old as literature itself" (Barenblat 172) subsequently demonstrates that fanfiction has been present for as long as those historically canonical texts have existed.

Applying Derecho's definition of fanfiction, Aja Romano, a reporter for *The Daily Dot* newspaper, compiled a list of historical novels and other acclaimed works of literature that belong within these parameters of fanfiction in her blog post titled "I'm Done Explaining Why Fanfic Is Okay." This list was written in response to authors such as Dianna Gabaldon, who argue that fanfiction is illegal and immoral (Gabaldon). Gabaldon herself has since

deleted her blog post regarding fanfiction, but keeps a fanfiction policy on her official site stating that she is “not comfortable with fan-fiction” (“Diana’s Fan Fiction Policy”). Romano points out that Gabaldon and others who share her opinion have “summarily dismissed as criminal, immoral, and unimaginative each of the following Pulitzer Prize-winning writers and works,” proceeding to list works including Jane Smiley’s novel *A Thousand Acres* (1991), a modernised retelling of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, as well as J.M. Coetzee’s *Foe* (1986), a novel that “uses the narrative of Robin Crusoe [*sic*] to explore issues of power and colonialism,” among a multitude of others (“I’m Done Explaining Why Fanfic Is Okay”). In the foreword to *Fic: Why Fanfiction Is Taking over the World*, Lev Grossman states that “[f]ans have been engaging in illicit, unsanctioned interactions with other people’s characters and stories since at least the nineteenth century,” providing the example of a letter Jane Austen’s niece wrote to Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) character Georgiana Darcy (xii). Grossman also mentions J.M. Barrie’s works, later named pastiches, containing Doyle’s characters Sherlock Holmes and John Watson (xii), and goes back even further by referring to Virgil’s borrowing of Homer’s *Iliad* character Aeneas and placing him in *Aeneid* (xiv). Grossman argues that “fanfiction isn’t just an homage to the original – it’s subversive and perverse and boundary-breaking, and it always has been” (xii). Fanfiction, then, has technically existed as a parallel field to canonically renowned texts within the field of literature, one that often overlaps and coincides. Romano and Grossman, among others, portray fanfiction in a literary context, and point out the literary value of the tradition of reworking and retelling canonically acclaimed works of literature.

The literary value of fanfiction is also contended by scholars Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse’s *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, which is a compilation of scholarly essays pertaining to different aspects of fanfiction and its surrounding fan community. In the introductory chapter, Hellekson and Busse observe that Derecho’s essay “posits fan fiction as a practice that offers marginalized groups, especially women, a tool for social criticism in opposition of hierarchical notions of ownership” (26). Outside of the rules and regulations of published works, fanfiction forms a way in which narratives are given voice that marginalised groups would otherwise not be able to express. Furthermore, in recent years there has been growing academic interest in the literary value of fanfiction. Fanfiction, as part of the interdisciplinary field of Fan Studies, has become a subject that is worth critical response as well as academic research, as evidenced by the steadily growing number of academic works focusing on the literary possibilities of fanfiction.

An example of the increasing literary value of fanworks is *Transformative Works and Cultures*, “a peer-reviewed academic journal that seeks to promote scholarship on fanworks and practices” (“About the OTW”). *Transformative Works and Cultures* is part of the Organisation for Transformative Works, frequently abbreviated to OTW, which is a fandom-initiated and volunteer-run non-profit organisation aiming to preserve fan culture and provide access to fanworks (Coppa 306). One of the ways in which the OTW offers access to fanworks is by hosting an archive for fans to safely upload their transformative content. The creation of a safe haven for fanworks became necessary because the niche market that fandoms or fan writing communities have created is possibly lucrative, and could be tapped into. There have been several attempts to do so, in fact: Amazon launched Kindle Worlds in 2013 and Chris and David Williams, for example, ran a commercially owned fanfiction archive. By submitting the works of fanfiction, however, the author would forfeit the rights to their story, allowing them to be commercially sold by third parties (Baker-Whitelaw). Instances such as this triggered the creation of an own archive for fans, aptly called the Archive of Our Own, a “fan-created, fan-run, non-profit, non-commercial archive for transformative fanworks” (“Archive of Our Own”).

Fanfiction has a history of reworking and reshaping traditional frame narratives, and with it comes an exploration of topics not originally present in the source material. The Sherlock Holmes fandom, with its roots as one of the first large literary fandoms alongside fans of Jane Austen (Derecho 62; Jamison 42), has seen its share of stories exploring unconventional topics (Jamison 42). Fanfiction enables marginalised groups to present their experiences without the burden of representation, and it allows their individual voices to be heard and celebrated. The presentation of gender roles and instances of cross-dressing in the Holmes stories, as well as implicit questions surrounding the gender performance of the characters, has prompted many fan writers to explore the gender identity of these characters in fanfiction.

Scholars such as Hellekson and Busse, who have written extensively on the current field of fanfiction, examine such fanfictions in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays*. Kristina Busse and Alexis Lothian later specifically analyse gender-related fanfiction conventions in “Bending Gender: Feminist and (Trans)Gender Discourses in the Changing Bodies of Slash Fan Fiction”, providing a close reading of multiple fanfictions featuring regendered characters. Consequently, there is existing research in the field of fanfiction on the theme of gender identity and gendered performances in fanfiction. The theme of gender within Doyle’s canonical Sherlock Holmes series has also

been examined. Critics such as Julia Hound and Christopher Redmond, for example, have analysed gender roles within Doyle's works featuring Sherlock Holmes. Round's "Out of House and Holmes", for instance, explores the elements of masculinity present in Sherlock Holmes, whereas Redmond points out the "Holmes stories [that] are of women who need rescuing or helping" (82) and discusses the role of women in the context of sexual elements present in the canonical Holmes works in his *In Bed with Sherlock Holmes: Sexual Elements in Arthur Conan Doyle's Stories of the Great Detective*. There is also research that combines the two fields: an analysis of gender within Sherlock Holmes fanfictions has been done, for example, by Ann McClellan's "Redefining Genderswap Fan Fiction: A Sherlock Case Study". There has yet to be an analysis that compares and contrasts the gender performance within the canonical series featuring Sherlock Holmes and its corresponding fanfiction, however. This thesis sets out to fill that gap, and contribute to the existing research in both fields. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to question the way in which the theme of gender identity is explored within fanfiction based on the fictional character of Sherlock Holmes, and how this compares to the characters' gender performance within the context of their original narrative framework.

This thesis will answer this question by presenting a comparative analysis of the gender performance in Arthur Conan Doyle's works surrounding the life of Sherlock Holmes and fanfiction written on the character of Sherlock Holmes. Therefore, fanfiction written about Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes stories will be compared and contrasted with the original text material, with a particular emphasis on the exploration of gender identity and gender performance. By doing so, this thesis will also examine the characteristics of the field of fanfiction and its narratological possibilities as well as the way in which gender is presented within written fanworks. Though there is no singular methodology for comparative research, comparative theory will be used to study the fanfiction and analyse its relation to the original work it was based on. By using comparative analysis, the Holmes stories will be placed next to the fanfiction in order to examine the differences and similarities of the written texts. This thesis will be focused on fanfiction written about Arthur Conan Doyle's series of works surrounding the life of Sherlock Holmes, particularly fanfiction that deals with the topic of gender. From Doyle's written body of work, there will be a close textual analysis of the short story "A Scandal in Bohemia" as well as a selection of other relevant short stories such as "A Case of Identity" (1891), "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892), "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax" (1911), "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone" (1921), as well as others.

These short stories were chosen for the thematic elements they contain pertaining to gender identity and gender roles. The chosen stories also form the selection of primary sources for this thesis, along with a body of fanfiction spanning ten titles as well as a close reading of Introductory's fanfiction "Equivalence" and Ishmael's *Body of Evidence* fanfiction series. While the selected fanfictions vary in length and narrative framework, they are chosen for their exploration of gender identity or for confronting unconventional gender performance. Specific fanfiction texts such as Fresne's "Gordian" and Darkest_bird's "A Fold in the Universe" also showcase an innovative way of presenting gender identities and offer social commentary on other societal issues regarding gendered power struggles.

For the theoretical framework, this thesis will mainly be using Judith Butler's gender performativity theory in *Gender Trouble* and "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory": this will form a central part of the theory that will be used and applied to the primary sources during the comparative analysis. The analysis will include terminology and definitions surrounding gender identity and gendered representation within gender studies, as well as the social and cultural constructions of gender roles. Furthermore, theories that are referenced in the multidisciplinary field of fan studies will also be used to examine fanfiction texts, particularly analyses and assorted essays on fanfiction in Anne Jamison's *Fic: Why Fanfiction Is Taking over the World* and Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson's *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays* and various of Busse's other works detailing the narratological possibilities of fanfiction. The narrative theory will be in the background, however, with the main focus being the way in which gender identity is performed by the characters and expressed within the narrative. Moreover, this research will be comparing thematic gender elements present in Doyle's canonical works featuring Sherlock Holmes and contrasting this with the gender performance of the characters in the resulting fanfiction. This thesis will examine the way in which fanfiction goes beyond the themes present within the source material and is capable of producing an innovating narrative framework that often deals with problematic social issues that most mainstream fiction shies away from. The terminology that will be discussed as a result of the chosen fanfiction titles includes gendered identities beyond habitual categories, e.g. genderfluid, transgender, or people who are agender; this terminology is used in scholarly works detailing the current fandom conversation about the topic of gender.

This thesis consists of five chapters, each with a varying number of sub-chapters. This thesis will adhere to a comparative chapter structure, meaning that there will be a separate chapter focusing on the chosen Doyle stories, another chapter on the selected fanfiction, and

this chapter will then be followed by a comparative chapter in which Doyle's short stories and related fanfiction will be compared and contrasted. The very first chapter, however, will introduce fanfiction and its related terminology.

The first chapter forms a general exploration of the literary possibilities of fanfiction, detailing the forms that fanfiction can take as well as the various conventions used as its narrative framework and the way this has evolved. Furthermore, it will include the historical background of fanfiction within the context of the Sherlock Holmes stories and opens the conversation about gender identity as well as the way fanfiction currently works within the boundaries of fandom. This chapter builds the foundation for the terminology and theory used in the following chapters, and forms the groundwork for the rest of this thesis.

The second chapter introduces gender theory. It explores the way in which the theme of gender is discussed within the works featuring Sherlock Holmes and which elements within the chosen short stories gave way to such an interpretation. The chapter furthermore applies Judith Butler's gender performativity theory, specifically in the case of a close reading of "A Scandal in Bohemia".

The third chapter examines the exploration of gender within fanfiction written on the character of Sherlock Holmes. By doing so, the transformative nature and narratological possibilities of fanfiction will also be examined, using fandom discourses on the topic of gender identity. This chapter will furthermore discuss unconventional gender performance within the fandom-created sub-genre Omega!verse, examining the thinly veiled metaphor for gendered power struggles and the politics of the female body. It will also provide a close reading of the gender performances in five chosen fanfiction titles.

The final chapter combines the findings of the previous chapters by comparing and contrasting to the way in which the theme of gender is presented within the chosen Sherlock Holmes short stories, and how this is reflected on and relates to the resulting fanfiction. By applying Judith Butler's performativity theory to Arthur Conan Doyle's series of work surrounding the life of Sherlock Holmes, particularly focusing on the short story "A Scandal in Bohemia", and fanfiction that is based on the character of Sherlock Holmes, it will become evident that while Doyle does present characters with unconventional gender performances, fanfiction authors create innovative ways of performing gender outside of the traditional narrative framework.

Chapter One: Fanfiction

1.1 Introduction

Fictional characters are continuously taken apart and examined, and subsequently put back together entirely anew; minor characters are pulled to the forefront of the narrative and given detailed backstories, particular scenes in novels and films and other media get subverted, rewritten and retold. All of this is made possible within the innovative narrative framework of fanfiction. This chapter examines the narratological possibilities of fanfiction and what this allows fanfiction authors to do by first giving an account on the historical background of fanfiction and then delineating the various forms fanfiction can take. Moreover, this chapter highlights the ways in which fanfiction deconstructs and transforms existing works, allowing fanfiction authors to implement changes to established narratives. These changes include a transformation of gender identity, for instance. This will form the foundation upon which the rest of the chapters build. By examining the reinterpretation and reworking of existing characters and settings in fanfiction, it becomes evident that the narratological possibilities of fanfiction give fan authors the opportunity to challenge elements such as gender identity in the traditional narrative framework.

1.2 Historical Background

Fanfiction, when taken to mean “the imaginative interpolations and extrapolations by fans of existing literary worlds” (Hellekson and Busse 6), is not an entirely new phenomenon created in the twenty-first century. Francesca Coppa, for example, argues in “Writing Bodies in Space: Media Fan Fiction as Theatrical Performances” that “the creative expansion of extant fictional worlds is an old-age practice” (226). The tradition of borrowing characters, and at times entire fictional settings, has been in place ever since literature itself started being written (Barenblat 172). Homer’s *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, for example, formed the inspiration for Virgil’s *The Aeneid*, whose version of Hell was in turn used as the basis for Dante’s *Inferno*. Even before the written tradition of sharing and reinterpreting stories, however, oral traditions ensured the preservation of cultural and historical material through oral storytelling (Tonkin 203-4). These stories were passed down through generations, from word to mouth, causing slight alterations with each retelling. In fact, “[f]or most of human history, it would be taken for granted that a great story would take many different forms,

enshrined in stain glass windows or tapestries, told through printed words or sung by bards and poets, or enacted by traveling performers” (Jenkins). Each subsequent retelling could provide new elements to established narratives, leading to countless further reimaginings. Written traditions, too, see the retelling of an original story from a different perspective or by shifting the story’s focus.

This shifting focus can result in the exploration of an already existing minor character, for example. Focusing on minor characters and foregrounding their particular narrative is frequently done within literary tradition. Sir Tom Stoppard, for instance, shifted the focus of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* by exploring the minor characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and their exploits in his play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. A review by critic Richard R. Cuyler notes that “the wings in *Hamlet* have become the main stage of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*” (551). Stoppard’s play takes place in the background of *Hamlet*, as it were, running parallel to the original with other *Hamlet* characters occasionally making an appearance.

Another example of focusing on a minor character in an already existing novel is Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. Brontë likely took inspiration from Jane Austen’s *Emma*, where the minor character of Jane Fairfax with bleak prospects would have been destined to be a governess if she did not make a good marriage match. Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* explores the plight of Jane being a governess with little fortune, and tells the story of her marrying Edward Fairfax Rochester. As such, Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* could be interpreted as the exploration of Austen’s minor character Jane Fairfax. Scholar Jocelyn Harris argues in her article “Jane Austen, Jane Fairfax, and Jane Eyre” that Brontë made several “corrections” (99) to Jane’s portrayal in *Emma*, altering and improving Jane’s character in the process of making her a protagonist in her own novel. Brontë’s work has, in turn, formed the inspiration for further retellings. While critics such as Diane Simmons believe that Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy* seems to draw on *Jane Eyre* as well, for example, scholar David Yost argues that the novel instead acts as a postcolonial reworking of Brontë’s *Vilette* (141). Another novel which “expands and improves upon” an established minor character in *Jane Eyre* is Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea*, published in 1966, which portrays a “feverish reimagining” of Brontë’s character Bertha Mason, Edward Rochester’s first wife (Grossman xi). In other words, Rhys too participates in the literary tradition of retelling established narratives by expanding and reimagining Bertha Mason’s life in a prequel to *Jane Eyre*.

Fanfiction adheres to the same principles as these literary retellings: it reimagines and

reworks the original narratives. Rachel Barenblat notes that the source work and its narrative framework are “explored, remixed, and interpreted” (172), which makes fanfiction suitable to be described as a transformative work. Busse concurs and explains in the introduction of her article “In Focus: Fandom and Feminism” that “transformative works take existing artefacts and add to or alter them to create a new message or meaning” (104), a definition issued by the United States Supreme Court (Barenblat 172). When fans took matters in their own hands and deconstructed and altered their cherished stories, “they seized, as revolutionaries do, the means of production” (Grossman xi), and they were not the first to do so:

There’s a reason Virgil was never sued by the estate of Homer for borrowing Aeneas from the *Iliad* and spinning him off in the *Aeneid*. Fictional characters and worlds were shared resources. For all its radically new implications and subversions, fanfiction also represents the swinging back of the pendulum towards that older way of thinking. When *Star Trek* fans published *Spockanalia*, they weren’t just discovering a new way to tell stories. They were helping us all to remember a very old one. (Grossman xiv)

Long before *Spockanalia* and the distribution of fanzines made by fans, however, fans of the beloved character of Sherlock Holmes were “engaged in very much the same project: the breaking down of a long-standing state of affairs that made stories and characters the exclusive province of their authors, and that locked readers and viewers into a state of mute passivity” (Grossman xi).

