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Lines of Distinction:

Self-Other Dynamics Within Cultural Groups

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Lines of Distinction

Self-Other Dynamics Within Cultural Groups

Julia Knaus

Abstract

Lines of Distinction establishes a critical framework for the study of relationship dynamics *within* cultural groups. As a critical framework, Lines of Distinction are differences associated with value judgements that determine what and who is considered 'self,' and therefore 'good,' or 'other,' and therefore 'bad.' This is applied to the often unexamined interior dynamics of cultural groups, using the English-speaking Sherlock Holmes fandom as a primary case study.

The thesis uses Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault's conceptions of 'power' in its critical framework. It focusses in particular on self-other dynamics in a non-hierarchical sense, in that any individual or faction within a cultural group considers themselves to be 'self'/'good' while simultaneously being thought of as 'other'/'bad' by other individuals or factions. This contests an objective hierarchical structure and argues that these Lines of Distinction emerge only through actual practice and interaction. The thesis extensively draws on primary data generated by the actual members of the chosen cultural group, Sherlock Holmes fans. This data was gathered primarily through a questionnaire, interviews and participant observation. It captures three broad categories of Lines of Distinction within this fandom: those relating to the ways in which fans approach their fandom; those that concern the ways fans engage with each other; and those that touch on fans' demographics. The interplay between these three broad categories is then examined through three fandom activities: meetings, fiction writing and non-fiction writing.

The thesis highlights the complexities of self-other dynamics *within* groups such as fandoms and the applicability of the framework of Lines of Distinction in diverse situations. In this way, this thesis adds to conversations around cultural power dynamics more broadly, while also giving a more balanced perspective on fandoms, which are cultural groups that have traditionally been homogenised in view of an *outside* Other. The overall aim of the project is to provide a critical framework that enables the further examination of the interior dynamics of a diverse range of such cultural groups, in fandom and beyond.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Imagine: You are attending a Sherlock Holmes fan meeting – it is your first; you've only just discovered the World's Greatest Detective, Sherlock Holmes, for yourself a few months ago. This will be your first time meeting other Holmes fans in person. You're nervous, sure that they have all been in the fandom much longer than you, that they are all going to know much more about Holmes than you. Granted, you have devoured all episodes of the BBC's *Sherlock*, and have had a good go at the original Doyle short stories, but you've found the four novels a bit long and daunting. Thankfully, you quickly find some people to chat to. You share your enthusiasm for *Sherlock*, and the conversation eventually loops around to the original stories. Hesitantly, you confess that you have found the novels difficult to get into. You've managed *A Study in Scarlet*, but... One of your conversation partners, Sasha, nods: 'Yes, it's those long sections that don't have Holmes or Watson in them, isn't it?' You readily agree, but another fan, Addison, is frowning at you and says: 'You haven't even read *The Hound of the Baskervilles*? You can't really be a *proper* Sherlock Holmes fan, then, can you?'

Phrases such as this one are probably familiar to anyone who has ever moved in fandom circles – or, indeed, in any kind of group that posits its own requirements for entry. There always seems to be someone else in the group who has a different

opinion of what is needed to 'belong.' Often, this is phrased in a way that suggests that the person is not a 'proper' member of the group, or even a member of the group at all. At the same time, the person very much considers themselves to be a group member – such as 'you' in the scenario above consider yourself a Sherlock Holmes fan. It is not always so directly or personally expressed as in our imaginary scenario, but the sentiment remains, as does the fear of encountering it. This truth seems so intrinsic to fandoms that in the introduction to a collection of first-hand accounts of fan experiences in the Sherlock Holmes fandom, Chris Redmond feels obliged to comment:

> We have to say yes [they all are fans], or we shall incur the charge of "gatekeeping", which is metaphorically used nowadays to mean an assumed right to decide who is, and who isn't, a member of a cultural group, including a fandom. [...] "Gatekeeper" is one of the worst names someone can be called in a fandom context. (Redmond 2017, 8)

The kind of 'gatekeeping' Redmond addresses here is particular, as it comes from *within* a cultural group,[1] from members of a cultural group towards *other* members of that same cultural group. So, for instance, we may have certain Sherlock Holmes fans trying to 'gatekeep,' trying to determine 'who is, and who isn't' a 'proper' Sherlock Holmes fan. Other Holmes fans may have an entirely different conceptualisation of what it means to be a Holmes fan. In our scenario, Addison does not consider someone who has not read the Doyle novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles* a 'proper' fan, while 'you' and Sasha definitely consider yourself Holmes fans.

The above scenario might be imaginary, but this kind of 'gatekeeping' is very

[1] I use 'cultural group(s)' here as consciously broad umbrella term. Coming from Raymond Williams's understanding of 'culture' as 'a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general' (Williams 1983, 90) and consequently 'cultures' 'as the lived practices of social groups' (Hall 2005, 21), I understand 'cultural groups' as communities of people with a specific 'culture,' including but not limited to fandoms, subcultures, regional groups, religious groups, ethnic groups, gender groups, LGBTQIA+ communities and social movements, such as the feminist movement.

real. In its extreme forms, it has even made its way onto the mainstream news channels. For instance, it has been highly publicised as the so-called 'GamerGate,' in which feminist critics of video games and female gamers have been subjected to criticism as well as (online) abuse from fellow (male) gamers (e.g. Lewis 2015). At its core, 'GamerGate' was the discussion of whether female gamers 'belong,' whether they are 'real' gamers, while the female gamers very much considered themselves part of the gaming community. 'GamerGate' is perhaps an extreme example, but equivalents of 'gatekeeping,' of exclusion *within* groups seem to be found in every fandom. For example, the increasing prevalence of adaptations, remakes and sequels or prequels to popular media texts such as *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* have resulted in fandom discussions of whether fans of the most recent incarnations are 'real' fans, or whether you have to have at least seen all the previous material to begin to consider yourself a 'proper' fan. Big changes to ongoing texts have resulted in similar discussions – now that the Doctor in *Doctor Who* has changed gender, are you a 'real' fan if you (only) like the female Doctor? All of these recent examples have further contributed to shifting into the public eye what members within these fandoms have always known: that there is a diversity of opinion within them, and that these differences of opinion can lead to quite distinct rifts and arguments within the fan groups.

And yet, when academia has studied groups, movements, subcultures, fandoms and so on, it has frequently focussed on those cultural groups' homogeneity as opposed to an outside 'Other.' Subcultures, for instance, by the very term applied to them, are defined as something 'other' or at the very least 'sub,' i.e. a part of or subsection to the broader 'culture' or the mainstream. Though the term 'subculture' and its definition is by no means uncontested in itself, the concept's core concern remains how the subculture relates to the rest of 'culture,' as in this traditional definition of the Birmingham School:

> *[S]ub*-cultures are sub-sets – smaller, more localised and differentiated structures, within one or other of the larger cultural networks.

> We must, first, see sub-cultures in terms of their relation to the wider class-cultural networks of which they form a distinctive part. When we examine this relationship between a sub-culture and the 'culture' of which it is a part, we call the latter a 'parent' culture [...] Sub-cultures, then, must first be related to the 'parent cultures' of which they are a sub-set. But, sub-cultures must *also* be analyzed in terms of their relation to the dominant culture – the overall disposition of cultural power in the society as a whole. (Clarke et al. 2003, 13, emphasis in original)

Similarly, fandoms are commonly defined through their 'resistance' to an 'Other' (e.g. the mainstream, producers, academia, other fandoms, cf. Jenkins 2013), or, conversely, are examined on the level of the individual fan (cf. Sandvoss 2005; Hills 2002), disregarding the relationship dynamics between fans of the same fandom. In this way, all of these cultural groups largely become black boxes – seemingly united in and through their opposition to the outsider, with no or very little internal differentiation. While the artificial homogeneity of such perspectives has certainly been challenged (e.g. Thornton 1997; Muggleton 2000), 'black-boxing' still underlies the widespread understanding of cultural groups: that they have more in common than what divides them and that this is a unifying factor, with little to no study of how relationships *within* these groups are actually negotiated.

This thesis aims to lay out a more heterogeneous view of the 'inside' of such groups, schematising group internal dynamics to a fuller extent than previous work. It establishes and tests a theoretical framework for the analysis of just such internal group relationship dynamics. To do so, it draws on conceptualisations of relationship negotiations in culture as a whole, primarily the concept of 'power,' and applies it to the structures *within* groups. This thesis establishes the theoretical framework of *Lines of Distinction*. It borrows the term 'distinction,' with some adjustments, from Bourdieu, and uses Foucault's concept of 'power'

as theoretical backing (Bourdieu 1996; Foucault 1982). The framework is further guided, refined and confirmed by primary data gathered from the Sherlock Holmes fandom.

Lines of Distinction are defined as internal differences *within* a cultural group that are associated with value judgements by the members of that group. These value judgements are expressed as 'self' vs 'other' dynamics contained within the group, in the sense that 'self' equals 'good' and 'other' equals 'bad.' These Lines of Distinction, like power in the Foucauldian understanding, are not 'owned' by any one member or group of members within a group. In this way, the theoretical framework does not presume a fixed, single hierarchy within the groups. Instead, Lines of Distinction are generated and expressed through practice and interaction – in the case of fandoms, through discourse between fans as well as in and around fan activities. What is 'self' and what is 'other' depends on the individual member(s). Consequently, neither side of the Line of Distinction holds objectively more power.

To use the scenario above as a hypothetical example for Lines of Distinction generated in fannish discourse: for Addison, only someone who has read (at least) *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is part of the 'self' group within the fandom, one of the 'good' fans. Everyone else is 'not involved enough' in Sherlock Holmes to be a 'proper' fan, and therefore part of an 'other' *within* the same fandom. For Sasha, having read *The Hound of the Baskervilles* does not matter for being part of their 'self' group. Expressing these opinions generates the Line of Distinction. You, in that scenario, would presumably put less value on having read this particular Doyle novel, or indeed any of the Doyle novels, but might consider, for example, it more important to be accepting of adaptations, such as *Sherlock*. This, too, is a value judgement, creating a Line of Distinction. Therefore, various (opposing) Lines of Distinction can exist parallel to each other within the same group, and Lines can intersect and interconnect. Examining them in isolation runs to risk of doing an injustice to the complexity of the relationship dynamics

within a fandom, and indeed within all kinds of cultural groups to which Lines of Distinction may apply.

1.1 The Case Study: the Sherlock Holmes Fandom

The primary case study and source of data for the thesis is the English-speaking fandom around Sherlock Holmes (in the broadest sense of contemporary fans of all incarnations of the character). Though the underlying theoretical framework of Lines of Distinction is designed to be applicable to all fandoms and also to other cultural groups, be they subcultures or movements and so on, all parts of this thesis are directly informed by primary data gathered from the Holmes fandom. Among fandoms, the Holmes fandom is possibly the oldest well-documented one that is also still highly active and highly diverse. Originally based on the Victorian detective fiction and adventure short stories and novels penned by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the Holmes fandom has been fuelled through the ages by ever new film and television adaptations and other works, from novels to video games. Today, the fandom is a global phenomenon, with Holmes fans living in a wide variety of countries all over the world and coming from all walks of life. I provide a more detailed history and introduction to the fandom in Chapter 3: Lines of Distinction: the Sherlock Holmes Fandom. Suffice to say here that, as a fandom, the Sherlock Holmes fandom is also largely understudied despite its age and size, with very few fan studies scholars devoting any great attention to it. This is largely due to the fandom's origin in literature, as I will explore in the Chapter 2: Towards Lines of Distinction: Power in Bourdieu, Foucault and Fan Studies.

I use the Holmes fandom to explore how Lines of Distinction are enacted in actuality, in a specific context, to illustrate how complex the dynamics are and can be. For this thesis, the specific context is the Sherlock Holmes fandom during

the time of research for this thesis, that is 2016 to 2018, and referencing materials no older than 2000. Because of the fandom's size, it is impossible to map it in any comprehensive shape or form. As the Sherlock Holmes texts originate in English detective fiction, I have focussed on English-speaking fans (regardless of physical location and citizenship), and have allowed fans to self-identify as such.

Beyond Sherlock Holmes, I chose fandom as a case study for this thesis for two primary reasons, one personal and one practical, which informed each other. When it comes to groups or communities traditionally defined against an outside 'Other' fandom is the one with which I am personally most familiar, including past personal experiences with the Sherlock Holmes fandom in particular. As a practical consideration, this familiarity with fandoms removes the barrier of examining a cultural group as an outsider to the group and comes with a certain level of insider knowledge. Without this insider knowledge, one runs the risk of constructing a narrative of increasing inclusion through the process of research, following the notion of 'the *quest* [that] is common in ethnographic accounts, whereby the researcher moves from "outsider" to "insider"' (Gray 1997, 97, emphasis in original). By itself, this would not necessarily be an issue, but it can lead to mistaking this movement as indicative of a hierarchical inner structure to the fandom, as happens in Bacon-Smith's *Enterprising Women* (Bacon-Smith 1992).[2] My previous knowledge therefore allowed me access to fandom spaces and provided an understanding of the important activities and workings of fandoms without having to rush through a familiarising period. It enables me to present a perspective on the fandom's inner structure, on its Lines of Distinction, from *inside out* – without enforcing an outsider's perspective on my data and running the risk of further 'black-boxing.' Instead, all parts of this thesis are grounded in data from *within* a cultural group even as I am establishing a

[2] In the sense that the new fan is at the bottom of the fandom hierarchy, and can move up it through deeper/longer involvement. More on this in Chapter 2: Towards Lines of Distinction: Power in Bourdieu, Foucault and Fan Studies, where I discuss previous perspectives from fan studies scholarship in more detail.

framework for analysing precisely these insider dynamics.

1.2 Methodology

This personal connection with my subject of study always also contains a risk with regards to bias and objectivity that should not go unacknowledged. Within cultural studies, the very concept of 'objectivity' has been criticised as being based in the 'othering.' In this 'othering,' the 'subjective' research subject is to be analysed by the 'objective' researcher (Johnson et al. 2004, 51–53). Having thus rejected 'objectivity,' cultural studies has sought to embrace the very subjectivities that make up culture. It has done so in particular also in highlighting 'marginalized points of view' not as 'superior,' but as new 'starting points' (Johnson et al. 2004, 53–54). Alongside this acknowledgement of the subjective points of view, cultural studies has also called for 'reflection' on part of the researcher (Johnson et al. 2004, 57), both in terms of the researcher's own position and in 'thinking systematically how specific methods influence the results produced and shape our perception of the world' (Couldry 2000, 12). Following this tradition, this thesis does not seek to make a claim to objectivity. Instead, it embraces the subjectivity inherent in a study of culture and cultural groups. The thesis therefore acknowledges not only the subjectivity of the positions presented by my research subjects, but also my own, in view of both my fannish background and my role as a researcher. However, in order to provide an analysis not solely based on my own perceptions, I rely heavily on a diversification of methods for data gathering.

This diversification seeks, primarily, to bring in the voices of other fans. I draw on the principle of 'triangulation' as 'multimethod approach to data collection' (Rothbauer 2012, 893). I use triangulation not to justify a view on my research subject that is 'objectively true,' but to increase the range of subjectivities on which I base my analysis, 'to identify, explore and understand the different dimensions of the units of study' (Rothbauer 2012, 893). This allows me

to bring in a diverse range of subjective perspectives on the interior dynamics of the Sherlock Holmes fandom, consequently revealing a multitude of contradictory 'self'/'other' judgements instead of highlighting only the perspective of one 'self' group. I triangulate evidence of fans' activities (whether tangible in the form of writing or more ephemeral in the form of social gatherings) with fans' own views and reports (in interviews and a questionnaire) and my own perspectives, particularly through data gathered as participant observer.[3]

1.2.1 Participant Observation

The personal participant observation was carried out both online and at in-person fandom meetings, and this method was naturally most influenced by my own perspectives. I base my approach on Matt Hills's call for 'more explicitly auto-ethnographic work [...] rather than academics' fan experiences being implied in their work' (Hills 2002, 22). In particular, I have sought to minimise the separation of myself from my research subjects, to avoid the tendency of academic 'othering' discussed above, as also suggested by Hills for fan studies (Hills 2002, 81). I address the details of this approach and my previous experience with the Holmes fandom in more detail in Chapter 4: Meeting Up: Fan Gatherings. Suffice to say here that I had not previously attended any in-person fan meetings, though I was aware of several. Keeping within the time limit of the research period, I ultimately chose two for the very reason that, at first glance, they appeared to be quite distinct from each other.

First, I attended the Baker Street Irregulars Weekend in January 2017. The Baker Street Irregulars Weekend is the annual gathering put on by one of, if not the, biggest Sherlock Holmes literary societies, the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI), and thus organised by fans and for fans. It is held in New York, USA, and, as coming from a literary society, seemed to focus more on the original Doyle stories.

[3] The gathering of fan data received ethics approval through the University of Nottingham's ethics approval procedure. Approval confirmed via email on 04/10/2016. Approval form on record; informed consent forms by all participants on record.

Secondly, I chose to attend the 'Sherlocked UK' Convention in October 2017, which is commercially organised specifically for fans of the BBC series *Sherlock* (2010—) and was held in Birmingham, UK.[4] I discuss the data gathered from these events in greater detail in Chapter 4: Meeting Up: Fan Gatherings.

In addition to these in-person meetings, the participant observation included observing fan activity on Tumblr for the whole period of research 2016–2018, in particular the months at the beginning of 2017. As Tumblr is split into blogs run by individuals and does not afford community spaces, there is no centralised feed of all things Sherlock Holmes. Tumblr does, however, allow a site-wide hashtag search. The Tumblr observation therefore entailed monitoring recent posts with the tags related to Sherlock Holmes (e.g. '#sherlock holmes,' '#sherlock,' '#holmes'). While this could not capture blogs that did not make use of the tagging system, it still gave me an overview of current discussions in the fandom. Generally, the Tumblr observation confirmed impressions I gathered from other sources and also significantly informed Chapter 6: Non-fiction Writing: Shipping Sherlock Holmes and Fan Meta.

1.2.2 Voices from Fans

The largest part of the data used for this thesis was gathered directly from other fans in the Sherlock Holmes fandom. Their voices were captured in three primary ways. Firstly, I circulated an online questionnaire (Appendix B) which ultimately gathered 423 responses. The questionnaire was open from January 2017 to March 2017. Because of the high number of respondents, it forms the core of all data gathered in this thesis, but its data has consistently been corroborated by the other methods used.

While a large part of the questionnaire asked for and produced qualitative responses, these were often short and the questionnaire did not allow me to follow

[4] Both events are fairly large in scale, and I had attempted to balance this out by attending a smaller scale meeting, but its organisers did not re-establish contact after my initial reaching out to them.

up on what fans had written. I therefore also conducted a series of semi-structured interviews (Appendix C). The interviewees (11 in total) were recruited from volunteers from the questionnaire respondents. Their selection aimed to cover a range of fans and demographics, including different genders, ages and native languages as well as different fandom engagements. These interviews were conducted in July 2017, with one follow-up interview in March 2018. In the interviews, I was able to follow up on fans' statements and was able to engage in longer discussions around specific points that had come out through the questionnaires.

In addition to both of these, I am drawing on a published collection of fan experiences, *About Being a Sherlockian* (Redmond 2017), which provided me with the experiences of fans I was otherwise unable to reach. As I had no personal control over the recruitment of contributors and the textual focus of their contributions, this source is tertiary to the questionnaires and interviews conducted by myself.

1.2.3 Fan Material

These personal fan experiences, in turn, are contrasted with observable fan outputs or activities. I conceive of this category in the broadest way possible, including meetings, fanworks and also public utterances by fans such as blogs and social media posts. The questionnaire, my own prior experience and participant observation resulted in the selection of the three fan outputs/activities that I ultimately ended up using in greater depth for this thesis: meetings, fiction writing, and non-fiction writing, which also inform the chapter structure as I discuss below. I had originally also considered drawing on the activities of collecting and fanart, but my data ultimately did not supply enough information on either of these activities to enable an effective analysis. I will discuss the specific details of the selection and obtaining of these fan materials in the relevant chapters. For example, Chapter 5, in which I discuss fanfiction, also contains a description of my rationale in choosing the fannish fiction writings I examine.

1.2.4 Participant Recruitment

Overall, participant recruitment was on voluntary basis and carried out in two broad phases. My first contact with the fandom in the role of a researcher was in preparation of my attendance of the Baker Street Irregulars Weekend in the winter of 2016. During this initial contact period, I was also preparing the questionnaire. I then first circulated the questionnaire at the Baker Street Irregulars Weekend. Though I carried and offered paper copies of an abridged version of the questionnaire, all respondents preferred to fill out the full-length questionnaire online. I asked the attendees who talked to me about the questionnaire to circulate it amongst their acquaintances, and the link was consequently shared by some on their own social media. After the Weekend, I also shared the questionnaire link through social media myself – through my academic Twitter account, using Holmes-related hashtags, and through a Tumblr account established for the purpose of recruitment. Via this account, I also contacted other fans active on Tumblr, asking them to share the questionnaire with their followers. This snowballing method led to the width of circulation that the questionnaire ultimately reached.

I closed the questionnaire in March 2017, having obtained 423 valid responses. The questionnaire was able to capture responses from fans aged 16 to 60 and older, with the majority being under 30 years of age. Most respondents were female, and over half also were LGBTQIA+. Despite the size of the sample, this can, of course, only be a *part* of the total Sherlock Holmes fandom, and one that claims neither to be objective nor representative of the total fandom, though it is somewhat reflective of traditional media fandoms in the Jenkinsian sense (generally characterised as younger and predominately female). While this doubtless impacts the fans' position against outside 'Others' and likely also impacts the way they 'do' fandom, my data has not provided evidence that these majority demographics influence what fans report as value judgement between fans. That is, I used triangulation to increase the range of subjectivities, seeking to acknowledge

points made also by those fans in demographic minorities within the sample, but found the general trends as regarding Lines of Distinction corroborated by *all* fans within the sample, including those in such a demographic minority (e.g., male and/or straight fans). That is not to say, of course, that fans of any demographic that were not captured within this sample at all may not have different perspectives, but the enormity of the Sherlock Holmes fandom as a total makes this ultimately impossible to determine. I will discuss the further particulars and limits of the questionnaire data in more detail in Chapter 3: Lines of Distinction: the Sherlock Holmes Fandom.

1.3 Thesis Structure

Using this data, I was able to pinpoint the specific Lines of Distinction present in the Holmes fandom as reported by my research participants, and divide them into three categories: 1) Lines of Distinction which reference attitudes and approaches towards the object of fandom (Approach to the Fandom Object), 2) Lines of Distinction which refer to the relationships, attitudes and behaviour between fans (Fan Attitudes) and 3) Lines of Distinction established around the fans' demographics (Demographics).

Approach to the Fandom Object refers to the ways in which fans 'do' fandom, for instance which of the multiple texts within the fandom object – i.e., the thing they are a fan of – they prefer, or how much time they spend engaging with the fandom object. Fan Attitudes refers to how fans approach other people in the fandom, their fellow fans. This includes, for example, whether and how they judge fellow fans' behaviour as appropriate. Demographics, finally, probably requires the least definition, and includes all categories that are generally considered demographic, such as age and gender.

This division informed the choice of structure for this thesis. The thesis, then, consists of two parts. In the first part, which contains Chapters 2 and 3, I set up my theoretical framework, moving from the general to the specific. In Chapter

2: Towards Lines of Distinction: Power in Bourdieu, Foucault and Fan Studies, I establish my framework of Lines of Distinction. It examines the 'self'-'other' distinctions as outlined by Bourdieu and Foucault, focussing in particular on the Bourdieusian notion of 'distinction' and Foucault's concept of 'power.' The chapter also explores the existing perspectives on the interior workings of fandoms with the aid of academic literature, and determines that the scholarship has so far failed to develop a satisfactory model of fandom's internal dynamics. Through this discussion, I define Lines of Distinction as differences associated with value judgements *within* groups. These Lines of Distinction are expressed through the actions and discourses of the members of cultural groups.

Following this, in Chapter 3: Lines of Distinction: the Sherlock Holmes Fandom, I provide an introduction to the Sherlock Holmes fandom and introduce the particular Lines of Distinction that I have extrapolated from the Holmes fandom data. The four most prominent lines that emerge are, in order, Entry Point; Depth/Time of Engagement; Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings; and Thematic Knowledge. I give a general introduction to these four most prominent Lines and divide all observed Lines into the three categories mentioned: Approach to the Fandom Object (here, Sherlock Holmes), Fan Attitudes and Demographics.

Having done so, the second part of the thesis is dedicated to illustrating the practical functioning of the Lines of Distinction framework on case studies of specific Holmes fandom activities. The activities thus examined are the ones mentioned above, in order: fan meetings, fiction writing, and non-fiction writing. There are, of course, numerous fandom activities beyond the ones I have mentioned, such as fanart, collection, cosplay, filk or vidding, and I do not wish to suggest that they are unimportant to the fandom or that Lines of Distinction are not applicable in these. Ultimately, the selection I have made here is informed by my data. That is, I have selected those activities for which my observations (both as participant observer and of the fan outputs during the research period) and the fandom voices I have gathered have provided me with enough material for the

analysis. They are also the activities most commonly mentioned by my participants, whereas the others rarely, if ever, have been raised in my data, though fans were given the space to flag them up to me in the questionnaire. As such, the selection reflects those activities which were reported as the most common by the fans.

The case study chapters are, then, Chapter 4: Meeting Up: Fan Gatherings, Chapter 5: Fiction Writing: between Fanfiction and Pastiche, and Chapter 6: Non-fiction Writing: Shipping Sherlock Holmes and Fan Meta. Apart from the limits of the data, the division of the three different types of Lines of Distinction also informed this choice of case studies as well as the order in which I address them in this thesis. As Table 1.1 illustrates, each of the activities first shows Lines of Distinction that refer to Approaches to the Fandom Object (Fandom Object in the table), as one would probably expect in fandoms. That is, the first Lines of Distinction that emerge around these activities are always those that concern the ways in which fans 'do' their fandom. However, the three case studies are very distinct in the ways in which other Lines of Distinction emerge after and around the Fandom Object Lines of Distinction. These interplays and interconnections allow me to explore the complexities of Lines of Distinction in different ways, as I will describe in the chapter breakdown below. To reiterate here, then, the focus on these activities and in particular the prominence of written fandom output discernible from the chapter titles is not to suggest that other fannish activities do not give expression to Lines of Distinction. Instead, all of the activities were chosen because the fans reported them as the most common. Additionally, they represent a visible controversy in the Sherlock Holmes fandom and/or illustrate complex interworking of several Lines of Distinction *in different ways*. Because I chose the case studies which are best grounded in my data, all also provide me with an opportunity for triangulation, either between my own observations and interviews/questionnaires or between fannish outputs and interviews/questionnaires, corroborating my findings on all levels of my data.

	Primary LoD	Secondary LoD	Tertiary LoD
Chapter 4	Fandom Object	Fan Attitudes	Demographics
Chapter 5	Fandom Object	Demographics	N/A
Chapter 6	Fandom Object	(Demographics)	(Fan Attitudes)

Table 1.1: Spread of different categories of Lines of Distinction (LoD) as expressed in the individual activity case studies and chapters of the thesis' second part.

The three chapters, then, present the interworking of Lines of Distinction in different ways, as I have illustrated in Table 1.1. In Chapter 4: Meeting Up: Fan Gatherings, both Fan Attitudes and Demographics emerge with nearly equal prominence to Fandom Object. The chapter is primarily based on the observational data gathered at the two fan meetings I attended. It discusses my own previous experiences with the Holmes fandom. I then go on to introduce the two meetings in more detail, contrasting them briefly, before the chapter turns to Lines of Distinction. Using my experience as a participant observer as a basis, the chapter discusses the Lines of Distinction of Entry Point and Thematic Knowledge.[5] It also addresses the nature of the membership in the Baker Street Irregulars society, and the Lines of Distinction revealed in the discourse around this membership.

Chapter 5: Fiction Writing: between Fanfiction and Pastiche engages with the observable in-fandom controversy on whether there is a difference between the categories of 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche' in fans' fiction writing, in which one is 'better' than the other. Generally, it is 'fanfiction' which is considered inferior. The chapter interrogates how far fans agree on this, and which factors influence their differentiation between 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche.' It tests the objectiveness of the primary of these factors, the textual Line of Distinction of 'Canonicity,' i.e. 'closeness to the canon.' Finally, the chapter addresses the notion that some fans read the differentiation as targeting the writers rather than the content of their

[5] Definitions and details of these specific Lines of Distinction are given first in Chapter 3: Lines of Distinction: the Sherlock Holmes Fandom, and again in the relevant chapters in which they are discussed.

texts, engaging with Demographic Lines of Distinction.

Finally, Chapter 6: Non-fiction Writing: Shipping Sherlock Holmes and Fan Meta turns to the activity of 'meta,' i.e. fans' non-fiction writings, to analyse the very prominent Line of Distinction of Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings. Fandom Object Lines of Distinction therefore seem to be the primary focus. However, the Lines of Distinction in the categories of Demographics and Fan Attitudes that emerge around meta and shipping are of highly personal nature. I define shipping, both as a Line of Distinction and as an activity, further in the chapter. Suffice to say here that shipping, as interpretative activity, is the celebration of certain character relationships within the fandom text. Shipping is thus firstly concerned with interpreting the Fandom Object, and fans frequently express these interpretations in their writing, in particular also non-fiction writing. However, these textual discussions around shipping can have the side effect of intimately touching on fans' own demographics, in particular fans' own Sexual Orientation as a Line of Distinction, and Fan Behaviour as a Line of Distinction (as part of the Fan Attitudes category). The chapter focusses on the appearance of ad hominem argument addressing these Lines of Distinction around textual discussions on shipping. It thus explores a further interplay of Lines of Distinction.

Having analysed these various appearances and interplays of Lines of Distinction in the Holmes fandom, I conclude the thesis with a summary and an outlook to future research. This conclusion in particular addresses the applicability of Lines of Distinction to other fandoms as well as other cultural groups, for example movements, subcultures and communities.

This thesis thereby establishes a theoretical framework for the analysis of relationship dynamics and structures *within* cultural groups that have often remained unexplored. This framework of Lines of Distinction is based on existing understandings of cultural structures, which have, however, rarely been effectively applied to dynamics *within* groups. With this framework, the thesis explores the case study of the Sherlock Holmes fandom and the practices of its members. It

provides a highly complex picture of the fandom's internal dynamics, seeking to highlight the adaptability and complexity of the theoretical framework of Lines of Distinction. At the same time, Lines of Distinction are presented as a tool that is applicable to other case studies, whether they are other fandoms or cultural groups more broadly. It fills a gap in the research on cultural groups, in particular on those cultural groups which are defined against an outside Other, and contests the frequent homogenisation of these groups. Lines of Distinction offers an effective and adaptable tool for the analysis of these groups' internal dynamics. Ultimately, the research that follows intends for the Lines of Distinction framework to be applied to other case studies, both in the field of fandom and beyond.

Chapter 2

Towards Lines of Distinction: Power in Bourdieu, Foucault and Fan Studies

In the "'social" definition' of culture according to Raymond Williams, 'culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour.' Deliberately broad, this definition allows Williams to argue that the 'analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture' (Williams 1998, 48). The field of cultural studies, of which Williams is a key figure, has often been described, not necessarily negatively, as an anti-discipline 'frankly shaped by borrowings from an array of fields (anthropology, art theory, linguistics, literary studies, media studies, philosophy, political science, and sociology, among others)' (White and Schwoch 2006, 4). However, few questions have remained so consistent as the interest in human relationships as expressed through – often hidden and 'implicit' – constellations of power between the 'self' and the 'other.' In the highly diverse range of topics and subjects that have been examined un-

der the umbrella of cultural studies, power in human interaction returns time and again, whether in, for example, discussions of class, or in the analysis of gender and gender roles, or in the examinations of postcolonialism. While power is not necessarily a 'meaning' or 'value' in itself, an analysis of the 'meanings and values [expressed] in ordinary behaviour' points towards human interaction, which in 'the other definitions [i.e. not the 'social' definition of culture] are not "culture" at all: the organization of production, the structure of family, the structure of institutions which express or govern social relationships, the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate' (Williams 1998, 48). This leaves us with the two key terms 'structure' and 'power.'

On the large and small scale, then, cultural studies has sought to analyse, or firstly to make visible, the often hidden dynamics that structure our everyday lives, and 'power' has been used in various ways to explain these structures and relationships. It is framed as one of the mechanisms which influence, organise and shape different individual and group identities, such as gender or class, and the relationships between those differing identities. Identities are frequently 'defined by difference, that is by what it is not [...] and by the marking of inclusion and exclusion – insiders and outsiders, "us" and "them"' (Woodward 1997, 2), and the power constellations between 'us' and 'them' are thus of paramount importance. This thesis seeks to add to the discussion in two ways: firstly, by applying it to dynamics *within* groups, and, secondly, by looking at power in an area of human interaction, communication and organisation that is becoming more and more mainstream: that between fans within fandoms. While the academic study of fandom is yet to arrive at a definition of its subjects that finds broader acceptance even within the field of fan studies (cf. Jenkins 2013; Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998; Hills 2002; Sandvoss 2005), there can be no doubt that fan activity is becoming an increasingly visible means of engaging with (popular) culture, and an increasingly important element of the everyday 'ordinary behaviour.' For instance, large sections of social media have been dedicated to fannish

engagement by its users, such as by populating a Tumblr blog with fan-made gifs or by using a Twitter account to roleplay a character, and copyright holders themselves are increasingly engaged with fandoms – the BBC's 'mixital' website, for example, has a section dedicated to *Doctor Who* fanfiction (BBC 2017). Therefore, a fandom application of this traditional cultural studies concern with power and relationship structures between cultural groups seems long overdue.

In this chapter of the thesis, I establish a critical framework for carrying out such an examination of the power structures *within* cultural groups in general and fandoms in particular. To do so, I will first survey how the subject of power has been addressed by two key theorists, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. I will then go on to examine how power and its role for fandom has previously been addressed and then cast aside by the field of fan studies. I will also expand on another omission of the field, the exempting of literary based fandoms, and how it relates directly to the way in which the role of power has been perceived in relation to fandom. Finally, I will bring both of these concerns – power and the literary fandom – together in establishing a reading of power mechanisms based on Foucault and Bourdieu which allows an examination of the interior power dynamics of cultural groups and thus fandoms: Lines of Distinction.