In the article “Transformative Work: Madras and Fanfiction”, Rachel Barenblat argues that despite the fact that “the tradition of derivative works (artistic creations which are rooted in other people’s art) is as old as literature itself,” that which truly “makes fanfiction unlike Virgil’s retelling of Homer or Alice Randall’s *The Wind Done Gone* (which recasts and reframes Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone With The Wind*) is that fanfiction arises within the context of community” (172). While it is possible that fanfiction can be written as a solitary venture, in addition to some fans that are unaware that what they have written could even be classified as fanfiction, writing fanfiction outside of a community is nevertheless a rare occurrence. Most commonly, fanfiction is born out of a fan community as “that community’s primary form of commentary,” one which creates a “communal conversation” (Barenblat 173). Fans use the sharing of stories as a form of social commentary not only on the original material, but

also as a way of inspiring and encouraging their fellow fans to produce creative work within the community. A fan community is often referred to as a ‘fandom’, which is short for fanatical domain. Of the countless fandoms that currently exist, Sherlock Holmes is widely regarded as “[t]he first fanwriting fandom, and one that’s going stronger today than ever” (Jamison 39).

The original collection of works surrounding the fictional life of detective Sherlock Holmes, written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle between the years of 1887 and 1947, is comprised out of 4 novellas and 56 short stories. After the publication of the first two novels *A Study in Pink* (1887) and *The Sign of Four* (1890) saw only moderate success, Arthur Conan Doyle turned to the serialisation of his future work (Jamison 40). The rest of the Holmes stories started being published in *The Strand Magazine*, “best remembered as the magazine in which the stories of Sherlock Holmes first appeared,” where Doyle’s works “enjoyed commercial success from the first” (Ziegler 256). Aside from the official stories published by Doyle, however, there exists a vast amount of additional material. There is an extraordinary amount of Holmesian literature available that comprises out of a combination of fan-produced work as well as professionally published material. Anne Jamison argues that “Sherlock Holmes fuelled the imaginations of the first fanfic fandom; the mimeograph was to become the engine of fanwriting publications and distribution for decades,” in *Fic! Why Fanfiction Is Taking Over the World* (4). The amount of extra-canonical work written in the Holmesian universe includes the publications of literary pastiches, celebrating Doyle’s work and the character of Sherlock Holmes, among which are the famous Nicolas Meyer’s *The Seven-Percent Solution* (1974), Carole-Nelson Douglas’ *Good Night, Mr. Holmes* (1990), and Lyndsay Faye’s *Dust and Shadow* (2009). There are countless other Sherlock Holmes pastiches, but whether or not the additional fiction written in the Holmes universes were written by fans or professional authors with credentials, the extra-canonical works could all fall under the umbrella term of fanfiction.

The interest in Sherlock Holmes and his fictional detective work carries on well into this day and age. Michael Chabon’s *The Final Solution: A Story of Detection*, published in 2004, depicts the character of Sherlock Holmes as a retired beekeeper solving yet another mystery, though the novella takes care not to explicitly mention Holmes’ name. Aside from published homages to Holmes and his adventures, there are fanfiction authors that transform the traditional narrative framework of the original work; fanfiction excels at experimenting with narrative form, deconstructing the original and reframing it to reflect current values.

Throughout the emergence of new retellings upon new adaptations of the Sherlock Holmes series, fans continue to produce fanfictions in response to each new reworking, telling their own stories. Here, Sherlock fans continued to do what *Star Trek* fans achieved with the publication of *Spockanalia*: they “dared to raise their voices and speak back . . . [in] the language of the narrative — just as Rhys spoke back to Brontë and Stoppard spoke back to Shakespeare” (Grossman xi). This resulted in fanfiction authors “assert[ing] the rights of storytellers to take possession of characters and settings from other people’s narratives and tell their own tales about them -- expand and build upon the original, and, when they deem it necessary, to tweak it and optimize it for their own purposes” (Grossman xii).

1.3 Different Forms of Fanfiction and Its Narratological Possibilities

The ways in which fanfiction authors take possession of an established narrative vary depending on the author and what they wish to achieve. There are a multitude of forms that transformative fanworks can take. There are no strict rules or boundaries that these creative works are obligated to conform to, which has resulted in a large variety of formats that fanworks can adopt. These formats are not restricted to written work, though that is the most common one. Fanworks can take forms ranging from literature, artwork, or even audio. Examples include written fanfiction, fan art and graphics, fan videos, fan comics such as zines or Japanese doujinshi, and even audio recordings of fanfiction, called podfics. The focus of this thesis, however, is on written manifestations of fanworks, which on their own also offer a limitless amount of possibilities.

Due to the fact that fanfiction is not bound to the same expectations of published novels, it allows writers of fanfiction the freedom to shape the text’s narratological framework and its content to their own liking. As scholars Kristina Busse and Alexis Lothian state in “Bending Gender: Feminist and (Trans)Gender Discourses in the Changing Bodies of Slash Fan Fiction”, “[f]an fiction . . . creates a canvas where writers, unrestricted by commercial impetus, can explore characters and worlds already familiar to and beloved by their readers (106). Therefore, the author is able to experiment not only with different types of writing styles and techniques, but also with the length and chronological content of the text. That is not to say that a published novel is unable to experiment with chronology or narrative framework. Published novels, however, do not categorise themselves as “a revision of, a continuation of, or an insertion into, a prior narrative” as fanfiction does (Derecho 66). Derecho goes on to say that novels can, however, indicate that they are revising, continuing,

or inserting a new narrative into a prior one through the use of their title. The title of Stoppard's play explicitly indicates that the focus will be on Shakespeare's characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, while J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* is a portmanteau of Crusoe and Friday's names (66). The history of novels is long and complex, however, and "[i]n approaching the novel . . . we are faced internally with the fluidity of its boundaries and externally with its particular relationship to life. . . . There is no such thing as *the* novel" (Bluestone 7-8). A novel's length can also vary greatly from a written series of books, a published short story, or a poetry collection, to anything in between. The ways in which fanfiction experiments with these aspects of length, chronology and framework stretches the boundaries beyond what we have been able to see in published material, however. A published novel, for example, must typically contain a beginning, middle, and an end. Aside from that, novels also frequently need a type of world building. The readers of original narratives are treading on unfamiliar territory; the characters need introducing, the setting needs to be built, and relationships need to be constructed. Fanfiction, on the other hand, deals with a fictional universe that the intended audience is already familiar with. Fanfiction is not bound to the same obligation of laying down the foundations for the reader, because this basic foundation already exists. The basics are all established: the characters, setting, and plot. Additionally, they also have an established readership; namely, fellow fans of the original work.

It is at this point that the writer of fanfiction can choose what to focus on, and which aspects of the established work the fanfiction author wishes to deconstruct, reimagine, or add to the original. As such, fanfiction based on an original work can for example choose to create a prequel for this story; much like Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* forms a prequel to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Fanfiction authors Jaida Jones and Rave wrote "The Shoebox Project", for instance, which acts as a prequel to the *Harry Potter* (1997-2007) series by J.K. Rowling. It features the Marauder Era and follows a group of teenage wizards, one of whom becomes the father of Harry Potter, through their high school years in the 1970s. Conversely, a fanfiction author can also choose to write a sequel and expand the storyline from the moment the original narrative ends. Unwilling or perhaps unable to let go of the original series, countless *Harry Potter* fans wrote stories taking place after the seventh instalment of the series. It has led to what could potentially be described as its own sub-genre: Hogwarts Eighth year fanfictions, in which the students go back for another school year after the war. Sequels to original works can take many other fandom-specific forms as well, however. There is a vast amount of next-generation fanfiction in the Harry Potter fandom, for instance, which

feature the children of the main characters of the Harry Potter series. Fans left unsatisfied with the epilogue provided by J.K. Rowling, on the other hand, have written stories that completely disregard the final chapter and create their own future settings in works labelled EWE, which stands for ‘Ending, What Ending?’ or ‘Epilogue, What Epilogue’. Harry Potter fans are not the only ones who turn their dissatisfaction with the source work into reinterpreted fanfiction, however. Henry Jenkins states in *Textual Poachers*, for instance, that “[f]ans reject narratively specified events” and consequently “build upon the assumptions of the fan meta-text, respond to the oft-voiced desires of the fan community, yet move beyond the status of criticism and interpretation; they are satisfying narratives, eagerly received by a fan readership already primed to accept and appreciate their particular versions of the program” (155). This reiterates that fanfiction is the result of the shared conversation within an online community, brought on by shared wishes and resulting in a reconstructed narrative.

Fans reconstruct and rework more than the beginning or ending of an established narrative; the online fan writing community has the entire timeline of the original material at their disposal. Mad Maudlin’s Sherlock Holmes fanfiction “Apotheosis”, for example, is a post-Reichenbach piece in which John Watson chooses to engage Moriarty in the final fight, which leads to Watson being presumed dead instead of Holmes. This fanfiction was written as a response to a writing prompt requesting a reversal of the “The Adventure of the Empty House” scenario in which Holmes returns after having been presumed dead. These writing prompts, frequently also featured as ‘kink memes’, are most commonly found on *Live Journal* or other blog services that provide threaded commentary. The prompts are submitted by fans, ranging from a vague suggestion to more elaborate and thought-out scenarios, which are subsequently ‘filled’ in the comments section by fellow fans in the form of fanworks; usually fanfiction. Despite its name, kink memes do not necessarily entail sexually explicit material. The prompts could be of any kind of nature, often encouraging the author to be creative with the prompt and building and expanding on what the fans already know of the established narrative.

Should a scene from the original work have left behind the feeling of dissatisfaction, for instance, fans could also request a particular section of the original source to be rewritten. Jamison claims in “Love Is a Much More Vicious Motivator” that “[t]aking dissatisfaction for inspiration is a common and very productive strategy in fanfiction, but it is also one of the least understood by outsiders” (60). This lends itself to different kinds of interpretations of the same scene, or rewriting it by viewing the original source through a different lens. Busse and

Lothian, for instance, argue that “[f]an writers use the characters, plots, and bodies from their chosen texts as raw material which can be manipulated to explore questions of most interest to them as well as issues and plot points raised by the source” (108). Fanfiction, therefore, critically looks at the source material and challenges the plot points that fans felt should be changed. This includes the gender representation of fan favourites, for example, as “manipulations of gendered embodiment frequently lead to the exploration of feminist concerns” (Busse and Lothian 108). Transforming a character’s gender identity offer social commentary on an established narrative while simultaneously challenging their traditional gender role. This is one of the ways in which fanfiction turns fans’ disappointment with the original material and manipulates and reconstructs plot aspects in direct response. Subsequently, these types of fanfictions “provide insights and critiques which rival any academic analysis” (Busse and Lothian, 106). Additionally, a fanfiction author could write scenes or scenarios they felt were missing from the original novel; expanding the original narrative with a scene that can be incorporated seamlessly within the original narrative. Faithwood’s short story “Not Your Face”, for example, is a character analysis of Draco Malfoy; a scene that many commentators felt should have been included in the original narrative. Faithwood presents a scene that reveals what Draco would see depicted in the Mirror of Erised; the subsequent depiction subtly suggests a queer retelling of the original series. Other authors choose to accept the original plot up to a certain point and disregard the rest, creating fanfiction that reflects what they think should have happened afterwards.

Not all fanfiction is written after the completion of the original work they are based on, however. For example, fanfiction written while the original source work is still in progress, like a TV-series or other serialised media. Once the original source releases new material, new plot points thwart countless fanfictions and their content. Many fanfiction writers’ exploration of future events are contradicted by the narrative the original chose to adopt. Screenwriter and producer Joss Whedon is particularly renowned for doing this in his television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997), to the extent that it has led to the term ‘Jossed’ being added to fan lexicon. The source material does not dictate any boundaries that the fans must adhere to, however. On the contrary, fanfiction frequently acts as a counterculture against mainstream ideas and interpretations (Busse, *Framing Fan Fiction* 106). Some fanfiction authors have even taken on the laborious task of retelling the entire original narrative from start to finish. This is best seen in the fanfiction series *The Sacrifices Arc*, heralded as one of the longest fanfictions with a word count of roughly three million. The author goes by the pseudonym of Lightning on the Wave, and rewrote the entire Harry Potter

series over the course of nearly a decade. *The Sacrifices Arc* deconstructs J.K. Rowling's original series, reworking the plot and offering an alternative exploration of its characters. In the process, *The Sacrifices Arc* criticises the way in which J.K. Rowling portrays social structures such as race and class in her original *Harry Potter* series.

The aforementioned examples of fanfiction are all examples of adjustments that writers can make to the timeline of the source the fanfiction is based on. Aside from timeline-adjusted fanfiction, there are other forms that written fanworks can take. The most self-evident form is that of the canon-universe; in other words, the "collection of texts considered to be the authoritative source for fan creations" (Busse, *Framing Fan Fiction* 101). Therefore, most fans take it to mean that canon is the version of events that the source material presents, and that it refers to the "official or sanctioned 'reality' as defined by the source material" (V.Arrow 328). The term was first used in fannish context by the Sherlock Holmes fandom, whose fans referred to Arthur Conan Doyle's writing as the canon (Busse, *Framing Fan Fiction* 101). This can be traced back to Ronald Knox' 1911 essay "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes", in which Knox satirised the German New Criticism by applying their methods of analysis of the Bible to Conan Doyle's stories. While Knox had compared Conan Doyle's work to the Bible in jest, fans quickly took it upon themselves to refer to the Holmes stories as the 'canon' from that point onward. Since then, the term has become adopted in fannish circles and is quite regularly used. There exists a counter term for this as well: 'fanon', a portmanteau combining the words canon and fan, indicating a type of "common fan consensus not based on observable or textual 'truth'" (V.Arrow 328). When a fandom-fact is so widespread within the fandom that it is taken as unquestionable part of the narrative, fanon can at times be confused for canon.

Canon-compliant fanfiction adheres the same sequence of events and conventions present in the original canon; that does not, however, mean that canon-compliant fanfiction cannot be innovative or transformative in its own right. In the article "The Writing and Reading of Fan Fiction and Transformative Theory", Veerle van Steenhuyse argues that "[i]f writers of fan fiction simply described the primary text, readers would no longer have the challenge of imagining something new and such texts would be too boring to be immersive" (6). Lacrimula Falsa's "A Star In A World Of Candles", for example, is a canon-compliant character exploration of the X-Men character Charles Xavier, created as an exercise for writing in the second person. Fanfiction normally mentions the degree to which it is canon-compliant and whether or not it diverges at some point, leading to new settings or

environments for the characters.

These different settings lead to another highly common and popular category: namely the Alternative Universe, frequently abbreviated to 'AU'. The premise is simple; the author presents a story that features an alternative version of the canon. The degree to which the narrative is transformed varies from author to author. Semi-canon compliant fanfiction is still considered to be an alternative universe to some fans, in the sense that it still deviates in some way to the original source. There is a myriad of categories and genres within the umbrella term AU. The most straightforward example is one in which the author goes outside of the scope the original source work created: by placing the original characters in a different setting. An example of this can be seen in "Tired and Wired (We Ruin Too Easy)" by Softshinythings, which takes the characters of HBO war series *Band of Brothers*, *The Pacific*, and *Generation Kill* and explores the events of these characters attending university together. A vice versa scenario is also possible, however: using an established setting or universe, and populating it elements or characters of other narratives (Busse, *Framing Fan Fiction* 116). This is done in Badacts' "Corvus, Vulpes, Lupus", wherein characters from Nora Sakavic's *The Foxhole Court* (2013) are presented with 'daemons' from the fictional universe of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995) trilogy. Badacts' fanfiction explores the events of Sakavic's characters featuring daemons, and simultaneously presents another form of fanfiction: a crossover AU, "combining two different sets of characters from two media sources into a single story" (Hellekson and Busse 11).