2.1 Power, Difference and Identity in Bourdieu and Foucault

This thesis conceives of individuals' and groups' positions in and within fandom as part of an identity, and therefore as comparable and indeed overlapping with other identity categories such as nationality, gender and class. Consequently, it is also comparable and overlapping with other types of group identities, such as subcultures, movements and communities formed around identity categories. 'Identities,' writes Kathryn Woodward, 'are produced, consumed and regulated within culture,' and to do so, they are 'mark[ed] [...] in relation to another' (Wood-

ward 1997, 1–2), that is, they are directly influenced by what is considered 'self' and what is considered 'other.'

When it comes to cultural studies' engagement with 'identity,' there seem to be two camps. On the one hand, there are those influenced by Marx and primarily concerned with class and class differences, such as the Birmingham School of the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies, among which Raymond Williams can be counted and from which I have drawn the definition of subculture in the Introduction. The interest in class also finds a representative on the continent in Pierre Bourdieu, who perhaps most comprehensively deals with the question of how the triad between cultural consumption, class identity and power functions. Accordingly, Bourdieu is the first focus here. On the other hand, there are those who engage with other aspects of human identity and their relation to power structures in human interaction, such as, for example, Judith Butler on the subject of gender and sexuality. As these critics most frequently seem to draw on Michel Foucault's texts around the subjects of power and identity, he shall be my second focus here. The aim of this section is not to provide a general definition of the term 'power' which would be too complex an undertaking. My interest in power is limited to how it influences relationships and relationship management between individuals and groups based on discourses of identity, self and other, or, in other words, in power as 'the "relational essence", or rudimentary concept, throughout social space, akin to how the quantum was the innermost working of the atom' (Bang 2014, 18). Therefore, this section engages with two theorists, Bourdieu and Foucault, who have undertaken an examination of just such social dynamics, arriving at two concepts of how 'self' and 'other' and social relationships are constructed through power.

Pierre Bourdieu's entire corpus of works is too large and complex to examine it here in its entirety, and I will therefore focus only on the elements most relevant to this study: his link between class and cultural consumption through types of capital, the field, and, of course, distinction in the Bourdieusian sense. These

aspects are difficult to separate out from each other as Bourdieu links his theory together closely. While this is a strength in terms of cohesion, it also makes it difficult to pick a starting point or to discuss aspects in isolation – or, indeed, to apply them without applying the entirety of Bourdieu's work. I will address this difficulty below. To introduce Bourdieu's work, I will first turn to one of Bourdieu's main research subjects: his interest in the connection between cultural consumption and the class of the consumer, which leads Bourdieu to introduce his different types of capital.

Through extensive empirical work, Bourdieu establishes that certain classes are more likely to engage with certain types of cultural products. He examines, for instance, the tastes in films of various professions, and determines that there is a clear difference in which films are appreciated by which class (Bourdieu 1996, 271–72). Bourdieu links these results back to the idea that taste is informed by both the distinctions made by these people and by their knowledge, i.e. their cultural capital, immediately raising two of his key concepts – distinction and capital. Let us first turn towards 'capital' as Bourdieu understands it.

Based on the notion of economic capital as marker of class, Bourdieu establishes the presence of other types of capital which are equally used to mark out class status. The concept of different capitals arises as an alternative to the Marxist overemphasis on economic capital in its role in forming class:

> [Economics] leads one to reduce the social field, a multidimensional space, to the economic field alone, to the relations of economic production, which are thus established as the co-ordinates of social position; [intellectualism] leads one to overlook the symbolic struggles that take place in different fields, and where what is at stake is the very representation of the social world, and in particular the hierarchy within each of the fields and between the different fields. (Bourdieu 1991, 229)

While Bourdieu is still very much interested in class hierarchies, then, he refuses

to consider these solely in the light of economic possession. Critics reading and analysing Bourdieu disagree on which and how many distinct types of capital there are in Bourdieu's work (cf. Jenkins 2002; Harker, Mahar and Wilkes 1990). The index to *Distinction* lists cultural capital, educational capital ('measured by qualifications' (Bourdieu 1996, 13)), economic capital and symbolic capital ('i.e. on the *recognition* [...] that they receive from a group' (Bourdieu 1991, 72)) (Bourdieu 1996, 607–13), and the text further includes a reference to 'academic capital (measured by duration of schooling)' (Bourdieu 1996, 18) as Bourdieu is primarily interested in the effects of education in *Distinction*. Already it becomes clear, then, that not only are the definitions of these types of capitals substantially vague, the notion of capital can also be applied to other areas. Bourdieu does so in introducing academic and educational capital, and thereby opens the concept up for further application. Capital becomes anything which determines the position in a hierarchy 'within each of the fields and between the different fields' (Bourdieu 1991, 229). It is a means by which relationships are shaped and managed, and thus by which one's 'self' is shaped in contrast to the 'other' of people with other capitals, either in terms of amount or in terms of type, within what Bourdieu calls a 'field.'

This, clearly, forces us to turn to Bourdieu's definition of 'field.' Bourdieu defines 'social spaces' as a

> field of forces: in other words, as a set of objective power relations imposed on all those who enter this field, relations which are not reducible to the intentions of individual agents or even to direct *interactions* between agents. (Bourdieu 1991, 230, emphasis in original)

Richard Jenkins provides us with a succinct summary of this concept: '[a] field, in Bourdieu's sense, is a social arena within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific resources or stakes and access to them' (Jenkins 2002, 84). Here, the concept of power emerges. The 'stakes' within a field *are* the capitals:

> Agents [in a field] are thus distributed, in the first dimension, according to the overall volume of the capital they possess and, in the second dimension, according to the composition of their capital (Bourdieu 1991, 231)

If a 'field' in the Bourdieusian sense is shaped by power relations, and one's position in a field is determined by capital, then the possession of a certain volume or type of capital determines one's relative power, both within a field and in relation to other fields. Which type of capital is valued more or most both within and beyond fields and so gives the owner the most power is bound up with Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus.' 'Habitus,' in the first instance, accounts for 'self' versus 'other' dynamics in Bourdieu, before we turn to the comprehensive concept of Bourdieu's 'distinction' below.

'Habitus' is variously and often elliptically defined in Bourdieu's work; to give just one example, habitus is 'the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, produces practices which tend to reproduces the regularities immanent in the objective condition of the production of their generative principles' (Bourdieu 1977, 78). In short, though no short definition will do the complexity of the concept justice, habitus is a set of mostly subconscious rules generated within a society which '*disposes* actors to do certain things' (Jenkins 2002, 78). These, in turn, reproduce the social structures that created the habitus in the first place. In reference to power, it is thus the habitus which, for example, leads the male to be perceived as superior to the female. At the same time, that power constellation and the habitus that generates it is reinforced every time the habitus prompts individuals to act according to it, creating a circular system. Hence, the concept of 'habitus' entails Bourdieu's understanding of power as socially constructed and continuously replicated above and beyond conscious decision. However, Bourdieu goes on to expand the notion of habitus beyond the microlevel to a model of society/class structure by pulling all of the above – capital, field and habitus – together in his concept of 'distinction,' to which I will

therefore turn next.

The first mention of 'distinction' within Bourdieu's work of the same title runs as follows:

> Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed (Bourdieu 1996, 6)

This quotation immediately reveals three things about Bourdieu's understanding of 'distinction.' One, it clearly and immediately evokes self-other dynamics; two, it must be taken as noun to 'distinguished' in that it carries a judgement of being 'better' rather than merely 'distinct' in the sense of 'different' without any additional connotation; three, it implies that there is such a thing as an 'objective classification' which is expressed through the distinctions individuals make.

Bourdieu goes to great lengths to illustrate these distinctions with empirical examples, such as the film viewing habits mentioned above (Bourdieu 1996, 271–72). However, his analysis is consistently flawed through two implicit assumptions: firstly, that the works appreciated by professionals of a higher class should be appreciated by those of lower classes but that those lack the capital to do so 'properly' and, secondly, that this class hierarchy is objectively correct. In this way, Bourdieu's concept of distinction becomes circular, not unlike his underlying definition of 'habitus' as key to individual everyday behaviour: The class forms because it makes distinctions, and the distinctions are informed by the class. There is very little sense of both the possibility of movement between classes, nor of the potential that the lower classes might have no interest in acquiring the capital to appreciate the works appreciated by the higher classes; instead, the lack of capital is consistently portrayed as negative, and distinction thus constructs a single one-way top-down hierarchy.

While Bourdieu's underlying understanding of power constellation is summed up by 'habitus' only as socially constructed but not centrally or objectively dic-

tated, his application of this understanding of power through the notion of capitals and distinctions makes it a profoundly hierarchical one. Within Bourdieu's model, (class) identity and power is bound up with capital, and different distributions of capital determine differences, such as positions within and between fields. According to Bourdieu, it is therefore possible to possess and amass power, and thus determine one's position within a hierarchy.

In seemingly irreconcilable contrast to Bourdieu stands Michel Foucault's conceptualisation of power, to which I will turn now. Though Foucault's understanding of power is the basis of much of his work, it is not Foucault's primary interest. That, instead, lies in the concept of 'the subject' in specific historic contexts, or more specifically in the 'objectivication which transforms human beings into subjects' (Foucault 1982, 777). Foucault sorts these into three 'modes' in 'The Subject and Power': scientification, division and 'the way a human being turns himself into a subject' (Foucault 1982, 777–78). Though power might not have been his initial focus and even though Foucault consciously decides not to try to define it (McHould and Grace 2002, 59), power has still become an integral part of his work, as Foucault himself freely admits (Foucault 1982, 778). Instead of a definition, he approaches the subject through examples, in particular examples of 'forms of resistance against different forms of power' (Foucault 1982, 780). It is immediately clear, then, that not just power on its own, but also its relation to *difference* is intrinsic to Foucault's understanding of power relationships. Foucault understands power as diffused through society – every relationship, down to day-to-day personal interactions, even with oneself, is shaped by it. It is neither fixed nor objective – there is no way for an individual *not* to be implicated in structures of power, and an individual will both be subjected to and execute power:

> [Power] is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in

> the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. (Foucault 1980, 98)

As this quote also shows, Foucault rejects the idea that power functions like capital in the sense that it can be accumulated by individuals to form a single top-down hierarchy. He even goes so far as to say that '[p]ower exists only when it is put into action' (Foucault 1982, 788). This is in direct contrast to Bourdieu, who seems to argue from difference to power – differences in capital possession determine a position within a field, within a class and thus one's power. Foucault, by contrast, deliberately divorces his notion of 'power' from class: the resistances to 'power' are 'to attack not so much "such or such" an institution of power, or group, or elite, or *class* but rather a technique, a form of power' (Foucault 1982, 781, emphasis mine). Foucault argues from power to difference – not the position in terms of class (or possession of capitals) dictates the power relations; the power relations in which an individual is implicated directly shape how the 'self' and 'other' are understood.

The moments of resistance which interest Foucault

> are struggles which question the status of the individual: on the one hand, they assert the right to be different, and they underline everything which makes individuals truly individual. On the other hand, they attack everything which separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself, and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way. (Foucault 1982, 781)

Clearly, concepts of 'difference' and 'self' versus 'other' are essential to Foucault's understanding of power: 'Every relationship of power puts into operation differentiations which are at the same time its conditions and its results.' (Foucault 1982, 792). What role, then, does Bourdieu's 'distinction' play in Foucault's framework? Foucault's concept of self-other is bound up with his emphasis on

knowledge and the sciences in relation to power. Besides rejecting the top-down hierarchy, Foucault also rejects the idea that power is something intrinsically negative, stressing instead that 'power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth' (Foucault 1977b, 194). More specifically, power produces an understanding of what is 'normal' and what is not. In other words, it has the capacity of establishing self-other binaries. As every individual is implicated in power, every individual, even without conscious decision, also is implicated in shaping and excluding the 'other.' Here, then, we have an understanding of what is, essential, distinction, without an immediate suggestion of a top-down hierarchy. Despite Bourdieu's criticism that

> lacking everything that I [Bourdieu] put under the notion of habitus, Foucault cannot account for the much subtler forms of domination which come to operate through *belief* and the pre-reflexive agreement of body and mind with the world (Wacquant 1993, 34, emphasis in original)

Foucault's understanding of how self-other differences form is very much in line with Bourdieu's habitus at its most basic – it is in the application that the two concepts of power differ.

To summarise, then, neither Foucault nor Bourdieu understand power strictly in the sense of a controlling institution, or as something that simply exists – instead, power is an element of human interaction, relationships and relationship management, and it is in this same sense that I will use the concept in this thesis. For Bourdieu, power and difference are bound up in a mostly static hierarchy, in particular a hierarchy of class shaped by varying capitals. This hierarchy emerges in Bourdieu as the primary influencer on human relationships and human interactions with each other and with culture. Foucault, by contrast, conceives of power as diffused and non-quantifiable, both shaped by and shaping the understanding of difference, self and other. For Foucault, power does not exist without action, and his interest in moments of friction or resistance between different groups

emphasises the shifting nature of his power concept. Before going on to set out how I will engage with both these understandings of power in the application to relationships and relationship management *within* cultural groups and fandoms in particular, the next two sections will examine how the concept of power has previously been applied in the field of fan studies.

2.2 Power and Resistance in Fan Studies Literature

Fan studies as an academic discipline is generally thought to originate with Henry Jenkins's seminal *Textual Poachers* (Jenkins 1992).[1] This work sets up two prominent lines of thinking which are still used within the field of fan studies today. The first is temporal: emerging from media and audience studies, the field usually positions the beginnings of fandom in the 1960s as media phenomenon around, most prominently, *Star Trek* (1966—). Most works which provide an overview over both the academic field and the cultural phenomenon of fandom follow this consensus around the start date of fandom and from there on trace fandom's development to the present day (e.g. Hellekson and Busse 2014; Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington 2007). The second is thematic, and it is this element which I will go on to discuss in the following: fan studies as a discipline has shown a consistent interest in the position of fandom within wider constellations of power in culture and cultural production, equally originating with Henry Jenkins's work. Originally, this was part of the goal of counteracting negative stereotypes about fans and establishing them as a worthwhile subject for study. This is both linked to the negative view on fans and to their objects of fandom, which Jenkins sets down as popular culture: Jenkins reads fan activity as a conscious act of breaking the 'rule' that popular culture should not deserve in-depth textual engagement

[1] Though originally published in 1992, this thesis primarily cites the second, 20 year anniversary edition of *Textual Poachers*, published in 2013. The edition is textually unchanged but page numbers may vary.

similar to academic study (Jenkins 2013, 60–66).

Popular culture is in itself a slippery concept, as it is bound up with discourses around high and low culture. While I do not have the space to engage with the debate at length, suffice it to say that what constitutes 'high culture' is considered not as intrinsic to a text(s), but a societal construct. Bourdieu also engages with this when he argues that groups with higher amounts of cultural capital are more likely to engage with certain types of cultural products, though Bourdieu is somewhat biased towards established 'high culture' throughout and fails to criticise their 'high culture' status (cf. Frow 1996, 36).[2]

Textual Poachers creates an understanding of fans which can be variously described as the unprivileged critical media fan, the power-resistance paradigm (e.g. Sandvoss 2005; Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998), or, in Jenkins's own words, as 'fans operat[ing] from a position of cultural marginality and social weakness' (Jenkins 2013, 26). Fans are considered unprivileged but critical in the sense that they do not and cannot control the production nor the content of their object of fandom and also consume popular, not high, culture, but engage with it with a critical eye that is not unlike academic study. The underlying understanding of power is thus a primarily Marxist one – rather than being about human interaction, it is centred on who controls the production, and the argument that fans do not. Alongside it stands an understanding of popular/high/low culture that seems to follow Stuart Hall in its emphasis on (class) resistance (Hall 1998, 452).

Though it has been variously reused since, Henry Jenkins applies his model in two main directions in *Textual Poachers*. On the one hand, he reclaims fan activity as something worthwhile and productive. On the other, he positions fans against commercial producers as a critical subculture (Jenkins 1992). The relationship of fans and producers especially is set up as a dichotomy. Not only do fans have to 'beg with the networks to keep their favorite shows on the air' (Jenkins 2013, 26–27), they also face legal opposition against their use of copyrighted

[2] For more discussion about 'high'/'low' and 'popular' culture see, for instance, Stuart Hall (Hall 1998), John Frow (Frow 1996) and Lawrence Levine (Levine 1988).

materials. This, according to Jenkins, not only includes opposition to the simple use of the materials, but also to the *ways* in which the material is used by fans (Jenkins 2013, 30–32). That is, fans often find themselves in opposition to the producers in matters of legal ownership, but also in matters of textual interpretation. Jenkins uses the titular 'poaching' to encompass both these phenomena: the fans 'poach' upon not only the ownership, but also the producer-sanctioned interpretation. Jenkins further reads the exchange of fan works as anti-capitalist (Jenkins 2013, 160) – so, again, as a resistant act that directly references a Marxist model. All of these arguments, then, establish fans as resistors against a variety of Others.

This power-resistance concept has been developed in various ways since *Textual Poachers*. A great number of works emphasise the creative or active/productive aspect of fandom (e.g. Barton and Lampley 2014; Hellekson and Busse 2006; Jamison 2013; Geraghty 2014), others have chosen to focus on the various Others and their relationship with fandom, often in an attempt to define what 'fandom' or a 'fan' is (e.g. Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998; Hills 2002). Though power/resistance is not always directly addressed in these subsequent works, it resonates in the emphasis on the 'transformational' or 'critical' nature of fan products. That is, fan works, such as fanfiction, are often defined by the very fact that they supposedly transform the source text, in the sense that they break mainstream media conventions while being written by fans who are perceived as having relatively little cultural capital, to use Bourdieu's term. Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse in their *Fan Fiction Studies Reader*, for example, acknowledge that something like fanfiction (and therefore, certainly, fans) might have existed as far back as antiquity, or at least from the emergence of 'authorial copyright' (Hellekson and Busse 2014, 6). They, however, are also quick to limit their analysis, '[f]ollowing most academics' in the field, to media fandom as starting in the 1960s (Hellekson and Busse 2014, 6). Hellekson and Busse see the distinction of that fandom to earlier forms of fanfiction in the 'consciously critical' nature of these new fan

works, though they fail to precisely define what they mean by those terms, beyond an emphasis on its primarly female (and therefore of lower cultural capital?) creators (Hellekson and Busse 2014, 6).

Alternative, the question of power/resistance arises in the discussions of Others that are perceived as more culturally established, ranging from the rights holders and professional producers to academics (Hills 2002) – in Bourdieu's concept of class, those that hold more cultural and often also economic capital. Hills stresses the tensions between academics and fans in particular, in that academics seem to look down on fans for not being scholarly enough, i.e. not possessing enough educational capital, while fans seem to look down on academics for precisely placing so much emphasis on educational capital (Hills 2002, 3–8).

However, the power/resistance model has also been criticised, and the fan studies discipline has sought to overcome it. Cornel Sandvoss in *Fans* explicitly rejects what he calls the 'power and resistance' (Sandvoss 2005, 11) model of fandom. He raises several points of critique, three of which I will highlight. Firstly, Sandvoss criticises that the object of this resistance is not fixed – as shown above, fans can be interpreted as resisting, for instance, the popular textual interpretation, the producer, academics (Hills 2002; Jenkins 2013) or even society at large. That is, fans seem to 'resist' on many fronts, according to Sandvoss, and 'do not allow for simple bipolar oppositions' (Sandvoss 2005, 43). Secondly, Sandvoss argues against the emphasis on popular culture, stating that not all fans belong to a disempowered group in the wider cultural context, in the sense that not all have low cultural capital in Bourdieusian terms (Sandvoss 2005, 38). I will address this criticism in more detail in the next section, when I turn to literary fandoms. Thirdly, this kind of power-resistance view on fandom sets fandoms up as being understood as largely homogeneous groups fighting united against an empowered (and seemingly equally uniform) Other, when there is evidence of differences between fans (Sandvoss 2005, 27, 38). Though there have been some efforts to analyse fans on an individual basis to break out of this illusion of homogeneity

(e.g. Sandvoss 2005; Hills 2002), these works in turn lose track of the communal aspect of fandom, creating insular individuals with fannish interests. That is to say, fandoms by definition contain a number of different fans, a group of people, whether or not they describe themselves as cohesive community, and regardless of the fact that not every individual interacts with every other individual of the fandom. In attempting to counteract the homogeneity of the power-resistance model as Jenkins establishes it, then, the works emphasising the individual fans have struck on the other extreme, making invisible what individuals within the same fandom have in common.

Hence, I would propose a middle ground. The power/resistance model constitutes only one way in which the idea of power might be applied to fandoms: the resistance of unprivileged fans against an empowered Other. What is missing is a different application of the concept of power to fandom – one which analyses power dynamics *within* fandoms rather than between fans and an outsider. Before proposing a new understanding of power as it might be applied to fandom (and other, comparable cultural groups), however, I first have to address another gap in previous analyses of fandom: the lack of discussion of fandoms not based on film and television. The power/resistance model, as Sandvoss correctly points out, has been intimately linked with the idea that a fan is, first and foremost, a fan of *popular* media culture, thus exempting a wide range of fandoms. Fan studies has sought to fill this gap in recent years, but there are still significant omissions in an area particularly relevant to this thesis' case study of the Sherlock Holmes fandom: fandoms based on literary works.

2.3 Caught between 'Resistance' and 'Popular': Literary Fandoms in Fan Studies Literature

Among the reasons why fans are considered resistors to an empowered Other is the argument that their object of fandom is culturally devalued – i.e. 'low' or

'popular' culture. While *Textual Poachers* does not strictly limit itself to film and TV, genre television still constitutes most of Jenkins's main examples (*Star Trek*, *Doctor Who*, *Blake's 7*, amongst others). Jenkins makes reference also to Sherlock Holmes, whom, as a character, he seems to consider still very much rooted in the world of books, as his mention of the Holmes fandom rarely overlaps with the extensive discussion of media fandoms (Jenkins 2013, 27). Since *Textual Poachers*, however, the emphasis on film and TV has been variously perpetuated, to the point where the 'popular,' as it is used in relation to fandom, seems to even exclude pop music or sports fans (see Sandvoss 2005). Among the objects of fandom excluded are also literary texts, even where they are 'popular' or, alternatively, these only emerge as subjects in fan studies works when the literature is adapted into film.

Literary works which have seen major film adaptations in the recent years, such as *Harry Potter* or *The Lord of the Rings*, have been discussed in fan studies works, but as film fandoms, not literary fandoms. For instance, Owain Gwynne's essay in *Fan CULTure* (edited by Kristin Barton and Jonathan Lampley) only addresses *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* as a series of films rather than as a literary work, and its fandom as one centred on these film trilogies (Gwynne 2014). Chin and Gray's article on the *Lord of the Rings* films examines de-facto literary fans, but frames them as 'pre-viewers' of the films (Chin and Gray 2001). Similarly, the (academic) interest in *Sherlock Holmes* as both a text and a fandom has spiked considerably through its recent presence in mainstream media (e.g. Ue and Cranfield 2014; Stein and Busse 2012). However, both *Holmes* and *The Lord of the Rings*, at least, have been around more than half a century as literary texts, and so surely have the (literature) fans.

A noteworthy early exception to this lack of discussion about literary fans is Janice Radway's work on *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriachy and Popular Literature* (Radway 1984). The discussion of the readers of romance is only a small part of Radway's work, and she does not directly invoke the term 'fan.'

However, Radway, too, positions the genre of 'romance' as one that is culturally devalued (Radway 1984, 54) and thus its readers as a resistant subculture. Consequently, these romance readers constitute a fandom in a very Jenkinsian sense, including not only the resistance aspect, but also the community and even the productivity. Her romance readers therefore easily fit within the power/resistance paradigm of fandom.

Even here, then, the focus is still on the 'popular.' Radway's romance readers appear so much like a fandom in the Jenkinsian sense because the material they deeply engage with is not academic-canonical reading. Clearly, then, Jenkins's framing of fans' in-depth textual engagement with popular culture as resistant (Jenkins 1992, 82) makes a point not only about fans and their activity, but also about what can be considered an object of fandom. Fandom is only fandom, and therefore the focus of fan studies, if its object of fandom allows one to establish a power/resistance constellation based on that object being culturally devalued.

This is where Sandvoss's second point of critique of the power/resistance model of fandom finds a lot of traction. Cornel Sandvoss stresses that the need for resistance does not apply equally to all types of fandoms and fans. Instead, we can observe fandoms that are not strictly 'popular' as well as fans who do not lack cultural capital. This goes hand in hand with Sandvoss's move away from popular media culture fandom as sole focus. He attempts to move away from specific case studies entirely, aiming to arrive at a new definition and model of fandom that can be applied across the field, whether it be sports or narrative media. His interest is in highlighting 'the parallels between fans of different text or genres' (Sandvoss 2005, 8) rather than in making a case for the 'assumed uniqueness' (Sandvoss 2005, 8) of any specific fan culture. So, to raise just one example following Sandvoss, the emphasis often placed on female fandom as a counter to the male-dominated world of producers cannot be generalised as a universal model of fandom, as sports fandoms, for instance, are more male dominated. Not all fans can be considered as having little cultural or educational capital even when

their object of fandom is 'popular' as, almost by definition, access to 'popular culture' spans social classes.

Here, Sandvoss still emphasises popular culture as objects of fandom, even where he argues that the fans of these popular culture objects do not occupy the same social and cultural position. Sandvoss further argues, however, that it is not a question of the 'objects of fandom' (Sandvoss 2005, 38) where one might find 'privileged' fans. That is, 'highbrow' shows, for example, do not necessarily attract only 'highbrow' fans, and 'lowbrow' shows do not only attract 'lowbrow' fans, i.e. fans with a high or low degree of capital respectively, whether it be expressed in class or otherwise. Rather, according to Sandvoss, 'variation in fan practices [...] are increasingly indicative of social and cultural differences' (Sandvoss 2005, 38). That is, the fannish *activity* undertaken by the fan indicates their cultural status, not the material on which their fandom centres. Class differences change the way the fans engage with their fandom, not what they pick as object for their fandom.

Sandvoss thus does not directly link the 'highbrow' objects of fandom with 'highbrow' fan activities (whatever these might be), as he suggests that not all fans of 'highbrow' objects of fandom are 'highbrow' in terms of their own social status. As such, he partially contradicts Bourdieu's direct link between cultural consumption and class/capital. Sandvoss instead merely establishes a connection between certain types of *activity* and a fan's social capital. He does not go on to expand on what these activities might be, and which might be considered 'lowbrow' and which 'highbrow.' This failure to define what he means by highbrow activities immediately opens Sandvoss's point up to criticism. Indeed, the assumption that exclusively 'highbrow' forms of engaging with fandom exist at all is contradicted by the few studies that have been done on fans or fan objects that are considered (or consider themselves) more 'highbrow.' These studies find that the way in which 'highbrow' fans engage with their objects of fandom is at least closely related to those generally considered fannish (e.g. Pearson 2007; Yaffe

2013; Brooker 2005a), regardless of both the object's cultural status and the social position of its fans. While 'highbrow' is far from an objective descriptor, and rather forms a value judgement expressed, for instance, in such cultural markers as academic canonicity, the concept remains one which is in use within fandom circles, and thus cannot be ignored. For instance, there are groups that are reticent to describe themselves as 'fans.' This reticence is perhaps explained, as Roberta Pearson suggests, by a desire amongst 'fans' of the high- or even middlebrow (as difficult as it is to pin down those categories) to distinguish themselves from the 'fanatics' of pop culture. They may do so by rejecting the very term 'fan' as a means of self-description and opt for terms like 'aficionado' instead, playing into broader societal and cultural hierarchies (Pearson 2007, 106–7).

However, regardless of these fans' evocation of a position of higher cultural capital, the activities of these 'aficionados' are not so very different from those described of popular culture fandoms. Roberta Pearson's essay 'Bachies, Bardies, Trekkies and Sherlockians' (Pearson 2007) compares 'fans' of classical music and those of Shakespeare, Sherlock Holmes 'fans' organised in literary societies, and the often-studied *Star Trek* fans, and finds a great deal of similarity between them:

> Expecting dissonances between Bachies ['fans' of classical composer Johann Sebastian Bach] and popular culture fandoms, I instead found harmony. Bachies are every bit as emotional as their popular culture counterparts and every bit as bloody minded about their own particular preferences. (Pearson 2007, 862)

There is thus every indication that there is no difference in activity between fans of the two different ranges of objects of fandom, even where there are signs that the fans consider *themselves* to also be more 'highbrow' (i.e. of higher social class). This directly disproves Sandvoss's argument that fans of different cultural capital engage with their objects of fandom, even the same object of fandom, in different ways.

The brevity of the Pearson article does not allow for wider ethnographic work and it might not be wise to generalise from it. However, it is backed up by other studies on literary societies. Will Brooker's essay-length study of 'The Lewis Carroll Society as a Fan Community' approaches the Lewis Carroll Society directly from the perspective of a fan scholar. Assuming the fannishness of his subjects to show the fannishness of their behaviour may be a somewhat circular argument, but the fact remains that the activities Brooker observes fit well within the Jenkinsian model of fandom, even where Brooker emphasises the fans' 'respectably middle-class' status (Brooker 2005a, 861). Brooker succeeds in highlighting the various activities carried out by the Lewis Carroll Society that might be perceived as 'fannish': travelling, forming a community, the intensity of engagement, a sense of ownership of the text regardless of copyright and the performative nature in adopting, for example, Carroll's diction. Brooker's 'fans' further position themselves somewhere in between academia and the general reader, claiming a superiority over the latter and engaging with the former by publishing their own scholarship (Brooker 2005a, 872–75), again fitting to the Jenkinsian model. Similarly, Janeites – 'fans' of Jane Austen – organise in literary societies, such as JASNA (the Jane Austen Society of North America), but their activities are fannish in the same sense that the Lewis Carroll Society's are: they hold meetings, go on Austen-themed trips (Yaffe 2013, 93), they write their own (transformative) works based on Austen novels (Yaffe 2013, 182). Deborah Yaffe's book-length journalistic investigation of the Janeites self-describes as 'not a scholarly study' (Yaffe 2013, 239) and thus does not engage directly with the question of whether Janeites are fans or of how they fit within pre-existing models of fandoms. However, the taken-for-grantedness with which Yaffe, herself being a member of JASNA, talks of the Janeites as fans is telling, as it suggests that without disciplinary preconceptions of what a fan should be in terms of objects of fandom – i.e. someone engaged with popular film/TV – the Janeites unquestioningly read as fans.

What emerges here, then, is that the restriction to 'resistance' and the 'popular' has functionally excluded groups which walk, swim and quack like fans, and accordingly surely should be considered fans, whether or not they label themselves as 'fans.' Both Pearson and Brooker are concerned with justifying the need for fan studies as a field to recognise these types of literary societies and their activities as fandom and fannish and therefore needing to be examined within the frame of the field. However, all of the works mentioned above also highlight the difference perceived between this type of fan and the 'typical' pop culture media fan of the Jenkinsian type. Brooker stresses what he calls 'intriguing differences,' addressing directly the resistance paradigm and the powerlessness of fans (Brooker 2005a, 861). In particularly, he challenges the academic vs fan dichotomy that is established by Jenkins, who describes fans as academic-like, but never fully academic for their emotional yet critical closeness and the very reason that the object of fandom is pop culture (Jenkins 2013, 60–66, 86–98). Brooker engages with fans of an author who has become canonical within English literature (Brooker 2005a, 861), in this way immediately removing one point of distinction between Jenkins's academic-like fans and 'true' academics. As for emotional closeness, Brooker writes

> Although the LCS's [Lewis Carroll Society's] publications are born of fan enthusiasm, they also employ the conventions of academic scholarship and include contributions from scholars such as Edward Wakeling, whose books enjoy success in mainstream publishing, outside the fan community. LCS members are regularly consulted by journalists and invited to shape the discourse on heritage sites; the community includes descendants of Carroll and Alice Liddell's family and custodians of primary documents. [...] these fans have a significant cultural voice. (Brooker 2005a, 862)

In the case of the LCS, then, Brooker sees very little distinction between fan scholarship and academic scholarship in terms of format, and the emotional close-

ness, or 'fan enthusiasm,' is not an obstacle to the production of scholarship that is perceived as 'truly' academic. Rather than hinting at a difference in the scholarly texts themselves produced by the LCS and Jenkins's media fans respectively, then, this points towards the very power/resistance paradigm, and the way in which it has restricted what a fan can (and should) be. The scholarship produced by the LCS is *not* culturally devalued. The scholarship produced by the fans Jenkins writes about is devalued. Hence, it mirrors the way in which their object of fandom – Lewis Carroll on the one hand, popular media on the other – is and is not culturally devalued. Therefore, the LCS does not fit into the 'resistance' bracket of the paradigm, but even so it still engages in fan activity.

Pursuing a similar line of enquiry, Deborah Yaffe shows interest in the question 'What kind of fan?' with regards to the Janeites. This question seems to have guided her selection of interviewees as she presents a broad spectrum of different 'fan types' and the lines of division that arise through those 'types' within the fandom. So, for instance, as she narrates the history of JASNA, she, too, mentions the tension between academics and fans. One of her interviewees 'considers herself an Austen scholar, not a fan,' and there was a fear of JASNA becoming "'too academic"' (Yaffe 2013, 172). JASNA's website, despite invoking the term 'fan' on the landing page, gives every indication of a professional rather than a fan society: 'The Jane Austen Society of North America is a non-profit organization staffed by volunteers and dedicated to the enjoyment and appreciation of Jane Austen and her writing' (JASNA 2017b). Its registration as a non-profit organisation gives it a status few other fan groups hold, and beyond that, the website gives information about Jane Austen prominence over information about the society. Further, societal activities are framed in academic terms: 'Publications,' 'Conference & Events.' Even the 'About JASNA' page makes no further reference to the term 'fan,' using instead the terms 'reader' and 'literary society' (JASNA 2017a). Again, it does not seem to fit within in the 'resistance' bracket, in that there is no visible difference between academic work and the scholarly

work put forth by JASNA.