These fanfictions cross the boundaries between separate narratives and populate an established universe with another set of existing characters; stories in which two worlds collide. The remixing of two already existing universes and incorporating them into one harmonious narrative framework takes a lot of skill. It is easy to go wrong with a crossover AU, which has led it to a acquiring a less than stellar position among other fanfiction categories. Despite the crossover AU's bad reputation, however, author John Kessel wrote what can be considered an award-winning crossover AU. Kessel's *Pride and Prometheus* (2008), a novelette that features characters from both *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) as well as *Frankenstein* (1818), mixes two established fictional worlds together. It won the 2009 Hugo-Award for Best Novelette. Another Hugo-winning novel is Neil Gaiman's *A Study in Emerald* (2003), which places Sherlock Holmes in H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos universe.

In fanfiction, there lies a world of endless possibilities. Scholar Rachel Barentblatt observes in her essay "Transformative Work: Midrash and Fanfiction" that "Sherlock Holmes

can solve mysteries he never encountered; the USS Enterprise can explore even more new worlds and civilizations; Harry Potter can become a side character in Hermione Granger's life story, instead of the other way around" (172). There is no consensus on how to best write fanfiction. While no conventional categories exist, as fanfiction often tends to cross genres, fanfiction nevertheless has its own sub categories; this includes fandom-specific categories, however, which makes it impossible to list all categories (Hellekson and Busse 10). There are common sub genres that recur most frequently, however; categories that fans are likely to encounter in most fandoms. There are, for example, common AU tropes that remain beloved to the fan writing community; characters of an existing work are cast in an alternative universe setting. Casting characters in a high school setting like Softshinythings' "Tired and Wired (We Ruin Too Easy)", for instance, is a popular fanfiction premise. Conversely, there are also college and teachers AUs, along with coffeeshop AUs and its similar companions, the bakery and bookshop AU. These types of alternate universes frequently present light-hearted content and are filled with Hollywood-esque meet-cutes. Recently, fans have come up with 'meet-uglies' to combat meet-cutes, presenting an awkward and unlikely scenario for two characters to meet; such as accidental house break-ins after a drunken night out, sharing a walk of shame on a Sunday morning, or mishaps that end up with getting to know each other in hospitals.

There is an endless list of the various AUs, however, as fans continuously create innovative and creative scenarios to subject their characters to. In addition to from alternative universes, a recurring fanfiction category includes 'fix-it fic'. This often occurs after a canonical event leaves the fans with the desire to fix the situation in the canon. Arthur Conan Doyle's short stories were often not edited before they were published, for example, which led to many inaccuracies. The *Sherlock* fandom dealt with this by providing fix-it fanfiction that solved the loopholes if possible, or alternatively used these loopholes to shape their own version of events.

Aside from tropes, fanfiction authors can apply specific narrative frameworks: 'Five Times This and One Time That', for instance. Blind_Author's "Five Times Sherlock's Gender Didn't Matter, and the One Time It Did" uses this fanfiction convention, depicting a female Sherlock Holmes and offering five scenarios in which this gender-change was of no consequence and one time it was. This narrative structure enables the author to compile different scenarios that would not chronologically fit within a continuous prose narrative. At the same time, this particular fanfiction uses the 'five plus one' fanfiction convention to

explore the issues raised by Sherlock's reinterpreted gender identity. Aside from these forms of fanfiction, or rather alongside these, there are also types of fanfiction that are unique to their own fandom. One example of fandom-specific fanfiction, this one particular to the Sherlock Holmes stories, is the "221-B" format in which the stories are exactly 221 words, and the last word starts with a letter B (Fries 50). This is another interesting framework that can be used to efficiently and succinctly respond to certain issues, and it is merely one of many.

Another example that is unique to the Holmes fandom is the 'The Great Game': a type of "participatory fiction" that operates on the strong belief that Sherlock Holmes is a historical person whose adventures were documented by a biographer, John Watson, and that Arthur Conan Doyle is merely the literary agent that chronicled their adventures in what was dubbed by fans to be the "Sacred Writings" (Jamison 8). Referring to the canonical works of Doyle as the Sacred Writings is what led fans to adopting the term 'canon' for the collected Holmes works, as "[o]ur current idea of canonicity derives from this sense of a unified and godlike authority" (Goldman). This has not prevented fans from experimenting and reconstructing these Doyle's sacred writing, however. Fanfiction authors in general "are not often concerned about obeying canonical rules. They enjoy the source text's blueprints while not being restrained by it" (Busse, *Framing Fan Fiction* 117). The *Sherlock* fandom has indeed not let itself be limited, and is still producing reconstructed narratives that challenge Doyle's original material. According to Anne Jamison, in fact, "the *Sherlock* fandom lives up to the literary promise of online fanfiction — consistently producing experiments in topic form that a dedicated audience is willing to try and, often enough, embrace for the fresh perspectives and twists on beloved characters and scenes they offer" (55). The myriad of forms that fanfiction can take in regards to story length, thematic content and experimenting with narrative structure showcase the innovative narratological possibilities of fanfiction.

1.4 Fanfiction: the Deconstruction and Transformation of Original Material

These narratological possibilities of fanfiction are partly due to the way in which fanfiction deconstructs the established narrative and takes over the metaphorical writing reins from the author. When French theorist Roland Barthes argued that the birth of the reader can only come at the cost of the author's death in his essay *The Death of the Author*, published in 1967, he likely did not have fanfiction in mind. Barthes contends, however, that "a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue,

parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author” (148). Hellekson and Busse reiterate Barthes’ statement in their introduction to *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays*, mentioning “Barthes’s notions of entering, interpreting, and expanding the text,” and how this is a “concept crucial to an understanding of fan culture: that of pleasure and play” (31). The multiplicity of the text can, and has, inspired a vast amount of different interpretations. Readers are consequently able to put these interpretations into words for the next generation, or for their peers. Stories do not stay a fixed, static product that one author created. If a story or fictional character becomes popular or widespread, such as Doyle’s character Sherlock Holmes, there will inevitably be retellings in the form of “spin-offs, pastiches, and adaptations” (Jamison 40).

Different interpretations or retellings of a story result in the longevity of a narrative. Sherlock Holmes, for example, became a household name during Doyle’s lifetime (Priebe 11) and continues to be the most well-known fictional detective (C. Roden and R. Roden ix). Any time a story is told, it is leaving other stories out; stories that are just as valid and deserve to be told. Retellings occur most often with stories that are already widespread and known. As such, there is a growing trend of children’s tales being rewritten in altered perspectives: stories that are familiar to nearly everyone. Lisa Jensen’s *Alias Hook* (2013), for example, is a retelling of *Peter Pan* (1911) written from Captain Hook’s point of view. Fairy tales and children’s stories are not the only classic stories that have frequently been retold, however. John Gardner’s novel *Grendel* (1971), for example, is a retelling of the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*. It uses the antagonist’s point of view, however, and is written from the perspective of Grendel, who is often depicted as a monster.

Fanfiction, too, frequently uses this strategy; *Little Red Riding Hood* told from the perspective of the Big Bad Wolf, or *Peter Pan* told entirely from the point of view of villain Captain Hook. It can also be argued, however, that the original villain of this particular tale is Peter Pan himself; J.M. Barrie’s original novelisation of *Peter Pan* implies that Peter kills the Lost Boys once they reach adolescence to ensure that they never grow up, while Hook is the one trying to save the boys. Inversions of the heroes and antagonists can also be seen in fanfiction subverting the popular Dragon myth; instead of the hero slaying the dragon and being rewarded with the princess, the princess slays the dragon herself and is her own champion. K.M. Morrison, writing under the pseudonym Gyzym, wrote a series of fairy tale rewritings that combined the traditional narratives and portrayed a significantly reinterpreted

character study that questions and reconstructs its characters' sexual identities. Gyzym's queer reinterpretation of the narrative of Snow White/Sleeping Beauty, "The True Story Of What Once Was", warns the reader: "Be not fooled by the trappings history has provided: this is an assassination story" ("The True Story Of What Once Was"). Gyzym's fairy tale rewriting "Learning an Angry Language", too, presents a reinvention of the traditional narrative by portraying a subversive, queer reading of *Little Red Riding Hood* (named Scarlett here) and *Rapunzel*. It disregards the damsel in distress trope when Scarlett "paints her name into the water" after attacking a prince, for example ("Learning an Angry Language"). The author also presented a "retelling of the fairytale *Beauty and the Beast*, now with more lesbians, fae legends, and . . . violence" ("Show You What That Howl Is For"). She continues by saying "[p]lease be warned; this is, for all intents and purposes, a horror story, and contains mentions of murder, suicide attempts, suicidal tendencies, sexual and non-sexual power play, whipping, and general madness" ("Show You What That Howl Is For").

Additionally, the author has also written fairly radical reinterpretations of biblical stories and themes. Her feminist reworking of the Fall of Man, for example, is incorporated in the story "I Just Happen to Like Apples (I Am Not Afraid of Snakes)", using characters from Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's *Good Omens* (1990) universe. Furthermore, Theapplepielifestyle presents a retelling of both fairytales and Greek mythology in the form of poetry in "Reinventing Rescuing". The author writes pieces that subvert the traditional narratives that make female characters the victim of their fate, and instead portrays a reinterpretation of those narratives; one in which they are the masters of their own fate. These aforementioned fanfictions are examples of the way in which fanfiction authors take the reins into their own hands and create their own versions of old tales and subsequently creating cross-genre transformative works that have no place in current mainstream publishing.

While there are multiple ways and forms in which fanfiction is written, and many authors have chosen to remain within the canonical boundaries of the original material, there are also authors who have taken a slightly different approach. Fanfiction is able to deconstruct and reform the traditional narrative framework into a product that includes an element that the original work was previously lacking. An important aspect of fanfiction for the online writing community is the possibility of representation. For many fans, fanfiction is "... about twisting and tweaking and undermining the source material of the fanfiction, and in the process adding layers and dimensions of meaning to it that the original never had" (Grossman xiii). This often includes the amount of unconventional gender performances and subversive content that

is freely present in fanfiction: “[i]t’s also about prosecuting fanfiction’s larger project of breaking rules and boundaries and taboos of all kinds” (Grossman xiii).

Categorising this content in fanfiction is important for readers, so fans know where to find certain content or, conversely, how to avoid certain content. As stated before, fanfiction does not operate in conventional categories. Hellekson and Busse suggest that fanfiction can nevertheless be sorted into three genres: slash, het, and gen!fic (10). Slash fiction focuses on the relationship and interaction between fictional characters of the same sex, usually “based on perceived homoerotic subtext” (Hellekson and Busse 10). While this was originally restricted to male/male pairings, it is now generally believed to pertain to the sexual or romantic attraction between any same-sex pairing. Nevertheless, most fans take care to distinguish fem!slash to refer specifically to female-focused slash. Het refers to heterosexual or heteroromantic relationships, while gen “denotes a general story that posits no imposed romantic relationships between the characters” (Hellekson and Busse 10).

Most creators and actors involved in the production of an original source work tend to shy away when confronted with fanfiction, especially one that posits a romantic or sexual relationship between the actors or the characters they play. While many involved in the source material are uncomfortable with the idea of their character in such unfamiliar territory, there are also actors who embrace it. When asked about fanfiction in an interview with Elizabeth Minkel, *Sleepy Hollow* (2013) actor Orlando Jones for instance shared the following:

I like the slash, and I think I like it because I feel there are so many people who are under-represented – or not represented at all – in mainstream Hollywood entertainment. I really enjoy the fan fiction that embraces character and themes that showcase those people – their love, their desires, their passions. I think that’s really cool – and I hope the show as it continues embraces that more, because that’s an opportunity to tell stories that other people might not be familiar with. (Minkel)

Jones goes on to say that “it’s another way to go but it’s no less valid than what we’re doing” (Minkel). His statement not only resonated with fans but also emphasises the importance of representation; specifically about narratives that are underrepresented in mainstream entertainment. This includes narratives for marginalised groups and their ability to present subversive, reinterpreted material. This sentiment is reiterated in “Hero with a Thousand

Copyright Violations: Modern Myth and an Argument for Universally Transformative Fan Fiction”, in which the critic Natalie Montano argues that “[t]he transformative nature of fan fiction goes beyond mere copyright law . . . Its ability for non-professionals and people of all ages, genders, and races to reinterpret mainstream stories to their own, individual experiences is an alternative form of myth creation for underrepresented voices that could not otherwise exist” (703). Fanfiction is inherently subversive, giving voice to marginalised experiences that cannot be found in mainstream media.

This could explain fans’ displeasure with BBC’s *Sherlock* screenwriter Steven Moffat and his view on fanfiction. In an interview for “Entertainment Weekly”, Steven Moffat told James Hibberd the following:

A load of [Sherlock fanfiction] has been superb. There’s a tendency to disparage it. I don’t agree. Even the slash fiction, that’s a great way to learn to work. No one really does three-act structure, but just trying to put words that make somebody else turned on, that’s going to teach you more about writing than any writing college you can go to. It’s creative and exciting. I refuse to mock it—because I’m a man who writes Sherlock Holmes fan fiction for a living! (Hibberd)

Despite the seemingly positive nature of his statement, it hit a nerve with *Sherlock* fans. Moffat’s statement treats fanfiction as training wheels for later work, which disregards the subversive and counterculture aspects of fanfiction and its transformative nature. It also shows a lack of appreciation or understanding of fanfiction and the fan writing community when there is an emphasis on ‘even’ slash fanfiction being deemed acceptable. Given the fact that fandom is a space dominated by marginalised groups in society, the online fan writing community does not write for the typical mainstream audience. Nevertheless, it bases itself on available texts. Fanfiction in the context of Sherlock Holmes is difficult to distinguish itself from published pastiches and homages, for instance, but there exists a vast amount of both. The original Holmes stories lend themselves towards being retold from different perspectives. This is not restricted or limited to the time the stories were first published; many of the short stories contain elements that are currently still of interest to the reading public, decades after the stories’ first release.

The Sherlock Holmes books have been told and retold countless times. Both producer

and fan operate based on the same source text, however. Slash fans of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, for example, pick up on the presence of homoerotic subtext. Fanfiction, subsequently, “was a way of making visible the hidden thread of attraction that runs through the complex bond between the two characters. It elevated subtext to text” (Grossman xiii). Sometimes there is not merely subtext present in the source text, however. Arthur Conan Doyle’s *A Scandal in Bohemia* features Irene Adler canonically cross-dressing, for example, portraying an unconventional gender performance that fanfiction authors pick up and expand on. Astolat’s “The Maiden Voyage of the Tiresias”, for instance, features Holmes being the one that cross-dresses. This particular fanfiction raises questions about the construction of gender, as Watson notes that he “never should have believed it him, so perfectly did [Holmes] mimic a woman’s manner” (Astolat), indicating that there is more to gender besides Holmes’ physical appearance and feminine attire.

Fanfiction calls for a deeper exploration of characters’ gender identities. This exploration is done by constructing a transgender narrative of an established character like Sherlock Holmes, for example, or by providing a genderqueer reading of one of Doyle’s short stories. Conversely, when there is a lack of representation, fans could incorporate this in their rewritings. Busse and Lothian state that “it is scarcely surprising, then, that questions of gender presentation, representation, and equality are central to fan fiction and discussions” (108). The exploration of gender identity within fanfiction and the resulting discussions in the fan community helps many fans come to terms with their own social experiences, encouraged by open conversation.

1.5 Conclusion:

In conclusion, the myriad of forms that fanfiction takes as well as its various genres portray the transformative and inherently subversive nature of fanfiction. Fanfiction authors take the traditional narrative framework and reframe and reinterpret it from the point of view of individual social experiences, which in turn provides representation for marginalised groups in society. Aside from that, fanfiction and fan communities engage with the original material and explore of themes and topics of gender identity and sexed bodies that would otherwise be neglected in published novels targeted at mainstream audiences. By exploring the narratological possibilities of fanfiction, it becomes evident that fanfiction presents innovative ways of deconstructing and reinterpreting established narratives to allow for the challenging and criticising of the original narrative framework.

Chapter Two: Gender in Sherlock Holmes

2.1 Introduction

A famous detective disguising himself as a clergyman to obtain evidence for a case against a cross-dressing woman, who in turn proves to be the only woman capable of besting the great Sherlock Holmes: Arthur Conan Doyle's short story "A Scandal in Bohemia" features intriguing gender performances. This chapter examines the gender performativity in this short story, as well as other selected stories by Doyle such as "The Adventures of the Speckled Band", "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax", "A Case of Identity", and "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone". These particular stories were not only chosen for their characters' noteworthy gender performance and unconventional gendered behaviour, but also for the way in which certain characters do adhere to gender norms. By providing a close textual analysis of the short story "A Scandal in Bohemia", this chapter will explore the ways in which masculinity and femininity are performed by various characters. Gender and the theory of gender performativity form the focus in the following chapter. By using terminology present in gender theory, the conventional gender roles in the Sherlock Holmes short stories will be examined, as well as the ways in which characters support these roles on the one hand and challenge traditional gender norms on the other hand. By applying Judith Butler's gender performativity theory on Arthur Conan Doyle's selected short stories and examining the characters' gender performance through the lens of this theory, it becomes evident that there are characters in Doyle's canonical series involving Sherlock Holmes that both comply with as well as defy the strict Victorian gender roles and their corresponding feminine and masculine traits.