However, the topic of cultural power and resistance emerges in different ways in the case of JASNA. Roberta Pearson in 'Janeites and Sherlockians: Literary Societies, Cultural Legitimacy and Gender' (Pearson 2018) directly compares the scholar-like activities of Janeites and Sherlockians and the way in which they are culturally (de)valued. While Austen's novels are firmly canonical and the Holmes stories are not (Pearson 2018, 496), the literary societies of both fandoms engage in 'scholarship.' JASNA's journals are 'peer-reviewed [...] leading sources for Austen studies' (JASNA 2017c). The Baker Street Irregulars (BSI), one of the largest Sherlock Holmes literary societies, publish the quarterly *Baker Street Journal* (BSJ), which includes 'both serious scholarship and articles that "play the game"' (BSI 2017b). The 'game' references The Great Game, which is 'predicated upon two fundamental precepts: (1) Holmes and Watson were real people; and (2) Watson wrote the stories; Conan Doyle was merely his literary agent' (Pearson 2018, 500). As the description on the journal's website indicates, the Game is not considered 'serious scholarship.' By all rights, the scholarship produced by JASNA should be more highly valued culturally than that written for the BSJ. However, Pearson finds that this is not the case. Instead, JASNA as a society and its output is devalued on the basis of being connoted predominately female, whereas the BSI is connoted male despite being open to women since 1991 (though there are still conflicts of gender surrounding the BSI) and therefore perceived as more culturally legitimate (Pearson 2018).

In this fashion, Pearson speaks to a power/resistance paradigm that does not run along the lines of 'highbrow' versus 'popular,' but along the lines of gender. The power/powerlessness of fans is perceived not as due to their popular object of fandom, or as due to the type of their activities, or as due to their emotional closeness, but as due to their gender, thus speaking to broader cultural hierarchies in which the female is connoted as inferior to the male. What the works on literary societies cited here achieve, then, is not only to further complicate the Jenkinsian

power/resistance paradigm as Sandvoss begins to do and to move away from the paradigm towards an examination of fans that do not seem to fit the mold, but to attempt to answer the question of *why* some fans are 'powerless' while others, despite their clear similarities, are not.

While this is doubtless an intriguing line of enquiry, it also feeds into a conception of fandom that has been far less actively criticised than the power/resistance paradigm. Fandom is still conceived of as largely homogeneous in itself. What is interrogated is still the relationship of fandom against an Other (mainstream, producers, academia, other fandoms etc.), even if the Other, in some cases, is now no specific entity, but society or culture at large (e.g. in the form of gender dynamics). What is largely missing from the argument is an examination of how (cultural) power dynamics play out *within* fandoms and, indeed, comparable cultural groups. Yaffe indicates towards differences of opinion among the Janeites (Yaffe 2013, 172); Pearson examines the negative reception of the female Holmesian group of the Baker Street Babes by the BSI (Pearson 2018, 503). Comprehensive studies of how fans interact with their fellow fans, however, are far and few between, despite Hills's decade-old critique that Jenkins's *Textual Poachers* 'lack[s] of a sense of fandom's competitive, argumentative and factional possibilities' (Hills 2002, 1). This thesis aims to fill that gap. If power is as persuasive in structuring human cultural interaction as cultural studies' interest in it suggests, it is surely to be found between the members of a single cultural group, between the fans of a single fandom. If power dynamics with regards to, for example, class can further our understanding of society, then the power dynamics within cultural groups, within fandoms, must surely further our understanding of this particular type of everyday 'way of life' (Williams 1998, 48). It is this question of how to analyse power structures within fandoms with which the next section of this chapter is concerned.

2.4 Towards a Fandom Model of Distinction with Bourdieu and Foucault

As we have seen, then, power has been an important aspect of the studies of fandom as much as of cultural studies in general. Fan studies as a discipline has so far approached the subject of power in one of two ways: either reinforcing the power/resistance paradigm, or attempting to contradict it. In either approach, fan studies conceives of fandoms primarily as groups of which the interior structures are either exempted from analysis or assumed to be mostly homogeneous in the face of an Other. Another branch of fan studies has looked at individual fans, but has not engaged with the question of the power constellations that surround these fans at any length (e.g. Sandvoss 2005; Hills 2002). Neither of these has examined power with regards to the relationships and the relationship management *within* fandoms. In this section, I will therefore return to the theories of Bourdieu and Foucault to establish an understanding of power relationships applicable *within* cultural groups and fandoms in particular, with which I will then go on to examine the case study of the Sherlock Holmes fandom in the remainder of the thesis.

First, however, it is necessary to acknowledge that there are studies that do shed some light on the interior structures of cultural groups, including fandoms, though they are far and few between and often do not fully engage with the question of power relationships. That is, this thesis acknowledges that it is not unique in its interest in internal dynamics, but intends to examine and schematise these internal dynamics to a fuller extend than previous works. Previous works that do show interest in internal dynamics include, for instance, Bacon-Smith (Bacon-Smith 1992), Thornton (Thornton 1997), Muggleton (Muggleton 2000), Proctor and McCulloch (Proctor and McCulloch 2019), Brooker (Brooker 2005b, 2002) and Bury (Bury 2005).

Camille Bacon-Smith is concerned with the *Star Trek* fandom's makeup, but

seems to perceive of it mostly as an onion of which an outsider uncovers one layer after another as they are inducted into the fandom (Bacon-Smith 1992). She does not entirely shy away from discussions of what fans consider appropriate behaviour and not, and therefore of divisions within fandom. There is discussion of the dislike of slash fiction (i.e. fiction that pairs (often same-gender) characters that do not necessarily have a romantic or sexually explicit relationship in the source material; Brooker similarly addresses criticism of slash (Brooker 2002, 129–31)), as well as of a fundraising campaign for a zine publication, in which the donations were never actually put towards the publication (Bacon-Smith 1992, 220–22). These examples show that fandom can be far from harmonious. But even in highlighting these points of division and conflict, Bacon-Smith returns to the positive image of an overall close-knit, supportive, social and unified community.

Will Brooker's study of *Star Wars* fans is similar. He is careful to acknowledge the specificity of the fan responses uses for his study, nodding towards potentially conflicting responses among fans (Brooker 2002, 54–57). Most prominently, Brooker addresses conflicts in response to a diverse and developing source material (Brooker 2002, 69–72, 84–99, 107–13), and to a lesser degree gender (Brooker 2002, 201–20). Brooker does not wave these conflicts away in the same way as Bacon-Smith, acknowledging instead that fandom conflict 'reminds us that to talk of the fan reaction or the fan viewpoint [...] is to impose an imagined consensus on a community that thrives on debate' (Brooker 2002, 113). Brooker does, however, touch only briefly on between-fan conflicts, and frame many occasions of conflict as either between non-fans/newcomers to the fandom and long-time fans (Brooker 2002, e.g., 53–54, 60–62, 209), or between fans and the official rights holders (Brooker 2002, 79–99), and tends to also put a stress on similarities despite (demographic) differences (Brooker 2002, e.g., 229). He comes closest to analysing a fandom-specific division when he addresses the "'Basher/Gusher Wars"' around *The Phantom Menace* (Brooker 2002,

94–99), but ultimately describes the conflict in terms of fans' relationship to *Star Wars*' creator, rather than between each other (Brooker 2002, 96–99). In his work on Batman, Brooker also addressed fans' engagement the various Batman texts, but there focusses his discussion on fans' engagement with multiple authorship, rather than on how these texts influence the relationship of fans amongst each other (Brooker 2005b, 249–307). On the whole, Brooker, then, also stops short of schematising any of these within-fandom conflicts more fully.

Most recently, William Proctor and Richard McCulloch's edited collection *Disney's* Star Wars*: Forces of Production, Promotion, and Reception* follows in Brooker's footsteps (Proctor and McCulloch 2019). William Proctor's own chapters in the volume also engage with the diversity of fan reactions to a changing source text / fandom canon, and mention the intra-fandom conflicts resulting from this (Proctor and McCulloch 2019, 2–53,301–21). However, these are overall more concerned with views *on* fans (i.e., who do *we as scholars* perceive as a 'good' fan), rather than relationship negotiations *between* fans (i.e., who do *the fans* perceive as 'good' fans) (Proctor and McCulloch 2019, 252). The methodology used in the discussion of #BlackStormtrooper – twitter scraping – for instance, makes it 'difficult to distinguish fans from general commenters' by Proctor's own admission (Proctor and McCulloch 2019, 250), and thus, though interesting in that it reveals *potential* discussions of racism and race within a fandom, does not fully focus on within-fandom dynamics.

Sarah Thornton's *Club Cultures*, a study of subculture rather than fandom, seems at first glance to be an exception to the homogeneous view. Thornton sets out to examine distinctions *within* music subculture, but ultimately succeeds less in portraying a complex interior structure of the subculture than she does in portraying both the homogeneity and the distinction against the 'mainstream' Other as constructs created not only by outsiders, but also by members of the subculture themselves (Thornton 1997). So she, not unlike Bacon-Smith, starts from an interest in the interior workings of the communities, but ends with a bin-

ary opposition/resistance view of the cultural group in which the group mostly coherently resists an Other, reinforcing the power/resistance paradigm.

Similarly, David Muggleton criticises the 'black box' approach to subcultures of the Birmingham School. He highlights the necessity of individual subjective perspectives of the members of the subculture and acknowledges also the individual *differences* between members (Muggleton 2000, 10; 20–22), going further than Thorton. He comes closest to a discussion of relationship negotiations *within* a cultural group in addressing the question of 'authenticity' with his own interview data (Muggleton 2000, 87–91), identifying references to a 'subcultural "Other"' (Muggleton 2000, 101) as well as to Others outside of the specific subculture. In particular, Muggleton discusses the labels of "'hardcores"' and "'preppies",' ultimately concluding that 'there are no "hardcores" and "preppies" in any "realist" sense, only members who construct themselves as the former and their contemporaries as the latter,' and vice-versa (Muggleton 2000, 101–102; 147). However, Muggleton merges these inner-group otherings with discussions of otherings of non-group members. He stops short of attempting to fully schematise these observations of a 'subcultural "Other"' (or to expand and categorise them beyond the concept of 'authenticity') as specific power / value dynamics. He is ultimately less interested in the power constellations between members than in proposing an alternative to the Birmingham School approach to cultural groups.

What is missing, then, is a fuller conceptualisation of relationship dynamics between fans: a comprehensive way of understanding how power functions within cultural groups and fandoms, how group members and fans negotiate their relationships with their fellow members and fans – one that is also founded in the point of view of its members rather than in the point of view of an outsider, which is one of Muggleton's biggest points of critique against the Birmingham School (Muggleton 2000, 1–8). What I have previously vaguely referred to as cultural groups' 'interior workings' or 'structure' should be understood as the relationships and the associated relationship management that occurs between

individual members of the same group as well as between the sections that form within that group. For this present study, I will refer to these sections as fandom 'factions.' Factions may have a special term or name to self-describe, but such a term is not necessary for a faction to form, and factions are subsections of fandoms, not fandoms in their own right. These cultural group/fandom relationships are relationships of power, and it is therefore necessary to establish a framework with which to analyse these power-driven mechanisms of relationship management between members and factions of members *within* a cultural group such as a fandom.

In terms of underlying conceptualisations of power, Thornton points the way, though her study ultimately falls short of its goal of fully opening the 'black box' of her music subculture. Her underlying framework invokes the Bourdieusian concept of 'distinction.' As Thornton uses it, 'distinction' becomes primarily about whether or not someone 'belongs,' i.e. about an insider-outsider binary, much in the same vein as Bacon-Smith's narrative of being introduced into the fandom. In Thornton, this binary becomes a construct by the subcultural members. Not only does the 'mainstream' Other become coded as 'female' as opposed to the subcultural 'male' (Thornton 1997, 115), the club culture also constructs an idealised self-image. So, for instance, Thornton describes clubs as 'exclusive and egalitarian, classless but superior to the mass-market' (Thornton 1997, 56), highlighting the tension between the attempts to idealise the subculture coming from within that culture and the exclusiveness of 'belonging.' Leaving aside the Other for a moment, Thornton indicates a hierarchical understanding of the subculture by coining the term 'subcultural capital' in reference to Bourdieu's 'cultural capital,' a 'currency which correlates with and legitimizes unequal statuses' (Thornton 1997, 104). In other terms, it describes degrees of 'hipness' which translate into degrees of 'belonging.' Therefore, the less 'Other' one is – the more 'subcultural capital' one holds – the better integrated one is and the higher also one's hierarchical position within the subculture. Sadly, these hints at

relation-shaping hierarchical structure within the subculture remain hints – most of Thornton's book is instead concerned with how distinction against the mainstream Other is constructed, and thus remains caught up in the resistance/'black box' model.

Rhiannon Bury, conversely, engages in depth with the relationships and relationship management within her chosen fan groups (Bury 2005). She does not examine a complete fandom, but focusses on two specific email list servers, an all-female *The X-Files* list and a slash-focussed *Due South* list. In the terminology used within this thesis, these lists would represent factions within the larger *The X-Files* and *Due South* fandom. Throughout her ethnographically driven study, Bury's interest lies in both the relationship management between the members of the lists and in their relationship towards others in the fandom, rather than fandom outsiders. She, too, invokes Bourdieu, using him alongside Foucault. The primary recurring tool for understanding the relationship she analyses, building on both theorists, is the concept of an 'insider/outsider binary wherein exclusion necessarily goes hand in hand with inclusion' (Bury 2005, 15) – not in the sense that the outsiders are marked as outside of the fandom, but as outside of the in-fandom faction. Thus, Bury uses similar terms as Muggleton, who also invokes an internal 'other,' but differs in the conceptual backing. In this, Bury is closest to this thesis's approach. Where Muggleton describes his work as 'neo-Weberian' (Muggleton 2000, 10) and is ultimately more interested in refuting the Birmingham School approach than in group-internal dynamics, Bury anchors her study firmly in the notion of power relationships between group members, and in Foucault and Bourdieu as theoretical background. Hills, though ultimately applying it more to the fan versus academic dynamic, also proposes a similar concept, that of 'moral dualisms,' 'i.e. different versions of "us" (good) and "them" (bad)' (Hills 2002, 27). Hills affirms the judgemental aspect to the binary – not only are the outsiders different, they are also (however unintentionally) marked as at least unwelcome. To draw on Bury's example of the *X-Files* list:

> The name David Duchovny Estrogen Brigade [...] signals that membership involves an adherence/allegiance to a feminine heterosexual identity. While naming the lists as such was intended to exclude male fans and celebrate female desire, it also had the effect, intentional or not, of excluding female fans of *The X-Files* who may have wanted to join a women-only list but identified as lesbian. (Bury 2005, 14–15)

As this quote illustrates, the formation of this faction does not equal the formation of a new fandom. The faction was designed to provide a space for female fans but at the same time excluded lesbian female fans. Not just a male fellow fan, but also a homosexual female fellow fan would have been marked as 'outsider' in this faction. This exclusion in particular already illustrates the complexity of the interrelations of fans and fan factions within a fandom – it is not just a question of how the faction deliberately frames itself, but also what (unintended) effects these framings might have. Nor should one fall into the trap of 'romanticiz[ing] communities that are formed out of exclusion and/or marginalization' (Bury 2005, 15), thereby creating new homogeneous black boxes. In a moment, I will expand on how this thesis will draw on Bourdieu and Foucault to examine the relationships and relationship management within cultural groups such as fandoms, between individual members and between factions. Before that, however, it needs to be said that the main flaw of Bury's study is that she reduces all the complexities of inclusion/exclusion she explores – and there are a great variety in her study – to three broad categories: gender, sexuality, and class. While this aligns her closely with Bourdieu, it is also somewhat reductive, as I shall illustrate.

What we have seen is that there are two models that seem to come up when light is shed on relationship management within fandoms: hierarchies and insider-outsider binaries. To avoid terminological confusion between fandom outsiders and within-fandom faction outsiders (which are intermingled in Muggleton, for

example), I will henceforth refer to the latter as self-other binaries. This thesis suggests that both of these concepts may be unified under the term 'distinction,' which here is defined not as strictly Bourdieusian, but is taken to describe a difference associated with a value judgement.

However, the use of the term 'distinction' so immediately invokes Bourdieu, as does the notion of a group-specific type of capital that Thornton raises, that Bourdieu needs to be addressed before this thesis can formulate it's own conceptualisation of 'distinction.' Additionally, the Bourdieusian concept of 'field' allows for sub-fields, that is, the existence of smaller fields within larger fields which follow their own rules yet are also influenced by other fields as well as the larger field (Jenkins 2002, 84–85). This definition of 'field' provided by Bourdieu is reminiscent of what Bury observes in relation to the 'Estrogen Brigade':

> [...] a field of forces; in other words, [...] a set of objective power relations imposed on all those who enter this field, relations which are not reducible to the intentions of individual agents or even to direct *interactions* between agents [...] (Bourdieu 1991, 230)

That is to say, if we consider the 'Estrogen Brigade' a sub-field, the exclusion of the homosexual female fan clearly falls under one of the 'power relations' which cannot be linked to intentions of one of the members, or to a possible interactions between a member and a non-member – instead, the name in itself excludes, intentionally or not. Consequently, Bourdieu and the concept of the 'field' in particular seems a tempting model to apply to fandoms. One can certainly perceive of a fandom as an overarching field in which there exist other fields (the factions), and in all of which types of capital are negotiated. As shown above, however, it is clear that Bourdieu's notion of capital is irrevocably hierarchical – the more capital, the better your position within the field/class/society. While Bourdieu acknowledges that different professions, for instance, value different types of capital more than others (Bourdieu 1996, 286) according to their respective 'habitus,' it is still the case in Bourdieu's model that the more – and the

more different types of – capital one possesses, the better one's placement in the frame of reference, and the more 'distinguished' one's tastes. In this Bourdieusian sense, the relations between and within fandom fields must be considered strictly hierarchical, and while not determined solely by economics, so still determined by the possession of some type of quantifiable capital. The concept of distinction in the Bourdieusian sense therefore does and will carry hierarchical connotations which we should avoid applying without question, at least in the case of fandoms, but perhaps also in the case of other cultural groups.

As Bacon-Smith, Fiske and Thornton show – the latter two both invoking Bourdieu's notion of capital (Fiske 1989; Thornton 1997) – cultural groups including fandoms are not devoid of somewhat fixed hierarchies, nor do I wish to suggest as much. Clearly, especially in terms of the introduction of group outsiders to the group/fandom et cetera, group-specific capital, such as subcultural capital, however defined, plays a role, and the concept of Bourdieusian distinction as such is applicable. However, looking at cultural groups, in particular fandoms, and distinction purely through the lens of Bourdieu implies the existence of a single, objective hierarchy through which all members/fans wish and do move, and that the only real distinction that occurs is between members/fans and not-members/fans. Even allowing for sub-fields with their own internal hierarchies still implies that the sub-fields, collectively, are also again arranged hierarchically. In essence, the Bourdieusian model suggests a single hierarchical route to the position of 'supermember' or 'superfan' that each would-be-member/fan must take (and wants to take!) or be considered 'not enough of a member/fan' to belong to the group/fandom. This model, however, at best does not account for the variety amongst cultural groups generally, fandoms in particular and members and fans individually. In fandom, such difference may include those that congregate online and those that meet in person, those that write fanfiction and those that do not and so on. Assuming a single hierarchy at worst implies that

one is more 'fannish' than the other.[3]

Not to throw the baby out with the bath water, however, let us take the concept of 'distinction' and remove the strict single hierarchical connotations that Bourdieu ascribes to it, simply understanding it as difference that is imbued with a value judgement, but does not sit within a predefined single hierarchy as per Bourdieu. Instead, this thesis draws on an understanding of relationship management, both personal and among groups, which is deliberately not top-down hierarchical: Michel Foucault's understanding of power. Despite Foucault's avoidance of a definition of the term 'power' (McHould and Grace 2002, 59), his understanding of how relationships are negotiated through it is a good one to think with in terms of cultural groups such as fandoms, as it breaks with the idea of a single, necessary, inescapable hierarchy. As discussed above, Foucault understands power as diffused through society – every relationship, with others and with oneself, is shaped by it. What is more, difference that is expressed as 'self' versus 'other,' or indeed 'good' versus 'bad' is intrinsic to Foucault's model of power and the way in which human relationships and interactions function.

As I have shown above, the concept of distinction is not entirely irreconcilable with Foucault, especially if removed from the single hierarchical context in which it is bound up in Bourdieu. To apply this to fandom factions specifically, the notion of capital and hierarchical distinction implies the existence of an in-fandom consensus about which fan/faction is 'good' – that which retains the highest amount of capital, the most 'distinguished.' Foucault's understanding of self-other binaries not bound within a single hierarchy allows for the phenomenon that a faction perceives itself as 'good' and another faction or factions as 'bad,' but, vice versa, these other factions might perceive the first as 'bad' and themselves as 'good.' Further, there is not always a sense that the 'bad' other faction need only to become more involved with the fandom to become part of the own, 'good' faction (as Bacon-Smith's model seems to imply), although fac-

[3] A fallacy that is also present in academic works due to the emphasis on 'producing' fans, initially via Jenkins's *Textual Poachers* (Jenkins 1992), as I have shown above.

tions frequently seek to 'recruit' new members both from fandom outsiders and other in-fandom factions. There is neither a definite apex faction nor a core faction within the fandom, though factions/individuals might perceive themselves in that way. Other factions/individuals, meanwhile, might consider them the worst possible factions/individuals in the fandom. At the same time, even as these other factions/individuals refuse to be part of the first faction, they are still enmeshed in the net of power, and construct self-other binaries of their own. This links back to Bury's point on the (possibly unintentional) exclusion of queer women in the 'Estrogen Brigade.'

It is, of course, possible to conceive of these kind of shifting self-other binaries as hierarchies, in the sense that, depending on the individual perspective, each side considers itself more 'distinguished,' i.e., in a higher hierarchical position. However, this perception depends entirely on the individual side of the binary, that is, someone's 'self' is another's 'other.' At the same time, as I have illustrated above in the discussion of Thornton, fixed hierarchies are often understood as based on a degree of 'selfness' (or 'otherness'). Therefore, they can ultimately be related back to a self-other binary. Thus, in order to avoid terminological confusion, this thesis defines 'hierarchy' strictly in the Bourdieusian sense – as a kind of objectively fixed ladder of 'distinguishedness,' and lacking the shifting nature of what I describe here as 'binaries.' That is to say, when I describe fandoms as 'lacking hierarchies,' I do not suggest that hierarchical notions are absent, but that there is no single, fixed, 'objectively' tiered hierarchy.

As a consequence of this lack of a single hierarchy, 'self'/'other' perceptions within a cultural group also do not have to align with the cultural hierarchies of the wider society. Within a particular 'self' faction, the value judgements of that 'self' faction will be the ones that carry the most power, regardless of whether or not their position is culturally (de)valued beyond that faction and/or beyond the cultural group in question. That is, for example, a faction of female fans who value female fans beyond other genders, has the power to 'other' different

genders, even when one of those, male fans, is considered to be in a higher position of cultural power in the wider patriarchal society.

It might, of course, be possible that other cultural groups or indeed specific fandoms (or even another sample from within the Sherlock Holmes fandom) do have a commonly agreed fixed hierarchy, and more studies of the interior structures of a variety of groups are necessary to determine whether and where this is the case. This thesis contends, however, that approaching cultural groups with the assumption that they *must* contain a single hierarchy (in the way that society has been considered as a single hierarchy of class by scholars like Bourdieu) runs the risk of forcing preconceived assumptions on individual case studies. Without suggesting that hierarchical notions are absent, then, this thesis understands distinction as difference around a self-other binary which goes hand in hand with a value judgement.

Factions are not objectively the owners of more power or capital than others. Nor are they objectively more distinguished in a way that would allow an observer (or, indeed, a member/fan) to sort them into an in-group/fandom hierarchy which would be considered correct by all, or most, members/fans in the group/fandom. Nor is it the case that one faction seeks to subvert an objectively higher hierarchical position of another faction. Instead, each and all factions are bound up in a binary power dynamic. Each and all frame themselves and negotiate their relationships both towards other factions and individual members/fans by stressing their distinctness against a 'negative' Other, in short, by distinctions. In this sense, what is 'self' and what is 'other' constantly shifts, depending on the individual/faction that offers its perspective. Often, factions will also simultaneously draw on a variety of different distinctions, and position themselves against a variety of Others. Rather than attempting to define what these factions are and what types of capital they hold, the thesis will examine what constitutes these distinctions. In other words, it analyses what differences are imbued with value judgements and how the group members, here fans, negotiate these lines

of division within their group, here fandom – generally without considering the Other group/fandom outsiders, though they are faction outsiders. These lines of division, henceforth referred to as *Lines of Distinction*, are the focus of this thesis.

Having established as much, it is worth highlighting a notion that I mention only very briefly above. Foucault's concept of power, as power cannot be 'possessed,' requires some kind of action or practice for it to come into being. Consequently, as Lines of Distinction are based on this very same Foucauldian notion of 'power,' they do not exist without the actions of the members of the group, here, the fandom. In that sense, basing Lines of Distinction on Foucault leads to a similar kind of 'duality of structure' (Giddens 1979, 71) that underlies Giddens's conceptualisation of cultural structures in a general sense: 'the notions of action and structure *presuppose one another*' (Giddens 1979, 53, emphasis in original), and 'a social system [...] is produced and reproduced in interaction' (Giddens 1979, 66). Thus, while Lines of Distinction may sometimes have the appearance of a pre-set 'rule' or 'structure,' they are not – they emerge solely through (inter)action, in relationships between people. In fandoms, they thus appear and are reinforced through fan activities, discourses and interaction between fans, in short, through fannish practice. There are no Lines of Distinction without fans' actions. At its very basic, a Line of Distinction can only exist when an actual fan or faction makes a value judgement; there is no objective or pre-existing Line of Distinction, as there is no 'possession' of power.

There are a multitude of possible Lines of Distinction, certainly between cultural groups and between fandoms, but also within a single fandom. Most fandoms will have more than two factions, which will rarely have only a single Line of Distinction and which will also sometimes overlap in large parts while drawing very firm Lines of Distinction in others. The image of the net, which Foucault introduces in relation to the spread of power, is a good one to apply to this network of Lines of Distinction, as well. A fandom can be visualised as a complicatedly patterned net. In it, some knots (individuals or factions) might

be connected, while they separate themselves strictly from others except for the fact that they all form part of the same net, i.e. fandom. Which Lines of Distinction apply will depend on the fandom, and beyond fandom, on the nature of the cultural group. Amongst fandoms, at least, there are certainly some Lines of Distinction that can be found in most. Some of them might align with Bourdieu's capitals, but certainly not all. To introduce just a few examples, the ones we might broadly categorise as demographic, like the three Bury mentions – gender, sexuality and class – are certainly applicable to many fandoms, if not all, and likely also highly important beyond fandoms. However, there are also Lines of Distinction that are more group/fandom-specific and possibly also less intuitive to the outside observer. Among these we could, for example, count the type of productivity (you are only part of faction X if you write fanfiction) or the level of productivity (you are only part of faction Z if you write five fanfictions a week) or even self-description (you are part of faction Y if you call yourself a Y-er). While these examples might sound slightly exaggerated or even facetious in theory, it is important to bear in mind that Lines of Distinction are not limited to demographics or degrees of Bourdieusian capital, and that they might follow very specific in-group/fandom rules. Equally, it is not possible to reduce all Lines of Distinction that do not immediately *appear* demographic down to demographic reasons, as Bury attempts.

2.5 Concluding Remarks: Lines of Distinction

To summarise, Lines of Distinction, that is, lines of differences which are associated with value judgements, are formed by factions/individuals within cultural groups such as fandoms. Different factions may overlap in their Lines of Distinction, but have very specific Lines of Distinction in other cases. These Lines of Distinction are the primary way in which power is expressed in relationships between group members/fans or factions, and the Lines of Distinction emerge only through the practice of the members of the cultural group – they do not exist

without members/fans to embrace, enforce and address them. The Lines can be, but are very much not limited to, demographics, and a faction will generally have a combination of multiple Lines of Distinction which are applied in it.

In the next chapter, I will explore this model of Lines of Distinction directly on my specific case study of the Sherlock Holmes fandom. After introducing the fandom generally and historically, I will go on to point out the Lines of Distinction that can be observed within it. The following chapters will then examine selected examples of these Lines in greater detail, on case studies of specific fandom activities.

Chapter 3

Lines of Distinction: the Sherlock Holmes Fandom

The aim of this chapter is twofold: first, to give a brief overview of Sherlock Holmes and the associated fandom in general, to provide the background essential for understanding the following analyses; second, to outline the Lines of Distinction in the Holmes fandom today. As with the whole of the thesis, I will focus on the English-speaking fandom, though the interest and fandom around Sherlock Holmes spans the world, limited by neither language nor nationality.

First, I will give a short history of the text and fandom, including short introductions of the key players of the fandom today. From there, I will turn to the primary data that informs this thesis and highlight the multiple Lines of Distinction as they are described by members of the fandom. I will discuss the more prominent Lines. Both the discussion about the fandom's background and the one about its Lines of Distinction will remain only overviews here, designed to provide the reader with the essential background for Chapters 4, 5 and 6, which look at how the Lines of Distinction occur around a selection of Holmesian fandom activity. In these chapters, I will return in more detail to what can only be outlined in this chapter.

3.1 The Sherlock Holmes Fandom: a History and Overview

The original Sherlock Holmes stories were penned by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and comprise fifty-six short-stories and four novels. These stories are primarily narrated by Doctor John Watson relating cases solved by his flatmate and friend, Sherlock Holmes, who is a private consulting detective. The characters of Holmes and Watson first appeared in 1887 with the first novel, *A Study in Scarlet*. The final short story, 'Shoscombe Old Place,' was published in 1927. These works, or the Holmesian Canon,[1] are considered a cornerstone of the detective fiction genre, fully realising the model of the genius detective which would influence many subsequent works of the genre. There were instances of what can be classified as detective fiction before the Holmes Canon, such as Edgar Allan Poe's stories abound the amateur crime-solver Auguste Dupin, but 'their successes were subsumed into and superseded by that archetypal presentation of the somewhat aloof, infinitely clever, quite active, but always reliable hero who helped a baffled and threatened populace' (Knight 2004, 67) that is Holmes. Beyond the detective mysteries, a great deal of the continuing popularity of the Holmes stories (and their adaptations) has been credited to the main characters, and more specifically to the relationship between Holmes and Watson. For instance, in the afterword to his Holmes novel, *The House of Silk*, Anthony Horowitz argues that 'the appeal of the books [i.e. the Canon] has much more to do with character, the friendship

[1] In this thesis, 'Canon' (capitalised) will refer exclusively to the stories written by Doyle, excluding any adaptations, parodies and (re)writings created by other authors, even though it is necessary to note that in fandom discussions these latter might be considered (part of) the canon. 'The stories' also refers to the Canon only, exempting written work about Holmes by other authors unless otherwise specified. Due to the multitude of editions of the Canon and its relative diversity and size, direct citations of the Canon text in this thesis include not only the page numbers (in Arabic numerals) and volume (in Roman numerals) taken from the edition I am using – the three-volume *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, ed. by Leslie Klinger (Doyle 2005-2006) – but also the 'generally accepted' (at least among fandom circles) abbreviations of the story titles (Weller 1992, 139). These are usually comprised of the first four letters of a title's key term. An overview of these can be found in Appendix A. General references to specific Canon stories in brackets and footnotes will be by title abbreviation only.

of Holmes and Watson' than with 'the crimes or the mysteries' (Horowitz 2011, 396–97).

For the original author Doyle, Holmes's popularity, evident even during the first publication of the stories, was more of an impediment to the recognition of his other works than a celebrated success to be enjoyed. Consequently, Doyle was determined to kill Holmes off. He mentioned the idea first in 1891 (Lellenberg, Stashower and Forley 2007, 300) and carried it out in 1893 in the short story 'The Final Problem.' Roughly ten years later, Doyle was financially convinced to resurrect the character, re-using him first in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which was set before Holmes's death, and then bringing the character back to life in 'The Empty House' (Lellenberg, Stashower and Forley 2007, 510). The in-story time period between 'The Final Problem' and 'The Empty House' – three years – is generally referred to as 'the Great Hiatus' or simple 'the Hiatus' in fandom, and is one of the narrative gaps in the Canon that has most fascinated the fandom.

While the first novel appeared elsewhere, the Holmes stories are still primarily associated with *The Strand Magazine*, which was first to publish the first two series of short stories. Quickly, however, Holmes grew beyond the *Strand*. As Ann McClellan observes, the *Strand*'s editor was keen to promote the Holmes stories, which were quickly making the *Strand* famous, in the sister magazine *Tit-Bits*. *Tit-Bits* was running 'inquiry columns, competitions, and Holmesian pastiches' solicited through competitions as early as 1891 (McClellan 2017, 5.4; 7.3). Aside from Doyle's own mentions of readers writing to him seeking contact with Sherlock Holmes (e.g. Doyle 1924, 104), these writings in *Tit-Bits* are likely the first evidence of the readership engaging with the Holmes texts. McClellan sadly does not define the term 'pastiche' she uses for these reader-penned stories – she does not go beyond saying that 'today we would call them fan fiction' (McClellan 2017, 7.3). However, 'pastiche' is a term which is still in common and controversial use – especially in its relation to 'fanfiction' – in at least certain parts

of the Holmes fandom, as this thesis will illustrate in Chapter 5: Fiction Writing. To stay with the stories in *Tit-Bits*, however, they clearly indicate the readers' interest in expanding on the Canon. For instance, one story carries the evocative title of 'Sherlock in Love' (1896), whereas Holmes in the Canon remains without overt love interest. These fiction and non-fiction writings in *Tit-Bits* stand alongside a clearly evidenced demand for more Holmes – most of these pastiches were published in the time of Holmes's 'death' (McClellan 2017, 7.3), and there were persistent demands upon Doyle to resurrect the character (Lellenberg, Stashower and Forley 2007, 520).

Adaptations of the Holmes stories were also quick to appear. William Gillette's Sherlock Holmes play premiered in 1899, after Doyle had famously told Gillette that '[y]ou may marry or murder or do what you like with him [i.e. Holmes]' (Doyle 1924, 97). Films followed suit – after the first silent short in 1903, there seems to barely have been a break in the appearance of Holmes in moving pictures (Doyle and Crowder 2010, 257–82). Screen adaptation in many languages continue to be plentiful. In English, they include the 1940s films with Basil Rathbone as Holmes, the 1980s Granada series with Jeremy Brett as Holmes as well as the most recent film and TV adaptations: Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* with Robert Downey Jr in the title role (2009; 2011); the BBC series *Sherlock* with Benedict Cumberbatch (2010—) and CBS's *Elementary* with Johnny Lee Miller (2012—). Holmes also had a continuing presence on the radio. To mention just one example, the BBC Radio 4 series with Clive Merrison as Holmes has the distinction of being the only Holmes-Watson pair of actors to date to adapt every one of the sixty stories in the Canon (1989–1998). Sherlock Holmes has also found his way into the games industry, being featured in board games as well as video games.