2.2 Introduction to Gender

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," Simone de Beauvoir famously states in her book *The Second Sex*, published in 1949 (301). As a French existentialist, de Beauvoir's statement echoes the values of existentialism; the emphasis is mainly on the assumption that "man has no given character which determines his actions, but that he is free" (Copleston 19). De Beauvoir therefore proposes that a person is not born to do or be any particular thing, and instead is in process of being shaped by their choices and experiences from the moment of their birth. This sentiment is essential for gender studies, as well: starting from the moment of

birth, every human being is exposed and affected by gender and gendered behaviour. Gender can be seen as a socially constructed concept that divides the biological sex into a binary gender system and consequently creates a distinction between gender and sex. “On the Construction of Gender, Sex, and Sexualities”, published in *The Psychology of Gender* in 2004, explains how gender as a term was originally adopted as a means to establish a distinction between biological sex and the social aspects of femininity and masculinity (Marecek et al. 192-216). Judith Butler also notes in “Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*” that Beauvoir’s “formulation distinguishes sex from gender and suggests that gender is an aspect of identity that is gradually acquired” (35).

Having established that, Butler states that a person’s “sex is understood to be the invariant, anatomically distinct, and factic aspects of the female body, whereas *gender* is the cultural meaning and form that the body acquires, the variable modes of the body’s acculturation” (35). This echoes the definition that was taught in the late 1960s and early 1970s, where the distinction was explained as the following: “Sex . . . was what was ascribed by biology: anatomy, hormones, and physiology. Gender, we said, was an achieved status: that which is constructed through psychological, cultural, and social means” (West and Zimmerman 125). Gender, when considered to be the cultural equivalent of a person’s sex, has created socially gendered rules that dictate what type of behavioural characteristics constitute as masculine and which characteristics constitute as feminine.

The accumulation of these socially gendered rules, then, leads to “the formation of gender roles, by which people are expected to have characteristics that equip them for the activities typical of their sex” (Eagly, Wood and Johannesen-Schmidt 270). Gender identity and gender performance are abstract concepts that affect an individual’s behaviour, most frequently without them noticing or even being consciously aware of the effect gender has in their lives. Gender has embedded itself so intricately within society and pervades people’s everyday lives to such an extent that they have become blind to it. Gender is present in “our institutions, our actions, our beliefs, and our desires, that it appears to us to be completely natural” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 9). Considering the assumption that gender roles are subject to social practices that change and evolve rather than remaining a fixed gender identity, the gender roles people have ascribed to for centuries can be called into question. If a person’s gendered behaviour can be extracted from their biological sex, this opens up all sorts of new possibilities to view and reflect on gender identity.

2.3 Gender Performativity Theory

Exploring new and challenging ways to examine gender identities can best be seen in gender theorist and philosopher Judith Butler's work, which reflects on the construction of gender by placing it within the concept of performativity. Butler's gender performativity theory is often attributed to her book *Gender Trouble*, published in 1990. However, Butler first proposes her theory on gender performance in her 1988 essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory". In this essay, Butler states that "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceede [*sic*]; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time — an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (519). In other words, rather than a gender identity resulting in a series of behavioural acts, Butler claims that a repetition of acts instead results in a gender identity. Butler continues by requesting the reader to regard gender "as a corporeal style, an 'act,' as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where 'performative' itself carries the double-meaning of 'dramatic' and 'non-referential'" (521-22). Here, Butler combines gender and performativity and first proposes that gender is a performative act: a certain kind of gendered performance that is the result of a repeated sequence of acts.

Butler also suggests that the performance is not necessarily imposed on us, despite the fact that the "gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives" (526). In her later work, Butler emphasises a crucial difference between performance and performativity. In an interview with Max Miller in 2011, Butler states that:

When we say that gender is performed, we usually mean that we've taken on a role; we're acting in some way. . . . To say that gender is performative is a little different. For something to be performative means that it produces a series of effects. We act and walk and speak and talk in ways that consolidate an impression of being a man or being a woman. . . . We act as if that being of a man or that being of a woman is actually an internal reality or something that's simply true about us, a fact about us. Actually, it's a phenomenon that is being produced all the time and reproduced all the time. (00:00:06-00:01:27)

Whereas a performance takes on a role and embodies gender within that moment, performativity is an on-going process; it is repeated again and again, almost incessantly.

While it produces the effect that an individual gives off a certain impression, performativity also produces an effect in other people and their perception of someone's gender; their reaction can range from approval to disgust, depending on how well someone is 'doing' gender ("Performative Acts" 522). Gender performativity is embedded and acted out within each individual's daily life almost thoughtlessly. It is important to note, however, that gender performativity is not an act in the sense that one can simply stop acting that way. It is, instead, an on-going performance that is out of an individual's control. Butler also points out that gender is also not an individual producing a performance: it is the performance producing an individual. There is, in fact, nothing 'behind' the performance; the performance is all there is ("Performative Acts" 522). This sentiment is repeated in *Gender Trouble*, wherein Butler reiterates that "gender proves to be performance— that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed" (25). The same is later again echoed in her 1993 paper "Imitation and Gender Insubordination", where Butler states that gender is "a kind of imitation for which there is no original" (313). The gendered acts are repeated and imitated, yet there is no act or being that constitutes as the original.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity has changed the way gender can be looked at. The impact of a gendered performance changes the way in which gender is perceived as a whole: the marginalised community that deliberately seeks out or creates content for others within their 'safe zone' regarding gender identity, for example, does so because of the way in which gender is currently perceived. Gender is still a social construct for which there is a 'norm', and any individual who deviates from that standardised gender norm is met with social policing; is told to 'act normal' or to seek help from a psychiatrist in order to be able to adapt to the behaviour their gender demands them to have. In her interview with Miller, Butler mentions that this is true for 'sissy boys' or 'tomboys', for example (00:01:44-00:04:48). A boy wanting to play with Barbie dolls is quickly dissuaded from the notion; a girl choosing what is considered to be a 'boys' toy', such as plastic swords or toy cars, is told that she should choose the softer, household or beauty-oriented toys instead; toys that stimulate becoming a nurturing, feminine individual.

The way we look at gender has far-reaching consequences not only in personal achievements and decisions such as choosing careers, but also in allowing behaviour in others in the form of gender policing. The learning process starts almost immediately from the moment of birth: the colours we are put in at birth determine our behaviour for the rest of our

lives, and that behaviour is met with social policing in order not to stray from the norm. In her interview, Judith Butler mentions “institutional powers such as psychiatric normalisation” (00:02:07-00:02:10) as examples of social policing. What starts out as parents berating their child over their social transgressions, for example, could grow into the parents intervening to change their child’s behaviour in the form of visits to a psychiatrist. Butler also mentions how “informal practices” (00:02:15) such as bullying, escalating from teasing to violent altercations, all “keep us in our gendered place” (00:02:17-00:02:19).

2.4 Gender in Victorian Sherlock

Gender and the application of gender within a fictional narrative can be examined by first looking at the social gender norms and societal expectations surrounding the author. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, for example, has produced 56 short stories and four books involving the fictional character of Sherlock Holmes. These works were published between the character’s first appearance in print in 1887 and the publication of the final short story in 1927. The Holmes series were published in a period falling largely within the Victorian (1837-1901) and Edwardian (1901-1910) period of British history. As such, readers could expect Doyle’s stories to include and reflect on the social setting and mainly Victorian ideals and values of the time and context in which the works were written.

The Victorian era is a time frequently characterised by rapid changes and developing technology (Knewitz 1; Greenblatt and Adams 985). In the midst of a whirlwind of change, stability was sought by maintaining a strict sense of morals and values, as “the increasing social mobility of the Victorian era highlighted the need for moral examples and models of conduct” (Hadley 34). This had a particular effect on the working classes of society, one in which “industrialization and urbanization changed working roles and, hence, roles within the family” (Parker 13). The Industrial Revolution particularly affected patriarchal relationships in the working classes. There was a decreased interaction between fathers and sons, leading to a “crisis of masculinity” of sorts in the nineteenth century, claims Julia Round in her “Out of House and Holmes” essay (136). While this could have led to a variety of expressions of masculinity, it instead seemed to have narrowed down how to best ‘be a man’. In “The Emancipation of Women - Its Motives and Achievements” sociologist Viola Klein points out that the middle classes, on the other hand, seemed to have “put a premium on the idleness of their women” (264). Klein goes on to say that “[a]part from bearing children, the social function of the bourgeois woman was to be a living testimony to her husband’s social status,”

and as such, her values “did not include either industry or intelligence” (264). Ideas about socially accepted forms of behaviour, whether it be the masculinity of working classes or idle femininity of the bourgeoisie, began to spread and become the social norm.

The spread of ideas was facilitated by another important characteristic of the Victorian period: this was also an era marked by the development of large-scale printing presses that could produce more printed material, ensuring a more widespread literacy in Britain (Greenblatt and Adams 993; Coatsworth et al. 172). This significant increase in literacy resulted in “radical changes in the way that culture was expressed and disseminated; and it was during that era that first the ‘Woman Question’ and then wider issues of gender roles and sexuality became topics of discourse” (Parker 8). Victorian ideals and the norm for how men and women ought to behave were rigidly set in place partly due to the members of Victorian society repeatedly acting according to behavioural gender norms. In Butlerian terms, Victorian gender roles were performative; the contemporary society continuously repeated gendered acts, which produced the effect of rigid behavioural standards. The social roles of men and women were accompanied by character traits specifically attributed to men and a different set of characteristics adopted by women, creating a very distinct and clear-cut schism between gender roles. In “Gender and Feminism: An Overview”, Chris Beasley claims that “[g]ender in Western society refers to the binary division (into two categories) of human beings and social practices to the point of this division even being construed as oppositional” (11).

This oppositional binary of gender is reflected in the nature of masculine and feminine traits, or rather, how these traits are frequently the polar opposite of one another. Scholar Susan Kent, for example, proposes in *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914* that “[m]en possessed the capacity for reason, action, aggression, independence, and self-interest,” thus belonging to the public sphere, while “[w]omen inhabited a separate, private sphere, one suitable for the so called inherent qualities of femininity: emotion, passivity, submission, dependence, and selflessness, all derived, it was claimed insistently, from women’s sexual and reproductive organization” (30). Consequently, gendered traits were linked directly to biological sex, and Victorian norms operated on that assumption: “[u]pon the female biological entity, a sexed body, nineteenth-century theorists imposed a socially and culturally constructed ‘femininity’, a gender identity derived from ideas about what roles were appropriate for women” (30).

Surrounded by rigid gender roles, a Victorian individual's gender performance would likely mirror that which its Victorian society demanded it to be. The masculine and feminine traits, such as the one Kent listed, describe a certain 'act' an individual can perform, either deliberately to avoid social policing or as an unconscious mimicking of others. Butler states in "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" that it is these acts that together form gender, or rather: "the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender" (522). These gendered behavioural traits are linked to gender performativity in the sense that they are acts that are continuously performed: e.g. a man acting with aggression while the woman submits or reacts emotionally. Additionally, social forms of politeness also portray a repetitive act: the contemporary gentleman standing once a woman enters or leaves the room, or the act of taking off his hat as a sign of respect; actions that are so repeated that it becomes an ingrained habit that conveys gendered behaviour. These acts are performed again and again, in a multitude of scenarios and manifestations, in a way that produces the effect of leaving a gendered impression on others: through the repetition of what are deemed masculine or feminine acts, the individual performing these masculine or feminine acts are perceived as either male or female.

In the Sherlock Holmes stories, Doyle generally portrays gender roles that largely adhered to the Victorian gender traits mentioned above by Kent. Doyle's mother, Mary Doyle (née Foley), "brought him up on tales of chivalry and chivalry and fairness were guiding principles throughout his life" (O'Leary 24). This is reflected in the masculine qualities of the male protagonists that appear in Doyle's work, and further aided by the female characters' frequent dependence on men's gallantry. In fact, Julia Round claims in "Out of House and Holmes" that "Holmes' rationality, logic and comradeship with Dr Watson are masculine traits that helped set the pattern for masculinity at the start of the twentieth century" (135). The stories' wild success and widespread fanbase (Jamison 40) ensured that a large portion of Victorian readers would have come across the depiction of Doyle's characters and the ways in which these characters present and perform gender. According to Round, masculinity in the Victorian era "was strongly associated with rationality, logical thought, and a lack of emotion" (135). Round continues by saying that "[l]ogic and rationality form the basis of Sherlock's thought processes, and are emphasised throughout the stories" (135). Holmes' logic and rationality, utilised while solving his cases and aiding those in need of his help, form the very basis of his character.

Holmes' clever mind and superior deductive reasoning are especially showcased when he is in contact with 'regular' characters that do not share his deductive skills. The contrast to his method of thinking and even mode of existing becomes particularly apparent when faced with traditionally Victorian female characters. Meghan R. Gordon claims that Doyle provides this contrast in order to "further the ingenuity of deduction of Sherlock Holmes in placing him in juxtaposition to female characters who are typically eccentric, sensuous, or silent" (1). Holmes firmly roots his deductive skills within objective truths and exact sciences, and rejects any romanticism that might mire his analytic reasoning. This can be seen in his reaction to Watson's brochure titled "A Study in Scarlet", which according to Holmes was too tinged with romanticism (*The Sign of Four* 76). Holmes' rejection of emotionality is also seen in "The Statement of the Case", the second chapter to *The Sign of Four*, wherein Holmes states that "[t]he emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning" (82). Even when voicing his sympathetic opinion on topics regarding women, Holmes tells Watson: "I use my head, not my heart" ("The Illustrious Client" 950). This echoes the Victorian sentiment that any form of rational or higher thought was ascribed to the male gender, while matters of the heart were recognised as feminine.

In contrast to the masculinity portrayed by Holmes' character, the women he comes in contact with through his cases are often characterised by passive helplessness. An example of this is Miss Mary Sutherland in "A Case of Identity", whose meek obedience is characteristic of Victorian women, as is her acceptance of the fact that her stepfather handles the inheritance income that is rightfully hers. This situation is seen again in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band", a short story that features Helen Stoner, a middle-aged lady whose money is also controlled by her stepfather. Another example would be "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax", a short story that depicts a case where men make an attempt to steal a young lady's inheritance; an attempt that would not occur were she capable of defending it in the first place.

Aside from being seen as the catalyst of problems in many of the Holmes short stories, Doyle's women are also often portrayed as being weak and incapable of solving their own problems and thus needing Holmes's assistance. This leads to the fact that women play a large role in establishing Holmes as a heroic figure: a masculine, rational gentleman and caretaker that solves the irrationality caused by women. The problem, caused by the assumed fragility and irrationality of women, then becomes a man's problem and is thereafter solved by Holmes' rationality: his deductions. Both Holmes' rational masculinity and the women's

helpless and emotional femininity fit into the conventional Victorian gender roles of Doyle's period. These are roles that are played or 'performed' by Doyle's characters again and again, establishing a repetition that leads to the performativity of gender; the construction of gender as what Butler calls the "*effect* of a regulatory regime of gender differences in which genders are divided and hierarchized *under constraint*" ("Critically Queer" 21). The repetition of gender differences and the consequent performativity of gender are echoed by the gender norms of Doyle's Victorian surroundings.

Doyle's women were not always complacent with their prescribed gender roles, however. Helen Stoner, for example, is an observant and responsible character, constricted by the Victorian laws that rendered women dependant on either their husbands or, if they were unwed, their fathers. Furthermore, until the Married Woman's Property's Acts passed between the years 1870-1908, "married women could not own or handle their own property," and "[e]ducational and employment opportunities for women were limited" (Greenblatt and Adams 990). Women that were not yet married, such as Stoner, could not touch their money either way. Her character, on the other hand, is an interesting mix of what were considered feminine and masculine traits; she performed gendered 'acts' that, while largely adhering to the Victorian female ideal, nevertheless also include acts that corresponded with masculinity. Miss Sutherland, too, had attempts to rebel against her obedient role by eloping, despite ultimately being duped and taken advantage of. There are also exceptions to Doyle's conventional gender roles, where the role of men and women had been reversed. Irene Adler is a prime example of a woman who is neither soft-hearted nor has a disposition towards kindness. Instead, she subverts traditional gender roles, deliberately performing gender to achieve a certain effect: Adler's gender performance differs depending on the situation she finds herself in. She is kind and gracious to those she considers in need of her help, for instance, but does not hesitate to deviate from the social conventions for her gender by donning male clothing and exploiting the freedom this grants her.