In the history of the Holmes fandom, 1934 marks an important date: the founding of a Sherlock Holmes literary society that exists (and thrives) to this date, the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI). Located in the US, though its members now span

the world, and named after the street children employed by Holmes in the Canon (SIGN), the BSI describes itself as 'part literary society, part social group, and part source of whimsical entertainment' (The BSI Trust 2015). Originating from a dinner company invited by Christopher Morley to celebrate the date he proposed for Sherlock Holmes's birthday (January 6th), the BSI quickly became an established society and has held an annual dinner every year from 1938 onward (The BSI Trust 2015). The BSI also publishes a quarterly semi-scholarly journal, *The Baker Street Journal* (BSJ) to which anyone can subscribe. Membership to the BSI, by contrast, is by invitation only:

> One does not join the BSI. One is invited to join (and, then, usually after several years of attending the dinner as an invitee). Membership is generally given after significant accomplishment, and, thus, BSI members are generally accomplished adults, either in the Sherlockian community or in their professions (but having a deep love of, and interest in, Sherlock Holmes). (The BSI Trust 2015)

Parallel to the BSI, the Sherlock Holmes Society of London (SHSL) formed in the UK, founded in its current form in 1951. It had formed previously in the 1930s, then disbanded during World War II. The SHSL describes itself as 'a literary and social Society' 'open to anyone with an interest in Sherlock Holmes, Dr John H. Watson and their world' (The Sherlock Holmes Society of London 2017). It also publishes a journal twice-yearly, though unlike the BSJ this journal is only available to members. There is some cross-pollination between the societies, though they are formally separate. Many of the more regionally-oriented Holmes societies in the US, meanwhile, are scion societies of the BSI – that is, they are directly affiliated with the BSI, but do not only include BSI members. The term 'scion' that is in use for these societies seems to have come from within the fandom, though it is unclear when it first appeared in this context. These scions are also the site of much social activity around Sherlock Holmes in the US, both of fans that have and those that have not (yet) been invited into the

BSI. The most important event held by both the SHSL and the BSI is the annual dinner around Holmes's supposed birthday in January. The two societies alternate weekends year to year as to be closest to the birthday date every two years while leaving it possible for fans to attend both events. In the case of the BSI, the dinner is now the culmination of nearly a week of society-related events held in New York, though it is still called The Baker Street Irregulars Weekend.[2] I will address both the event and the BSI in more detail in Chapter 4: Meeting Up.

Originally male-only, the BSI was soon confronted with female fans who wanted to be a part of the society. Being rejected, they ultimately formed their own society in the late 60s: The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH). Though again based in the USA, ASH is consequently one of the few US societies that is not a scion of the BSI. In 1991, the BSI 'invested' (i.e. accepted as members) the first women, and has been open to women since. ASH invested four men in that same year, and became formally open to men in 2008 (ASH 2017). The publication of ASH, *The Serpentine Muse*, is again available only for members with the exception of selected articles that appear on ASH's website.

More recent years have seen the formation of the Baker Street Babes in 2011,

> an all-female group of Sherlock Holmes fans dedicated to approaching the fandom from a female point of view, as well as engaging in fun, lively conversations about the canon, film and television adaptations of Arthur Conan Doyle's work, and associated topics (The Baker Street Babes 2017a)

The Baker Street Babes are not a society in the sense that they accept members. They formed as a group of close friends (The Baker Street Babes 2017b) which actively distance themselves from the idea that they are 'some kind of elitist club' (The Baker Street Babes 2017c). This group has since become a regular feature of the BSI Weekend as annual organisers of the Baker Street Babes Ball. The Baker

[2] The official name on the sign-up page has been The Baker Street Irregulars and Friends Weekend (BSI 2017a) since the 2012 event, but 'BSI Weekend' is still the more common fandom shorthand term to describe the whole cluster of events, as corroborated by my interview data.

Street Babes aim to 'provide a bridge between the older and often intimidating world of Sherlockians and the newer tech savvy generation of fans that are just discovering the Holmes stories for the first time' (The Baker Street Babes 2017a). They have an active presence across social media and are perhaps best known for their Sherlockian podcast, the original reason of their founding, which first aired in May 2011.

As the Baker Street Babes' intention to build bridges indicates, formal societies like the SHSL and the BSI and their members form only a fraction of the Sherlock Holmes fandom today. Aside from yet more societies, both BSI scions and not, there is an unmeasurable amount of Holmes fans who are not associated with any societies, some of whom might not socially engage with Holmes at all. However, the Holmes fandom also has an undeniable and visible presence in social media (fan) spaces, partly but not exclusively due to the recent surge of adaptations. It would be a mistake to argue that there is a) no overlap between fans who engage online and fans who organise in the above-mentioned societies and b) that all fans that do occupy online spaces are *only* interested in the most recent adaptations. Instead, Sherlock Holmes has had a presence throughout the stages of traditional fandom history, ranging from zines over listservers to blogs and social media.

Unfortunately, in contrast to the Holmesian societies who meticulously document their own history, there is next to no history of the older Holmes fandom not centred on the development of the above-mentioned societies. The surge in fandom activity around Holmes which now make Holmes one of the most frequented fandoms is generally credited to the recent adaptations (e.g. Porter 2012, 5), but there are strong indications that Holmes has been included in wider fandom activities for a long time. Sherlock Holmes appears to have always been part of fanzine publications, as evidenced, for instance, by *The Holmesian Federation*, a crossover zine between Holmes and various science fiction and fantasy texts, which was in publication from 1978–1991 (Fanlore 2017e). There is also evidence of fanzines inspired by contemporary adaptations, such as *221B Baker*

Street (1993–1996), which draws on the Granada series as well as the Canon (Fanlore 2017a), but no attempt has been made to catalogue the presence and development of the Holmes fandom in zines.

The online presence of the Holmesian fandom equally lacks historic documentation, though scattered evidence of it can still be located. Fanlore.org notes that, at least up to the 2010s, 'the fandom's online presence is surprisingly small,' as evidenced by its inclusion in a Christmas fandom exchange for small fandoms (Fanlore 2017d).[3] That is not to say, however, that the fandom did not exist online at all. Sherlockian.net, a Holmesian reference website originally established by Chris Redmond (BSI), was founded in 1994, and claims to have then been 'the only Sherlockian website in the world' (Sherlockian.net 2017).[4] Fanlore also lists a variety of GeoCities pages around Holmes, which include pages centred on specific adaptations as well as authors' private fanfiction archives (Fanlore 2017c). Roberta Pearson explores the history of a Holmesian listserver, Hounds of the Internet, which in 1996 constituted primarily American and male members (Pearson 2014, 50–51). Holmesslash, a Yahoo Group around queerness in Holmes, was established in 1999 (Fanlore 2017b). Some still-existing Holmesian LiveJournal[5] communities also date back to before the appearance of the Guy Ritchie movies in 2009. 221b_bakerst, for instance, was established in 2002 (https://221b-bakerst.livejournal.com/profile), its sister community for fanfiction dispatch_box in 2005 (https://dispatch-box.livejournal.com/profile).

The Holmes fandom also moved onto online archives dedicated to fanfiction,

[3] A brief remark on Fanlore.org as a source is necessary here. The website is a user-edited wiki and part of the Organisation of Transformative Works, who also manage the academic journal *Transformative Works and Cultures* and the fanworks archive Archive of Our Own (AO3). As a wiki, Fanlore.org is, of course, vulnerable to non-factual edits. However, it provides a platform for fans to tell their own stories. As such, it is a communal project in which any fan can add their own experience and perspective, which often makes it the most extensive source for general fandom facts and specific histories that even a group of academic scholars would have no hope to capture in full.

[4] The website has come under new management since this data collection, and, following allegations of sexual harassment against Redmond in April 2019 (Manente 2019), is planning to divorce itself fully from Redmond (Sherlockian.net Team 2019).

[5] LiveJournal is a journalling platform that was one of the primary sites of fan activity online before a large amount of activity shifted onto social media such as Facebook and Twitter and the microblogging platform Tumblr in more recent years.

such as Fanfiction.net and Archive of Our Own (AO3). On Fanfiction.net, the first Holmesian work dates back to the year 2000.[6] Currently, the category of 'Sherlock Holmes & Related Fandoms' on AO3 is one of the largest categories in total, standing alongside other highly frequented categories such as 'Harry Potter – J.K. Rowling,' 'Marvel' and 'Supernatural.' Today, aside from these easily monitored fanfiction archives, there are also innumerable social media presences, which would be impossible to map in their entirety. There are personal profiles on Tumblr, Twitter and Facebook and GooglePlus, as well as communally maintained pages on these same sides. There also exist Holmesian profiles on sites such as Pinterest, Instagram, Wattpad, DeviantArt and Dreamwidth etc. not to mention privately hosted websites and blogs around the topic of Holmes.

Even just focussing on the primarily English-speaking fandom thus shows a large spread of activity around the Holmes fandom today. While it might therefore be impossible to determine the true size of the fandom, not in the least due to overlapping profiles and aliases, even this brief survey clearly shows the diversity in the ways of engagement with Holmes. To grapple with the enormity of the fandom, I will therefore return to the concept of Lines of Distinction introduced in the previous chapter, which informs my understanding of relationship management and power dynamics within fandoms. To recap, a Line of Distinction separates individuals or factions within a fandom on the basis of a difference constructed as a value judgement, i.e. a distinction between 'self' and 'other' where the 'self' is 'good' and the 'other' is 'bad.' It depends on the individual or faction's point of view which is which. Lines of Distinction emerge through the practice of members of a fandom. Not all Lines of Distinction are drawn intentionally by the fans, nor are all Lines of Distinction based on demographics, though some are. A faction or individual might draw several Lines of Distinction while happily co-existing in areas where other factions, conversely, do draw

[6] This archive does not allow users to manually adjust the date of publication to back-date a work to before the date of posting, unlike the other primary fanworks archive Archive of Our Own (AO3), and thus serves as a good indicator of Holmesian fanfiction beginning to move onto multifandom archives.

Lines of Distinction. Rarely does a faction form based solely on one Line of Distinction, so there are frequently overlaps and interplays between several Lines of Distinction, in which one might be used to reinforce the other.

3.2 Lines of Distinction Within the Holmes Fandom Today

Instead of constructing the Lines of Distinction within the Holmes fandom from an outsider-academic perspective, I draw them out directly from data obtained via a questionnaire and interviews as well as my own experiences in participant observation, i.e. as a member of the Holmes fandom myself. This allows me to examine the Lines of Distinction that are actually most prominent within the Sherlock Holmes fandom from the perspective of the individual fans. It also avoids attaching Lines of Distinction only to specific groups or factions within the fandom that can be observed from the outside, such as, for instance, the Baker Street Irregulars. While it is certainly the case that factions tend to take a specific stance towards Lines of Distinction, which makes them into a faction in the first place (like the BSI), the Line of Distinction is never limited to a single faction, if only because there is always the other side of the Line. The emphasis is thus on what fans report to be the primary differences that are associated with value judgements as based on their own fandom experience, not on determining the identity of the Holmesian fandom factions and their respective stances towards Lines of Distinction.

I have summarised the Holmesian Lines of Distinction under succinct names and will illustrate them here. All of these names for Lines of Distinction will be capitalised in this thesis, to distinguish the Line from the general use of the terms their names contain. Here I will first give a brief introduction to the less frequently mentioned Lines, before going on to give more detailed examples of how the fandom speaks of the four most prominent Lines of Distinction drawn

directly from questionnaire and interview responses.

Table 3.1 orders the Lines of Distinction in the frequency with which each was mentioned in the questionnaire, as the questionnaire responses provide the largest data sample. While the 423 questionnaire respondents form a sizeable sample, it needs to be noted that the sample can only ever represent a selection of the total Sherlock Holmes fandom. Even with the limit on English speaking fans as used in this thesis, the sample neither claims to be objective nor representative of the total community – my concern instead was in using triangulation of methods to achieve as broad a range of subjectivities as possible. That said, the questionnaire did reach its highest distribution by circulating it online on social media (primarily Tumblr and Twitter). It has therefore presumably primarily captured fans that frequent these online spaces, and has likely also encompassed a number of fellow academics. However, I had initially circulated the questionnaire at the Baker Street Irregulars Weekend in January 2017, and the results of those first responses before the questionnaire was more widely distributed online correspond with the overall trends, and they are further backed up by interview responses and my own observations. The questionnaire has primarily reached a fairly young demographic, with approximately 61% of respondents giving their age as under 30 years of age, though I received responses from fans of all ages, including fans over the age of 60 (3.6% of total respondents who gave their age). Age notwithstanding, most questionnaire respondents report their first encounter with Sherlock Holmes as happening via the Canon (36.1%). A substantial percentage also identified as female (87.6% of those that gave their gender), as opposed to 6.4% male and a cumulative 3.6% non-binary, genderfluid and trans, with a further 2.4% of participants declining to specify their gender.

In many ways, these demographic trends reflect the traditional perception of fandom as primarily female (Jenkins 2013), and thus of as a subcultural Other to wider society. The high percentage of LGBTQIA+ respondents (over 50 per cent of those who indicated their sexual orientation) further positions my sample

Line of Distinction	Frequency	Percentage
Entry Point	244	57.7
Depth/Time of Engagement	205	48.5
Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings	169	40.0
Thematic Knowledge	118	27.9
Activeness	83	19.6
Approach to Fandom Object (unspecified)	75	17.7
Academic Approach	67	15.8
Fan Behaviour	59	13.9
Age	57	13.5
Fandom Preferences	57	13.5
Gender	55	13.0
Social Knowledge	35	8.3
Seriousness	25	5.9
Canonicity	20	4.7
Sexual Orientation	19	4.5
Reason for Engagement	18	4.3
Place of Fandom Activity	11	2.6
Possessions	7	1.7
Publication Type	6	1.4
The Game	6	1.4
Race	5	1.2
Affirmative vs Transformative	2	0.5
Disability	2	0.5

Table 3.1: Most frequently mentioned Lines of Distinction in questionnaire data ordered descending by frequency; frequency column equals real numbers of mentions, percentages column each calculated from a total of 423 questionnaires (100%).

of Sherlock Holmes fans as subcultural group. However, as Bury warns, it is a mistake to 'romanticize communities that are formed out of exclusion and/or marginalization' (Bury 2005, 15), as even fans who are members of minorities / marginalised groups outside of fandom or in relation to the wider cultural power dynamics will find themselves in positions of exercising power (as well as being subjected to power) *within* the fandom. It is essential to bear in mind that each Line of Distinction has two sides, both of which consider themselves as 'better' than the other, *regardless of which side corresponds to the power structures in wider society*. That is, some perceptions of 'self'/'good' may reflect traditional power structures in wider societies, others may subvert them, but both are equally a 'self' versus a 'other' *within* the fandom. Thus, as this thesis engages not with the position of Holmes fans versus an *outside* other, but with power dynamics amongst Holmes fans, I therefore take into account not only those Lines of Distinction raised by the majority demographics in my sample (which are, simultaneously, culturally devalued groups outside of fandom), but also addresses Lines of Distinction as reported by those fans that are in the demographic minority within my sample (which may, in turn, be in a privileged position in wider society).

To do so, I have supplemented the questionnaire data by taking into account reports from such questionnaire-minority demographics elsewhere. For example, I selected older and/or male respondents for interviews and drew on the edited collection of fan experiences *About Being a Sherlockian* (Redmond 2017), which includes accounts from fans from all walks of life, including some I was unable to reach with the questionnaire. This reduced the risk of overlooking Lines of Distinction experienced only by the demographic minorities within my questionnaire respondents. However, overall this triangulation has confirmed the trends as emerged from the questionnaire and as outlined in Table 3.1, in that both the demographic majority *and* minority within my sample report on the same Lines of Distinction (though not necessarily from the same *side* of the Line in question). Where the demographics emerge as significant within the activity case studies

following this chapter – in that they are, in themselves, Lines of Distinction – I have discussed their relevance in detail.

The Lines of Distinction drawn from the questionnaires are therefore corroborated by all parts of my data. I will cite some interview responses below,[7] and draw more substantially on my observational data in the following chapters.

Broadly, the Lines of Distinction as illustrated in Table 3.1 can be sorted into three categories: those that address fellow fans' demographics such as age and gender (Demographics), those that address the ways in which the fans engage with their object of fandom (Approach to the Fandom Object), and those that describe how fans engage with the fandom as a community and with their fellow fans (Fan Attitudes). There are, of course, definite overlaps between these three categories, especially between the latter two, and Lines, including those of different categories, often occur in direct interplay with each other. Below, I have sorted each Line into one of the three categories, using the most fitting one as informed by my data, but some Lines touch on multiple categories. For instance, I have sorted the Line of Depth/Time of Engagement to the Fandom Object category to distinguish it from the Fan Attitudes Line of Activeness, but both Lines definitely intersect and interact. Table 3.2 illustrates where I have sorted all Lines from Table 3.1.

It should also be noted that, in addition to these Lines of Distinction, there are factors that might exclude a fan from participating in certain fandom factions or fandom activities. These factors, such as their location or their financial means, have not been reported as in themselves being associated with a value judgement by other fans. Therefore, they do not fall within the category of Lines of Distinction. Nonetheless, these factors can significantly influence – to the point of making impossible – the ways a fan engages with the fandom. For instance, a

[7] To preserve full anonymity, interviewees are identified through the abbreviation 'SHI' (Sherlock Holmes Interview), followed by a unique number, e.g. SHI01. I spoke to one interviewee, SHI02, twice, and the two interviews are distinguished as SHI02a and SHI02b. Questionnaire respondents are identified by the abbreviation 'SHQ' (Sherlock Holmes Questionnaire) and a unique number, e.g. SHQ001.

Demographics	Fandom Object	Fan Attitudes
Age	Entry Point	Activeness
Gender	Depth/Time of Engagement	Fan Behaviour
Sexual Orientation	Shipping, P. and Q.R.	Social Knowledge
Race	Thematic Knowledge	Place of Fandom A.
Disability	Approach to F. O. (unspecified)	
	Academic Approach	
	Fandom Preferences	
	Seriousness	
	Canonicity	
	Reason for Engagement	
	Possessions	
	Publication Type	
	The Game	
	Affirmative vs Transformative	

Table 3.2: All Lines of Distinction within the Sherlock Holmes fandom as sorted into the three categories of Demographics, Approach to the Fandom Object and Fan Attitudes, in order of frequency.

fan might find it impossible to attend a meeting due to the cost and/or distance of travel (e.g. SHQ016, SHQ022), but none of my respondents reported feeling or being made to feel a 'worse' fan because of their location or their finances. As Lines of Distinction are defined as *differences associated with value judgements* on part of other fans, I have therefore not included these factors as Lines of Distinction. There are, of course, instances in which these factors support the 'enforcing' of a Line of Distinction. For instance, the impossibility of attending meetings might make a fan appear less active in the fandom, which is considered negatively by some factions. Similarly, a high cost might functionally exclude 'undesired' younger or retired fans as demographics with a higher chance of having low income. In these cases, however, the Lines of Distinction are Activeness and Age, respectively, rather than the fan's location or financial means.

Keeping this in mind, let us return now to the Lines of Distinction reported by the Holmes fans. In order of frequency, the overall most mentioned Lines of Distinction by a substantial margin are the textual *Entry Point* to the fandom; the *Depth/Time of Engagement*; *Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings*; and *Thematic Knowledge*, i.e. knowledge about the fan object and fandom. All of

these belong to the Approach to the Fandom Object category, which is also the most frequent *category* of Lines of Distinction. I will examine these four most frequently mentioned Lines in more detail below. First, however, I will give a brief overview of all other Lines of Distinction as ordered into the categories above (Table 3.2).

The two biggest Lines of Distinction in terms of Demographics are *Age* and *Gender*, often but not always mentioned in combination. The only demographic category other than Age and Gender that was mentioned with any frequency was the fans' *Sexual Orientation*, often but not exclusively together with queer readings of the text (as under the third most frequent Line of Distinction, Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings). *Race* and *Disability* were both mentioned very rarely, and often as a general reference only without greater detail given – for instance in characterising a faction of the fandom as straight, white and male – though none of the fans making these references indicated that they were themselves not white. Fans made no explicit mention of experiencing racism or distinction based on their own racial or cultural backgrounds, e.g. based on which country they came from, nor on whether English was their native language, despite approximately forty per cent of participants being non-native speakers of English. Interviewees similarly described factions of the fandom and the societies in particular as 'still very very white' (SHI02b) and 'a very homogeneous [white] society' (SHI10), which my observation at the BSI Weekend confirms, but again these observations came from white fans.

It is possible that the questionnaire failed to reach fans of minority ethnicities in their respective countries when it was distributed online. I did speak to one fan of colour[8] informally during my attendance at the BSI Weekend, but Race remained unmentioned as a Line of Distinction within the fandom in these conversations.

[8] I am not disclosing their precise ethnicity here for reasons of preserving their anonymity, as disclosing it would, in view of the overwhelming majority of white attendees at the BSI Weekend, identify them directly. I have no intention to suggest, however, that all 'non-white' ethnicities share the same experience, nor that one representative of one ethnicity can speak for all members of their ethnicity or for members of other ethnicities.

Black, Asian and other minority fans in general and specific cases of various ethnicities within fandom are unfortunately also a frequently under-represented in academic literature on fan studies,[9] and based on my data I cannot speak to whether fans feel that their ethnicity is a Line of Distinction within the Holmes fandom, or even a factor of exclusion from the fandom entirely.

The second category, Approach to the Fandom Object, is the most common category of Lines of Distinction within the Holmes fandom, underlined also by the fact that the four most prominent Lines overall all fall into this category. I will discuss these four in more detail below. Other than the four, the most frequently mentioned Line consists of general critical remarks about certain approaches to the fandom object without precisely specifying what these approaches entailed. Among these questionnaire comments were mentions of certain interpretations of the fan text being looked down upon (without specifying what these interpretations were, e.g. SHQ006) or of fans described derogatorily as acting 'entitled' with regards to the fan text (e.g. SHQ307). I have subsumed these under the title of *Approach to Fandom Object (unspecified)*, since the mentions were too frequent to ignore. They were, however, not detailed enough to sort them under other Lines of Distinction in this category without making assumptions about what the respondents might have been hinting at, which would undoubtedly be tinted by my own perspective on the fandom. Another Line of Distinction under the Fandom Object category was appreciation or dislike of an *Academic Approach* to fandom, followed by *Fandom Preferences*, i.e. interpretative stances unrelated to Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings yet more specific than the general mentions of 'unwanted' approaches that I have subsumed under Approach to Fandom Object (unspecified). For instance, these were preferences for particular interpretations of the Holmesian characters. Further Lines include whether or not fans take their object of fandom 'seriously' (*Seriousness)*, whether they own fan collectibles (*Possessions*) and the reasons for which they engage with

[9] With some recent exceptions, see, for instance, the contributions to the TWC special issue *Fans of Color, Fandoms of Color* (Kosnik and carrington 2019).

the fandom (*Reason for Engagement*). Finally, a few fans mentioned Lines of Distinction more or less directly related to written activity within the fandom – *Canonicity*, *Publication Type*, *The Game* and the *'affirmative vs transformative'* differentiation.[10] As these are so closely linked to fannish writing, I will return to some of them in the Chapter 5: Fiction Writing.

The remaining Lines of Distinction address attitudes towards the fandom as a community of people, the category of Fan Attitudes. Most frequently mentioned in this category was fans' *Activeness*, i.e. how visibly active they were in the community, and *Fan Behaviour*, which subsumes all reference to behaviour of fans towards other fans and the acceptability of that behaviour. As such, it, for example, includes mentions of the 'friendliness' (or the lack thereof) of fellow fans as well as the ways in which fans approach new fans (e.g. SHQ022). Finally, there is *Social Knowledge* in the sense of whether fans knew people at fandom meetings already, had friends in the fandom and/or were, for instance, able to recognise 'big name fans,' followed by *Place of Fandom Activity*, that is, for example, whether fans engaged online or in person or both.

In the following, I will return to the four most frequently mentioned Lines of Distinction one by one (see Table 3.1), giving more detail about what they encompass and examples of how they were described to me in the questionnaire or interviews. I will also indicate which of the following chapters they primarily inform. In these following chapters, I will look at the Lines of Distinction in practice. Through the lens of specific fandom activities, I am able to explore the complexities of Lines of Distinction in the fandom everyday. There I will also

[10] This last Line relates to a conceptualisation of fandom and fans' interpretative approaches originally coined by fan obsession_inc. In short, it argues that there are two types of fans – those that disregard authorial intent, and those that bow to authorial intent and consequently have a higher chance of receiving official sanctioning (obsession_ inc 2009, n.pag). It has been taken up by Roberta Pearson (Pearson 2012) to describe the Holmes fandom in particular, in the sense that '[w]hile affirmational fandom is seen as respecting authorship and the text, transformational fandom is seen as reworking the text' (Pearson and Rosenblatt 2017, 1.8), where Pearson understands the traditional Holmesian societies as being the former. This has been further explored by Ashley Polasek (Polasek 2012, 2013). As 'affirmative vs transformative' received so few mentions in the questionnaire, I will not analyse it in greater depth in this thesis and refer the reader to the texts mentioned here for further discussion of this concept. I do, however, problematise the notion of 'reworking' in Chapter 5: Fiction Writing.

draw, where relevant, on the less frequent Lines of Distinction which I will not examined in detail here, illustrating the frequent overlap between various Lines of Distinction surrounding the same activity. In the present chapter, I will focus on how the Lines of Distinction are experienced and reported by fans, i.e. how they influence attitudes and relationships/relationship management discursively, rather than on how they inform fandom activity.

3.2.1 Entry Point

The *Entry Point* is by far the most frequently mentioned Line of Distinction, both amongst all Lines of Distinction and within its category of Approach to the Fandom Object. In other words, the question of which text in the Holmesian intertextual diversity was the first or is the most prominent Holmes text a fan engaged with is key to what they consider 'self' and 'other.' The Entry Point therefore has two dimensions: the text(s) which brought the fan to the fandom in the first place *and* the text(s) the fan continues to engage with primarily. The large diversity of Holmesian texts is likely the reason why this Line of Distinction takes such prominence in this fandom. There are not only a multitude of literary materials, both the works written by Doyle (the Canon) and subsequent Holmes adventures penned by other authors, but also the various adaptations, some of which I have mentioned above. I asked both questionnaire respondents and interviewees about their first encounter with Sherlock Holmes as a character, and received a wide spread of answers. In the questionnaire, reading sections of the Canon was the most common (36%), followed by the BBC series *Sherlock* (14%). Other encounters with Holmes range from the Granada series and the Guy Ritchie films – both still fairly common at 4% – to Disney's *The Great Mouse Detective* (3.4%) and appearances of Holmes in other shows, such as *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Wishbone*. A substantial number also indicated that they had been introduced to Holmes via family members or friends or through school (9% and 6% respectively), without specifying which version of Holmes

they were introduced to.

Nearly every respondent and interviewee made some reference to the 'entry point' being a Line of Distinction. When asked to define the terms 'Sherlockian' and 'Sherlock Holmes fan' (both of which are used as self-descriptions in the Holmes fandom), SHQ012 defines a 'Sherlockian' as '[s]omeone who has more interests on [sic] Sherlock Holmes than *just* watching *one* tv [sic] series' (emphasis mine), conversely, another respondent describes 'Sherlockian' as 'someone who is a fan *only* of the ACD [Arthur Conan Doyle] books and stories' (SHQ198, emphasis mine). Another writes that 'those that wish to be Sherlockians should have read *at least* some of the original stories' (SHQ013, emphasis mine), whereas yet another describes feeling excluded for being accepting of Holmesian texts beyond the stories (SHQ011). Another questionnaire participant writes that *Elementary* DVDs are one of the very few things they exclude from their collection (SHQ031), indicating that they consider *Elementary* an unacceptable Holmesian adaptation and therefore entry point.

It should be said here that the percentages quoted above might show which Holmes version was the most *common* first encounter, but neither show which Holmes the respondents consider their primary focus nor which first encounter is considered most appropriate. It is therefore not possible to draw direct conclusions about the Entry Point distinction from these figures. To reiterate, the Entry Point is not limited to the 'first contact' with the fandom text(s), but refers also to the text(s) the fan primarily continues to engage with. It would be tempting to conclude, for instance, that the BBC series or the Canon are the most accepted Entry Points because of their prominence among the first encounters with Holmes, or that the Line of Distinction runs primarily between fans who have the Canon as Entry Point and fans who have the BBC series as Entry Point. However, that is not strictly the case.

This Line of Distinction also cannot only be reduced to a book versus any adaptation distinction. Even the few responses cited above show that the Line of

Distinction also includes distinctions *between* TV series, such as between *Elementary* and *Sherlock*, with fans of the former looking down on fans of the latter and vice versa. One respondent, for instance, further notes that 'I have had conversations end when I mention that I'm not a fan of *Sherlock*, and I prefer *Elementary*' (SHQ036), despite their first encounter with Holmes being neither of the two. These individual responses indicate that the 'self' – 'other' divide *between* adaptations is equally deep, and that the Entry Point Line therefore does not reduce to a distinction around the primary media for engagement with Holmes. To give another example, interviewee SHI10, when asked for their wishes and hopes for the fandom, indicated a hope that the fandom would both 'get past this stupid... *Elementary* –- *Sherlock BBC* split' as well as the conflict between 'the people who come to Sherlock Holmes through media as opposed to people who come through the Canon.' It should be noted that the Entry Point Line of Distinction also does not reduce to arguments about fidelity to the source text (or, indeed, the 'transformative' versus 'affirmative' differentiation mentioned above). Not only fans of adaptations that are described as less faithful to the Canon are depicted as 'other.' Instead, the othering occurs in various directions. Participants mention othering of and by Canon fans, and of and by fans of the Granada series, for instance, which is considered by several participants to be very true to the Canon, *and* of and by fans that prefer an adaptation that is considered to be farther removed from the Canon.

The Entry Point Line of Distinction therefore does not concern fidelity or medium. It is, however, possible to pinpoint a different 'self' – 'other' division which underlies this Line of Distinction. This division seems to be a limit (or lack thereof) on the interest in Holmes that is read into these preferences for specific Holmesian texts. Terms such as 'only,' 'just' or 'at least' occur with high frequency in the responses speaking to this Line of Distinction, as in the examples above. That is, fans are accused of caring about *only one* Holmesian texts and looking down on other texts and their fans. Vice versa, fans are criticised for not

accepting fans who primarily engage with one Holmesian text, unless it happens to be their own favourite text. This suggests that other fandoms with a similar diversity of texts, such as various adaptations, remakes, sequels, et cetera, or even a long-developing and therefore diverse canon (like *Star Trek* and *Supernatural*, respectively) might also feature this Line of Distinction quite prominently. Of course, distinguishable versions or parts of the object of fandom need to exist before this Line of Distinction can become prominent, and the object of fandom therefore has to either have existed for a certain length of time and/or been present in various media or versions. However, trends towards the production of sequels/prequels/remakes in already highly fan-frequented objects of fandom, such as *Star Trek*, *Harry Potter* or *Marvel* suggests that this Line of Distinction might increase in importance across fandoms. I will address this Line of Distinction with regards to the Holmes fandom further in Chapter 4: Meeting Up, and will now continue the examination of the most prominent Lines of Distinction in the Holmes fandom.

3.2.2 Depth/Time of Engagement

The second most commonly mentioned Line of Distinction within fandom surrounds the *Depth/Time of Engagement*. It refers in particular to the time committed to the object of fandom daily/weekly, though there were also mentions of (not) having been in the fandom for a longer or consistent period of time. Notably, the time criterion was not raised against younger fans who might not have had the chance yet to be in the fandom for a number of years. So while there is some overlap with the Line of Distinction around Age, the Line around Depth/Time of Engagement cannot be conflated entirely with that Line of Distinction – it is focussed on the 'investment'[11] in the fandom, not on whether fans have had the chance to spend a certain amount of time in the fandom. While 'investment' emerges as key term in this Line of Distinction, raised by many re-

[11] 'Investment,' here, is understood not as financial, but as an 'investment' of time and energy.

spondents (e.g. SHQ055, SHQ067, SHQ134, SHQ236, SHQ303), practically all participants seemed to be unable to describe what defines it. They are equally unable to say what marks the period of time or depth 'invested' in the fandom that would be the 'right' one to qualify one as a 'proper' fan. This is in direct contrast to the previous Line of Distinction, which tended to be very clearly articulated.

Further, an overwhelming majority of the mentions of this Line of Distinction took the form of participants feeling they themselves were not quite a 'proper' fan because others seem to be much more 'invested' in the fandom and willing and able to dedicate more time to it. Thus, it was rarely raised in the context of criticising other fans' *lack* of depth of engagement/time commitment. Instead, the *lack* of depth/time of engagement was used to mark outsiders to the fandom entirely, rather than to other within-fandom factions or individuals. There are, however, mentions of fans being 'too invested,' i.e. showing *too much* depth/time of engagement with the fandom, to which I will turn below.

Firstly, I will examine how the lack of engagement is used to self-exclude. To give an example, a respondent wrote to the question of why they had chosen their term for self-description ('fan'): 'I enjoy Sherlock [...] a lot more (and on a more daily basis) than the average person, but I am by no means an expert or as dedicated as some of the theorists [...] out there' (SHQ045). The keyword here is 'dedicated.' While the fan is also making a statement about their knowledge, they specifically reference their 'dedication,' i.e. their 'investment.' As I have indicated above, SHQ045 also uses a certain level of engagement as a marker of being a fan vs 'the average person,' but does not criticise fans who might invest less time than they do. Instead, they highlight that there are people that invest yet *more* time than they themselves do, that are more 'dedicated,' making those 'more of a fan.' Several interviewees, too, downplayed their own engagement with the fandom in favour of highlighting other fans' greater engagement. Interviewee SHI01 speak to the depth of engagement being measured on 'making a contribution to the community,' though they again were unable to pin down

what that meant. They became aware that their own activity *was* making such a contribution during their answer, but still choose to emphasis another's 'greater contribution':

> Uhm, and granted I'm contributing to the community, but like… you have people like Chris Redmond [BSI, editor and contributor to a number of Holmesian books, both fiction and non-fiction] who have written God only... I don't even know the number of books over his lifetime and, you know, I... he has contributed quite a bit [laughs] to the Holmes community. (SHI01)

This incarnation of this Line of Distinction therefore seems to be primarily one of self-exclusion, thus forming a curious case in terms of Lines of Distinction. Instead of marking out a 'bad' other, these fans 'other' themselves, calling to mind the Foucauldian concept of the subject disciplining itself. Most memorably illustrated in the image of the prisoner in a Panopticon, Foucault argues that the threat of surveillance alone leads to subjects behave according to the rules – regardless of whether or not they are watched in that moment in actuality, and in the absence of direct punishment: 'surveillance [that] is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action' (Foucault 1977a). In the case of this Line of Distinction, fans chose to exclude themselves from being 'good fans' by measuring themselves against a construct of what it means to be a 'proper fan' against which they consider themselves lacking. However, while in the Panopticon the chance of surveillance is at least there in theory, the same cannot necessarily be said of the fandom. There is no official overarching fandom guard that examines the time a fan commits weekly to the fandom and decides on their merit as a fan, or a system for punishment if a fan displays too little time/depth of engagement. Fans frequently expressed awareness of this lack of control (e.g. SHI11). Further, as I have highlighted, the lack of depth/time of engagement does not emerge as a *criticism* against fellow fans at all. Instead, the ideal amount of 'investment' seems to be an entirely imaginary construct against which fans measure them-

selves. As such, this Line of Distinction also has similarities with a concept from psychology and the work space: the 'impostor syndrome.'

First described as 'feeling of intellectual phoniness in high-achieving women who seemed to be unable to internalize their success experiences,' it has since been broadened to a 'nongender specific' phenomenon (Holmes et al. 1993, 48–49). In short, it describes a feeling of being an impostor who might be unmasked any moment in spite of evident success at work. Within fandom, it would describe a fan who fails to recognise their own depth/time of engagement, feeling inadequate in comparison to other fans, and deciding that they themselves do not 'deserve' to be highlighted as deeply invested fans in the way they highlight others. As at least some of the participants who draw on this Line of Distinction are fans who dedicate a significant amount of their free time to Holmesian activities, such as reading Holmesian texts daily, maintaining a blog or working on a Holmesian audio play, it seems not too far a leap to consider this Line of Distinction a kind of fandom centred impostor phenomenon. This emerged most frequently in the questionnaire when participants were asked which term of self-description they would pick, in which fans argue that they did not feel like they 'deserved' to call themselves by fandom label X.[12] They justified this through what they perceived as their lower depth/time of engagement in comparison to people whom they considered 'deserving' of those labels. Fans describe themselves as 'far less invested [...] as opposed to how others are' (SHQ072), or, alternatively, describe others as 'far more invested than I am' (SHQ150). More than one fan specifically acknowledged that this exclusion was self-imposed:

> I felt excluded because of myself. First, because I took so long to join the fandom. And then, [...] I personally am not emotionally invested in johnlock [romantic/sexual pairing between Sherlock and John in *Sherlock*, BBC] and (I guess) still retained some of that fear

[12] Notably, the label which was considered to indicate greater depth/time of engagement varied, i.e. the label 'fan' was not consistently considered to denote fans of lesser engagement, nor 'Sherlockian' of more engagement.

of being a "casual" (SHQ046, spelling as in original)

Instead of being discriminated against for not doing enough/spending enough time on fandom, then, these fans measure themselves against some kind of superfan 'other,' a standard which they do not believe to have reached.

On the other hand, it is worth turning towards the instances of this Line of Distinction in which fans were described (in a negative sense) as 'too invested.' One respondent, for instance, wrote that '[w]hen people identify as "Sherlockians" I tend to assume that they are over-invested in their fandom and a bit too enthusiastic for comfort' (SHQ281). Again, it is difficult to determine what defines 'over-investment,' except in that it is a criticism of the intensity in which some fans engage with the fandom. In this same vein, there is a tendency to use derogatory terms to describe fans that are perceived as 'too invested.' Within my questionnaire responses, in contrast to the above self-excluding angle, I have more instances of fans calling others by derogatory terms than reporting having been called these terms or calling themselves 'too invested' in a negative sense. Notably, some of these derogatory terms closely align with negative stereotypes raised against fans in general – that they are 'crazy' – which seem to be still as prevalent today as they were when Henry Jenkins set out to challenge them in his seminal *Textual Poachers* in 1992 (Jenkins 2013, 7). For instance, one respondent writes to the question of which term they would pick to describe themselves in relation to Holmes, to which they responded 'fan': 'Sherlockian throws you in with the "crazy" fans' (SHQ161). One respondent specifically referenced Johnlockers (i.e. fans primarily of the BBC's *Sherlock* who consider Sherlock and John to be in a romantic/sexual relationship) as '[r]abid' (SHQ092), another made reference to 'TJLCers[13] going crazy and throwing hate at Mofftiss [Steven Moffat and Mark

[13] *TJLC* stands for 'The Johnlock Conspiracy,' an interpretation of *Sherlock* that argues that there are clues within the show that point to a plan on part of the show's creators that Sherlock and John will become a couple before the show ends. The fourth series, which had aired shortly before the circulation of the questionnaire, had disappointed many in that regard. Supporters of The Johnlock Conspiracy call themselves TJLCers. TJLC will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6: Non-Fiction Writing.

Gatiss, the creators of BBC Sherlock]' (SHQ237).[14] These closely conform with stereotypical pathologisation of fans that Jenkins criticises and which is based on fans being perceived as deranged 'fanatics' just steps away from being a criminal threat (Jenkins 2013, 12–15). Evidently, fans who use the Line of Distinction of Depth/Time of Engagement to distance themselves from 'too invested' fans do so to distance themselves both from the stereotype and from what they perceive as inappropriate behaviour – such as, for example, 'throwing hate' (SHQ237) at people involved with an adaptation, or being 'snooty nosed' (SHQ160) and 'exclusionary' (SHQ011) towards other fans. In this way, the Line of Distinction of Depth/Time of Engagement intersects with the Line of Distinction of Fan Behaviour.

Altogether, the Depth/Time of Engagement Line of Distinction remains a subjective one. Whether it is employed to highlight what a fan perceives at their own inadequacy based on a lack of investment, or to distance oneself from 'too much' investment, participants seem to be unable to pin the category down more concretely. Nonetheless, this Line of Distinction clearly does have a significant impact on how much part of the 'self' group or how 'othered' fans feel within the fandom. There is one slightly more tangible example of this Line of Distinction that I have been able to observe, which are the criteria for being accepted into the Baker Street Irregulars society. I will therefore return to this Line of Distinction in more detail in Chapter 4: Meeting Up. I also return to the notion of 'over-investment' under the Line of Distinction of Fan Behaviour in Chapter 6: Non-Fiction Writing.

[14] 'Crazy' is just one example of a derogatory term, with others including 'rabid' (e.g. SHQ092), 'toxic' (e.g. SHQ314) and 'delusional' (e.g. SHQ379). With regards to 'crazy' in particular, it should be noted that not all respondents used it as a negative term. Interviewee SHI10 even expressed delight at encountering 'other crazy individuals who enjoy Sherlock Holmes.' I have of course not counted these mentions of the term 'crazy' as 'derogatory term.'

3.2.3 Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings

The third prominent Line of Distinction surrounds *Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings*, subsequently shortened to Shipping. As part of the Fandom Object category of Lines of Distinction, it focusses on stances towards textual interpretations and speculations based on the various Holmesian texts. The Shipping Line of Distinction includes both the question of whether and which queer readings are acceptable as well as which 'pairing' (i.e. sexual/romantic relationship between characters), if any at all, is the 'right' one. I discuss shipping in more detail in Chapter 6: Non-fiction Writing, which focusses on this Line of Distinction. Suffice to say here that 'shipping' and 'pairings' are fandom terms related to sexual and/or romantic relationships between characters that do not necessarily (explicitly) have such a relationship within the source text. At that, 'shipping' describes the act of coupling up characters, whereas 'pairing' or 'ship' denotes the various possible relationships. It is common within fandom to form a pairing name either by a portmanteau of the names of the characters involved (as is the case with Johnlock, i.e. Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, mostly in reference to BBC's *Sherlock*, as the characters use their first names there), or by separating the names of the people involved with a slash (hence also the term for the genre of (queer) fanworks which pairs characters, 'slash'), such as, for instance, Holmes/Watson.

Questions about the characters' sexualities and their possible romantic/sexual partners are a frequent topic for both fiction and non-fiction writing within the fandom. It is therefore not surprising that this Line of Distinction has a great prominence within the fandom. Distinctions along pairing lines appear to be more common, at first glance, in those respondents who associate their fandom primarily with Holmesian film/TV media in the form of 'shipwars' (i.e. arguments between supporters of different ships). Yet, upon closer examination they also occur in discussions about the Canon, emerging in arguments about whether the character of Holmes can be married, and about whether it is appropriate to

interpret Holmes as non-heterosexual, regardless of partner. Further, given that there are two sides to every Line of Distinction, even if conversations around shipping were limited to certain sections of the fandom, others might still engage with Shipping as a Line of Distinction by rejecting it. One interviewee, for instance, referred to discussions about Holmes's sexuality as a 'taboo,' joking that 'it would be less controversial if people said that [...] Sherlock Holmes is a lizard king' (SH02a).

As a Line of Distinction around textual interpretation, Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings therefore goes beyond just queer interpretations, encompassing also discussions about the pairing up of characters that could be considered heterosexual, and indeed arguments about *in which way* a character is (or is not) queer. This is expressed, for instance, in discussions about whether Holmes is heterosexual, asexual, bisexual or homosexual. While the various queer readings in particular are certainly hotly contested, fans can be equally as adamant about pairings that are heterosexual, such as Holmes/Irene or Sherlock/Molly ('Sherlolly'), and the question whether Holmes would have any interest in sexual/romantic relationships (with women) at all.

Shipping as a Line of Distinction can directly influence how included or excluded the fans feel. Often, it is also cited as a reason for self-censorship and self-exclusion. One questionnaire respondent, for instance, mentioned not bringing up any of their 'shipping,' without specifying the characters involved, in scion meetings, for the fear that the attendees would 'look down on this as "non-canonical" or "too modern"' (SHQ029). Others directly referenced feeling excluded because of *not* shipping (e.g. SHQ059, SHQ077, SHQ346). Several others made reference to people shipping 'too much' or to being too insistent about their ship – not unlike the category of being 'too invested' as discussed in the previous Line of Distinction (e.g. SHQ276, SHQ319, SHQ361). Sometimes, these responses were unspecific as to which pairing/reading the respondent was thinking of, though conflicts between shippers of different ships were also cited. For

instance, one respondent indicated feeling excluded '[f]or "shipping" Sherlock with characters other than John Watson, or seeing Sherlock as anything but gay' (SHQ130). Another noted that '[i]f you do not ship Johnlock you are not welcome. And heaven help you if you have AroAce!Sherlock [aromantic asexual] headcanons [i.e. character interpretations]' (SHQ168). Another specifically indicated having been excluded by 'AdLock [Sherlock Holmes/Irene Adler] fans, Sherlolly [Sherlock/Molly] fans, fans of all kinds of "ships" [...] I was excluded for believing that Holmes and Watson loved each other romantically even in the ACD [Doyle] canon' (SHQ159). These responses make evident that, again, this Line of Distinction functions in multiple directions. That is, for example, both fans who ship Holmes/Watson and fans who do not ship Holmes/Watson have felt 'othered,' and the same is true for other examples that fall under this Line of Distinction.

As SHQ029 indicates, discussions of Shipping can sometimes touch on notions of authorial fidelity and 'closeness' to the Canon. That is, for example, fans will argue that there is explicit evidence in the Canon for their ship and none for others' ships, or that Doyle famously did not care whether Holmes was married off. This, of course, links this Line of Distinction back to the textual one of Canonicity, in which 'close to Canon' equals 'good' and 'further from Canon' equals 'bad.' However, the Shipping Line of Distinction is not constrained by the dichotomy of canon vs not canon. Fans might find one ship perfectly acceptable but not another, for instance, or agree with one queer reading but not another, despite both being equally as supported or unsupported by the Canon. Canonicity in itself is a complex, though not as frequently mentioned Line of Distinction. I do not discuss Canonicity in greater detail with regards to shipping, chosing instead to focus the discussion of Shipping in this thesis on another intersection of Lines of Distinction. I do, however, return to Canonicity in another context in Chapter 5: Fiction Writing. There I examine and problematise its subjective nature that also applies to arguments of whether a pairing is 'canonical' or not.

It is important to note here that arguments about shipping and especially queer readings do not allow direct conclusions about attitudes towards members of the LGBTQIA+ community within the fandom, which is why I have chosen to make fans' own Sexual Orientation a separate Line of Distinction. My participants' own sexual orientation was rarely raised as a Line of Distinction, i.e. very few mentioned having felt excluded or discriminated against within the fandom on the basis of their own sexual orientation, despite the fact that over half of all questionnaire respondents identified as non-heterosexual.[15] Interviewee SHI03 specifically mentioned that fandom gatherings were safer for LGBTQIA+ individuals than other spaces, something which my own observations confirm. Nonetheless, another interviewee (SHI04) also highlighted that their interest in a queer reading was linked to their own sexual orientation – in fact, they had come to Holmes via explorations of their own sexuality – and the criticism of that queer reading has influenced how accepted they feel personally within the fandom. Other respondents criticised factions of the fandom as seeming 'homophobic' (e.g. SHQ160) based on attitudes towards queer readings.

It is therefore not possible to separate fans' sexual orientation and fans' (perceived) attitudes towards sexual orientation and the subset of 'queer readings' in the present Line of Distinction entirely. I will explore this intersection and the specifics of Shipping as a Line of Distinction further in Chapter 6: Non-fiction Writing. However, it is worth reiterating that when I speak of the Shipping Line of Distinction, I consider it as focussed solely on attitudes towards the character pairings/sexualities in textual interpretation, refraining from drawing conclusions about fans' stance towards members of the LGBTQIA+ community based on their interpretative preferences. I will now move on to address the final most prominent Line of Distinction I wish to discuss here, Thematic Knowledge.

[15] This lack of mentions of Sexual Orientation as Line of Distinction might in part be due to a reticence to 'out' oneself in the questionnaire despite its complete anonymity, but when asked directly about their sexuality, most respondents choose to answer, and most did, as I have mentioned, identify as non-heterosexual in various ways – about 60% of those that responded to the question, approximately 55% of the total of respondents; only about 10% of the total of respondents choose not to answer.

3.2.4 Thematic Knowledge

The fourth most frequently mentioned Line of Distinction is what I have chosen to call the fans' *Thematic Knowledge*, by which I describe the knowledge fans possess about the content of their fandom text and the associated background, whether that is historical or in terms of production/the author(s)/the actors. Also included is knowledge about the fandom and fandom traditions. In many ways, one might consider this Line of Distinction as connected to the second most frequently mentioned Line of Distinction – Depth/Time of Engagement – as the fans who argued that they felt somehow less of a fan than others also often referenced what they perceived as their lack of knowledge. For example, one respondent indicated that they 'feel like I haven't read/seen/know enough to rightfully call myself "Holmesian". (This is probably silly because I know that there is no entry exam for the name.)' (SHQ145). This illustrates the clear similarities with the 'impostor syndrome' characteristics of the Depth/Time Line of Distinction. However, the Thematic Knowledge Line is also distinct. While depth and time 'investments' remain largely subjective categories that rarely find concrete expression through a method of exclusion (with the exceptions noted above), thematic knowledge is often expressed in within-fandom communication through allusions or insider jokes. The ability to understand these, or the lack of an ability to understand these, easily includes or excludes people from conversations based on their thematic knowledge, whether intentionally or not. For instance, SHQ018 wrote:

> I really only know the modern adaptations and maybe a tiny bit of the canon, so sometimes when people go [on] and on about other adaptations or have really in-depth debates about canon I can feel out of my depth. But that's not their fault, other people shouldn't limit their interests for me, esp[ecially] not online. I'd probably feel pretty bad though if it happened IRL ['in real life,' that is, during in-person meetings] and they knew I wouldn't be able to participate. (SHQ018)

I have been able to observe this way in which this Line of Distinction manifests most effectively on concrete examples during my participant observations at fan gatherings in comparison to my own thematic knowledge (or lack thereof) within the fandom, and will therefore address this Line of Distinction in depth in Chapter 4: Meeting Up. That is not to say, as the above quotes and numbers (see Table 3.1) also indicate, that Thematic Knowledge was in any way absent from the data gathered via the questionnaire. Many mentions of this Line of Distinction in the questionnaire occur, again, around the question of terms applied to Holmes fans. SHQ180, for instance, indicated that a 'Sherlockian' was '[a] very dedicated fan who [...] knows the names of the actors and has read at least some of the original stories, and maybe watched Sherlock Holmes [presumably the Guy Ritchie film] or some of the older series.' Another wrote that a 'Sherlockian' 'can reference important moments in the stories and have a general understanding of all Sherlock-related terms' (SHQ004). That same fan also wrote that

> The depth and breadth of Sherlock knowledge that I have encountered among people in the Sherlock fandom is kind of intimidating. I guess I'm nervous about being somehow caught out as not Sherlockian enough? The same way a language learner might hesitate to call themselves "fluent", in case their skills are tested and they don't speak that well after all. Seems silly now that I've written it all out, but there you have it. (SHQ004)

This stresses the similarity with the second Line of Distinction, in that the fans, even aware that they will not necessarily be tested on their knowledge, fear being excluded based on what they perceive as their own deficits in that field, and will consequently hesitate to include themselves in certain factions. In the questionnaires, lack of thematic knowledge was also often brought up as a barrier for people engaging in non-fiction writing in the fandom – SHQ109, for example, indicated that they 'don't feel knowledgeable enough to meet with other enthusiasts on the same ground (I imagine I would find myself excluded).' However,

as I have chosen to dedicate the chapter on non-fiction writing (Chapter 6) to the complex Line of Distinction of Shipping, I will not address the issue of Thematic Knowledge in greater detail there.

It is worth mentioning that the Thematic Knowledge Line of Distinction is not merely a case of having or not having consumed all fictional material on Holmes – an impossibility at any rate if one considers the myriad writings about Holmes not by Doyle – though having knowledge of the more prominent texts is certainly part of it. SHQ087, for instance, said that '[b]efore I read the short stories I personally felt excluded from the rest of the fandom because I felt they know [more] than me about it all and because of that I felt like i [sic] was being a 'wrong' fan and others were 'right' fans.' Conversely, another argued that they have 'never' felt excluded, despite not 'know[ing] all the canon' (SHQ112). That is to say, Thematic Knowledge does include specific knowledge about the texts, however, it reaches beyond it. This Line of Distinction also encompasses knowledge about fandom traditions and customs. Insider allusions in conversations do not only reference material from various Holmesian works, but also common fandom activity and shared experiences. The breadth of insider knowledge and allusions is perhaps best illustrated by the editorial to a recent Baker Street Journal, which addressed the controversy of 'Who is a Sherlockian?', taking an initially inclusive stance, though one might consider it somewhat qualified later in the editorial:

> You are a Sherlockian if you think you are. If you find your thoughts frequently straying towards Baker Street. If you know who the unhappy John Hector McFarlane is or can name the three Garridebs, you are a Sherlockian. If you spent too much time listening to Sherlockian podcasts, tweeting pictures of moustaches, observing Red Pants Mondays, or posting photos of otters and hedgehogs on Tumblr, you are a Sherlockian. If you've deconstructed Watson's timeline in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* or pastiched an unrav-

> eling of the remarkable worm, you are a Sherlockian. And if you subscribe to the *Baker Street Journal* and eagerly read each article, you are a Sherlockian. (Rothman 2016, 5)

To explain just a few allusions, John Hector McFarlane is Holmes's client in the Canon short story 'The Norwood Builder.' The Sherlockian connection with otters and hedgehogs originates amongst fans clustering around the BBC series *Sherlock*, who have compared Sherlock and John to an otter and a hedgehog, respectively, creating fanworks around that theme. The 'remarkable worm' is an allusion to a case that Watson as a narrator mentions in the Canon short story 'The Problem of Thor Bridge,' but that does not have a corresponding Canon story. As Roberta Pearson correctly notes, the allusions are practically 'impenetrable' to non-fans, and, within the fandom, different factions or individuals might find different allusions in the above 'baffl[ing]' (Pearson 2018, 505–6) to various degrees. What I hope to have illustrated with this is that thematic knowledge goes beyond knowing the Canon by heart, and that even fans who do know the Canon and/or the prominent adaptations will find themselves excluded by allusions to fandom activities with which they have not come into contact. I will further explore this Line of Distinction in the following Chapter 4: Meeting Up through the lens of insider jokes and allusions that I have personally observed.

3.3 Concluding Remarks: Lines of Distinction in the Holmes Fandom

I will conclude the one-by-one exploration of the Lines of Distinction within the Holmes fandom here. However, it bears repeating that, as the numbers in Table 3.1 indicate, the Lines of Distinction I have so far discussed in detail are only the most prominent, not the only ones that are present in the fandom. Amongst certain factions or in certain situations, Lines that overall seem less important will have a large bearing on whether a fan feels included or excluded, or what

a fan considers part of their 'self' and part of the (negatively connoted) 'other.' For example, in the case of the Line of Distinction around Age, the effect if an older fan finds themselves surrounded by young fans at a fan gathering, or vice versa, can be quite profound, despite the fact that Age was not one of the most frequently mentioned Lines of Distinction overall. I will therefore return to these less frequently mentioned Lines of Distinction as and where they are relevant to the situations discussed in the following chapters.

It has been made clear that Lines of Distinction in a specific context cannot be divorced from the activities and discourses in that context. That is, a Line of Distinction in the Holmes fandom cannot be discussed without referencing the practice of Holmes fans. Indeed, as I have stated in the previous chapter, power constellations and therefore also Lines of Distinction cannot *exist* without practice, even if they can have the appearance of being universal and ubiquitous. In the following chapters, I will examine a selection of prominent fandom activities – fandom meet-ups, fiction fan writing and non-fiction fan writing, and illustrate how Lines of Distinction are expressed through these activities.

Chapter 4

Meeting Up: Fan Gatherings

I begin my explorations of Lines of Distinction around fan practice with the one that is probably most influenced by my own perspective on the fandom – fan meetings. While fan meetings have the potential to evoke every Line of Distinction that exists within a fandom, and thus from all categories of Lines of Distinction, I have, by drawing on the results of my participant observation, come to focus primarily on those Lines of Distinction that reference the Approach to the Fandom Object, that is, Sherlock Holmes. While I touch on others as they arise, this primarily textual focus also allows for a slow immersion into the world of the Sherlock Holmes fandom, introducing the reader to Holmesian Lines of Distinction that are perhaps easiest to follow for an outsider. Later in this chapter, and especially in Chapter 5 and 6, I turn to the more complex interplays of Lines of Distinction.

This chapter contains the first study of Lines of Distinction within the Holmes fandom in practice. It looks at the two in-person meetings organised for Holmes fans that I attended during the research for this thesis, the Baker Street Irregulars Weekend in New York, January 2017, and the 'Sherlocked' Convention in Birmingham, UK, in October 2017. Apart from observational data from these events, the chapter also draws on experiences as reported by fans in interviews,

questionnaires and publications. The first section of the chapter will introduce my own position within the fandom to frame my participant observational data and give context for both events. I will then go on to discuss the interplay of Lines of Distinction in three examples: assumptions around entry points, insider jokes, and the notion of exclusivity.

Before entering into the discussion proper, it is worth revisiting three characteristics of Lines of Distinction. Firstly, Lines of Distinction more often than not overlap with others, creating a complex interplay in which several different Lines reinforce each other. Secondly, Lines of Distinction always have two sides. That is, an individual fan's self (and 'good') is *simultaneously* another fan's other (and 'bad'). It is impossible to divorce individuals and factions from these power dynamics; they are always enmeshed in them in some way. Thirdly, Lines of Distinction do, in practice, lead to exclusion and can engender resentment, but are not always or necessarily held with malicious intention. To conceive of Lines of Distinction only as being employed to deliberately exclude (or include) is a tempting simplification, but as Rhiannon Bury's example of the all-female X-Files listserver shows, the heterosexual female focus unintentionally also managed to exclude lesbian fans (Bury 2005, 14–15) without being intentionally targeted at excluding these lesbian fans. In this way, Lines of Distinction might have unintended effects, or might even fail to achieve the desired effect. Whether these Lines of Distinction are framed to be inclusive or to exclude only one specific faction, they might also exclude/include other factions without there being an intention to deliberately exclude/include these. Both the practical interplay and duality of various Lines of Distinction and the unintenionality of inclusion and/or exclusion will be examined below.

4.1 A Fan at Two Meetings

The field of fan studies increasingly asks scholars that are studying fandom to acknowledge their own fannishness (e.g. Hills 2002, 22), following a general trend

of increasing importance of autoethnography as qualitative method (Ellis 2012, 49). The current fan studies push for acknowledging our fannishness as scholars comes from a need for more consciously reflective practice: for 'more explicitly auto-ethnographic work [...] rather than academics' fan experiences being implied in their work' (Hills 2002, 22). In Hills, aside from criticising (often somewhat dismissive) comparisons and the artificial distance between academic work and fannish engagement (see Jenkins 2013) – a debate with which I will not engage here – autoethnography serves primarily to illustrate the multiple fannishness of an individual fan on Hills's own example (Hills 2002, 71–89). For the present study, autoethnographic considerations are relevant in view of the participant observational data, primarily the notion that '[a]utoethnography should treat self [the researcher] and other [the researched subjects] identically, using the same theoretical terms and attributions of agency to describe both' (Hills 2002, 81). Thus, as a fan, I am very much not exempted from drawing the very Lines of Distinction that I observe in my research participants. My own identity as a fan is significant in that it invariably influences my engagement with fans and my understanding of fan activities. Certainly, my own previous experiences with the Holmes text and fandom as well as my demographics have noticeably shaped my experience as participant observer at the fan events I visited. I will therefore give a brief overview over my own fannish engagement with Sherlock Holmes, in a similar way in which I asked my interviewees to describe how they first encountered Sherlock Holmes and the fandom, before addressing the fan meetings.

I had first read the Holmes stories during the summer holidays in the later years of secondary school in their original English, which is not my native language. I had a keen interest in English literature, however, so the original was the logical choice, and to this day I have not read a German (my native language) edition of the Canon. I had previously read a learners' abridged version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* for a school assignment, but that had not left a lasting impression and I only remembered the experience in retrospect. Reading the Canon that

summer started me off on a journey through various Holmesian screen adaptions, at that point primarily the Jeremy Brett Granada series. I entered the English-speaking online fandom just around the time that the first Guy Ritchie movie came out (*Sherlock Holmes*, 2009), and just before the first series of *Sherlock* (2010), and I was active in fanfiction circles around both the books and *Sherlock*. After *Sherlock*'s second series (2012), I had an unfortunate online experience around issues of shipping and subsequently, now being an undergraduate student, moved my interest in Holmes from fandom entirely to academic pursuits. I had not met any Holmes fans in person at that point. The following years saw me going to in-person events for other fandoms, but this PhD project was the impetus to renew my relationship with the Holmes fandom and prompted me to attend my first in-person meetings around Holmes. I had by that point lost touch with all previous Holmesian fandom acquaintances and as such knew no one currently active in the fandom as a social community.

In this chapter, I will give a brief impression of both meetings to which my PhD field trips took me, before discussing selected aspects as examples of how Lines of Distinction play out at these events. It bears noting here that I was fortunate to gather such a wealth of data at both events that I cannot possibly mention let alone discuss everything. I have chosen examples that illustrate prominent Lines of Distinction (primarily, Entry Point, Thematic Knowledge and Activeness) as well as give an impression of the meetings for readers without previous knowledge of these events.

The first meeting I attended was the Baker Street Irregulars Weekend in New York in January 2017. I introduced the BSI briefly in the previous chapter, so will focus here on the specific event I attended. The BSI Weekend is fan-organised. The BSI oversees overall registration and hotel booking, but individual events at the Weekend are organised by other groups, scion societies or individuals. Set to last for about half a week (Wednesday to Sunday), the 2017 BSI Weekend was scheduled for January 4th to 8th. It kicked off with ASH Wednesday on Wednes-

day evening, followed by the Baker Street Babes Ball (Daintiest Thing under a Palm Tree Beach Party) on Thursday, with the BSI Dinner – members exclusive, and therefore inaccessible to me – on Friday night. On Friday, after the Gillette Luncheon around midday, I therefore attended the Gaslight Gala instead, which is run parallel to the BSI Dinner. Saturday concluded the formal events with the Cocktail Reception, and the Weekend was rung out on Sunday morning with a brunch which most attendees used to say their good-byes. Most of the events at the BSI Weekend involve dinner (for which each attendee was asked to pay in advance as a kind of registration fee) and a loose programme of entertainment, ranging from auctions to speeches ('toasts') to costume contests to acted skits. There was also a Dealers' Room on Saturday, at which several stalls sold Holmes-related collectibles and books (both fiction and non-fiction).

Throughout my presence at these events, I found it helpful to frame my own role through Ervin Goffman's conceptualisation of social interaction as comparable to stage performances, in particular the notion of front stage, back stage and outside region. The front stage, in this concept, is characterised by the presence of the 'anticipated audience' of a social performance, from whom the performative nature is hidden. The back stage, by contrast, encompasses only the performers (individuals or groups) and there 'impressions are openly constructed' (Goffman 1971, 97; 117). Finally, there is the outside region, with those people for whom the performance is not intended (Goffman 1971, 117). Despite my previous involvement with the Holmes fandom, I had felt very much that my purpose of being there – academic research – put me into the 'audience' section at best (as a fan recipient of what the event organisers had put together), possibly even in the role of a complete outsider (as a not-quite-fan academic attendee, when the programme was put together for fellow Holmes fans). However, I found that even from the first event I was very much part of the back stage group. This included receiving glimpses into the organisation of the upcoming events by simply happening to be around as organisational concerns arose in conversations between

other attendees.

Goffman's notion of people who find themselves together in the back stage 'act[ing] as if they were of familiar terms with one another in all matters' (Goffman 1971, 109) regardless of their actual relationship felt very much appropriate to my experience, and echoes a concept that attendees have mentioned again and again in relation to in-person meetings, both in interviews (e.g. SHI01) and personal conversations: that it is a gathering of 'family,' or 'their tribe' (see also, for instance, Jacquelynn Morris in Redmond 2017, 25). At the BSI Weekend in particular, since it is organised by fans for fans, there is a degree of the front stage and back stage collapsing into one another – without suggesting that they are completely equivalent. While I witnessed some organisational conversations (what Goffman calls 'staging talk' (Goffman 1971, 154–55)), others were surely kept between the people directly involved in the organisation, and there were actual stage performances given at the events which reestablished a front stage/back stage dynamic within the wider 'stage' of the BSI Weekend. Still, I found myself in this position on the cusp of the back stage far more readily than I had expected.

That is not to say that my research purpose did not shape my experience at the event at all, but that it did in much subtler ways than I was expecting. For example, fans would share their own research experiences in conversations with me, or tell me of previous researchers visiting the event. Mostly, however, I was given the impression that I was spoken to as a fan first and a researcher second, even though I did draw attention to my researcher status to gain participants for interviews and questionnaires. Therefore, I found myself integrated almost immediately, and was not given the impression of being 'performed to' as a researcher, only as a fellow fan. Certainly, my familiarity with Sherlock Holmes as a fan was a significantly contributing factor here.

Notably, despite my actual experience of rapid integration, the BSI Weekend has a fairly formal veneer, helped along not only by the locations of its venues – all in downtown Manhattan – but also by the relative formality of invitation

and registration and the lack of publicly accessible information about aspects such as dress code, which leads one to err on the side of too formal. The only easily located source of information for first-time attendees without contacts with returning attendees I was able to discover were blog posts on *I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere* (IHOSE) (Monty 2016). To stay with the example of dress codes, however, even here you only find tips about how to handle January in New York, no indications about the degree of formality. Altogether, aside from the barrier of having to be aware of IHOSE as an information source in the first place, the info post is more useful for first-time attendees who already move in the US Sherlockian circles or returning attendees rather than complete (international) newcomers, as I was.

I had always been aware of the BSI and the BSI Weekend as one of the biggest events in the fandom, but had no personal contacts to the organiser. Consequently, I reached out to some of the individual event organisers (not named here to maintain their anonymity) via email to arrange ethics approval. This email contact was friendly and welcoming – though I never heard back from any 'official' BSI channels – but beyond a few brief emails I had no contacts or acquaintances at the event, and certainly none that I would recognise on sight. It was by pure luck that I encountered one of the people I had emailed with at ASH Wednesday, where they noticed me looking lost and proceeded to introduce me to their acquaintances, all of whom continued to be a touchstone throughout the events. In Goffman's terms, I was taken through into the backstage by these first contacts, despite the fact that I had taken pains to make everyone aware that I was attending to conduct research.

In contrast to the BSI Weekend, the second event I attended was the commercial 'Sherlocked UK' Convention, which is an annual convention officially licensed by *Sherlock*'s production company Hartswood Films. It took place at the Hilton Hotel, Birmingham, UK, in October 2017. I already expected the back stage to be far less accessible and less closely connected to the front stage

than at the BSI Weekend due to the Convention's commercial organiser, Massive Events. Still, I attempted to first reach out in a similar manner as I had for the BSI Weekend. I enquired via email through the organiser's general information contact, but was unable to receive anything but a general polite dismissal. I therefore refrained from gathering data about other attendees at the event and am drawing only on my own autobiographical observations and public information.

The Convention was scheduled for three days Friday to Sunday, October 27th to 29th, though it was possible to book tickets for individual days as well as weekend passes. Each day had a range of celebrity guests involved in the acting or creation of the BBC show who would deliver stage talks and attend autograph signings and photo shoots. There were also a series of so-called 'workshops' (with celebrity guests from the production side of the show or fan artists)[1] and evening parties. On no set time schedule, attendees were free to visit a 'Museum' of props, a Dealers Room (which held both fan-created and officially licensed merchandise) as well as participate in a kind of scavenger hunt to solve a fictitious criminal case, with clues spread around the hotel. Not all celebrity guests were in attendance all days, with three notable names only in attendance on Saturday. I had opted for a Sunday-only ticket, at which only one notable guest was in attendance.