Holmes's character, too, does not display a fixed gender role and at times aligns with Victorian femininity in certain aspects. Round points out the emotional instability and changeability of his moods, for example, in "Out of House and Holmes" (137). While Holmes' rationality and level-headedness are prized above all else, he has developed certain practices that a Victorian hostess might have required, such as the ability to converse on a range of topics from plays, pottery, and music, to having "sophisticated culinary knowledge" (Round 137). These qualities combined with the fact that he resides in a domestic sphere with

Watson, a sphere usually inhabited by a married couple, mix interestingly with the rest of his masculine traits.

Upon closer examination, then, Doyle's characters did not always strictly adhere to Victorian gender roles. "[O]nce the need to define and redefine had been accepted, then there had been an acceptance that gender characteristics and roles were neither fixed, natural, nor obvious," Christopher Parker claims in *Gender Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Literature* (11). This is true for Doyle's fictional characters, as well: female characters embody feminine characteristics while also being capable of actions thought to belong firmly to men, and vice versa. The characters' actions, both verbal and non-verbal, accumulate into a series of acts that, together, form and construct their gender. Butler points out that, assuming "gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous," then in that case "the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment" ("Performative Acts" 520). She goes on to say that these discontinuous acts can lead to a transformative gender performance, straying away from a fixed gender identity (520). Doyle's characters, too, can be read as having fluid rather than fixed Victorian gender roles. Aside from Doyle's two protagonists, for example, Christopher Redmond debunks the conventional female gender role of Mary Morstan by claiming that she is "no stereotypical bloodless and fainting Victorian maiden" in his book *In Bed With Sherlock Holmes* (47).

Later media portrayals of Sherlock Holmes series re-establish this view, such as BBC's *Sherlock* portrayal of Mary Morstan, a serial killer capable of violence hitherto associated primarily with men. The BBC's depiction of Mary presents her gender performance as, at times, cold and ruthless; for example when she is interrupted by Holmes in her assassination of Charles Augustus Magnussen, and shoots Holmes to preserve her secret. More often than not, however, Morstan is reduced to a stereotypical damsel in distress and is either overlooked or dismissed as a character, much like a number of Doyle's female characters. Antonija Primorac, for example, argues in "The Naked Truth: The Postfeminist Afterlives of Irene Adler" that reinterpretations of Doyle's work continue to treat female characters conservatively, claiming "the myths about the Victorian era . . . still have a firm grip on the contemporary imagination," and how this "can be clearly seen from the way these recent adaptations treat Conan Doyle's late Victorian text and its gender-bending heroine" (107). While Primorac is referring to the portrayal of Irene Adler, this statement is true for female characters such as Mary Morstan as well. Sherlock Holmes fans' treatment of minor female characters such as Mary Morstan, later becoming Mary Watson, could also be

considered an extension of the continuous negligence of her character in Doyle's original material. It is therefore important to note the canonical abandonment or at least neglect of Mary's character; not only by Holmes, whom the reader expects to have little regard for Mary, but more prominently the implied desertion by her own husband.

Despite Watson's initial marital bliss ("A Scandal in Bohemia" 145), and given the fact that Watson and his wife had enjoyed wedded domesticity for the three years that Holmes was presumed dead, Watson is seen repeatedly abandoning his wife in favour of accompanying Holmes on his cases. To add insult to injury, Watson continues to frequently spend the night at 221B Baker Street, leaving his wife on her own. During "The Final Problem", Watson takes the negligence and abandonment of his wife even further. Holmes had come up with a plan to catch Moriarty, one that required him to leave London for his own safety. When requesting Watson to accompany him on this trip, Watson barely hesitated before leaving town, and his wife, altogether. Fans can only take this to mean that Watson considers Holmes to be more important than the domestic, married life; more important than Watson's wife.

If the original work sets the precedence to treating the character of Mary Watson (nee Morstan) with such negligence, it is not surprising that the fans continue this treatment and, in some cases, make it considerably worse in fanfiction. While frequently written off as uninteresting, the character of Mary Watson is given an incredible boost after her portrayal in the BBC adaptation *Sherlock*. She is portrayed as being more than a wife only interested in upholding the domestic sphere, the way she was primarily written in the source material, and instead is revealed to have a complicated and layered character. This has led some fans to become more interested in cultivating their own version of her backstory by writing character analyses, for example, and exploring the multi-faceted characteristics of Mary's character that extended past mere feminine traits.

Masculinity and femininity are not the only gender characteristics that are addressed in the canonical series of work, however. In "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone", for example, Sherlock approaches the subject of his own gender by stating: "I am a brain, Watson. The rest of me is a mere appendix" (972). Sherlock's statement echoes and reflects Judith Butler's suggestion in "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" that, without the repetition of gendered acts, "there would be no gender at all" (522). Holmes' gender performance could be read as either masculine or feminine, depending on the acts and moments that are analysed, but if those

were taken away the only thing that would truly be left is that which Holmes values and prizes the most: his brain. Holmes is not concerned which gender identity he intentionally or unintentionally portrays to outsiders, because Holmes is not concerned with gender: when people deal with Holmes, they are dealing with a brain. In short, while Arthur Conan Doyle's characters are frequently portrayed within conventional and traditional gender roles, there are multiple instances in which characters either defy their predesigned roles or carry a mixture of masculine and feminine traits that make up their gender performativity.

2.5 Close Textual Analysis: Gender In Context (A Scandal in Bohemia Analysis)

Doyle's portrayal of characters that display both masculine and feminine traits can be best seen in the short story "A Scandal in Bohemia". This short story depicts a case in which the King of Bohemia employs Holmes to retrieve a photograph portraying the King and a woman named Irene Adler; if leaked to the public, this photograph could ruin the King of Bohemia's chances to successfully wed the Scandinavian King's second daughter, Clotilde Lothman von Saxe-Meningen. During the course of this case, the reader encounters various ways in which gender is deliberately performed and ways in which gender is performative.

The story delves right into the matter of gender, starting from its first line: "To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex" (145). The woman in question is the character Irene Adler, making her first appearance in the Sherlock Holmes universe. Already, there is an emphasis placed on her gender. Adler has effectively captured Holmes' interest, a feat which no other woman had managed thus far. Viewing this short story through the lens of Butler's gender performativity, Adler's actions have made such an impact on Holmes in a way that it produced the effect of dismissing all other gender performances in light of Irene Adler.

It is also interesting to note that this very first section of "A Scandal in Bohemia" implies that gender is interlinked with sex; any future roles Adler takes on or acts out will be associated with her biological sex. Whereas society assumes gender roles are a result of biological distinctions, Judith Butler claims that this is not the case. Butler's *Gender Troubles* proposes that "[t]he supposed neutrality of biological difference actually serves to impose ideas about gender identity and sexuality" ("An Introduction to Judith Butler's Gender Troubles" 00:02:45-00:02:55). This short story portrays an insight into the way in which Holmes regards the female sex and gender; one woman, in particular. Irene Adler's character

grips him, evidenced from the very first line. The narrative is sure to make it clear, however, that “it was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler” (145). Watson continues to note that:

All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen, but as a lover he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and a sneer. They were admirable things for the observer -- excellent for drawing the veil from men's motives and actions. But for the trained reasoner to admit such intrusions into his own delicate and finely adjusted temperament was to introduce a distracting factor which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results. (145)

Holmes' revulsion to all emotions firmly posits him in a masculine role: the picture perfect Victorian model for masculinity with his reasoning and level-headed mind. This type of rationality and emotional disconnect is an act in which he feels comfortable and at ease, whereas the role of a lover would be a ‘false position’: a position in which he does not belong or a performance that would feel untrue to his character. This would imply that the position of being a lover is not merely unappealing to Holmes, but also an erroneous situation for him to be faced with. This could be taken to mean that Holmes is simply not interested in matters of the heart. On the other hand, the fact that being a lover is described as “a distracting factor,” even one “which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results” (145) would suggest that love is merely a distraction; unwanted, perhaps, but not impossible. Previous short stories have shown that Sherlock Holmes has little interest in romantic or sexual partners, regardless of sex or gender. Holmes is described as being “deeply attracted by the study of crime” (145), instead.

Irene Adler is the first mention of any woman coming close to shifting his focus. When the King of Bohemia first describes her, it becomes apparent to the reader that Adler is not the typically submissive Victorian woman. Irene Adler shows a strength and stubbornness of character, not to mention notable tenacity, by holding onto an incriminating photograph of her and the Bohemian King. The photograph of Adler and the Bohemian King could spell the ruination of his imminent betrothal to another woman, and Adler has managed to hold onto

the photograph despite the King's various attempts at procuring it. She has outsmarted all of the King's attempts, and is described by him as having "a soul of steel. She has the face of the most beautiful of women, and the mind of the most resolute of men" (150). The focus is on physical attributes when it comes to measuring the value of women versus the importance of the mind in men: Adler possesses both. Irene's femininity is first noted by Holmes when he says that "[s]he is the daintiest thing under a bonnet on this planet" (152), whereas Watson notices that she possesses a certain "grace and kindness with which she waited upon [an] injured man" (155-56). From Holmes' and Watson's observations, Irene Adler gives the impression of an ideal Victorian maiden, suggesting that her gender is performative in the sense that her gentle posture and continuous acts of kindness unconsciously produce the effect of leaving an impression on those who observed her: in this case, the impression of what constitutes as an ideal Victorian woman.

It could also be the case, however, that this impression is the result of a deliberate performance: a case of Adler taking on a role. It would not be the first instance that she has played a role, as she claims: "I have been trained as an actress myself. Male costume is nothing new to me" (158). Here, she is referring to the evening that she observed Holmes while wearing a male disguise in the form of an ulster coat, and passingly wished him a goodnight (157). While Holmes recognised the voice that bid him goodnight, he could not see through her disguise. The moment that people see the outwardly appearance of a sexed body in a male uniform, for example, they automatically assign gendered behavioural qualities to that individual. As such, it was not a common assumption to make that a person that gives the impression of being a young man is actually a young woman. After implying that it was she who bade him goodnight that evening, Adler proceeds by stating that she has "often take[n] advantage of the freedom which it gives" (158), referring to the act of dressing as a man.

This statement suggests that she is aware of the limitations placed on her position in society, and the reason why she specifically sees it as a freedom to be able to take on a role and act according to different gender rules. She is giving a gendered performance by putting on the garments signifying a different gender, and therefore breaking out of the domestic sphere inhabited by women. Christopher Parker claims in *Gender Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Literature* that "[w]omen had been breaking out from the domestic sphere, to which they had painstakingly been allotted, both in 'life and literature'" (13). Irene can be seen as doing just that: breaking out of her assigned, conventional gender role. The deliberate act of roleplaying a masculine gender emphasises the moment Irene reverts back to her 'regular'

performance of being a woman. It calls into question whether her femininity is deliberately and consciously performed, too, rather than being a performative act over which she has no control. There is a distinct but important difference between ‘gender being performed’ versus ‘gender performativity’. Butler explains that gender performance is when “we’ve taken on a role, we’re acting in some way, and that our acting or our role playing is crucial to the gender that we are and the gender that we present to the world” (00:00:10-00:00:23). The gender performance that Adler wants the world to see is one that possesses more freedom than has been given to women in the Victorian period. When Holmes remarks that her recent marriage to the lawyer Godfrey Norton would change her life and habits (157), he does so with the knowledge that married women owed obedience above all else to their husbands.

Changing her gender performance has allowed Irene to be perceived differently. Irene has performed the deliberate act of putting on a persona in the very literal sense: she has donned the clothing of another gender. This alone is not enough to convince others that she is, indeed, the masculine role she intends to play. The manner of walking and speaking plays a large role as well, for example, as do more abstract facets to masculinity that together construct a person’s gender. When she wears her customary feminine clothing, she still displays her clear wit and personal strength, however. It is not necessary for a woman to only be feminine, or a man to only be masculine: they are interchangeable character traits that could be applicable to any individual regardless of gender, despite the fact that the dominant societal norms prescribe masculinity to the male gender. Doyle’s depiction of Irene Adler allows for flexibility: Adler can portray masculinity without losing her femininity.

Adler’s dual portrayal of feminine and masculine qualities might not be so far-fetched, according to Parker’s claim in *Gender Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Literature* that despite the fact that “Victorians had a clear idea of what constituted appropriate qualities of femininity and masculinity,” they were still “quite willing to ascribe ‘feminine’ characteristics to men and ‘masculine’ characteristics to women” (11). In Judith Butler’s interview with Max Miller, however, Butler contends that anyone acting outside of gender norms will frequently be met with disapproval and a considerable amount of unease. Butler states that there is a “violence imposed by ideal gendered norms, especially against those who are gender-different or non-conforming in their gender presentation” (Butler 00:02:45-00:02:56). This is especially true for visible transgressions of unwritten gender norms. Butler, for example, states in *Gender Trouble* that “[i]n imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself - as well as its contingency” (137). Anita Brady and Tony Schirato

explain in *Understanding Judith Butler* that the visible performance of drag, for example, “exercises its subversive potential by complicating the relation between ‘imitation’ and ‘original’ in gender performance, repeating gender in such a way as to reveal its reliance on repetition” (57). Repetition is key in both the construction of gender and the revealing of this construction. Brady and Schirato go on to say that “[i]t is drag’s cultural status as a misperformance of gender that foregrounds gender *as* a performance, but also as one that is culturally mandated to cohere with sex” (57). Irene’s performance counts as drag, as an imitation, but on the other hand her female gender performativity is also an imitation of the feminine ideals surrounding her. She embodies and portrays both by performing gender, one consciously and the other unconsciously.

Irene Adler is not the only character that is good at disguises. The afternoon he first spies on Adler, Holmes himself is in disguise as a “drunken-looking groom, ill-kempt and side-whiskered, with an inflamed face and disreputable clothes” (151). Watson notes his companion’s “amazing use of disguises”, a talent that succeeded in fooling even Watson despite him being accustomed to Holmes wearing disguises (151). Indeed, Holmes is not new to disguising himself, and in fact continues to do so in order to gather evidence for the solving his case: Holmes remarks that he had to make preparations to take on a new role (154). Rather than embodying the role of a woman, which does later occur the Holmes film adaptation *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, Holmes embodies a different type of masculinity by changing the way he performs gender. Watson remarks: “It was not merely that Holmes changed his costume. His expression, his manner, his very soul seemed to vary with every fresh part that he assumed. The stage lost a fine actor, even as science lost an acute reasoner, when he became a specialist in crime” (154). Holmes’ changed performance is not a simple matter of changing clothing or masking physical features: he embodies new characteristics and transforms himself to the extent that it changes other people’s perception of him. In the end, Holmes and Adler are both “stepping outside of their everyday roles as individual beings and adopting particular identities that are assertively divorced from their own” (Katyal 321). The roles that Holmes and Adler take on have very different effects, however. While Holmes’ performance is more theatrical and facilitates his cases, Adler’s is a gendered performance that allows Irene’s behavioural characteristics to comply with masculine ideals.

2.6 Conclusion

The Victorian era was rife with strict behavioural codes, which can be reflected in the literature of this period. Arthur Conan Doyle's works surrounding Sherlock Holmes portray recognisably traditional gender roles in the Victorian period. Doyle also introduces characters that present subversive and unconventional gender performances, however, challenging the contemporary gender norms. In conclusion, while Doyle's characters largely adhere to the strict Victorian gender roles of his time, there are certain characters, most prominently Sherlock Holmes and Irene Adler, who display a mix of masculine and feminine traits when performing gender. By exploring these characters through Judith Butler's gender performativity theory, it becomes clear that their gender performance is constructed through a combination of feminine and masculine acts, which in turn are repeated again and again in order to leave an impression of gender.

Chapter Three: Gender in Fanfiction

3.1 Introduction

Imagine if Sherlock Holmes and John Watson were female space cadets solving intergalactic crime, or a scenario in which female!Sherlock is a detective conducting a social experiment by disguising herself as male, or perhaps even a universe in which changing gender is a natural aspect of reaching adolescence. All of these scenarios are possible in fanfiction. This chapter examines fanfiction titles such as Introductory's "Equivalence", Etothepii's "Seems So Easy for Everybody Else", Ishmael's *Body of Evidence* series, and other fanfiction titles that use scenarios featuring gender performativity. These particular fanfiction titles are chosen for their exploration of gender identity or for portraying new ways of performing gender. Other fanfictions such as Darkest_bird's "A Fold in the Universe" and Fresne's "Gordian" are chosen for the fandom-specific conventions they contain, leading to innovative ways of presenting gender identities and providing social commentary on gendered power struggles.

This chapter first introduces the precedent of reimagining gender roles in adaptations of Sherlock Holmes, and how the topic of gender is subsequently explored and reconstructed in fanfiction. It also focuses in particular on Sherlock Holmes fanfiction that uses elements of the unconventional gender performances in the original work. Furthermore, this chapter will look at authors of fanfiction who use the lack of gender-challenging roles as an initiative to write their own version of those characters; in other words, fanfiction in which the characters do not conform to societal gender norms or perform gender differently than expected. The main focus of this chapter will be the exploration of gender identity within fanfiction and the way in which these works have expanded the treatment of gendered characters. By analysing multiple fanfictions that deal with the topic of gender and applying Judith Butler's gender performativity theory in a close reading of Ishmael's *Body of Evidence* series and Introductory's "Equivalence", it will become evident that the transformative nature of fanfiction and its narratological possibilities provide a new way of expressing and performing gender.

3.2 Re-Imagining Sherlock Holmes:

Arthur Conan Doyle's works concerning the life of fictional detective Sherlock Holmes had reached a stage of great popularity and success after the short stories became featured in *The*

Strand Magazine (Jamison 40). One of the effects of such popularity, especially when the source material was part of an on-going serialisation, was that Doyle's Sherlock Holmes became a household name and was thus subject to chatter and speculation among the reading public (Priebe 11). Its success therefore led to the works becoming a favoured subject of discussion, "igniting conversations fueled by observation, passion, and intelligence" (Priebe 11). It was only a matter of time before one of these speculations found their way into publication, and this indeed became the case: Samuel Rosenberg's *Naked is the Best Disguise: The Death and Resurrection of Sherlock Holmes* is recognised as the first book to speculate on the hidden meanings and messages in Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories (Redmond 127). The novel offers literary criticism that was received with disdain by Rosenberg's peers, offering speculations that "sound both far-fetched and distasteful" (Redmond 127). Despite the book's negative reception, however, Rosenberg set a precedent for other scholars to speculate on potential clues that Doyle left throughout his works.

While Rosenberg has been acknowledged as the first to focus specifically on the hidden clues Doyle might have left behind, he was certainly not the only one to have theorised about the Holmes series. Otis Hearn, for example, even speculated on the precise size of Mary Morstan's bust, claiming, "she had a bust of at least size 32 and at most size 34. While in comparison with over-opulent nymphs of that day like Lily Langtry this might be meagre, it is nothing to apologise for; it could hold pearls worth more than £3,000, and Watson liked it. Watson was not a leg man" (qtd. in Redmond 46). Numerous other critics in the past have published their own speculations and projected their thoughts and ideas onto the works of Doyle; including speculations regarding changes to the gender of Doyle's characters. The first of these gender-related reinterpretations appeared in 1941, when novelist Rex Stout proposed his infamous 'Watson Was a Woman' theory in a speech addressed to the Baker Street Irregulars, an exclusive group of Sherlock Holmes fans. In this speech, Stout claimed that Watson was female and was in fact married to Holmes, "finding abundant evidence in 'The Sacred Writings' of Watson's female gender in her nagging Holmes about drugs and smoking and pestering him to talk" (Jamison 45).

The re-imagining of conventional gender performances in Sherlock Holmes is far from a one-time occurrence, however. The 1987 film *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* features a Jane Watson, for example. Novelist Sherry Thomas also changed the gender of one of the main characters and wrote a gender-swapped 'Charlotte' Holmes in her 2016 novel *A Study in Scarlet Women*. This novel is not to be confused with Brittany Cavallaro's *A Study in*

Charlotte (2016), featuring the female descendants of Holmes and Watson. The protagonists are not the only ones whose gender identity is subject to reinterpretation, however, as can be seen in the 1999 animated television series *Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd century*, featuring female Inspector Beth Lestrade. Additionally, author Heather W. Petty's *Lock & Mori* (2015) features female James "Mori" Moriarty. A female portrayal of Holmes' arch-nemesis Moriarty can also be found in the contemporary, and in fact still on-going, CBC's *Elementary* television series. *Elementary* includes multiple occurrences of genderswapping, portraying a recovering heroin-addict and consulting detective Sherlock Holmes who is aided by his female sober-companion, Joan Watson. The critic Malcah Effron notes in her essay "Holmes' Companions: Refiguring Watson as a Woman" that Watson's female character, while initially criticised for being placed in a stereotypical caretaker role, eventually evolves into a strong and independent character and develops into more than a devoted supporting character. Instead, Watson forms a true partnership with Holmes (Effron). Watson's progression indicates a significant shift in not only character development but also in the gender politics of the show. Effron contends that "[i]n this capacity, the female Watson not only allows for reimagining of women in the Sherlock Holmes *oeuvre*—attributing to them strength and character denied to all but one female in the Sacred Writings—" but that it also provides a way "to move away from generic assumptions that a bumbling sidekick narrator is necessary to hide the thoughts of the detective and thus the excitement of the denouement from the reader" (Effron). The reimagining of canonical gender roles, then, can be a way to critically engage with the source work and create new, subversive material.

3.3 Gender in Fanfiction

The act of subverting pre-existing canonical roles and expanding upon characters' gender performances is not limited to already published creative works. In fact, the narrative framework of fanfiction inherently provides a new perspective on an already existing source text. Its mode of storytelling, at its core, is an expansion of the established narrative: a reimagining and reinterpretation of the original narrative. It is not a great leap to think that authors of fanfiction will make their own calculations and speculations about gender identities, as published authors and producers for instance have already done, and write accordingly.

By writing subgenres of fanfiction that incorporate various gender performances, fanfiction authors adapt and reinterpret their favourite characters' gender identity and make

them more tangible and relatable to themselves and other marginalised fans. The characters do not have to be relatable to the general public, and they do not even have to cater to certain target groups. Fanfiction authors write for themselves and fellow community members because the representative content they wish for is either not readily available, or not available in the form they hoped it would be, so fans create the content themselves using characters they identify with. Consequently, Kristina Busse states in the introduction to her work, *Framing Fan Fiction: Literary and Social Practices in Fan Fiction Communities*, that fanfiction “allows fans to reimagine the source material to not only negotiate their own identities and sexualities[,] but also do so within a community of like-minded people” (13). In this manner, gender identity and gender performativity are explored within a textual media and, through the sharing of fanfiction, becomes a shared experience.

Fanfiction also engages in the discussion about gender identity and performativity without dictating an absolute truth to the representation of the characters the authors choose to write about, because the fanfiction merely presents a portrayal of their own headcanon and does not claim to be authoritative (Polasek, par. 5.14). In other words, fanfiction does not dictate how the reader should interpret the character’s representation. This also makes it appealing for readers who are still in the process of trying to figure out their own gender identity. The authors themselves can also utilise the writing about gender topics as a reflection on the process of discovering their own gender identity; that is, writing for the purpose of discovering the self. This sentiment is echoed in Polkinghorne’s “Narrative and Self-Concept”, published in 1991, in which he states that “the story that serves to configure a person’s life into a self and to provide personal identity is the self-narrative” (145). Fanfiction authors coming to terms with their gender identity in the form of the self-narrative and exploring this theme within fanfiction can result in the author’s gender identity translating into the character’s gender identity, and consequently writing the character’s gender performance accordingly.

The subject of gender identity is one that fanfiction authors have incorporated in their stories or fictional universe in several ways. Fanfiction can provide social commentary by portraying unconventional gender performances; in other words, by having a character repeatedly act outside of the expected norm for their gender. These norm-defying actions do not have to be grand acts of gender expression, however. Rather, according to a Butlerian way of thinking, they can form a series of small subtle acts and gestures that accumulate and consolidate into the impression of gender being done differently. This can be seen in

fanfictions that include male characters that like to wear nail polish on multiple occasions, for example, which is featured in Whisperdlullaby's "Colours of the Rainbow (Shine So Bright)". A slightly more unconventional gendered act is portrayed in FeelsForBreakfast's "Like Holly Or Blood", in which male characters explore the act of wearing make up, as well as a large number of other fanfictions in which men experiment with what are assumed to be feminine outwardly appearances. Fanfiction authors, consequently, can transform the way in which these characters perform gender. The cultural transformation of gender is explored in Judith Butler's "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", in which Butler states: "if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity" (520). Fanfiction authors are able to reinterpret a character's gender performance, thereby disrupting their canonical behaviour and exploring "the possibilities of gender transformation [that] are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" (Butler 520).

A variety of other ways exists in which gender in fanfiction is addressed, reshaped, transformed, or performed in some manner. A number of these ways are explored in "Bending Gender: Feminist and (Trans)Gender Discourses in the Changing Bodies of Slash Fan Fiction", in which scholars Kristina Busse and Alexia Lothian analyse fanfictions that "present sex changes, gender-switches, crossdressing, impregnation, transgender life narratives, and radical genderqueer politicizations of . . . characters" (107). An example Busse and Lothian use to introduce their subject is a *Stargate: Atlantis* fanfiction in which male protagonist John Sheppard finds himself in temporary possession of a new set of genitals, and explores his changed body (105). Consequently, his sexed body has transformed, which begs the question whether his gender behaviour will follow suit or remain consistent with his previous sexed body. The premise of changing characters' sexed or gendered bodies can be applied to any creative work and explored within the innovative narrative framework of fanfiction: a female John Watson; a suddenly re-embodied Hermione Granger; a cross-dressing Sherlock Holmes embodying female mannerisms in a male sexed body, to name but a few. Looking at regendered characters, Busse and Lothian explore the way in which "familiar characters in unlikely situations construct their identities and negotiate sexed bodies in gendered environments" (108), stating:

Forcing male characters to experience the social and cultural, physical and emotional realities of life in a female body, genderfuck stories ask whether and how much these socio-biological facts – objectification, sexual vulnerability, the possibility of becoming pregnant – constitute womanhood. They also ask to what degree originally-male characters remain themselves through such changes: when the cultural predicates by which one gains one's sense of identity change, is one still the same person? In many cases, these questions are answered with surprisingly stereotyped understandings of the intersections of biology and gender. (109)

Busse and Lothian, therefore, examine to what degree having a changed body affects a character's gender identity in gender-changed fanfictions. The switching of gender, or rather 'genderswap', is a fanfiction practice that academic Ann McClellan writes about extensively in "Redefining Genderswap Fan Fiction: A Sherlock Case Study". McClellan describes genderswap as a label that is "most often used to describe stories where characters have become differently sexed," followed by the assertion that fanfiction which features genderswapped characters "reflects and reinforces common cultural misunderstandings about differences between sex and gender" (par. 0.1). This statement reiterates Busse and Lothian's earlier deduction about the lack of differentiation between sex and gender in most genderswapped fanfictions (109). McClellan also notes that, while the character's body becomes differently sexed, their gender behaviour usually remains similar to their original bodies (par. 3.1). This similarity, or indeed lack of change in gender behaviour, has led to certain fans preferring to use the label 'sex!swap' instead, referring to the changing of sexed bodies rather than the character's gender identity. This difference has become an important distinction to make, as it can cause problematic misinterpretations of the label.

The changing of gender within fanfictions is called a number of different terms aside from genderswapping, including labels such as 'genderbending', 'gender-switching', 'genderfucking', or by adding 'fem!' or 'girl!' as a pre-fix to a character's name (McClellan par. 10.2). There are also fanfiction authors that use the pre-fix 'cis!', a shortened denotation of the term cisgender, to indicate that the character's gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth. In other words, the term or label 'cis!girl Sherlock' can be used to denote that the story features an interpretation of the character Sherlock Holmes that was born female

and also identifies as female. These types of fanfictions stand in contrast to MtF or FtM fanfictions, which feature trans!bodies or transgendered characters.

There are constantly new terms appearing within the fanfiction community as members of the community become more conscious of the nuances and progress in academic and social studies regarding gender identity, growing and adapting alongside these new developments. Genderbending, for example, has largely fallen out of use because its usage is considered derogatory (Dhoest, Szulc, and Eeckhout 101), and the use of the term ‘swapping’ could indicate a gender binary and exclude other gender identities. The actual terms and phrases used to label fanfictions depend on the author’s preference and knowledge on the matter, but one thing seems to be certain: the regendering and reinterpretation of characters will continue, as “these fictional tropes manipulate the bodies of their protagonists for a variety of purposes, ranging from the spurious and voyeuristic to the political and subversive” (Busse and Lothian 105). Fanfiction authors continue to create ways in which they can reimagine their favourite characters and expand upon their existing narratives, and by doing so they produce new and innovative ways to perform gender.

3.4 Secondary Gender in Fanfiction

An example of these innovative and distinctive ways to perform gender in fanfiction can be found in the Omega!verse. It exists as a particular subgenre in fanfiction that offers an alternative form of existing biological bodies and an expansion on the understanding of gender as the topic is currently known. The subgenre Omega!verse is also known under the label of A/B/O universe, because it includes alpha, beta, and omega dynamics that are present in animal behaviour. This new gender-related genre is wholly unique to fanfiction and cannot be found outside of fandom. It is said to have originated in the *Supernatural* fandom around 2010-2011 (Netweight). The A/B/O universe is a genre that is explored in increasing amounts of fandoms, however. The Sherlock Holmes fandom, for example, is currently ranked third on AO3 with 1,704 works featuring the tag Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics. Works featuring the A/B/O dynamics frequently include the transformation of male sexed bodies to include reproductive abilities, among other biological changes, and consequently explore the situation of a man “whose physical alteration brings him to consciousness of the experiences of women in sexist society” (Busse and Lothian 108).

The changing of male bodies to include primary sexual characteristics such as a uterus, or other biological explanations that would result in the ability to produce children, is not a

phenomena that started with Omega!verse, however. M!preg, a fanfiction label indicating male pregnancy, predates the creation of the Omega!verse and even the Internet (Ingram-Waters par. 1.4). In “‘Dogfuck Rapeworld’: Omegaverse Fanfiction as a Critical Tool in Analysing the Impact of Social Power Structures on Intimate Relationships and Sexual Consent”, Milena Popova states that Omega!verse is, in fact, an “amalgamation of several common tropes” (13). These tropes include the aforementioned m!preg but also the popular tropes of mating or bonding for life, brought together to form a new subgenre of fanfiction that explores gender in innovative ways.

Omega!verse is a fictional, alternative universe in which humans have six genders instead of two; or rather, the Omega!verse features secondary gender characteristics that divide the human population into a hierarchical system based on these secondary gender roles. In “Pon Farr, Mpreg, Bonds, and the Rise of the Omegaverse”, Kristina Busse explains that “[m]any A/B/O stories posit societies where biological imperatives divide people based on wolf pack hierarchies into sexual dominants (alphas), sexual submissives (omegas), and everyone else (betas)” (317). Depending on the fanfiction author’s preferences, these stories may feature other animal behaviour such as scenting, mating, imprinting, and the characters may experience heat cycles (317). The alphas, regardless of their primary gender, are generally seen as the privileged leaders of society, and act accordingly; dominant, aggressive, and confident behaviour is unsurprising in an alpha, whereas an omega character is expected to be submissive, amenable and obedient. Betas exist in a neutral role, unaffected by the hormones that biologically affect alphas and omegas; as such, they can be seen as regular human beings (Norabombay). It is interesting to note that primary genders are almost rendered redundant in the Omega!verse, as secondary gender characteristics determine the character’s hierarchical role in society. Alphas, regardless of primary gender, dominate and lead whereas omegas are frequently forced into the role of the oppressed.