Aside from my inability to obtain any kind of productive contact with the organisers, I found the run-up to the convention fairly off-putting. Despite a meticulous webpage, there was a scarcity of information on which to base travel plans. The event schedule arrived very late – only days before the event, on the 24th – resulting in me being unable to attend an evening event due to travel arrangements. Basic level ticket attendees like myself did not receive even an event programme at registration, and as such were forced to piece together the information from posters around the venue and by drawing on the information

[1] I cannot speak to the content of all of the 'workshops,' but the one I attended took the shape of a small-group Q&A rather than any practical or activity based event as the name 'workshop' seems to imply.

available online with limited WiFi access. Additionally, contrary to my previous experiences at commercial fan conventions, all primary stage talks came with an individual entry fee of ten pounds each. As such, despite its, for me, more convenient location, the 'Sherlocked' Convention felt less accessible. This impression continued through to the impossibility of socialisation as there was no sense of communal attendance at set events due to the priced talks. To return to Goffman's terms, I felt that the Convention failed to even adequately include me in its 'front stage.'

Despite these differences in feel and experience, which I have framed via Goffman's concepts, there were also an astonishing amount of commonalities between the events. Aside from both events obviously revolving around Sherlock Holmes, both offered a similar range of different types of activities – meals, talks, auctions, merchandise, themed entertainment and pub visits at the BSI Weekend, and stage talks, auctions, merchandise, themed entertainment and parties at the Convention. Both involved a formal registration process. Both came at a cost for attendees. Aside from travel and accommodation, one had to pay for the meals at the BSI Weekend and for the stage talks at the Convention, in addition to any auction or merchandise purchases. Both events had notable guests – the celebrity invitees at 'Sherlocked,' and attendees of some fame either within the fandom or external to it at the BSI event, such as actor Curtis Armstrong, an active Holmes fan who has also been an invited actor guest at convention style events for other fandoms in the past. Both events invited costuming (or 'cosplay,' in fannish terms). I walked away from both events with a set of souvenirs which cannot be immediately sorted to the event they came from (Figure 4.1), in that I picked up *Sherlock*-specific things at the BSI Weekend (Figure 4.1a), and more general Holmesian things at the Convention (4.1b). Observe, for example, the *Sherlock* fanart postcard in the background to the right in Figure 4.1a, and the faux newspaper article on Holmes's death, including a reprint of Sidney Paget's original illustration for 'The Final Problem,' on the left in Figure 4.1b.



(a) BSI Weekend (b) 'Sherlocked' Convention

Figure 4.1: Souvenirs from meetings (photographs my own).

This is not to say that there were *no* differences between the two events, but to stress that the perceived or constructed difference between them is frequently greater. The construction of a difference between the events goes hand in hand with differences constructed about the respective *attendees* along Lines of Distinction, which are often equally as exaggerated. As Lines of Distinction are by definition about difference, it is important to bear in mind the similarities, so as to avoid overemphasising the differences and fall into a trap of considering the two events as a distinct binary, which they are not.

In the following, I will address how I have observed Lines of Distinction playing out at these events. I will not engage in a direct comparison between the two events any further than I have done up to now precisely to avoid giving a false impression of a binary opposition. Instead, I will focus on Lines of Distinction as experienced *at* one event or the other, rather than any differences *between* the two events. The Lines of Distinction selected for this chapter are the ones that stood out to me through my participant observation and are not better illustrated through any of the other fan activities examined in this thesis. It should be said, however, that social interaction in general, whether online or in person, whether

in organised events or casual meetings, features one of the densest interplays of various Lines of Distinction. As direct interaction can touch upon any and all aspects of one's fannish identity at any given point, it is only natural that all kinds of Lines of Distinction, Demographics, Approach to the Fandom Object and Fan Attitudes, should come into play. Some of these, of course, are formalised in the structure of events – such as, as I will address in more detail below, a convention focussed on the BBC's *Sherlock* privileging that same series as entry point to the Holmes fandom – but others might arise depending on who one speaks to, and on what topic. As such, aside from the selective focus in this chapter, it is also worth keeping the possible intersection of various Lines of Distinction in mind as I discuss these examples. In the final section of this chapter I will focus explicitly on just such an interplay in discussing the formalised and perceived criteria for the acceptance as a member of the BSI. As a first case study, however, I will return to one that is also often a conversation opener between fans: the Entry Point.

4.2 'So you found Sherlock Holmes through the BBC show?': Entry Point

To recap, the Entry Point Line of Distinction focusses on which of the varied Holmesian texts is the first and/or primary focus of a fan or faction. For myself, I would consider my entry point the Canon, both in the sense of it being the first Holmesian text I consciously encountered, but also in the sense of it being my favourite of the Holmesian texts in any medium. This is also reflected in my preferences with regards to other Holmesian texts, in that I prefer the ones that feel, to me, closer to the Canon.[2] Doubtless due to the diversity of Holmes texts, spanning over a century and practically every imaginable medium, a question about

[2] I will discuss the question of 'closeness to the Canon' and its subjective connotations and the problematic attempts within both fandom and academia to turn it into an objective criterion in Chapter 5: Fiction Writing. For the moment, suffice it to say that I use 'closeness to the Canon' as a distinctly subjective judgement call here and that what I consider 'close' might not be viewed as such by everyone or even anyone else.

the entry point is often a 'get to know' question in social interaction with fellow fans, taking the form of 'Who is your favourite Holmes?' or, more bluntly, 'Have you read the Canon/seen X adaptation?' As the 2017 BSI Weekend happened to coincide with a new series of the BBC's *Sherlock* (series four), I also encountered the latter in the form of 'Have you had a chance to watch the new episode?'

I would like to begin the Entry Point discussion at the other event, however. As both its name and the official licensing suggests, the 'Sherlocked' Convention comes with a not insignificant degree of assumption that its attendees are first and foremost fans of the BBC show, and may not be at all interested in Holmes otherwise. All invited celebrity guests were involved to some degree in the creation of the BBC show, whether as actors or as writers and producers. Neither of the main actors (Benedict Cumberbatch as Holmes, Martin Freeman as Watson) were in attendance, which also implies that the attendees would still be willing to come to the event to see the actors of comparatively minor characters, such as Una Stubbs (Mrs Hudson) and Louise Brealey (Molly Hooper), the latter of whom plays a character original to the BBC series which, as such, is of little interest to a general Holmes fan who is not also a fan specifically of the BBC series. Aside from the guests, the surrounding events were also clearly geared towards *Sherlock* fans specifically. The 'Museum,' for instance, featured props from the show that for the most part have no Holmesian relevance beyond it, such as Mycroft's umbrella.[3] The 'Museum' was also ordered roughly by episode. As such, its intended audience was clearly *Sherlock*-focussed and the exhibition of diminished interest to anyone with a non-*Sherlock*-specific Holmesian interest. The fact that I do not consider *Sherlock* my entry point – though I have seen and enjoyed the show – definitely diminished my enjoyment of the very *Sherlock*-specific offers at the event. For example, a number of the souvenirs I bought were generally Holmes-themed (see 4.1b) rather than *Sherlock*-themed. I also most enjoyed the

[3] Mycroft Holmes is Sherlock Holmes's older brother, first introduced in the Canon in 'The Greek Interpreter,' but playing a more important role in *Sherlock*. Portrayed by co-writer and producer Mark Gatiss.

workshop I attended, in which storyboard artist Mike Collins spoke mostly about his work on *Doctor Who* rather than his involvement with *Sherlock*'s 'The Abominable Bride' (2016) for which he presumably had been invited.

Most clearly I encountered the Entry Point as a Line of Distinction between fans in the day's only free stage talk, which ended up being organised last minute, as the originally scheduled guest had a conflicting engagement. In the guest's place, two members of different Sherlockian groups (neither a BSI member) who happened to attend were invited onto stage. In a kind of panel discussion they proceeded to address – without prompting from the moderator – the prejudice towards BBC *Sherlock* fans by other members of the fandom, for instance in the form of 'Oh, you like *Sherlock* because of Benedict Cumberbatch,' dismissively implying a focus on the actor rather than the character of Sherlock Holmes and his wider incarnations. In turn, the panellists communicated a dislike of the 'elitism' they perceived in fans of the Canon and other adaptations. The panel discussion thus exactly reflected comments I had received through the questionnaire around the Entry Point: criticisms towards a singular focus on 'only' one incarnation of Holmes, when that incarnation is not the individual fans' own entry point. I have cited some examples of this in the previous chapter, but just to reiterate the point with a further example here:

> There is a self appointed party pooper brigade that smothers any conversation with a circle jerk about how only the Canon and Jeremy Brett are legit, and everything else is sacrilege. Every conversation anywhere every time. (SHQ015)

This questionnaire respondent similarly vocally objected against a singular focus on, in this case, the Canon and the Granada series.

While the terms used in the panel were not quite as expressive, the sentiment was the same, and the panellists seemed to feel comfortable voicing these objections to the audience in the room. To return briefly to Goffman's framework (Goffman 1971), the panellists were confident that they were speaking to their

intended front stage, their intended audience, who would appreciate their standpoint and perhaps share the same experience, and that no 'outsider,' e.g. one of the fans that *did* consider *Sherlock* inferior, was in the room. Thus, in a venue where the shared assumed entry point was clearly *Sherlock*, the panellists felt free to express their experiences with being criticised for their *Sherlock* entry point, while simultaneously negatively characterising fans with other entry points as 'elitist.' They assumed a shared 'self' group with the audience around the entry point of *Sherlock*, and thus freely addressed both the exclusion they had experienced by 'other' Holmes fans, and in turn excluded these 'other' Holmes fans. If the assumed entry point had not been so clearly marked as *Sherlock* by the event itself, and therefore the audience assumed as part of a 'self' whose entry point was *Sherlock*, the panellists might not have been as frank in sharing their experiences and their criticism.

Personally, as I had by that point done a large amount of data gathering and analysis, I was not surprised to encounter the 'othering' of non-*Sherlock* Holmes fans at a *Sherlock*-specific event, though I was expecting it more in the manner that I have described above, in that there simply would be no materials or events of interest beyond what is connected to *Sherlock*. I had not expected such a frank and direct addressing of the Line of Distinction in discourse, and I further had not expected it to occur in the form of a stage talk, which gave it an 'official' character beyond casual conversation. It also moved the criticism outside of the protection of anonymity under which I had received strikingly similar comments through the questionnaire. The fact that this occurred in a panel discussion needs to be acknowledged here. Aside from the assumption that the audience would belong to the 'self' group and that it was therefore safe to voice this value judgement, there was surely also a degree of performativity to the invoking of the Entry Point Line of Distinction. Not only were non-*Sherlock* Holmes fans firmly 'othered,' the shared experience of *being* 'othered' by said Holmes fans was used to create a sense of communality, to the point where the panellists asked for a show of

hands from the audience of who had experienced prejudices by non-*Sherlock* Holmes fans. Thus, the drawing of a clear Line of Distinction against the 'other,' non-*Sherlock* Holmes fan also served as an affirmation of the 'self,' the *Sherlock* fan who shared this experience. It is not difficult to imagine that, conversely, fans of the Granada series would 'other' *Sherlock* fans based on precisely the same argument, that they have been 'othered' by *Sherlock* fans for preferring the Granada series. This effectively illustrates the way in which Lines of Distinction simultaneously function as both including and excluding depending on individual fans or factions' own Lines of Distinction, here, their Entry Point.

Let me turn now towards the BSI Weekend, and the ways in which the Entry Point distinction plays out there. While the BSI was founded as a literary society around the Canon, the BSI Weekend nowadays does not directly invite attendees of a specific entry point. Indeed, the conversation starter I mentioned above serves as an indicator of the presence of multiple entry points, while at the same time highlighting the importance of entry points as a marker of the 'self' or 'other,' depending on the conversation partner. Further, questions about the entry point are not asked without (implicit or explicit) value judgement – or indeed without assumptions about entry points that link to other Lines of Distinction, such as those around Demographics and Approach to the Fandom Object. This I would like to illustrate on two examples: the conversation starter in practice and a semi-formal get-together I happened into which discussed the question of how to better integrate fans who had never been to the BSI Weekend (or any kind of Holmesian (scion) meeting) before.

As the accommodation booking had been facilitated by the BSI at registration for the Weekend, many attendees were booked into the same hotel. It was consequently not uncommon to find fellow attendees waiting in the hotel lobby ahead of events to head out with their acquaintances spread throughout the hotel. As I had been publicly introduced at ASH Wednesday (the first event) to make attendees aware of my ongoing research, I was recognised and approached by

a fellow first-time attendee (male, middle-aged), who opened our conversation with, as near as I can remember, 'So, you found Holmes through the BBC series?' As I have described above, this is not the case, but there are two aspects to this conversation that I would like to unpack – firstly, the underlying assumptions (and Lines of Distinction) that prompted this phrasing of the question in the first place, and, secondly, my response which reveals something about the Lines of Distinction that I hold – or that I (subconsciously and/or voluntarily) bowed to in order to be considered part of the 'self' group at the BSI Weekend.

Firstly, the question is clearly a variant of the 'Who's your favourite Holmes?' Entry Point conversation starter. The way in which it was phrased, however, carried the previous assumption that I *must* have found Holmes through the BBC series. As this was my first conversation with this fellow attendee (and since my previous introduction did not reference how I had found Holmes), I can only assume that he came to this conclusion based on visually-coded demographics – my age and/or assumed gender. This shows an interplay between three Lines of Distinction: Age, Gender and Entry Point. Because I was comparatively young (certainly among the younger attendees at the BSI Weekend, though not *the* youngest (even excluding minors)) and/or because I present as female, my entry point was assumed to be the BBC series. This reveals a deliberate or subconscious judgement in that someone young and female could not possibly have come to Holmes through another entry point, or, put in somewhat exaggerated terms, that the only thing that could possibly attract a young and female fan to Holmes was the BBC series.

It should be said here that the question was not posed in a confrontational tone, and that I am also unsure about my conversation partner's own entry point. That is, I cannot be certain that despite the value assumptions around my demographics and thus my entry point he would not have considered a *Sherlock* entry point part of his own 'self' group, or, if not that, then still an acceptable entry point. That I do not know is to no small degree due to the response I made to the question,

equally as revealing, to which I will therefore turn now.

While I cannot recall my exact wording, it came down to a very immediate disclaimer of no, no, I had not found Holmes through *Sherlock*; I'd read the books a long time ago. As I pointed out above, this was factually the truth, though my overemphasising of the Canon as entry point reveals just as much about my own assumptions as my conversation partner's question revealed about his. I had come to the BSI Weekend very conscious of the fact that, historically and officially, the BSI was a literary society, and with the assumption that attendees were likely to value an entry point via the Canon more highly than an entry point via any adaptations. I had certainly, by that point of the Weekend (this conversation took place on Friday morning), found that emphasising both my identity as a fellow fan and my Holmesian knowledge spanning various adaptations led to more enjoyable conversations. I was also, to no small degree, responding to the (wrong) assumption clearly made based on my demographics. Being a common communication starter, I had previously at the BSI Weekend talked about the ways I had first found Holmes with various fellow attendees of different demographics, but never with quite the emphasis I found myself using here. Whether or not it was intended as such, I had perceived the question as a devaluing judgement. As such, it prompted me to defend myself and my Holmesian credentials via establishing a different entry point 'self' as my own than that which my conversation partner had assumed about me. In doing so, I deliberately contradicted the assumptions based on demographic Lines of Distinction, and probably also (somewhat unintentionally, as I have and do enjoy the show) communicated that *I* valued the Canon as entry point higher than the BBC series.

This example illustrates two things around the Entry Point Line of Distinction. Firstly, it illuminates why the Entry Point Line of Distinction is the most frequently mentioned Line of Distinction of all in the questionnaire responses. In any context where your conversation partner's entry point is not clear or assumed through the nature of the location in which the conversation takes place (as at the

'Sherlocked' Convention), the question is bound to come up in a conversation about Holmes. Secondly, the question and my reaction could well have ended all conversation between us, echoing the experience from one of my respondents quoted in the previous chapter: 'I have had conversations end when I mention that I'm not a fan of Sherlock, and I prefer Elementary' (SHQ036). I continued to be on good terms with the fellow fan who had asked the question, but presumably only because he, too, valued the Canon as an entry point, or because he was not offended at my emphasising the Canon at the expense of *Sherlock*, either because it was an accepted stance at the BSI Weekend or because we shared the entry point.

That I was not entirely mistaken about the high value of the Canon as entry point at the BSI Weekend (despite its openness to all Holmesian angles) was confirmed by an informal discussion on how to better integrate newcomers into the BSI proceedings. Titled Loungers and Idlers, this discussion took place in the hotel lobby and was seemingly informally organised – I happened to go along by pure chance, and there was no mention of it in the official programme. There were about ten of us in attendance, some first-time attendees and some returners, the majority female. In terms of age, we united perhaps the largest possible range, from a baby to a retiree, who was also a first-time attendee. The discussion addressed several practical obstacles I had also encountered before at the Weekend – the difficulty of finding official information, such as on dress codes (a returning attendee narrated an anecdote of showing up to the Gillette Luncheon (scheduled later that day, a highly formal event) in jeans in the first year, and receiving strange looks, but now continuing to wear jeans in reference to that first-time faux-pas) and the social barrier of getting to know people if you have no contacts already.

However, there was also a discussion not unlike the panel at the 'Sherlocked' Convention in which common prejudices towards newcomers were addressed. The Lines of Distinction that came up in this conversation were Gender, Age in

the sense that there is a resistance by 'older' Sherlockians to the use of digital media both in terms of distributing information and in practical registration for events, and the Entry Point, which I will detail in a moment. Firstly, it should be noted that the people at the Loungers and Idlers meeting took pains to emphasise that many of these Lines of Distinction were held by more or less specific *others* at the BSI Weekend, not themselves. This way of conversing about Lines of Distinction is something that I have also encountered in my questionnaire responses, in that respondents would vaguely nod towards certain groups (as SHQ015 quoted above) or 'some people' that excluded others while at the same time distancing themselves from this kind of behaviour. To give just a brief example:

> I haven't experienced any [exclusion by other fans] personally, but I'm aware of *some fans* of older adaptations' (e.g., Granada TV series) dislike of more recent adaptations (the Guy Ritchie movies, BBC Sherlock, and Elementary), and *some fans* of particular recent adaptations' dislike of other recent adaptations (e.g., controversy in BBC Sherlock fandom when Elementary was announced). Some of this was presented as a matter of personal taste combined with other factors, but other times claims of lack of 'faithfulness' or claims of moral superiority were used to suggest fans of the disliked adaptations were in the wrong. (SHQ060; emphasis mine)

Certainly this way of speaking is designed not to accuse any individual and to emphasise that not *all* fans of particular adaptations act in this way, but it also ties in implicitly with the Line of Distinction of Fan Behaviour. This framing implies a criticism not of the personal entry point preference – the 'personal taste' (SHQ060) – but of using these preferences to look down on other fans, i.e. of using the entry point *as* a Line of Distinction. In terms of the Loungers and Idlers meeting, everyone attending claimed to hold an inclusive attitude without Lines of Distinction that encouraged exclusion of certain fans/factions. At face

value, this seems to defy the point of the meeting – discussing strategies for the better inclusion of newcomers. If the barriers to said inclusion come only from *others*, these others would need to adopt strategies developed in a discussion of which they were not a part, and the attendees at the meeting were preaching to the converted. However, like at the 'Sherlocked' Convention, the fact that the people present assumed all of the group to be like-minded, part of their 'self,' brought out other Lines of Distinction. Not only was there the othering of the exclusionist fellow fans based on the Fan Behaviour Line of Distinction, there was also a strong emphasis on the Entry Point.

An attendee stressed that newcomers should at least make an effort to read the Canon, raising the example of the dog Toby, which had recently made an appearance in *Sherlock*. According to this attendee, people were recognising Toby from Disney's *The Great Mouse Detective* (1986)[4] rather than from Doyle's *The Sign of the Four*, where it originally appears, which they considered appalling. This point seemed to meet with agreement from all attendees, with the notion of 'We need to get people to read!' receiving nods all around. Therefore, while this self-identified newcomer-friendly group of BSI Weekend attendees saw no issue with people first finding Holmes through, for instance, the BBC series, there was still an agreement that the ultimate goal would be for these fans to read the Canon, and that only having read the Canon they would be fully included. This went hand in hand with a call for newcomers to 'show interest' in and 'respect for the traditions' of this section of the fandom, which links the Entry Point to both Fan Behaviour and Thematic Knowledge as Lines of Distinction. Having briefly addressed the Fan Behaviour Line of Distinction here, I will therefore now turn at greater length to the Line of Distinction around Thematic Knowledge. I will do so by examining the use of insider references at the two meetings.

[4] TGMD is based on a series of novels by Eve Titus and narrates the adventures of the mice Basil of Baker Street and Dr Dawson. As such, both the novels and the film can be considered a Holmesian adaptation in which Holmes and Watson are mice. Basil and Dawson live beneath 221 Baker Street, and the film heavily implies that the original, human Holmes and Watson live in the flat above, and that Toby is their dog.

4.3 Props, Skits and Songs: Insider References

The Line of Distinction around Thematic Knowledge encompasses both knowledge about the object of fandom – in this case, Sherlock Holmes, though this also includes knowledge about related subjects, such as various adaptations and their actors, Victoriana, etc – and knowledge or awareness of fandom traditions, customs and shared experiences. If we recall the introduction of an issue of the BSI journal quoted in the previous chapter:

> You are a Sherlockian if [...] you know who the unhappy John Hector McFarlane is or can name the three Garridebs, [...] [i]f you spent too much time listening to Sherlockian podcasts, tweeting pictures of moustaches, observing Red Pants Mondays, or posting photos of otters and hedgehogs on Tumblr, [...] [i]f you've deconstructed Watson's timeline in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* or pastiched an unraveling of the remarkable worm (Rothman 2016, 5)

This quotation includes a mixture of references to the fandom object (e.g. the three Garridebs, i.e. Canon characters) and allusions to fandom activities or traditions (e.g. Red Pants Mondays, i.e. a *Sherlock* fanart tradition), encompassing all that I categorise under Thematic Knowledge. Both knowledge of fandom tradition and knowledge about the fandom object are often expressed through insider jokes and references, which will be my primary focus of analysis here. In practice, the difference between references to fandom tradition and references to the object of fandom is far less clear cut, as will become clear below.

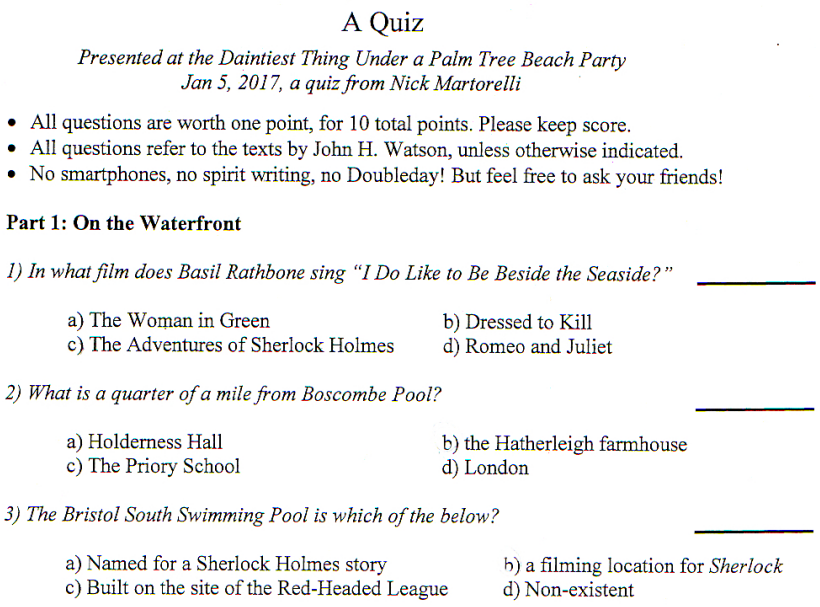
As both the BSI Weekend and the Convention specialised in Holmes, there were many examples of Thematic Knowledge that would go over the head of someone not part of the fandom. However, as the focus of Lines of Distinction is on relationships *between* fans, I will draw out the more complex examples, some of which created a sense of inclusion among all attendees, some of which I noted as reaching only sections of the attending fans and excluding others.

There are, of course, also significant overlaps with other Lines of Distinction, primarily Depth/Time of Engagement and the Entry Point discussed above. Consequently, if your entry point is the BBC series, you are more likely to have the thematic knowledge to understand references to the BBC series specifically, or references to fandom traditions around the BBC show, such as the above 'otters and hedgehogs' (another *Sherlock* fanworks tradition) and 'Red Pants Monday.' As I have touched on in the previous chapter, Thematic Knowledge also communicates with the Line of Distinction around Depth/Time of Engagement, which addresses the (temporal or otherwise) 'investment' of fans with the object of fandom. That is, more such engagement is likely to also result in a greater degree of thematic knowledge. For instance, one might have read the Canon and consider it one's entry point, but still not be able to recall the details or traditions such as the characters mentioned in the quotation above or the references discussed in the following. On the other hand, having spent some time engaging with the Canon on a daily basis, one is also more likely to accumulate a greater degree of thematic knowledge about the Canon and therefore be able to more easily identify the references. However, I consider the insider references that form most of the examples here as directly engaging with Thematic Knowledge (on part of both the maker and the recipient of the reference), rather than constituting a veiled criticism of a fans' 'lack of investment.' As such, insider references are a distinct aspect of the Thematic Knowledge Line of Distinction, and as far as is possible, I will focus strictly on Thematic Knowledge as a Line of Distinction in its own right in the following, but the overlap with both Entry Point and Depth/Time of Engagement should not go unreiterated.

I have observed the Thematic Knowledge Line of Distinction in two different ways. Firstly, it functions self-excludingly. In contrast to the Entry Point Line of Distinction, Thematic Knowledge as a Line of Distinction is rarely raised in a fans' face, as also evidenced by the questionnaire and this interview response: 'I don't think you have to take a test or anything like that, but I'd imagine you'd need

to have a much more detailed knowledge of canon than I do' (SHI11). If we recall the notion of the 'impostor syndrome' from the previous chapter, there is therefore a high degree of subjectivity and self-exclusion with this Line of Distinction. That is, the perceived difference in knowledge causes a value judgement about *oneself* in comparison to other fans rather than being experienced as a judgement *from* other fans about oneself. This seems to be the most common appearance of this Line of Distinction, more so than it being used as a direct determiner of whether a fan is part of the 'self' group in the form of a 'tak[ing] a test' (SHI11). It is therefore almost impossible to pinpoint exact instances in which 'too much' Thematic Knowledge is asked for, as it will entirely depend on the individual. The instances I picked up on as requiring a relatively high level of thematic knowledge might have been perceived as very obvious to other attendees, or as even more complex to yet others.

Still, there is a visible effect, and here is where the second way in which I have observed this Line of Distinction comes in. As many insider references drawing on Thematic Knowledge take the form of insider *jokes*, a failure to 'get the joke' can quickly make a meeting or conversation unenjoyable or awkward, even when that is not the intention of the person telling the joke. Indeed, as Leveen points out, there is a vulnerability also in the joke *teller*: 'The joke act [i.e. the telling of the joke] may allow the joke teller the opportunity to [...] prove her/his intellectual and social skills, yet in attempting to gain the power of pleasing the audience [...] the joke teller risks the possible humiliation of being found not funny' (Leveen 1996, 31). Thus, the insider jokes and references function as a test of the Thematic Knowledge of both the joke teller and their audience, succeeding in building a community if the knowledge is shared, and failing to the point of actively excluding if it is not. On the subject of jokes about ethnic groups, Werner Sollors argues that successful jokes create 'communities of laughter' that 'may affirm in-group cohesion' and establish 'a sense of we-ness in laughing with others' (Sollors 1986, 132). It is in this manner that Thematic Knowledge



A Quiz

Presented at the Daintiest Thing Under a Palm Tree Beach Party
Jan 5, 2017, a quiz from Nick Martorelli

- All questions are worth one point, for 10 total points. Please keep score.
- All questions refer to the texts by John H. Watson, unless otherwise indicated.
- No smartphones, no spirit writing, no Doubleday! But feel free to ask your friends!

Part 1: On the Waterfront

1) In what film does Basil Rathbone sing "I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside?" _____

a) The Woman in Green
b) Dressed to Kill
c) The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes
d) Romeo and Juliet

2) What is a quarter of a mile from Boscombe Pool? _____

a) Holderness Hall
b) the Hatherleigh farmhouse
c) The Priory School
d) London

3) The Bristol South Swimming Pool is which of the below? _____

a) Named for a Sherlock Holmes story
b) a filming location for *Sherlock*
c) Built on the site of the Red-Headed League
d) Non-existent

Figure 4.2: Quiz from the 2017 Baker Street Babes Ball, excerpt from the first of two pages (scan my own).

as expressed through insider references is most observable in fandoms – with the intention of establishing a 'self,' a 'community of laughter.' I have most strongly experienced insider references as such a force for *inclusion* at the two meetings I attended, probably entirely due to my thematic knowledge around Holmes being considerable if a bit rusty and unsystematic at the time of attendance. 'Getting the joke' reaffirmed my position as part of the 'self' rather than 'other,' especially at the BSI Weekend. As it is difficult to pinpoint instances of exclusion when they did not affect me personally, I use insider references as a case study here to stress that Lines of Distinction work as much *inclusively* to establish a 'self' as they work to exclude an 'other.' However, so as to not downplay the excluding/'othering' effects of this Line of Distinction, I will address excluding effects as and where I have been able to pin them down.

Before entering this discussion, I want to briefly touch on the idea of there being (or not) a quiz as a test of thematic knowledge, as many research participants reference this. There were, in fact, quizzes at some of the events I attended at the two meetings. However, these quizzes were so complex that even the most



Figure 4.3: Excerpt from the 'Sherlocked' UK schedule, the 'A.G.R.A.' stage talk.

seasoned of attendees seemed to struggle – in such way, they became more about a communal 'working it out' than about having to prove one's Thematic Knowledge to other attendees. For instance, as visible in the scan of the quiz in Figure 4.2, the Baker Street Babes Ball quiz explicitly instructed participants to collaborate with their friends and seat neighbours. The quizzes also were not in any way framed as an 'entrance exam,' nor were the prizes of particular value. Instead, the quiz was simply a further programme point, primarily for entertainment, and I will therefore not go on to discuss quizzes in any depth, though they clearly engage with attendees' thematic knowledge.

Due to its more social nature, most of my examples of insider references come from the BSI Weekend. However, I want to first discuss two examples of thematic knowledge and insider references from the 'Sherlocked' Convention, to illustrate the diversity such references can have, and to illuminate the more excluding effects. The first is evidenced by 'Sherlocked"s programme and the titles used for the celebrity stage talks. While the names of the panellists are also listed on the schedules, no photos or details about their roles in the show or production were given, and no further context provided about the nature of the panels. As I was unable to attend these panels, I cannot speak to how much the thematic grouping of these panels was reflected in the actual Q&As and conversation taking place

in them. However, the panel titles themselves required the attending fan to have a degree of thematic knowledge about *Sherlock* to understand the reference. For instance, a stage talk with Sacha Dhawan (misspelled 'Sascha' on the stage talk slot in the schedule) and Marcia Warren was titled 'A.G.R.A.' (Figure 4.3). A fan of the Canon might be reminded of the Agra treasure from *The Sign of the Four*, but be able to make little of the term as acronym. A fan who has seen *Sherlock* may recall that A.G.R.A. is the group of agents that Mary Watson (played by Amanda Abbington) used to belong to, but still struggle to remember details or recall the other characters connected to the group. From the context, this fan is likely to conclude that Sacha Dhawan and Marcia Warren did play such characters. However, considering the relative minor role of both actors/characters, even such a fairly involved fan might find it difficult to recall who the characters in question are and what precisely their connection to the A.G.R.A. group is with only the actors' names to go on. Thus, the scarcity of information about this panel presumes a high degree of thematic knowledge on the part of the attendees. The programme writers presumed that the information given would be enough to raise interest in the (individually priced!) stage talk. Not only do the fans need to be able to remember A.G.R.A., but they have to recall the names of actors with relatively minor roles to a) identify the characters they played and b) understand these characters' connection with A.G.R.A and, consequently, be able to judge whether they would like to attend these panels.

Similar assumptions about a high degree of thematic knowledge as expressed simply through a scarcity of information was evidenced by the 'Museum' of show props at the 'Sherlocked' Convention. These props were largely presented without descriptive label. While they were ordered roughly chronologically by episode, even just identifying this interior logic of the exhibition requires a degree of thematic knowledge: being able to recognise key objects and relate them back to the episode in which they appear. Even with knowledge about *Sherlock*, I struggled to place with certainty a set of burned out media devices (a TV screen

and two laptops). The 'Museum' further expected fans to be able to recognise two costumes that take the form of suit and tie as belonging to a specific character – in the case of both costumes, some context was provided by the surrounding items which related to the characters in question (though, again, these were unlabelled), but in the lose organisation of the 'Museum,' the connection was by no means obvious. In the instance of Mycroft Holmes's suit (Figure 4.4), it was contextually identifiable through the 'Diogenes Club' sign placed at the mannequin's feet and a display case with an umbrella, an ID card, two snapshot photographs (one of which shows children) and some documents. Already, it should be clear that even these markers in aid of identification of the costume require a large amount of thematic knowledge. While the ID card and one of the photos do identify *Sherlock*'s Mycroft fairly directly, the umbrella and sign might not be so obvious a marker. In *Sherlock*, Mycroft's umbrella has become a signature prop, though as I mentioned above, this has no reference back to the Canon and thus would not be recognisable for a fan who draws their Holmesian thematic knowledge primarily from non-*Sherlock* sources. Conversely, in the Canon, Mycroft is firmly associated with his club, the Diogenes. While we also see said club in *Sherlock*, it is a blink-and-you-miss-it reference, and the link between the Diogenes Club sign and Mycroft's costume is therefore far from evident. This part of the exhibit thus expected the visitor to be able to connect all these elements and conclude that the suit on display therefore had to be Mycroft's, or to be informed enough to recognise the suit just on its own.

To summarise, the 'Museum' was set up to really only be enjoyable to someone with a fairly in-depth thematic knowledge about *Sherlock*, or risk appearing as a collection of context-less items. Nearly all of the props on display are of interest only through their connection to characters and/or story lines. Their value as exhibit is therefore entirely based on the attending fans' thematic knowledge, which is needed to identify them and to understand the connections in the props' exhibitional arrangement. A fan with less in-depth knowledge might feel entirely



Figure 4.4: Mycroft Holmes's costume and associated props from the 'Museum' at 'Sherlocked' Convention (photograph my own).

out of their depth in this 'Museum' and possibly, for a fear of being 'outed' as 'not enough of a fan,' hesitate to ask for information and reveal their ignorance.

In the case of 'Sherlocked"s Museum and Panel Titles, the Line of Distinction of Thematic Knowledge comes primarily into effect in the first manner in which Thematic Knowledge can manifest: as a self-judgement, as in 'I should know this,' and therefore as self-excluding. The instances of insider references I will turn to now, drawn from the BSI Weekend, have a more immediate social effect, either furthering the inclusion or the exclusion of the individuals present in the room.

The first example is drawn from the Gillette Luncheon, to which I was invited by the organiser, which took place around midday on Friday. Uniquely within the BSI Weekend, the Gillette Luncheon traditionally features an acted Holmesian skit, which many described to me as the highlight of the Luncheon prior to my attendance. Taking place at the end of the meal on a simple stage, 2017's Luncheon featured a set of several skits rather than a longer scene. Short and comedic, these skits employed many layers of references and it would be impossible to analyse them all. However, I would like to point out one example. This Luncheon's skits revolved around the use of the telephone through the ages – up to and including the use of mobile phones, in a deliberate nod to Holmes's supposed immortality, but also certainly in reference to recent incarnations of the character in the media, at least two of which were 'updated' to a present day setting (*Sherlock*, *Elementary*). The mobile phone used a ring tone immediately recognised by some of the Luncheon's attendees – the title melody of *Sherlock*. The moment stands out to me for the scattered nature of the laughter which followed the ringing phone. While previous jokes and references seemed to unite more or less the entire room in laughter, the reaction was noticeably more scattered at the sound of the ringtone – clearly, not everyone had understood the significance of the tune (or at the very least had not found its use funny). Due to the seating arrangement I cannot speak to which of the attendees did laugh, or speculate

about whether their Entry Point was *Sherlock*, but the fact remains that the joke addressed and reached only those familiar enough with the *Sherlock* title melody to recognise it within a few seconds of it playing.

My second example also comes from the BSI Weekend, and was performed at the Gaslight Gala on Friday night. A few words on the Gaslight Gala first: while most of the events of the BSI Weekend are open to all attendees, whether they are BSI members or members of any Sherlock Holmes club at all or not, the Friday evening BSI Dinner, which is the historical core of the event, remains exclusive to BSI members and selected invitees (primarily those due to be invested as new members at the dinner). The alternative Friday evening entertainment is provided by the Gaslight Gala. In terms of structure, the Gala mirrors other dinner events during the week – dinner, some entertainment (readings, toasts...), a small auction – but it stands out through uniting those that are not allowed to be at the BSI Dinner.[5] The 2017 Gaslight Gala also featured two musical performances, a Holmesian version of 'Twelve Days of Christmas' ('On the first Day of Christmas, the Canon gave to me Sherlock Holmes in 221B') and a Holmesian version of Leonard Cohen's 'Hallelujah' (Cohen had very recently died). While the former is certainly also not without interest in terms of the Thematic Knowledge Line of Distinction, I want to focus here on the latter.

Sherlockian Hallelujah

I read a tale by Conan Doyle
A great detective and his foil
A doctor, solved a crime by chasing clues yeah
Read a second, third, a fourth, a fifth,
Addiction's claws are sharp and swift
Do you chose Holmes or does the Canon chose ya?

Hallelujah…

[5] More on the exclusivity of the BSI membership in the next section of this chapter.

Old Sherlock took a single glance
At collar, cuffs, the knees of pants
Then told ya ‘bout yourself as if he knew ya
None but a fool would try to lie
When stared down by that steely eye
A gaze the guilty knew could see right through ya

Hallelujah…

You never lived, so could not die
And yet, Sir Arthur had to try
Dispatched a Maths professor to pursue ya
Your battle’s now part of the myth
The rushing falls, the deadly cliff
You died and rose and God the honor do ya

Hallelujah…

To every boy within the man
To every girl who knows she can
Adventure from these pages beckons to ya
The world may be a scary place
But Sherlock Holmes is on the case
Moriarty, fear, we’re coming to undo ya

Hallelujah…

Chris Morley back in ‘34
With Starrett, Bell and several more
Met in New York, the BSI’s debut yeah
The flame they lit is still alive
It’s always 1895
And Holmes, we’re singing Happy Birthday to ya

Hallelujah… hallelujah…

> ‘Sherlockian Hallelujah,’ to the melody of Leonard Cohen’s ‘Hallelujah,’ written and performed by Karen Wilson at the 2017 Gaslight Gala (Third Pillar 2017); transcript mine.

Unfortunately, the transcript cannot reflect inflection and audience reaction, which I will therefore highlight, where relevant, in the following analysis. Suffice to say generally that the atmosphere was light but emotive – including some teary eyes by the song’s conclusion. The chorus also saw increasingly more singing along as the song progressed (the ‘Hallelujah’ rendition came after ‘Twelve Days’ which had explicitly asked for audience participation; in this case, the communal singing was an audience choice). Before analysing the song itself, however, I want to say a few words to contextualise this song in its ‘genre.’

Singing can be counted as one of the traditional fan practices, as communal singing has been linked to fans as far back as Jenkins’s *Textual Poachers*. Fans’ musical creations are often subsumed under the term ‘filk,’ though no one definition of the term exists (Fanlore 2018a), to the point where ‘filk’ both includes the rewriting of the lyrics of popular songs (even where they are only set down in writing, not performed), and original compositions complete with fannish lyrics both performed live and circulated as records. There is no space here to examine the phenomenon of filk in any depth, but there are two aspects of fan-created music that are worth highlighting for the present example. Firstly, filk draws on a rich tapestry of fannish knowledge and, secondly, filk is communal. As Jenkins points out on the example of a *Star Trek* filk song, filk tends to ‘evoke the fans’ shared cultural knowledge and competency through [...] constant in-references,’ including ‘the skillful management of hetroglossia, the evocation and inflection of previously circulated materials,’ that is, referencing not only the respective canon, but also more general fannish information, such as an actor’s connection to a particular singer (Jenkins 2013, 251, 253) – everything I have subsumed under thematic knowledge. Through and beyond its references, filk, especially when performed live for an audience at a fan gathering, is a community-forging

force, directly addressing fan traditions and identity. Filk is 'a cultural expression of the ideals, beliefs, and activities of fandom, [...] a means of articulating an alternative social identity, and [...] a resource for integrating the community's diverse interests' (Jenkins 2013, 253).

Some of those aspects should be immediately visible in scanning the lyrics to the 'Sherlockian Hallelujah.' The first three verses draw liberally on the contents of the Canon, with a nod towards Doyle's famous attempt to bring the character of Holmes to an end in 'The Final Problem' ('You never lived, so could not die // And yet, Sir Arthur had to try'). This reference to the authorial intent already draws on information that is not strictly intrinsic to the Canon text, but still fairly wildly known. The fourth verse directly addresses itself to the individual fans ('To every boy within the man // To every girl who knows she can'). The communal 'we' in the final line ('Moriarty, fear, we're coming to undo ya') already evokes a sense of a community of fans – one which was palatable in the air during the performance, and I had the impression that most emotional reactions began to really take hold during this verse. I want to focus my analysis here in particular on the final verse, however, as beyond addressing itself to Sherlock Holmes fans in general, it addresses itself to the attendees at the BSI Weekend in particular.

The first half of the verse is concerned with the founding history of the BSI, evoking the key founding figures as well as the founding year and location ('Chris Morley back in '34 // With Starrett, Bell and several more // Met in New York, the BSI's debut yeah'), all of which require some deeper knowledge of fandom traditions to contextualise. Notable during the performance was the slightly muted 'yeah' at the end of these lines and the subsequent laughter from the audience. The explanation, surely, lies in the fact that the Gaslight Gala was the one event without actual BSI members as those were simultaneously attending the members-only Dinner. The line thus turned into a playful mocking of that exclusivity along the lines of 'what's so great about them, anyway' while simultaneously both commemorating their history in song and uniting those not at the

BSI Dinner as a group. All of this requires a great degree of thematic knowledge around fandom traditions on part of the listener, especially if one was not present at the event itself. One needs to be aware of the context of the performance, the Gaslight Gala and its relation to the BSI Dinner, as well as of the exclusivity of the Dinner.

The next notable line is 'It's always 1895,' which was immediately picked up by the audience and confidently spoken along with the singer. None of us had heard the song before – instead, we had all picked up on what is perhaps the densest insider reference in these lyrics. 'It's always 1895' originates in the final line of Vincent Starrett's poem *221B* (1942) (the same BSI founding member Starrett), a nostalgic evocation of the Holmesian canon and world, which ends on 'Here, though the world explode, these two survive, // And it is always eighteen ninety-five' (Starrett 2013). The poem is of considerable significance within the fandom as a common reference point as well as as point of shared fandom tradition, not just in the nostalgia it evokes but also in the identity of the poet as one of the founders of the BSI. The ability of the audience at the Gaslight Gala to pick up on the reference immediately – not just subsequently to the line, but *as* the line was sung – united us through the one reference in the song that probably requires the highest level of Thematic Knowledge.

Finally, the reference to Holmes's birthday in the final line evokes the idea that the date of the BSI Weekend (and the annual dinner of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London) is fixed to the beginning of January in reference to Holmes's supposed birthday on the 6th – not a date explicitly mentioned in the Canon, but argued for by early fans and adopted by the community. Again, then, this line draws upon awareness of fandom traditions.

What I mean to show by this example is that the filk performance functioned as uniting, as inclusive, in the Gaslight Gala setting not solely through communal singing, but also through reference to both shared Canonical knowledge and shared knowledge of fandom traditions, as well as through a tongue-in-cheek

nod towards the simultaneous BSI Dinner. All of these references came together to form a shared Thematic Knowledge, received and reflected by the audience. Conversely, the song would have had far less of an affective effect or far less of a response in terms of singing along if it had not managed to evoke a sense of community, of shared Thematic Knowledge among the audience.

What unites all of these but especially the last few examples is their very performative nature. Rather than natural conversations, these skits and the song are deliberately and carefully crafted, their performance likely rehearsed and their reception carefully considered. This makes them an excellent example for the functioning of the Thematic Knowledge Line of Distinction in the sense that they are created for an audience, and reveal assumptions about the ability of said audience to 'get the joke.' As revealing as the reaction – or lack of reaction – from the audience that I have focussed on above are, one should not overlook the deliberation on part of the performers. Thinking back to the notion that the joke teller is also taking a risk (Leveen 1996, 31), these examples are not just a 'test' of the audience's thematic knowledge (in the sense that they must measure themselves against the other members of the audience), but also as a display of the performer's thematic knowledge and/or awareness of which pieces of thematic knowledge would be well received by the audience. If the references are too dense, too intricate, the performer risks alienating even the majority of a specialist audience, excluding more than it should; if they are too flat, the performance does not achieve what it sets out to do: to create an atmosphere of shared thematic knowledge, as including force.

To conclude, this section has shown the functioning of the Thematic Knowledge Line of Distinction on examples drawn from the two meetings. On the one hand, it can be a self-excluding force in comparison to other fans that are imagined as having a higher degree of thematic knowledge. On the other, it can be a force of reaffirming fans' belonging to a 'self' group though shared insider jokes. For the final part of this chapter, I want to turn to the notion of exclusivity,

and apply the framework of Lines of Distinction to the Baker Street Irregulars membership.

4.4 Memberships and Exclusivity: Baker Street Irregulars Investitures

When speaking about the BSI, one aspect is nearly inescapable: the notion of enforcedly exclusive membership to a fandom faction. It is worth stressing that exclusivity, in itself, is not a Line of Distinction. Exclusivity functions on a different level than informally applied Lines of Distinction. That is, for example, one might naturally gravitate towards fellow fans/factions who share the same entry point, but it is something different if one can *only* join a faction if one shares the same entry point. With regards to Lines of Distinction, I would therefore define 'exclusivity' as *any Lines of Distinction enforced as rule-like prerequisites for joining a fandom faction*. In other words, the 'exclusive' faction formally establishes certain positions along Lines of Distinction as requirement for would-be members. Of course, exclusivity in this manner is rarely attached to only one Line of Distinction, nor is it, like Lines of Distinction themselves, in itself a negative thing. Exclusivity, like the Lines of Distinction it evokes, as much inclusively shapes a sense of 'self' as it excludes 'others.'

Though interviewees and questionnaire respondents have occasionally voiced their dislike for 'exclusive' (in the colloquial sense) groups (e.g. SHQ048, SHI07, SHI10), the underlying criticism addressed either Lines of Distinction around Fan Behaviour (e.g. the members of the 'exclusive' faction perceived as behaving unacceptably towards other fans) or the *way* in which access to a faction is regulated. This latter again links to various Lines of Distinction, and is how I have re-defined 'exclusivity' here. As I have shown in the introduction to the fandom in the previous chapter, the Sherlock Holmes fandom is too large and multifaceted to highlight here all the various Lines of Distinction by which all

the various factions regulate their exclusivity; beside which we are likely to find that each of the Lines of Distinction is used by one group or another. The following analysis should therefore be considered an example only, and not a model by which all 'exclusive' factions in the fandom regulate their exclusivity. I will use the BSI membership as a case study here to explore the notion of exclusivity further.

Let us turn, then, to the Baker Street Irregulars membership, or more specifically, the process of becoming a member, the investiture. There is fairly little information about what the membership entails. On investiture, one is gifted a certificate, a Holmesian investiture name (generally something drawn from the Canon fitting to the individual investee) and a shilling, and subsequently is allowed to both call oneself a Baker Street Irregular and attend the annual Dinner without explicit invitation. As one might extrapolate from my account of the BSI Weekend above, my (and others') lack of BSI membership was barely an obstacle to my attendance at the Weekend apart from the Dinner itself. BSI members and non-members intermingled freely at most of the events, and friendships do not seem to be inhibited by a lack of a BSI membership. The BSI Dinner, of course, remains as a members only event. Even this is slightly mitigated by the Cocktail Reception on the following day, which provides those that were unable to attend the Dinner with a approximate experience (in the same venue) and a kind of verbal summary of the previous evening. However, the summary comes in form of a poem, and the references to the occurrences during the Dinner are obscured by the use of investiture names, and thus the summary is only marginally useful to non-attendees. As such, the summary section of the poem serves the primary function of entertaining the ones that were in attendance at the Dinner. That said, the exclusivity of the BSI membership is noticeable not just at the annual gathering, but also in conversation with Holmes fans (both members and not) when it comes to Lines of Distinction, as I have mentioned above. Therefore, though I would personally consider its influence on my experience at the

meetings a marginal one, the BSI membership 'exclusivity' is worth addressing here for the interplay of a variety of Lines of Distinction it entails.

To recall, the official BSI website describes the nature of the membership as follows:

> One does not join the BSI. One is invited to join (and, then, usually after several years of attending the dinner as an invitee). Membership is generally given after significant accomplishment, and, thus, BSI members are generally accomplished adults, either in the Sherlockian community or in their professions (but having a deep love of, and interest in, Sherlock Holmes). (The BSI Trust 2015)

Several aspects are notable here. Firstly, membership is by invitation only – who issues these invitations is unclear from this quote, but one would tentatively assume that it would be the current members or the current head of the BSI ('Wiggins'). As far as I have been able to gather during my research, there is something of a nomination process via current members. The current members I was able to speak to (SHI02 and SHI03) emphasised the fact that previous members had wanted them to be a member, which by some means resulted in their eventual investiture. Beyond that, information about the concrete process seems to be held back deliberately. Secondly, membership is tied to the requirement of 'significant accomplishment' by 'accomplished adults' as well as 'deep love of, and interest in, Sherlock Holmes.' All of this invokes primarily two Lines of Distinction: Depth/Time of Engagement and Activeness. Secondarily, it also touches on Age ('accomplished adults'), Thematic Knowledge and possibly Social Knowledge (implying a long prior involvement with the BSI as community). Taken at face value, the primary requirement to be invested into the BSI therefore is an active engagement of some sort with the fandom object, aka Sherlock Holmes, or the fan community.

Naturally, what constitutes the 'right' amount of Depth/Time of Engagement and/or Activeness to be significant enough for investiture is subjective, and ul-

timately up to whoever determines the candidates for membership to decide. Rather than this subjectivity however (and, indeed, the exclusivity in itself), what my research participants have tended to criticise about the BSI specifically is that they consider these 'official' Lines of Distinction a smokescreen for *other* Lines of Distinction actually at play – Lines of Distinction which are perhaps less seemingly 'rational' or palatable, such as personal dislikes of individuals, of certain Approaches to the Fandom Object, or of demographics such as Gender. This latter has been somewhat qualified since the BSI has been open to women for a good number of years now, but many still remember its male-only past negatively (e.g. SHQ029, SHI10). That is, these research respondents take no issue with exclusivity (as Lines of Distinction set as requirements for joining) in itself, but in *which* Lines of Distinction are used as requirements.

I spoke in-depth with many of my interviewees about the BSI, and have also had the chance to interview current BSI members (SHI02, SHI03), one of whom I was able to talk to before and after their investiture (SHI02).[6] To give just one example of the way in which the official Lines of Distinction that supposedly dictate the BSI membership are perceived as not the actual Lines of Distinction in play, SHI02 (before their own investiture) responded the following to being asked whether they would like to become a BSI member:

> I'm torn about this because I know... it's mostly sort of a participation medal? [...] I know that a lot of people who are extremely active in the fandom will never be BSI for different reasons – political reasons, personal reasons – uhm, and I know that some of the BSI really don't deserve [laughs] to be in it, or in that community, because they're not very active in that sense, they're basically just good drinkers, and, and, talkers, if you will – not naming names, but I feel that a lot of people, if it was about, if it was some sort of code of honour... thing, where, you know, you have to deserve to get in,

[6] I shall remain deliberately vague here to preserve their anonymity, as the yearly group of new members is a small one.

> uhm, then I think it would be different, but I think it's very much about, you know, people liking you, and [...] I guess very shy, you know, introvert people who are maybe very active in fandom under a pseudonym will never get there because they won't be able to make those friends [...]. (SHI02a)

In the terminology of Lines of Distinction, then, SHI02 argued that if the BSI investiture exclusivity were, in fact, tied to the Line of Distinction of Activeness and Depth/Time of Engagement, they would feel that the membership were more legitimate. They feel, however, that the actual Line of Distinction at play is Social Knowledge, knowing the right (amount of) people that are already members. This interviewee also touches on 'political reasons, personal reasons' (SHI02a) which prohibit some of their acquaintances from ever becoming BSI. While SHI02 did not go into detail, it is certainly not too far a leap to assume that such reasons are tied to other Lines of Distinction, such as those around otherwise unspecified Approaches to the Fandom Object. Even after their investiture, this interviewee reiterated their points (SHI02b) and raised another which I encountered frequently around the question of whether my interviewees would want to become BSI member and which is worth examining next.

This most evoked Line of Distinction was Depth/Time of Engagement (as well as Thematic Knowledge) as 'impostor syndrome' phenomenon. Respondents did not consider *themselves* 'worthy' of being invested, in some instances *even after having been invested*, and argued that they had acquaintances who deserved it more, often with an attached criticism of the fact that these acquaintances should already have been invested. To give just two examples, one:

> RESEARCHER: [...] did you ever / do you want to become a BSI member?
>
> PARTICIPANT: It would be really neat, but I really don't feel worthy. I don't analyze anything to that depth and I don't publish or write anything.....too shy. So I watch The Great Game from afar,

reading the BSJ [Baker Street Journal] and more books than I know what to do with.

RESEARCHER: What makes one 'worthy', then, in your view?

PARTICIPANT: [...] Well, I believe the criteria for membership includes being sponsored by a BSI member, and exhibiting some contribution to Sherlockian scholarship. I don't think you have to take a test or anything like that, but I'd imagine you'd need to have a much more detailed knowledge of canon than I do. I don't spend a lot of time worrying about chronology or stuff like that.....I enjoy the Holmes/Watson friendship, the Victorian details.....I collect antiques.

(SHI11; interview conducted in text chat form, spelling left as original.)

And example two:

Uh, and then I realised that I really kind of got an idea of the kind of work that went into it [becoming a member] and also I don't care for... uhm, but the whole men only thing really turned me off, I just think that that's stupid and annoying, but while there are a lot of deserving people who get in, it is not a meritocracy, there are people who get in because they are the flavour of the week, uhm, and there are people who have been doing the work for decades, and a lot of them are women, who... are not getting the recognition and the accolade of being invited, and that I think just sucks, and, recog... it's less of a 'well, if you don't want me in your club, I don't want to be in your club,' and more of a 'I would never want to be invited into this because I know people who deserve this who have not been.' And... I, that would be so completely inappropriate, because I have not done the work, uhm, and, and I would be... I think, you know, it's hard to say because it's all hypothetical and it's never gonna happen,

> but I think I would have to turn it down, because I have not done the work, and I know people – women – who have done the work, who have been doing the work for decades. (SHI10)

Both of these interviewees spoke to the fact that they did not consider their involvement deep or appropriate enough to deserve investiture – again evoking the notion that there would be no 'test' as such, but that they still did not feel that they had 'done the work' (or the right kind of work) while others had. As such, they consider themselves ineligible on grounds of the 'official' rules (around Activeness and Depth/Time of Engagement). The two interviewees also raise other Lines of Distinction. Both mention the Social Knowledge Line of Distinction. SHI11 brings up an Approach to Fandom Object in that only scholarly engagement counts towards the accomplishments required for investiture, so the Line of Distinction of Academic Approach. SHI10 in particular also touches on issues of Gender.

As these quotes show, then, most of the people I spoke to about the BSI criticised the fact that investiture was not solely or primarily tied to a kind of 'measurable' Depth/Time of Engagement or Activeness and rather draws more on personal preference of Approaches to Fandom Object and Social Knowledge, while at the same time arguing that they felt not 'worthy' because they had not achieved a sufficient Depth/Time of Engagement and/or Activeness.

Similarly to the frequent evocation of 'worthiness,' all who aspired to or had been invested evoked the notion of it being an 'honour' to be invested. This emphasises the inclusive nature of 'exclusivity,' the 'honour' of being found to fit the requirements around Lines of Distinction that the faction sets for membership. For example, several used the term 'honour' in their articles for Chris Redmond's *About Being a Sherlockian*, such as Jacquelynn Morris – 'I received my BSI investiture in 2014 as "The Lion's Mane," an honor that I had once deemed impossible' (Morris in Redmond 2017, 27) – or Doug Wrigglesworth – 'An investiture as "The Retired Colourman" in 2004 was indeed an honour, one that is

a highlight of my Sherlockian career.' (Wrigglesworth in Redmond 2017, 173). As with the 'worthiness,' what constituted the 'honour' was not solely linked to the Lines of Distinction addressed by the official description of the BSI's exclusivity. As much as saying that they (would) appreciate being recognised for their Sherlockian work, my respondents stressed the 'honour' of being recognised as one of the group in a social sense, the 'honour' of being in one club with notable Sherlockians. To give examples from my own interviewees, the first from a non-member interviewee, the second from one recently invested into the BSI:

> I know people, who – that is their goal, they wanna be BSI, and I can understand that, especially if they're the sort who actually does research and publishes and stuff like... I get it, I truly do. For me, it would be nice, like even just getting invited to the Dinner would be incredibly humbling, cause that means there're people who want you to be there like that means there're people who think you are worth the time and effort to be brought into this sort of fold, because people generally speaking, the way I understand it, people have to sort of write in on your behalf if you're not already BSI, uhm, and so... if you get invited to the dinner that means a couple of people have said 'hey, this person doesn't suck, we should probably hang out with them.' Uhm. And you know, like, if that ever happened that'd be amazing [...]. (SHI01)

> [...] I'm like, here's the list of people you have probably heard of who are all BSI members, right, so, obvious ones that people would know are Neil Gaiman, Laurie King, uhm, Isaac Asimov, [...] and then all of the sudden it becomes less of a... uhm, 'oh that's a neat hobby,' and all of the sudden, this is like, you know, it's starting to get a little more exclusive, it's... [sighs] It's kinda like, oh hey, I belong to the local yacht club or something like that, in the sense that... everyone can do it, but not everyone gets kind of this high

> recognition of... being invested, and I'm doing a really poor job of trying to explain this, because it... Again, it's making me sound awfully elitist, and I'm not *trying* to do that, but that's... I guess, it's the recognition, again, that, oh hey, this a group of people that really care about this character and... really care about this literature and want to see it, uh, be important. Not just in their lives but in general. (SHI03)

As such, both interviewees drew on the Social Knowledge Line of Distinction. SHI01 mainly emphasises the social recognition of being considered 'good enough' to 'hang out with,' SHI03 stressed the 'high recognition' of being included in a group of more or less prominent people who care about Sherlock Holmes. For both, this Social Knowledge aspect is equally as or perhaps even more important that those of Depth/Time of Engagement and Activeness. I had a chance to explicitly ask SHI02, to whom I spoke to before and after their investiture, about the 'honour' aspect, and received the following response:

> I think it's an honour to be around those people,[...] I think it's an honour to be invited to the Dinner, uhm, as a non-member, I think that definitely felt like an honour. I don't know about the investiture, because I think, in a weird way I deserved it? Like in this weird, you know, I wrote a lot, I spent a lot of money, I made a lot of effort, so in that sense, I guess it makes... like I was there for the first time, and people say once you're invited more than three times you get, you know, invested, and I felt that I had, on the one hand side I worked really hard, but I also know that I had a lot of people [...] really rooting for me and really, you know, asking year after year if I could get invited. (SHI02b)

SHI02, then, raised both the social recognition *and* the idea of having done enough in terms of Activeness and Depth/Time of Engagement. However, they

went on to say that while, yes, they had 'done the work,' there were others in their acquaintance who had done it as well and had not yet been invested, which made them feel ambivalent about their own investiture, reiterating the discourse around 'worthiness' that I examined above.

To conclude this section, I have examined the interplay of Lines of Distinction formalised as prerequisite to join a faction, as 'exclusivity,' on the example of the BSI memberships. 'Exclusivity,' in itself, is not perceived as a negative thing. It is as much framed as a positive achievement as criticised for its exclusion. I have shown that the 'official' Lines of Distinction tied to the BSI's exclusivity (Activeness and Depth/Time of Engagement) evoke the same responses around 'impostor syndrome' as they do in other contexts. I have also examined how my research participants consider other Lines of Distinction to be equally as or even more so in play when it comes to investiture requirements as the 'official' ones, primarily Social Knowledge. These 'hidden' Lines of Distinction have been criticised for their othering and the excluding of 'deserving' fans, as well as framed largely positively in the fans' discussion of the 'honour' of becoming invested themselves. All of this unveils a dense interplay between Lines of Distinction under the framework of 'exclusivity.'

4.5 Concluding Remarks: Lines of Distinction at Fan Meetings

This entire chapter has examined various Lines of Distinction as they occur at and around in-person meetings of Sherlock Holmes fans. Beginning with the Entry Point as often the first Line of Distinction to be invoked, the chapter then expanded on the multiple ways in which Thematic Knowledge can come into play before concluding with an analysis of the Lines of Distinction in a formalised context, in the investiture as BSI member. All of these examples are based on social interaction between fans, and the ways in which fans understand themselves

and their fellow fans in these context through Lines of Distinction, differences associated with value judgements. While meeting up is doubtless a fan activity, I want to turn in the next chapters to the way in which Lines of Distinction come into play in fan *productivity*, i.e. in works produced by and for the fans themselves and the discourses that surround these works and the act of producing them. As the first such case study, we will turn to perhaps the most commonly highlighted fan work: fanfiction.

Chapter 5

Fiction Writing: between Fanfiction and Pastiche

> Somebody has to decide which works are 'enough like Doyle' or 'trying hard enough to be like Doyle' or 'traditional enough' to warrant the word [pastiche]. Works that 'fail' someone's subjective test are, all-too-often, relegated to second-class status: In other words, fanfiction. (Thomas 2015, n.pag.)

This quote from an online article by one of the Baker Street Babes addresses a fandom controversy that is summarised by the article's title: 'Pastiche vs Fanfiction: The Debate That Wouldn't Die.' It concerns the use of terms for fannish story-writing around Sherlock Holmes, with the terms in question being 'pastiche' and 'fanfiction.'[1] At the core of the controversy is not merely the use of one term or

[1] I have chosen to use the spelling 'fanfiction' (one word, no hyphen) in this thesis, as it allows me to contrast two single word terms in the discussion of 'pastiche' and 'fanfiction.' Not doing so would imply a distance between the two word term 'fan fiction' and the single word term 'pastiche' (or, indeed, other specialised types of fiction, such as parody) that I wish to avoid. While 'fan fiction' seems to be commonly used in academic texts, 'fanfiction' is also the more common spelling in fan circles (Baker-Whitelaw and Romano 2017; Fanlore 2019a, n.pag.) as well as the preferred spelling on two largely fan-run projects of the Organization of Transformative Works, the user-edited 'wiki' encyclopaedia Fanlore.org and the fanworks archive Archive of Our Own (AO3, archiveofourown.org). Alternative terms and spellings include 'fan-fiction, fan fiction, fanfic, fan fic, fic, derivative fiction (older term), fan lit' (Fanlore 2019a, n.pag.).

another, but the perceived difference (or lack of a difference) between works classified as 'fanfiction' and those termed 'pastiche.' Both terms, of course, concern fans' creative writing output. 'Creative writing' is here defined as any writing on or inspired by Holmes that is fiction as opposed to non-fiction,[2] in particular stories with Holmesian characters (as opposed to poetry, filk etc.), rather than used as an indication of the level of creativity involved.

In the previous chapter, Chapter 4: Meeting Up, I examined prominent Lines of Distinction that I observed at fan meetings, extrapolating the applicable Lines of Distinction directly from fan action and interaction. This chapter takes a slightly different approach. Instead of observing an activity and the way in which Lines of Distinction play out during it in a general manner, I centre this chapter specifically on the fan-reported fanfiction-pastiche controversy. This controversy, as the quote above illustrates, has gained some notoriety in the Holmes fandom and I will illustrate the ways in which the controversy gives expression to Lines of Distinction.

One would expect fannish discussion around fannish textual productions to draw heavily on Lines of Distinction related to the Fandom Object text(s). On the surface, that is indeed the case around the fanfiction-pastiche debate, which, as the quote above indicates, frequently references the Canon, and therefore the textual Line of Distinction around Canonicity (defined further below). However, in analysing the controversy around fanfiction vs pastiche, we will see that some fans, at least, consider textual-based Lines of Distinction a smokescreen for other, non-text Lines of Distinction, most prominently Demographics. In this way, the fanfiction-pastiche debate shows similarities to the discussion around the acceptance criteria of the Baker Street Irregulars that I examined in the previous chapter.

I will begin by providing examples of the fanfiction vs pastiche debate as expressed by fans, including responses provided by my research participants in questionnaires and interviews, to extrapolate which *textual* Lines of Distinc-

[2] I turn to non-fiction fannish writing in the next chapter, Chapter 6: Non-fiction Writing.

tion fans raise around the debate. Importantly, the fanfiction vs pastiche debate, though certainly a hierarchically perceived distinction of terms, does not constitute a Line of Distinction in itself. That is, the debate is not in itself a difference associated with value judgements – it is not that someone who uses 'fanfiction,' for instance, is 'othered' solely for the choice of term. Instead, because there is a perceived actual difference between the texts in the categories of 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche,' the choice of term is an expression of a variety of those Holmesian Lines of Distinction illustrated in Chapter 3: Lines of Distinction, Table 3.1. The question becomes, then, what does the work (and its author) have to do to 'deserve' one term or another? Following on from the textual Lines of Distinction fans consider as important to the fanfiction vs pastiche debate, I will use textual analysis of a corpus of fan works to provide an academic framing of the supposed difference between the two categories of writing. Afterwards, I will return to the notion that the most prominently mentioned (textual) Lines of Distinction around fanfiction vs pastiche (in particular Canonicity) are considered to be a smokescreen for other, non-textual Lines of Distinction.

5.1 Fan Voices on the Fanfiction vs Pastiche Debate

A first impression from outside the fandom would suggest that there are two clearly distinct ways to engage in story-writing regarding Sherlock Holmes: writing 'fanfiction' or writing 'pastiche,' with texts bearing one label or the other with little to no overlap in substance between the texts in either category. From within the fandom, the case is much less clear cut, with the same texts being referred to as 'fanfiction' by some and as 'pastiche' by others. Further, neither term is in universal use across the entire fandom. Particularly important for the present analysis, what exactly constitutes the (textual or otherwise) difference between the two, if there is one, is at the core of the fanfiction-pastiche controversy.

Chris Redmond, writing for the Sherlockian news and multi-author blog (and podcast) *I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere* (IHOSE), attempts to summarise the controversy based on an informal survey via his twitter feed. He cites various possible definitional differentiations:

> - Stories about the Holmes and Watson of Arthur Conan Doyle's original stories are pastiche; other stories [presumably those about Holmesian adaptations] are fanfic.
> - Stories in print are pastiche, and those online are fanfic.
> - Stories that are commercially published are pastiche, while those that are individually distributed or self-published (whether in print or electronically) are fanfic.
>
> (Redmond 2015, n.pag.)

These differentiations raise notions around Entry Point, which was discussed in detail in the previous chapter, as well as around Place and means of Publication. Of these, only the first is based on the works' contents, the latter two on their context and/or paratexts. Having listed these, however, Redmond settles on 'a "pastiche" is a story written in an attempt to imitate the stories of the published Canon' (Redmond 2015, n.pag., whole definition bold in original). Though he does not explicitly state as much, 'fanfiction,' presumably, are those stories that do not.