The secondary gender roles and their characteristics of the A/B/O universe are met with a mixed reception. Judith May Fathallah’s *Fanfiction and the Author: How Fanfic Changes Popular Cultural Texts* calls the Omega!verse “highly contentious” within the fan community, with “some [people] condemning it as revolting and sick, [and] some admiring its deconstruction of bodies and gender roles” (66). This statement is reiterated by *Tumblr* user lierdumoa, who claims: “Omegaverse is really a fascinating fandom invention. 50% of it is totally problematic and reinforcing a lot of fucked up patriarchal, rape culture values. The other 50% is some of the most insightful, subversive social commentary I’ve ever read on

gender identity/gender roles/queer oppression” (qtd. in Fathallah 66). This dichotomy is presented because A/B/O stories can veer both ways; the characters can give in to their baser, biological needs and present problematic power imbalances, or the story can explore and subvert these power imbalances and provide insightful social commentary on gendered power issues.

SailorChibi’s “Opposites Attract”, for example, features a Sherlock that “has successfully ignored biology” for the better part of his life (83). This changes, however, when he meets Omega!John, who brings out “his natural tendency towards possessiveness and the alpha-dominant side of him” (83). This story provides a fairly straightforward example of the A/B/O trope. The inherently problematic aspect of the A/B/O trope, however, arises if the story includes mating or heat cycles, which most Omegaverse fanfictions do: an omega in heat is helpless to their baser instinct to mate and reproduce with an alpha. This is treated as a biological inevitability whether the omega in question would consent to this outside of a heat cycle or not, which presents a plethora of sexual consent issues. The author can choose to have their omega reduce the risk of such a situation occurring by taking medical suppressants, for example, or otherwise regaining agency over their own body. Moreover, the author can subvert existing gender roles by expanding the limitations of sexed bodies. In the Omega!verse, for instance, reproductive abilities are not solely limited to female bodies, breaking down the assumption that “gender is commonly linked to social interpretation of reproductive biological distinctions”, and thus “reject[ing] any suggestion that it is necessarily connected to notions of reproduction” (Beasley 12). Due to the fact that Omega!verse provides a transformation of sexed bodies, male omegas’ bodies are capable of childbirth and are likened to female bodies, raising questions about male omegas’ perceived masculinity and their subsequent treatment in society.

The treatment of omegas in the Omega!verse is explored “A Fold in the Universe” by Darkest_bird as a way of providing social commentary on gendered power struggles and to “interrogate some of the issues and prejudices of our day” (Busse, “Pon Farr” 322). The author offers a novel-length fanfiction that portrays a dystopian universe in which male omegas, or Omega Y’s as they are called in the story, are seen as inferior sub-species that need to be protected and coddled because they are increasingly rare, and prohibited from entering public places after dark such as bars (112) and parks without their alphas present (159). John, an omega, complies with the prescribed gender behaviour and hides his displeasure until he switches bodies with the contemporary BBC *Sherlock*’s portrayal of John

Watson, a parallel universe-swap in which omega!John realises how different society would be treating him without his secondary gender. The treatment of omegas in this story, consequently, can be seen as a thinly veiled metaphor for the politics surrounding gendered power struggles. The author draws parallels between the role of omegas and certain expectations placed on women, and calls for a change using a dramatized, dystopian version of the Omega!verse to do so. The Omega!verse, in this way, can be used as a tool to provide social commentary while simultaneously offering a new way of expressing and performing gender.

3.5 Gender in Sherlock Fanfiction

Aside from the Omega!verse, the topic of gender and gender identity is discussed and explored in several other ways within Sherlock Holmes fanfiction. One of these ways is by incorporating unconventional gender performances that are already present in the canonical works written by Doyle. Sherlock Holmes's talent for disguises, for example, is featured in the short story "A Scandal in Bohemia". Fans take the canonical fact that Holmes likes to wear a disguise for a case, and spin it into a story that explores his gender performance while cross-dressing. JaneTurenne's "One Week", for example, features a cross-dressing Sherlock Holmes as a result of a wager between him and Watson. When confronted with the sight of Holmes in drag, however, Watson admits to "hesitate to use the pronoun 'he'", as Holmes presents a decidedly female appearance (170). Watson goes on to note:

As is always the case with Holmes's disguises, he had changed more than simply his outward trappings. How he managed by his posture alone to convey not only the impression of a woman, but of a woman of ill-repute, I have no notion, and yet he did. When he stepped into the room it was with a woman's gait, that slight accentuation about the hips, and when he bid me, "Good evening, Doctor Watson," it was in a voice which, while not quite an imitation, lilted upwards in a way not entirely his own. In every detail, down to the way his eyelids fluttered, he was transformed. (170)

Holmes manages to embody the female gender in ways that go beyond mere physical appearance: his posture, gestures, even his voice and his way of walking, as well as other gestures that suggest gendered behaviour. In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An

Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”, Judith Butler claims that “the effect of gender is produced through stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (140). These seemingly mundane ways in which the body moves result in a certain effect when repeated: a gender performativity that others recognise as female, in Holmes’ case. Holmes understands that there is more to a gender performance than just looking the part. This was not the first instance that he had disguised himself as female, in fact, as it was “an excellent method of gathering information” (178). Butler, however, contends that gender itself is not a conscious performance. She argues that “[g]ender performativity is not a matter of choosing which gender one will be today. Performativity is a matter of reiterating and repeating the norms by which one is constituted: it is not a radical fabrication of the self. It is a compulsory repetition of prior and subjectivating norms, ones which cannot be thrown off at will” (“Critically Queer” 22). Gender, therefore, is an unconscious performance that cannot be controlled or stopped at will.

The Sherlock in this story does not cross-dress in order to wilfully change his own gender identity: instead, he is mimicking gendered acts as a conscious performance in order to obtain information for his cases (178). By doing so, however, he shows knowledge of gender constructions and which aspects of human behaviour and posture result in the impression of gender. Butler claims that “[i]n imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency” (*Gender Trouble* 137). Therefore, drag essentially proves and exposes the performativity of gender: the reliance on repetition and imitation in order to construct gender.

There are fanfiction authors that take it a step further and take away the cross-dressing element in Sherlock’s disguises; they take away the disguise altogether, in fact, and leave the readers with a female reading of Sherlock. In other words, they write a genderswapped Sherlock Holmes. On the use of previously existing characters in the fandom practice of genderswapping, McClellan wrote the following in “Redefining Genderswap Fan Fiction: A Sherlock Case Study”:

Genderswap fan fiction purposefully uses familiar characters in order to reify the cultural significance of that character and simultaneously to distance the audience from previous portrayals; such characters carry all of the cultural

capital of the original canonical figures as well as the defamiliarization needed to challenge traditional gender and sexual stereotypes. (par. 2.2)

A fitting way of doing so is by using familiar characters such as Sherlock Holmes, who has already seen a prolific literary afterlife and as a result carries a rich cultural history. In the introduction to *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, Christopher and Rachel Roden claim that Holmes is one of the most adapted literary characters in the world (ix). The reimaging and even regendering of Holmes has precedence, but regendering him within the narrative framework of fanfiction can lead to new and creative ways of transforming gender. By taking a known character and expanding or transforming their gender performance, fanfiction authors explore and reconstruct an existing character's gender performance in innovative ways. One of these ways is by presenting a genderswapped version of a pre-existing character.

The Sherlock Holmes fandom has its fair share of genderswapped or regendered fanfictions. Most of these fanfictions can be found under the tag "Alternate Universe - Gender Changes", of which there are currently 474 works. Regendered fanfictions can also be found under other tags, however: the 'genderswap' tag has 107 works, 'genderbending' has 50 works, and 'female Sherlock Holmes' has 91 works whereas 'female John Watson' has 53 works. Authors have also used the tags 'gender or sex swap', 'gender dysphoria', and 'gender issues', 'gender confusion' and 'gender non-conforming', among others. A number of these stories feature a Sherlock or Watson that wake up with a different set of genitalia, which would more correctly be labelled "sex-swap" rather than genderswap. "Shame Is Overrated" by PrettyArbitrary, for example, features John Watson waking up with an STI that causes his genitals to temporarily change. Other genderswapped fanfictions use the genderswap label to portray cisgender female characters. This can be seen in "And Then You Wake" by SomeoneElsesDream, a cis!girl Sherlock reinterpretation of BBC *Sherlock's* first episode. The portrayal of female Sherlock's mannerisms, personality, and self-confident attitude all remain the same as the canonical male character of the original series. In this particular fanfiction, however, Sherlock's masculine behaviour gets questioned and policed by her peers. The social policing of gender is explored in Butler's "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory". Butler claims that "gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences," and proceeds to argue that "those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished" (522).

This is the case with the Sherlock in this story. She is assaulted for “running around like a boy” and criticized for her small breasts, which her assailants take as a sign that “she’s barely a girl at all” (SomeoneElsesDream 10-11). This shows that her assailants equate gender with the physical appearance of a sexed body. This assumption is called into question by the narrative, as “highlighting the assumed connection between a woman's genitals and her gender identity simultaneously reveals cultural stereotypes about womanhood and critiques them” (McClellan par. 6.3).

The majority of genderswapped fanfiction, however, provides a transgender narrative. By reinterpreting Sherlock Holmes’ gender identity, fanfiction challenges the established gender norms within the traditional narrative. Moreover, it critiques the limited agency afforded to the character’s gender performance. Writing a familiar character like Sherlock Holmes as transgender allows fans to explore gender identity and issues of gender dysphoria within an existing cultural narrative. “A Room Untended” by Red, for example, explores some of the “coping mechanisms that are statistically over-employed by those who are unable to transition” (6) referring to self-starvation to delay the onset of menstruation and development of breasts, as well as referring to the use of narcotics to cope with gender dysphoria and eventual self-isolation and avoidance of intimacy. “Seems So Easy for Everybody Else” by Etothepii portrays another trans!Sherlock narrative, and explores the dissonance between biological sex and gender, as well as the significance of names as an identity marker. Sherlock’s “legal documents name him as Sophie and the marker for his sex is F. Technically, this is accurate, because sex and gender are not the same, and his sex *is* female” (70). This story also points out the misconception between sex and gender, as one of the characters exclaims: “You’re a girl — I know you’re a girl. We’ve had sex” (67). Here, the character implies that Sherlock’s must be a woman because of his genitals, despite Sherlock’s masculine gender behaviour and his own request “to be treated as a man” (66). Despite Sherlock’s gender performance, his corporeal body is still linked to other people’s perception of him and his gender identity. That is not to say that his gender performance is not criticised as well. He is told he is not feminine enough (49), and other characters such as Sherlock’s partner worry on how this will reflect on them, despite Sherlock stating that his “gender has nothing to do with [him] and it is not up for negotiation” (67).

“Soldier at War” by Bit_Not_Good is another fanfiction wherein the effect of gender performance on other characters is addressed. Whereas the other transgender narratives focused on the sexed body and the possible dissonance and dysphoria experienced between

gender identity and the character's body, this drabble-sized fanfiction points out that "[i]t wasn't the breasts that bothered John, or the vagina. Those were rather lovely body parts to have, when all was said and done, and he wasn't really interested in the pain and scarring and general *fuss* which would be required to remove and reshape them" (3). Instead, this story points out the effect that the character's sexed body has on others. This is best seen in the following sentence: "It wasn't that he hated the shape of his body- it was that he hated what the shape of his body caused people to do" (5). The author does explicitly acknowledge that there is no universal experience for gender dysphoria, and, as such, this story should not form the template for analysing such gender issues. Nevertheless, the John in this story and his experiences with gender are as valid as any other characters' experiences.

The changing of gender performance during the course of the narrative is also featured in Fresne's Omega!verse fanfiction "Gordian". The Omega!verse is written slightly differently depending on the author and how they wish to incorporate the typical elements of the A/B/O trope. "Gordian" by Fresne features a portrayal of the A/B/O trope wherein the secondary gender characteristics are tied to certain smells. The scents that determine the gender differ; there is no exact combination of smells that constitute being omega, beta, or alpha. While the scent combination varies, it is nevertheless clear which secondary gender the smells eventually present. Fresne's Sherlock is Unscented, meaning that he has "never presented a gender" (34). This led to people treating him as a child (30), however, so Sherlock used perfumed scents to emulate the smell of a particular gender: "On any given day, Sherlock might come out of the bathroom smelling like an Alpha on the hunt (Alpha #8) or an Omega in heat (Omega #9), a Beta brooding (Beta #3)" (8).

Looking at this concept of 'wearing genders' through a Butlerian lens, it becomes interesting to note that Sherlock is able to choose which gender he wanted to be that day, while Butler is against this principle ("Critically Queer" 22). When the gender performance of a character changes in Fresne's "Gordian", this is reflected in the smell they give off. Sherlock's scent, for example, changes as "the borrowed scent mingled with Sherlock's own deepening scent" (24). Once his scent fully changed into one that is identified as omega, people started treating him differently based on his presented gender: "[n]ow strangers glanced at his eyes and then stared at his groin. Attempted to chat him up. Followed him with their eyes and made bitter remarks if he didn't smile at them. At odd moments assumed that he was an idiot" (61). Sherlock's gender performance itself remains unchanged, with the exception of the hormonal changes he goes through after presenting as an omega. In short,

this fanfiction explores the concept of gender within the Omega!verse by focusing on gendered scents and how particular smells effects other characters. Fanfiction authors in general are able to examine and criticize the gender performances in their own works by portraying genderswapped characters.

3.6 Gender in Fanfiction: Close Analysis

Fanfiction has multiple other ways of incorporating and subverting the gender performance of existing characters. Ishmael's *Body of Evidence* series, for example, transforms the canonical gender performance of Sherlock Holmes by depicting him in the context of a transgender narrative. Ishmael's series is written in the second-person point of view. The use of a second-person narrative has a confronting and at times disorienting effect on the reader, as though the reader is directly addressed (Herman 345). It is as though the reader is the one performing gender and, consequently, the one having to cope with the ramifications of the character's gender dysphoria. Due to the second-person point of view, the author only uses the pronoun 'you' when talking of Sherlock. There are no other pronouns used in addressing Sherlock; neither by the author nor the other characters in the narrative. There is a great deal of meaning behind a name, however. This is immediately evident from the first line, in which Sherlock is introduced as having been "born Sheridan Olivia Holmes" (4). The phrasing already draws the reader's attention; this is Sherlock's 'birth' name rather than his current name, as it "didn't occur to [him] to switch to anything else. Not yet" (4). Sherlock, despite being addressed as Sheridan or 'Sheryl' at the start of the series, later identifies as male. Consequently, all of his experiences are male experiences, because a man is experiencing them. This includes the experiences he has as Sheridan and the possible gender dysphoria he experienced.

The narrative, from the start, points out Sherlock's dislike of the impractical clothing such as dresses and skirts that he was forced to wear, as well as his dislike for the praise he received because the compliments focused on his outward appearance rather than the qualities of his clever mind (4). Conversely, these compliments are thinly veiled prompts for him to act more traditionally feminine. His gender performance so far, however, has not deviated that much from the gender norm as an adventurous girl that loves the outdoors. The narrative soon points out, however, that he does not identify with the feminine things he is supposed to want, such as having children and being kind and nurturing (5); nor does he have "any particular affinity towards sports, cars, sex, or violence like most other boys did" (5-6).

While Sherlock does not have any awareness of gender as a construct yet, he nevertheless notices the discrepancy between bodies and the societal gender expectations placed on them. The narrative draws attention to the distinction between biological sex and the societal expectation that women must want children, something Sherlock has heard described as “the most amazing thing a woman can do” (4). Sherlock, however, “didn’t know why having those parts meant . . . [wanting] the things people expected [him] to” (5). Here, biology is linked to societal expectations of gender, as “the body suffers a certain cultural construction, not only through conventions that sanction and proscribe how one acts one’s body, the ‘act’ or performance that one’s body is, but also in the tacit conventions that structure the way the body is culturally perceived” (Butler, “Performative Acts” 523-24). Sherlock has ‘parts’ that enable him to bear children, and cultural conventions and speech patterns dictate that this is a positive and desirable course of action. Despite this, Sherlock finds pregnancy “terrifying,” and regards the growing fetus in his aunt’s stomach as a “parasite” (3).

Sherlock slowly starts gaining more awareness of gender and how gender is performed, as he “started paying closer attention to how people act,” deciding that he did not agree with a lot of the feminine expressions of gender, such as faking a lack of intelligence so boys would help them (6). Instead, Sherlock “carefully imitated the way men moved their bodies, the way they talked” (7). Sherlock is essentially changing his gender performance. This is not a subconscious act; rather, it is a conscious performance in the way that actors perform and “transform their identities” (Katyal 471). The imitation of a masculine gender performance is presented in the narrative as a child’s way of analysing gender behaviour and cataloguing which traits to copy in order to blend in. This change and careful mimicking only extended to his behavioural traits, however, as Sherlock had “no particular desire for a penis” (9). His gender identity is divorced from the sexed body.

This later changes in “Body Image”, the second story in the *Body of Evidence* series, wherein Sherlock is seen “emerging at last from [his] carefully constructed masculine shell” when he takes off his clothing to reveal his untransitioned body (5). This story navigates the sexual relationship between trans!Sherlock and John, and the possible pitfalls that arise during this exploration. In “Trans as Bodily Becoming: Rethinking the Biological as Diversity, not Dichotomy”, transgender theorist Riki Lane contends: “There can be a difference between the body image and the corporeal body—but it is the body image that we act on in the world” (149). In Ishmael’s “Body Image”, Sherlock struggles to reconcile his body image and corporeal body; his masculine self that is presented in his gender performance and the sexed

body he loathes, “the litany of ways [his] body is wrong-right and uncomfortable, like an ill-fitting suit” (7). Sherlock is not the only one that notes this difference, as John observes “the additions and subtractions between presentation and . . . form” (6). In other words, John notes the disparity between Sherlock’s masculine gender presentation and tries to reconcile it with a body whose anatomy he had previously thought of as female, reconfiguring “thirty-seven years of gender role reinforcement and sexual history” (7).

Sherlock’s discomfort and unease with his body is reiterated in the final instalment of Ishmael’s *Body of Evidence* series, “Body English”, wherein Sherlock “wills [himself] to forget the feeling of waking up in the wrong body” (6). This feeling is compounded in the following sentence: “You feel your chest push against your binder with each breath and you feel too aware of how you are presenting something you cannot truly be” (7). Sherlock feels his gender presentation does not align with his corporeal body, and struggles with the resulting dysphoria. Nevertheless, Sherlock does not doubt his own gender identity, as his “masculinity and masculine identity are not necessarily centered on male biology at all” (McClellan par. 8.13).

Ishmael’s *Body of Evidence* series is inspired by the fanfiction “Equivalence” by Introductory. Ishmael’s first sentence, which reads “[y]ou were born Sheridan Olivia Holmes” (4), is an echo of Introductory’s line, which is “[y]ou were born Anthea Westermack” (3). Introductory’s “Equivalence” constructs a transgender narrative focused on the minor character of Anthea, Mycroft Holmes’ assistant in the BBC’s adaptation *Sherlock*. When this character is first introduced in BBC’s *Sherlock* episode “A Study in Pink”, John Watson asks whether Anthea is her real name, to which she replies that it is not (00:34:51-00:34:58). This prompted the birth of “Equivalence”, in which the author explores a scenario that would explain why this is not her real name; a scenario that explores the question of her name in the context of gender identity and the gendered expectations that are associated with names.

The story immediately draws attention to the cultural weight and meaning of a name: “Your very name condemned you to femininity, to short skirts and the demure flutter of eyelashes, because it was what was expected of you” (3). As Judith Butler explains in “Critically Queer”, the performative naming of a child has social consequences. Butler claims that saying ‘it’s a girl!’ is a cultural practice that “initiates the process by which a certain ‘girling’ is compelled” (22-23). Butler continues by saying: “the term, or rather, its symbolic power, governs the formation of a corporeally enacted femininity” (22-23). There is a cultural power and history in names. Names are not only gendered, but also carry an assumption of

certain gendered behaviour: a gender performance fitting the gendered name. Introductory's protagonist Anthea, it is interesting to note, only seemed to have an issue with the feminine meaning of her name; Anthea is Greek for 'flower'. The protagonist notes that there are other girls whose names "meant *strength* or *courage* or *power*" whereas hers condemned her to femininity (3). Nevertheless, Anthea lived with this feminine name throughout the confusing stages in life wherein she thought herself a tomboy, a lesbian, and a freak, "caught between two extremes, confused and unable to compromise," before she "realized there was an alternative" (3-4). Anthea became aware of the fact that she did not have to choose either of the two extremes, and instead "pressed . . . into the liminal space between *male* and *female*" (4). Anthea was neither male nor female, existing instead in the non-binary space in-between: a genderfluid individual.

The story "Equivalence", like "Body of Evidence", is written in the second-person point of view. The second person narrative provides the author with an interesting narrative option: a second-person point of view eliminates the necessity of using a singular pronoun for the protagonist. When writing a genderfluid character, this seems the best way to avoid explicitly gendering them into a fixed identity. Introductory's protagonist, however, felt this "compromise became erasure instead of freedom" (4). Not conforming to the expectations of a fixed gender identity had begun to sit uneasily with Anthea, who had "panicked . . . picked a direction, and . . . fled" (4). Anthea had chosen the following:

At twenty-three, you started living as a man. You threw out your old wardrobe and quit your job and picked your brand-new name out of the paper: James Moore, round and smooth like a glass marble on your tongue. . . . your coworkers drew their own conclusions, and you let them. You taught yourself how to walk with your hips stiff and your shoulders squared, how to knot a tie around your own neck, how to give up your seat on the tube, how to buy a woman a drink. You thought you had finally found who you were meant to be.
(4)

This passage portrays a very deliberate changing of gender performance: a conscious transformation of certain movements and gestures that reify the impression of gender. Characters "perform gender identity through various behaviors ranging from clothing choices (women's skirts, high heels, and tight-fitting clothing; men's loose clothing, low-heeled shoes,

and hats), to how they move their bodies, use their voices, and the activities they participate in” (McClellan par. 3.3). Anthea’s gender transformation, too, does not only include changing outer appearances, but also deliberately includes a change in body stance, as well as social behaviour and speech patterns. This mimicking of gendered traits draws attention to the fact that “the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation” (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 191).

The conscious mimicking of these repetitive acts, however, simultaneously points out that gender is a construct that is made up out of these acts; it exposes the fact that it is reliant on this repetition and imitation (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 137; Brady and Schirato 57). Anthea, as James Moore, realises that this chosen identity was no longer working, that gender “is something bigger, something more vast and complicated than simply choosing which road to take, which door to open” (Introductory 11). Instead, for Anthea, it is the harmony of different gender performances that matters, “the two halves complementing each other perfectly” (9), suggesting a gender binary. Judith Butler, however, argues against the idea that gender can be something a person simply chooses to be (“Critically Queer” 22). She later concedes in “Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics” that “even when we decide to change gender, or produce gender, it is on the basis of some very powerful desires that we make such a choice. We do not precisely choose those desires” (xii). Introductory’s “Equivalence” portrays a genderfluid protagonist that is wilfully taking back their sense of agency by way of gender expression. This is a fictional depiction of a character attempting to cope with gender dysphoria when they do not identify with the extreme gender norms that society maintains.

Butler, however, maintains that “[w]hen we act, and act politically, it is already within a set of norms that are acting upon us, and in ways that we cannot always know about” (“Performativity, Precarity, and Sexual Politics” xi). There is historical precedence to social gender norms, and even when people decide to change their gender performance, they do so while still operating within a fixed norm. Anthea, for example, embodies existing female traits, while Anthony mimics male gender performances. Even when Anthea chose to remain in the “liminal space between *male* and *female*” (Introductory 4), they did so within the parameters of existing gender norms. By portraying Anthea as a genderfluid character, however, Introductory explores the ways in which a character’s gender performance can shift and change; adapting and transforming gendered traits until the protagonist feels comfortable with their gender identity. The story concludes with an echo of its first line, reiterating and

answering a simple yet resounding question: “John Watson asks, *is that your real name*, and you pause for a moment and say no. That would imply you only have one” (14).

Introductory took a line from an episode and took it as an initiative to explore the gender performativity of a minor character. This is what fanfiction does: taking a certain element of a canonical work that interests the fan, and expanding on its narrative. Introductory does this by focusing on the character Anthea, a minor character who was not even given a surname in the original material and had an extremely limited amount of screen time; a character that does not even exist in Doyle’s canonical works. A throwaway line in an episode was enough to spark an interest and resulted in an in-depth character analysis that explores the intricacies of gender performativity. Introductory’s “Equivalence” features a line that, in turn, inspired other fanfiction authors to take the same premise and apply it to the characters of their choice, which is what Ishmael did in the *Body of Evidence* series for example. Introductory’s story also inspired the creation of other fanfictions, however: Lizzledpink, for instance, created a companion piece to Introductory’s “Evidence”. Lizzledpink’s companion piece is titled “Distinction”, and depicts a retelling of “Equivalence” from Mycroft’s point of view. It uses the same narrative techniques and mirrors the stylistic choices of “Equivalence”, yet is written by a different author: a recreation and retelling of an existing story. Fanfiction, already a reinterpretation of existing material, provides a narrative that is shared and whose narrative, in turn, is also expanded and transformed within an interactive community that encourages and generates a constant cycle of creation.

3.7 Conclusion

There are multiple ways to perform gender in Sherlock Holmes fanfiction. The subversive nature of fanfiction allows for a deeper exploration of the characters’ gender performance within certain social contexts, whether this is done by the regendering of characters or by introducing an entirely new gender construct like the Omega!verse, or even by calling the canonical gender behaviour into question and reflecting on this outside of the confines of the traditional framework. Fanfiction authors explore and subvert traditional gender roles by transforming an existing character’s gender performance outside of their original narrative framework.

Conclusion

This research has examined the way in which the theme of gender is expressed, explored, or otherwise performed in the canonical Sherlock Holmes works versus the way in which gender is presented in fanfiction featuring the character of Sherlock Holmes. Viewing these stories through the lens of Judith Butler's gender performativity theory, it has become evident that the selected stories all feature characters that perform gender in a way that challenges traditional gender norms. This thesis has analysed gender in the Sherlock Holmes short stories "The Adventure of the Speckled Band", "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax", "A Case of Identity", "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone", and a close reading of "A Scandal in Bohemia". These particular short stories were chosen because they contain gendered elements that show that Doyle's characters largely adhere to the gender norms of the Victorian era. Despite this, however, there are instances in these short stories in which Doyle's characters subvert traditional gender norms and present unconventional gender norms. Minor characters like Mary Sutherland and Helen Stoner do this by rebelling in their own way against the constrictions placed on them by their society, Sutherland by eloping and Stoner by exhibiting observant and rational traits that were considered masculine. Furthermore, in Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia", Irene Adler portrays an unconventional gender performance by cross-dressing as a man in order to freely observe Sherlock Holmes.

The examined fanfiction "One Week", "Equivalence", "Gordian", "Seems So Easy for Everybody Else" and the *Body of Evidence* series, on the other hand, challenge and critique the limited agency afforded to the characters' gender performance in the original narrative. They were also selected because they portray ways in which the narratological possibilities of fanfiction makes it possible to present innovative ways to depict gender identity. Doyle's unconventional gender performances are present throughout Sherlock Holmes' cases and adventures. The narrative structure of fanfiction allows authors to focus specifically on gender presentation. In other words, whereas Doyle's canonical works generally encompasses a great deal of world building, characters, and casework, the chosen fanfiction titles instead pinpointed a specific scenario or element within Doyle's canon to focus on and reconstruct. The narratological possibilities of fanfiction afford writers the opportunity to infer their own version of how a particular scene should have unfolded, directly engaging the source material, or taking unconventional gender performances from the original work and expanding on this narrative. The cross-dressing element in "A Scandal in Bohemia", for instance, also appears

in the fanfiction written about Sherlock Holmes. Holmes' natural talent at disguises presents itself in JaneTurenne's "One Week", but it is expanded to include drag. Holmes' drag performance features more than the mere changing of attire; his entire demeanour, gestures, posture and even his way of speaking has been altered. This demonstration of cross-dressing to embody feminine gender characteristics adheres to Judith Butler's performativity theory presented in *Gender Trouble*, in the sense that Holmes demonstrates that drag exposes the necessity of repetition and imitation of established gender norms to form a gendered impression.

JaneTurenne's "One Week" features a cross-dressing Sherlock Holmes instead of Irene Adler in drag, but both JaneTurenne's "One Week" and Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia" feature characters that cross-dress for the purpose of presenting another gender. The fanfictions "Equivalence" by Introductory and Ishmael's *Body of Evidence* series, on the other hand, present gender performances and challenge gender norms in other ways. Ishmael presents a genderqueer portrayal of Sherlock and constructs a transgender narrative, while Introductory's protagonist Anthea is genderfluid and portrays both masculine and feminine behavioural traits. A close reading of "A Scandal in Bohemia" has shown that Irene Adler also displays both masculine and feminine traits, but this differs from Anthea's fluid gender identity. Adler's gender presentation facilitates the situations she finds herself in, portraying feminine gentility when tending to Sherlock in disguise while juxtaposing this by regularly cross-dressing as a man and displaying "a soul of steel . . . and the mind of the most resolute of men" (150).

The reader does not find out whether Irene Adler uses an alias cross-dressing as a man in Doyle's canonical works. The fanfictions "Equivalence", "Seems So Easy for Everybody Else" and the *Body of Evidence* series, however, emphasise the importance of names and the cultural assumptions that are tied to gendered names, portraying the characters' struggle with the very base of their identities: their very name. Introductory and Ishmael furthermore draw attention to the character's realisation that their name is something that can be changed. This changing of the name signals their changing gender performance, whereas "Seems So Easy for Everybody Else" signals this change by using the pronoun 'he' instead of 'she'. As both Introductory and Ishmael's fanfictions are written in the second person point of view, they do not use pronouns for their characters, as they would do with a third person narration. The majority of Doyle's short stories are written in the first person point of view; John Watson is the narrator in all but four of the Holmes stories, two of which are narrated by Holmes, while

the remaining two are written in the third person point of view. Due to the fact that both “Equivalence” and the *Body of Evidence* series are written in the second-person point of view, however, this negates the need to use pronouns to identify the protagonists. While using a first person narration like Doyle has achieves the same purpose, the second person point of view has a confronting effect that leaves the reader with the impression that they are the ones experiencing the character’s gender issues.

Subsequently, the fanfiction stories differ from Doyle’s canon because they vividly depict the characters’ struggle of coming to terms with their gender identity through the eyes of others and how they are perceived during the changing of their gender performance. The effect of transforming gender performances is evident only to a smaller extent in Doyle’s “A Scandal in Bohemia”: Holmes does not question the presence of Irene Adler in drag, but there is no deeper exploration of the effects of gendered impressions like there is in the chosen fanfiction titles. Cross-dressed characters are as far as Doyle could portray unconventional gender performances, however. Amidst strict moral codes and established Victorian gender roles, Doyle had little opportunity or even inclination to pursue genderqueer characters in the way that Introductory and Ishmael have written their protagonist; or even in the way that any fanfiction author who utilises the genderswap label has done. The Omega!verse portrayed in Fresne’s “Gordian” and Darkest_Bird’s “A Fold in the Universe”, too, differs greatly from Doyle’s canon. It provides a new way of presenting gender identities by featuring secondary gender characteristics and transforming sexed bodies as well as offering social criticism to current gendered issues.

By comparing and contrasting gender performativity within both the original Sherlock Holmes works as well as their corresponding fanfiction, this thesis has filled a gap in current research regarding gender performances in Sherlock Holmes and the correlation that exists with the gender performance in fanfiction, contributing to and expanding these fields of research. This research has opted to examine the gender performance of characters through the lens of Judith Butler’s gender performativity theory. Further research could be conducted about the exact correlation between gender identity and sexed bodies in fanfiction, and the way in which characters deal with this dissonance in, for instance, transgender narratives. The majority of the fanfiction that is analysed in this research is slash fanfiction, raising an interesting question about the possible links between the characters’ sexuality and their gender identity; unfortunately, this could not be discussed within the scope of this current

research. The correlation between slash fanfiction and gender identity could also be cause for further research, however, and could yield interesting results upon closer examination.

With this current research, it has become evident that fanfiction expands and simultaneously narrows down on gendered elements present in the canonical works concerning the life of fictional detective Sherlock Holmes. The narratological possibilities of fanfiction are shown in the way in which the traditional framework of the source material is reshaped and restructured, allowing for a unique reimagining of the pre-existing story. By applying Judith Butler's gender performativity theory in Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Speckled Band", "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax", "A Case of Identity", "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone", as well as a close reading of "A Scandal in Bohemia" with the fanfictions "One Week", "Equivalence", and *The Body of Evidence* series as well as the other fanfiction titles discussed in this research, it has become evident that while Doyle's stories do contain instances of unconventional gender performances, fanfiction challenges and criticises gender performativity outside of the traditional narrative framework; this showcases, finally, how fanfiction performs gender in creative and innovative ways.

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