Here, Redmond supports a differentiation of the two terms that is based on textual closeness. This definition broadly follows the non-Sherlockian definition of the term: 'A *pastiche* [...] is a work – whether literary, artistic, musical, or architectural – that imitates the styles of previous work.' (Doyle and Crowder 2010, 236, emphasis in original) This general use of 'pastiche,' of course, does not imply the use of the same characters or even larger story context, as is generally the case in the Sherlock Holmes stories called 'pastiches.' Redmond himself makes no mention specifically of 'style,' only of 'imitat[ion],' but the respondents

to my questionnaire very prominently referenced the notion of 'style of Doyle' (or, alternatively, 'Watsonian style,' as Watson is the narrator in most Canonical stories; e.g. SHQ021, SHQ197). No respondent specified what they meant by 'style,' and some even indicated that it was more of a canonical 'feel' (e.g. SHQ051, SHQ056). Despite this vagueness, it is possible to summarise notions of canonical 'style,' 'imitation' or even just 'closeness to the canon' under the term Canonicity.

Canonicity as a Line of Distinction is part of a subset of those Fandom Object Lines of Distinction that is primarily concerned with fans' written activities, with another in the same category being Publication Type. As such, Canonicity reflects a value judgement on whether or not a fans' written output shows close alignment to the canon, however individual fans or factions making this judgement define both 'the canon' and what it means to be 'close' to it. Mostly, the canon in question in the fanfiction/pastiche debate is the Doylean Canon, but respondents also made reference to Canonicity with regards to the BBC series (e.g. SHQ013). In this sense, 'closeness to the canon' or Canonicity does not necessarily have to be limited to narrative 'style,' but can encompass a great variety of elements such as story lines, story elements, characters and characterisation, as well as narrative style and voice.[3]

While this value judgement is therefore generally made about a fans' written output within the fandom and its quality, it tends to also imply a judgement about the fans producing these works. Not only the texts themselves, but also those that 'manage' to produce the works 'close to the canon' are 'better' – 'better' writers, and possibly also 'better fans' for their capacity to successfully emulate the canon style. Amy Thomas makes a related point in her direct response to Redmond's article, which I have cited briefly above, here in more detail:

[3] I am aware that many of these terms are contested in their meaning in literary studies and beyond, and I am using them here in a colloquial sense only to give an indication of the possible breadth of 'closeness to the canon.' A detailed attempt to define aspects such as 'style' with regards to the Holmesian Canon would exceed the limits of this thesis, but I engage further with the question of what 'closeness to the canon' means on actual textual examples and with a more academic framing below.

> I don't have a massive quarrel with IHOSE's [more precisely, Redmond's, as IHOSE is multi-authored] definition – technically. The problem is, words are not used in a vacuum, especially not in fandom. Somebody has to decide which works are 'enough like Doyle' or 'trying hard enough to be like Doyle' or 'traditional enough' to warrant the word [pastiche]. Works that 'fail' someone's subjective test are, all-too-often, relegated to second-class status: In other words, fanfiction. This is the ugly little secret, and I've been seeing it happen ever since I entered the Sherlock Holmes world as an adult. (Thomas 2015, n.pag.)

Thomas flags up that while a differentiation on the basis of Canonicity gives the impression of objectivity – based on actual aspects of the discussed fan-produced texts – the wider fandom context, and specifically how and by whom the differentiation is made, needs to be taken into account. The key term is 'someone' – who makes the decision, and about whom.

I have already mentioned some of the ways in which the questionnaire responses addressed the fanfiction/pastiche debate and the notion of Canonicity, but it is worth analysing them more fully here to add to the dialogue of articles between Redmond and Thomas. The questionnaire responses also clearly reflected the far reach of the fanfiction/pastiche controversy. All but 3.5% of respondents indicated that they had read 'creative writing' around Holmes not by Doyle, and approximately 60% of total respondents also indicated that they had themselves written 'creatively' about Holmes (61% of those who had read such works). The choice of the term 'creative writing' for the questionnaire was prompted by my awareness of the pastiche-fanfiction debate. I wanted to capture a more accurate number of those who wrote fiction about Holmes than I would have received had I asked fans to indicate whether they were writing 'pastiches' or 'fanfiction,' reinforcing a differentiation that not all fans might agree with. As a consequence, fans have included other types of texts under 'creative writing,' such as but not

limited to poetry and filk, so the percentages cited here will lie slightly above the numbers of those who wrote only Holmesian fiction in the sense of stories around Sherlock Holmes. Regardless, having previously answered this question about writing habits, I was then able to ask all who indicated that they had written on Holmes which term(s) they used to describe their writings and their reason for choosing these terms. Again, this question was phrased openly out of a desire to avoid prejudiced assumptions based on my own prior awareness of the fanfiction-pastiche controversy. Nonetheless, with the exception of those fans who wrote non-fiction texts or poetry/filk etc, no terms other than 'fanfiction' and/or 'pastiche' emerged through this question as in use for fictional texts.

Amongst those who picked one term or another, the majority did so without giving much explanation of why – 'fanfiction' was considered a natural choice by many on the grounds that 'it's fiction written by fans' (e.g. SHQ180, SHQ232). However, despite the question deliberately not addressing the pastiche vs fanfiction controversy explicitly in any way, a number of respondents also chose to interpret it as a nod towards this controversy. Consequently, they commented on the controversy, generally to the effect of the example below:

> Oh boy. Such a loaded question. I think any term – from pastiche, to parody, to hommage [sic], to adaptation, to fan fiction, to transformative work – is valid. I use fanfic to review to [sic] things posted online, primarily related to shipping, and pastiches to [sic] things that are "published," but obviously there's lots of politics in this naming. (SHQ029)

As such, respondents like this one were clearly aware of the controversy and complex 'politics' around which terms to use for fiction writing. They acknowledge the controversy and gave their own reasoning or definition for the use of the respective terms.

Others argued that they used both fanfiction and pastiche, and opted to draw their own differentiation between the two categories:

> Pastiche, fanfiction. Pastiches are essentially works of fiction that imitate the written style of ACD novels and are, in general, quality pieces of literature. Fanfiction is more liberal in style, format, and themes, and the quality also varies, ranging from absolute masterpieces of storytelling to sometimes low quality scribblings (SHQ159)

While SHQ029 pinned their use of the term primarily on where the work of creative writing had been published (with a slight nod towards the practice of shipping, to which I will return) as well as noting that the choice of terms was controversial, SHQ159 argued for a difference in style and quality between fanfiction and pastiche. Interestingly, SHQ159 acknowledged the existence of high-quality 'fanfiction,' but not of low-quality 'pastiche,' indicating a belief that, to be a 'pastiche,' the quality has to be high.

Yet others became aware of the 'arbitrariness' of the differentiation between the terms as they explained their use for the questionnaire:

> [P]astiches and fanfiction. Pastiches for the books and fanfiction for everything on the internet. I call the fanfiction "fanfiction" because generally, fiction written by fans on the internet is called fanfiction. I call the books "Pastiches" because I was introduced to that term when I read about the existence of such books. Given the fact that pastiches aim to dublicate [sic] ACD's style and many fanfictions do the same, you now made me aware that this dictinction [sic] is completely arbitrary. (SHQ145)

Like SHQ029 above, SHQ145 also had originally pinned the difference on the place of publication, but went on to acknowledge that they had also perceived a difference in 'style' – which they then proceeded to deconstruct as untenable.

All three of these quotes underline a number of things with regards to the term controversy. Firstly, the responses illustrate that at least a number of fans were conscious of these multiple possible terms for fiction writing. Secondly, those

who used both terms were often very aware of the controversial or at least subjective ('arbitrary') nature of the differentiation between 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche.' Thirdly, the responses confirm the point Redmond also makes in his article, that *what* defines the difference between fanfiction and pastiche varies – is it place of publication, is it quality, is it style, is it content?

In the interest of being able to provide a deeper analysis, I have chosen here to focus on the one differentiation that was most often mentioned as associated with a clear value judgement and therefore as a Line of Distinction: Canonicity, i.e. 'closeness to the canon.' Seen through this lens, the fanfiction vs pastiche differentiation is not a debate about which term to use for the same thing, or possibly the same thing in different contexts. It is instead a question of a supposedly observable difference in *substance* – i.e. the idea that 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche' are *not* the same thing. Consequently, the difference in substance creates a binary opposition where 'fanfiction' is one thing, and 'pastiche' is another, with no real overlap between the two. In most cases, 'pastiches' are the works valued more highly by fans who distinguish the terms in a binary manner (which by no means all fans do), in that 'pastiche' are considered to have a higher level of Canonicity. I have, however, also encountered fans who dislike works they describe as 'pastiche' precisely because the stylistic limitations they consider a consequence of being 'close to the canon' and consequently value the allegedly more stylistically diverse 'fanfiction' more highly (e.g. SHQ257). I also have at least one respondent who considered 'fanfiction' to be 'closer to the canon' and therefore 'better' than 'pastiches' (SHQ088).

Having established Canonicity as the core focus of (valued) differentiation between 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche,' this concept of 'closeness to the canon' requires further unpacking. There can be no doubt that fans make this differentiation from what I have so far discussed, but in order to understand the controversy, one has to acknowledge the potential subjectivity of judgements around Canonicity. It is therefore worth analysing, firstly, whether an objective case can be

made for two different categories of Holmesian fiction fanworks. Therefore, in order to be able to produce a fruitful discussion about terms that are so individually and fluidly defined, I will now take a step back from both the term 'fanfiction' and the term 'pastiche.' In the next section, I will introduce a framework which will allow me to talk about these terms and the political nature of their use without choosing one over the other, and go on to discuss the difficulties of 'closeness to canon' as a supposedly objective category from an academic perspective.

5.2 An Academic Perspective: Archontic Texts

I will here outline a framework that allows me to talk about fans' fiction writing without subsuming it under either the term 'fanfiction' or the term 'pastiche.' It would be possible, of course, to redefine either term for this thesis, such as establishing 'fanfiction' as a descriptor for all fiction output of fans, and attempt to build an analysis on this working definition. Certainly, 'fanfiction' is increasingly an object of analysis in academic fan studies literature. However, even here the term is varyingly defined by scholars (often without drawing on justifying voices from within fandoms), and is occasionally limited in a way that would exclude much of the fiction output of the Sherlock Holmes fandom, for instance through a focus on post-1960 media fandoms.[4] Even with a fresh definition, the political dimensions of the term 'fanfiction' within the Holmes fandom seem to prohibit its use as a general descriptor. There are alternatives to 'fanfiction,' such as older 'derivative fiction,' or 'transformative works,' as used by the Organisation of Transformative Works to include any and all fannish productions, from art

[4] See, for example, the *Fan Fiction Studies Reader*, which defines fanfiction as a product of media fandoms post-1960 that is 'sometimes purposefully critical' of its fandom text (Hellekson and Busse 2014, 6). The *Reader* acknowledges that it exempts the Holmes fandom and also that wider definitions of 'fanfiction' are possible. However, its choice of a narrow definition as '[f]ollowing most academics working on fan fiction studies' (Hellekson and Busse 2014, 6) clearly indicates the need for a wider-defined concept at least to talk about the Holmes fandom's fiction writing, if not an limiting perspective on fannish fiction writing in general. Further, though the 'sometimes' qualifies that specification, Hellekson and Busse's definition of 'fanfiction,' problematically, makes reference to its 'critical' relation to the source text not unrelated to Holmes fans' value judgement around Canonicity; more on this below.

to fiction. Both terms, however, have connotations as to the works' 'derivative' or 'transformative' nature. I wish to avoid these as to not confuse the within-fandom judgements around Canonicity with the use of a term which specifically implies a works' textual specificities in relation to a source text or a canon.

Therefore, it is worth looking at the lowest common denominator of the two fandom terms in question: both 'pastiche' and 'fanfiction' in the Holmesian context are new fictional texts generally inspired by the Sherlock Holmes works, regardless of the nature of this 'inspiration' and the ways in which this is expressed on the textual level. As such, whether they are 'fanfiction' or 'pastiche,' they, like sanctioned spin-offs and parodies, most certainly fall under the term of 'archontic literature.' Coined by Abigail Derecho on the basis of Jacques Derrida's concept of the ever expanding archive, the primary purpose of the term 'archontic literature' is negotiating the various possible understandings of what consists 'fanfiction' and its difference from general intertextuality. Derecho proposes 'archontic' in the sense that 'literature that is archontic is a literature composed of texts that are archival in nature and that are impelled by the same archontic principle: that tendency towards enlargement and accretion that all archives possess' (Derecho 2006, 64). In doing so, Derecho avoids alternative terms that are inherently hierarchical and/or negatively connoted such as the above-mentioned 'derivative' or 'appropriative.' In this sense, the archive of any given (literary) work does not only consist of the source text proper, but also of all works 'that have appeared in print both officially (issued by publishing houses) and unofficially (issued in zines and Web sites [sic])' (Derecho 2006, 65). Derecho goes on to distinguish archontic literature from intertextuality more generally – archontic are those texts that 'tie themselves *overtly* to pre-existing texts,' 'pointedly locating themselves within the world of the archontic text' (Derecho 2006, 66, emphasis mine). This process of 'locating,' according to Derecho, does not only happen by placing a work on a fanworks web archive, for instance, but also when works 'explicitly mark themselves as revisions, continuations, and insertions through replicating

titles [...], using established characters [...], and/or using plots and dialogue recognizable from the source text [...]' (Derecho 2006, 66).

While Derecho's differentiation of 'official' vs 'unofficial' is not without its own issues in the context of a largely public domain source text such as Sherlock Holmes, the broad applicability of 'archontic' is made very clear. Even though Derecho's theory is grounded in an interest in literature and fanfiction in particular, the principle of 'archontic literature,' or indeed archontic *texts* as I will refer to the concept from here on, can easily be expanded beyond the literary. It is a useful concept to describe texts that have seen as many (re)incarnations as Sherlock Holmes and its transmedia proliferation, not only in the shape of new (fan-)written Holmes adventures, but also as adaptations on screen and stage and others, ranging from illustrations to PC games. This signifies a move away from positioning the original work, and indeed one interpretation of the original work, as the definitive source for all of these transformations. Instead of positioning one pure original in the centre, the concept of archontic texts thus allows us to question the nature of what defines the Canon. It enables one to imagine an archive as more of an interwoven web of texts and interpretations, allowing for examinations of such phenomena as, for example, the influence of illustrations on the interpretation of the source text and the reuse of this interpretation in other works inspired by the source. With Holmes, the continuing popularity of the phrase 'Elementary, my dear Watson', which famously never occurs in the Canon, or indeed the Holmesian deerstalker cap, which was introduced not by Doyle, but by his illustrator, Sidney Paget, are prime examples of this phenomenon.

As such, the term 'archontic' allows for the cross-pollination of concepts, ideas and interpretations between the works based on the source, as well as for their potential of influencing our interpretations of that very source, without making a value judgement on any of them. It thus refuses the idea of one single authorial source text. I will therefore use the concept of archontic texts in its broadest sense – as applicable to the entire transmedia proliferation of Holmes, unbound to pre-

existing binaries and unconcerned with defining the relationship to the source text, even though the focus of this chapter is specifically on those archontic texts that the fandom describes as 'fanfiction' and/or 'pastiche.'

Not only does 'archontic texts' allow a discussion of 'pastiche' and 'fanfiction' without presupposing a hierarchy or difference between the two, it also acknowledges the fluidity and/or multiplicity of the source text, removing the assumption of an single authorial version of the Canon. Through the choice of this term, I have therefore already begun to problematise the concept of Canonicitiy. It is worth restating that, as we have seen, emphasising Canonicity is still a common practice in fan discourse – what is in question is the notion of Canonicity as 'objective' judgement. In the following, then, I will examine some of the issues that making judgements around archontic texts in relation to the Canon entail, drawing on a set of examples of Holmesian archontic texts.

5.2.1 Problematising Canonicity

Whether the term used to refer to them is 'pastiche' or 'fanfiction' (or, indeed, neither), all Holmesian fannish fictions thus constitute archontic texts in the sense that they overtly reference Sherlock Holmes. While this broad reference is a given, the *degree* to which archontic works reference Sherlock Holmes – and, indeed, which version of Sherlock Holmes – is at the core of fannish references to Canonicity and indeed of the fanfiction/pastiche debate. When Redmond defines 'pastiche' as 'a story written in an attempt to imitate the stories of the published Canon' (Redmond 2015, n.pag., whole citation bold in original), he clearly references the Canon as the stories written by Arthur Conan Doyle, which I have capitalised as 'Canon' in this thesis. However, the Holmesian archive is clearly much broader than the Canon, even if we go no further than the Canon's paratexts, such as the various illustrations that accompany even the first publication of the stories. Is an archontic work that references Holmes's deerstalker and Inverness cape – added by the illustrator, as mentioned above – already further removed

from ‘imitat[ing] the Canon’? Does an archontic work which bases its interpretation of Holmes on a film adaptation of the Doyle stories automatically have no chance of being a ‘pastiche’? And if the former *does* imitate the Canon and the latter does not, where can we draw the line?

That the fanfiction-pastiche debate exists at all is already indicative of the fact that these questions are answered differently by individual fans and/or fan factions. In the following, I want to briefly address academic attempts at ‘objectively’ ‘drawing the line,’ something which happens especially in transmedia contexts. Here, there is an attempt to describe the relationship between the ‘source’ or first text and the subsequent texts, often spread across various media forms. These attempts are not unlike the way in which the Holmes fandom seeks to define ‘pastiche’ and ‘fanfiction’ through their relation to the Canon.

In attempting to establish a methodology to talk about transmedia worlds, Marie-Laure Ryan establishes the concept of the ‘storyworld’ that ‘holds together the various texts of the system’ (Ryan 2013, 363), that is, the elements of the storyworld are what make the transmedia texts’ relation to the source text visible – to use Derecho’s term, what makes the text part of the archive. Ryan then goes on to examine precisely this relationship between the source and the transmedial text, describing it by four different categories – ‘expansion,’ ‘modification,’ ‘transposition,’ and ‘quotation’ (Ryan 2013, 366–67). Relevant for the present discussion are primarily the first two, in that the first describes texts that are supposedly closer to the source, and the second describes texts that are further removed from the source. While Ryan does not originally suggest a pure binary, she places great focus on the opposition between these two terms. Ryan writes, ‘the relation of expansion is much more world preserving than modification [...], because it does not require changing any of the facts asserted in the original story’ (Ryan 2013, 367) and ‘[modification] threatens the integrity of the original storyworld’ (Ryan 2013, 369). This must immediately invite us to ask, what precisely are these ‘facts’ of the original story that ‘modification’ threatens, but ‘expansion’

does not?

This is a question Ryan fails to answer. She lists a string of examples, but falls short of objectively justifying their inclusion in either category. Most interesting for our topic is her reference to slash fiction, that is, the fanfiction genre which explores (often same-gender) relationships between some of the characters as romantic and/or sexual. Ryan groups this genre firmly with 'modification,' as it 'changes the sexual preferences of famous film or TV characters' (Ryan 2013, 370). This, however, presumes that the sexual orientation of these characters has been made explicit in the first place, which is very seldom the case – assuming it is heterosexuality as a norm is at best a fallacy – for it to be 'changed.' Further, it categorically dismisses the validity of interpreting a relationship in the source text as romantic or sexual by, effectively, labelling it as 'not in the canon.' Can we really claim that, for example, a work that by plot and mode of narration is very close to one of Doyle's but features a romantic relationship between Holmes and Watson is a 'modification' when we have to acknowledge the validity of interpreting the Canon as containing hints of such a relationship, even where we might not personally agree with that interpretation? Or, further, can we claim that such a decision is 'objective'?

Meanwhile, adaptation theory has moved away from discussions of 'fidelity,' i.e. 'closeness' to the source text. In adaptation theory, this is driven by two impetuses: seeking to avoid a value judgement, such as that the book is always 'better' than the film, and explaining why certain adaptations, even if they seem to critics to be less 'true' to the source, are more commercially successful than the source (Leitch 2007, 3–21). To do so, Leitch posits all acts of adaptation as 're-writing,' drawing on Roland Barthes. If every act of reading is an act of interpretation and re-writing, then so is every adaptation, regardless of fidelity (Leitch 2007, 12–13; 21). The problem with Ryan's concepts is thus clearly an epistemological one. The concepts only work to determine the 'closeness' to the source text if we subscribe to the assumption that there are things that we can

take for 'facts' of the source, that there is a single, objective, authoritative, 'true' canon. However, both adaptation theory and literary studies, from the perspective of which Barthes writes, have moved away from arguments hinging on the 'authoritative' source text. For Roland Barthes, text is always 'plural' and closer to a 'network' than a single text – ultimately, there are as many texts as there are readers, as the act of reading immediately constitutes an interpretation, and the author's interpretation is no more or less valid than any of their readers' interpretations (Barthes 1977, 159–63). To talk about 'facts' of the source text, therefore, is to talk only of what the speaker perceives as 'facts,' and cannot be used as an *objective* basis of determining whether a transmedial work is 'close' to the source.

This forces us to acknowledge that, while concepts such as degrees of closeness to the Canon *sound* useful and suitably objective for discussing fans' archontic works, they bear the risk of imposing one interpretation of the Canon as the definitive one. To come back to the question of fanfiction vs pastiche: if one follows Redmond in considering 'pastiche' as 'closer to the Canon,' one distributes the Holmesian works into categories of 'fanfiction' or 'pastiche' according to *one's own interpretation* of the Canon. For instance, if I were to read the relationship of Holmes and Watson as homoerotic, I would sort slash archontic works onto the 'close to the Canon'/'expansion'/'pastiche' pile, whereas if I read Watson as heterosexual, I would sort slash fiction with 'further from the Canon'/'modification'/'fanfiction.' This kind of sorting happens in practice, by critics and academics, like Ryan, as well as fans, as discusses above. However, it cannot form the basis of an objective exploration of whether there is a textual difference between 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche' in the Holmesian world.

Having deconstructed the possibility of Canonicity as objective categorisation, what remains to do, then, is to explore whether there is *anything at all* that could be used as objective textual characteristic to distinguish between 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche' amongst the Holmesian archontic works. In order to investigate this question, I have examined a selection of such archontic works through textual

analysis.

5.2.2 Examining a Selection of Archontic Texts

Arriving at a small enough corpus of Holmesian archontic works for analysis is not a simple matter. The sheer number of works makes a comprehensive analysis impossible, and it is questionable that it is possible to even arrive at a sample that is somewhat representative. Even if narrowed down to those works that overtly reference only the Doyle Canon rather than any Holmesian adaptations, there is an enormous wealth of new Sherlock Holmes adventures to the point where there are no definite numbers. The unnamed curator(s) of schoolandholmes.com, an index of 'pastiches, parodies and other Sherlockian writings' and their characters and references, listed 413 novels, 1,636 short stories and 141 children's stories at the point of data collection for this thesis, but very emphatically state the incompleteness of that list as well as the futility of any attempt 'to keep up with them all' (Schoolandholmes 2019, n.pag.). Similarly, there is a veritable flood of Holmesian works on web platforms. At the time of writing this in March 2019, there are 119,599 works in the 'Sherlock Holmes & Related Fandoms' category on Archive of Our Own (AO3), which includes works for all incarnations of Holmes, from the Doyle novels to the most recent adaptations. 5,323 works are categorised as 'Sherlock Holmes – Arthur Conan Doyle,' which functions as a more specific sub-category. On Fanfiction.net (FF.net), there is no general category for everything Holmes, but there are 3.9k[5] works in the 'Books – Sherlock Holmes' category. Referring back to numbers taken in early June 2016 shows not only the mass of material, but also the rate at which it is increasing. On AO3, the 'Sherlock Holmes & Related Fandoms' category listed 91,251 works in June 2016, with 3,489 categorised under 'Sherlock Holmes – Arthur Conan Doyle,' which makes roughly twenty thousand new works in the overall category and just shy of two thousand new works in the subcategory a scarce three years later.

[5] For fandoms with a high number of fanworks, FF.net only supplies rounded figures in the format replicated here, whereas AO3 gives precise numbers as above.

None of these numbers are, of course, comprehensive. There is doubtless some overlap between the two web archives. Categorisation is also done by the users, so there is the potential of both erroneous in- and exclusion. At the same time, there are surely works elsewhere on the web, such as on private websites, on Tumblr or on LiveJournal which have not been archived on either FF.net or AO3. Similarly, there are certainly a large number of works have not been indexed by schoolandholmes.com.

This sheer amount of new Holmes adventures makes the selection of some to conduct a more detailed text-based analysis very difficult, and there is little doubt that any positive conclusion can only be taken as an indication, not as a unifying statement over all the Holmesian archontic literature. If there are two as clearly distinct categories amongst these archontic works as the fanfiction-pastiche controversy suggests, however, these should be visible in even a small corpus of stories, if the selection is broad enough. To make the case for two distinct subcategories of Holmesian archontic literature, there should be very little similarity between the two, and at the same time a fairly great similarity between the ones belonging to one category or the other. In order to investigate this further, I had to arrive at a corpus, which I would then need to analyse myself as well as in some way put before my research participants, in order to mitigate any biases of my own around the fanfiction-pastiche debate.

The final corpus was drawn from works both in print and published on the web. With both, I firstly narrowed the selection down to those that overtly and primarily referenced the Doyle Canon rather than another part of the Holmesian archontic archive.

On AO3, this includes all works tagged 'Sherlock Holmes – Arthur Conan Doyle,' and on FF.net, those in the category of 'Books – Sherlock Holmes.' I then made use of the function to 'kudos' (on AO3) or 'favorite' (on FF.net). 'Favorites' and 'kudos' are not direct equivalents – the latter is a simple, one-click show of appreciation available also to users that are not logged in, where the

former results in displaying 'favorited' stories on the account profile of the 'favoriting' reader and thus can only be used by logged-in users. Both, however, give a rough indication of the popularity of the story within their respective communities, as they can be applied only once per work,[6] whereas comments/reviews are unlimited. Both websites offer the function to sort by kudos/favorites, and I have chosen one work on each site out of the fifteen with the highest number of kudos/favorites (as of 2016). The works were selected to reflect a suitably broad range: 'Lending a Hand' by mistyzeo on AO3 has short-story length at 22,438 words (though Doyle's short stories are generally shorter). It is also slash, that is, it includes a romantic and/or sexual relationship or 'pairing' between the characters of Holmes and Watson (mistyzeo 2010). 'Vows Made in Storm' by Protector of the Gray Fortress and KCS (cited as 'Vows' from here on) on FF.net is novel length (134,901 words) and does not feature a pairing, though it does not explicitly label itself as pairing-less in the same way that 'Lending a Hand' labels itself as containing a pairing (Protector of the Gray Fortress and KCS 2008).

For works in print, I achieved a similar range by selecting both a novel and short stories, with the latter by a publishing house frequently bringing out new Holmes adventures and the former by a publisher not generally associated with Holmes. By this method I arrived at Lyndsay Faye's novel *Dust and Shadow* (Faye 2009). *Dust and Shadow* is Faye's debut novel. Faye is a member of the Baker Street Babes, and since the publication of *Dust and Shadow* she has both written further Holmesian archontic works and been invested into the BSI. For short stories, I selected two from the *MX Book of New Sherlock Holmes Stories: Part I* (Marcum 2015b): 'The Song of the Mudlark' by Shane Simmons, a writer with previous publications in fields other than Holmes (Simmons 2015), and David Marcum's 'The Adventure of the Pawnbroker's Daughter' (Marcum 2015a). The still growing collection of stories was instigated by that same David Marcum, a member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and frequent

[6] This is a given for 'favorites,' as works can only appear once per 'favorite' list. For kudos, the uniqueness is specified in AO3's 'Archive FAQ > Comments and Kudos' (AO3 2019, n.pag.).

writer and editor around Holmes, with the assistance of Holmesian literary societies for the preservation of Doyle's home Undershaw.

Having arrived at these five works, it quickly became obvious that I was unable to make a judgement on Canonicity, on which 'imitated the Canon more.' This was the case even when I disregarded my academic frame of reference which told me, as explained above, that such a judgement would always be a subjective one. The Canon[7] in itself is highly diverse, containing both short stories and novels, a large variety of different plot structures (some more akin to adventures, others more focussed on the collection of clues for a mystery). Even the narrator varies – while Watson is the narrator in most stories, there are also two narrated by Holmes (LION, BLAN) and two in third person (MAZA, LAST). Some of the novels also contain large sections narrated either in third person by an omniscient narrator or by another character (STUD, VALL, SIGN).

All of the archontic works I examined clearly referenced the Canon, but all of the works clearly had points of divergences from it, too. 'Lending a Hand' featured an explicit sex scene, 'Vows' had rapidly shifting points of view for its narration, *Dust and Shadow*, in fictionalising the Ripper killings, addresses real-world events, 'The Song of the Mudlark' is narrated by street urchin Wiggins, who is a Canon character but never a Canon narrator, and 'The Adventure of the Pawnbroker's Daughter' includes both arm-chair detection and direct citations from the Canon. Despite the Canon's diversity, none of the here listed elements occur within it. That is to say, *all* works in my corpus of analysis diverged from the Canon in some way or other.

At the same time, all of the stories also showed consistencies with the Canon. To give just some examples, 'Lending a Hand' makes use of a familiar cast of characters and a mystery plot as well as Watson as a narrator. 'Vows' is a narration of a case that Watson references in the Canon (NORW II: 830–31), but that is not featured as one of the published stories, and two of its three narrators are also

[7] A brief reminder to the reader here that I cite the Canon primarily by story title abbreviation, an overview of which can be found in Appendix A. See also footnote 1 in Chapter 3.

narrators in the Canon. *Dust and Shadow*, despite its real-crime case, has both a detective plot and Watson's narration. 'Mudlark,' though not using a traditional narrator, makes a traditional Canon character the narrator – Wiggins being one of the Baker Street Irregulars, Holmes's spy network of homeless children who first appear in *A Study in Scarlet*.[8] 'Pawnbroker's Daughter,' again, uses Watson as narrator and other Canonical characters as cast and features a detective mystery.

Thus faced with the impossibility of deciding which of the stories 'imitated the Canon more,' I broadened my focus and tried to find *any* way at all in which to sort this corpus of stories into two distinct groups. The most immediately presenting was place of publication – clearly, some of the works had been published in print, while others had not. However, while this difference was there, I could observe no, however subjective, value or quality differentiation alongside it. The identity of the stories' authors was another observable difference, but due to the anonymity of the online authors, it was again impossible to make two distinct categories.

Altogether, I was therefore unable to group the works into categories that would in any way fit the two terms 'fanfiction' or 'pastiche' without making an entirely arbitrary decision of which was which. However, the fanfiction-pastiche distinction was clearly being made in the fandom, so I proceeded to test this further by putting it before my research respondents. As I could not expect respondents to know and/or read any archontic works for the questionnaire, there were some clear limitations to the scope of this test. I ultimately chose to present the questionnaire participants with the first few sentences of the works, asking them to indicate whether they considered them 'pastiche' or 'fanfiction.' Afterwards, I provided an open text box for the respondents to explain their choice. In terms of limitations, firstly, largely due to the time in the research for this thesis at which the questionnaire was finalised, the questionnaire also contained some archontic works that ended up not being part of the corpus I examine here, but

[8] Not to be confused, in this case, with the Holmesian society of the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI), named after these very children.

were part of the wider, initial selections of archontic works I had considered for analysis. They do, therefore, reflect the same principles of selection – a focus on texts referencing the Canon, from various sources and of varying lengths. I had also included the beginning of a story from the Canon (RESI), to see whether it would be noticed.[9] Secondly, without revealing what the texts were and inviting possible snap judgements on the basis of fans' knowledge of the authors or works, I could only test whether fans consistently perceived a difference on the textual level, along the Line of Canonicity. As I have already illustrated, not all fans consider the 'fanfiction'/'pastiche' differentiation to be one of textual substance, which needs to be taken into account when discussing these results. Still, as I have said above, Canonicity seems to be perceived as the most value-heavy of all differentiations between 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche.' Through the shape of the question, I was also asking that a differentiation be made regardless of the fans' own views on whether this differentiation even existed. Despite these limitations, the results were nonetheless illuminating, as I will discuss in the following.

Firstly, a number of respondents indicated that they did not know the definition of 'pastiche' and had either looked it up for the questionnaire or 'guessed' (e.g. SHQ125, SHQ153, SHQ381). Most of those who had looked the definition up, however, then felt confident and happy to make a differentiation. There is, of course, no way to tell which definition the fans' search resulted in, though some indicated that they then considered the closeness of the 'style' to the Canon, i.e. Canonicity. This was also the most commonly cited reason for those who made a differentiation and indicated their understanding of what defined a 'pastiche.' This shows three things: A) The usage of the term 'pastiche' (and its controversial nature) has not reached all fans within the fandom. Therefore, while the controversy exists, it might be limited to some fans/factions simply through their knowledge of a possible alternative term, though my data does not allow me to say who these fans/factions are. B) 'Style' was the most often used marker of differ-

[9] The full list of archontic texts from the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

ence, both amongst those who were unsure of the term 'pastiche' and those who did not indicate any hesitation or uncertainty. This may be in some part due to the design of the question, as I have acknowledged above, but as some fans chose to indicate that they could not make a decision with the information provided instead of falling back onto style (e.g. SHQ211, more on this below), it may also reflect a real prevalence of a judgement based on Canonicity. Fascinatingly, some indicated that they considered 'pastiche' to be *less* like the Canon, increasing the range of diverse uses of the terms yet further (SHQ088). C) Though some fans were unfamiliar with the different terms, they were still willing to sort the given textual samples into the two categories, that is, to make some sort of judgement on what qualified as a 'pastiche' and what as a 'fanfiction.'

Secondly, there were respondents who *refused* to make the distinction. Mostly, these were the respondents who were aware of and displeased with the fanfiction-pastiche controversy, as indicated also by their responses elsewhere in the questionnaire, some of which I have cited above. In the comments box to explain their choice, these fans frequently reiterated that '[t]here may be a fancy word for it, but at the end of the day it's all fanfiction' (SHQ014). However, some also refused to make the choice with the argument that they lacked the necessary information to do so, such as the place/means of publication, for instance: 'I always just term pastiches as things that are published in a form that makes money or at least in a collected volume, but it's difficult for me to tell the difference between what is published and what isn't' (SHQ030). This again evidences the existence of a fanfiction-pastiche differentiation within the fandom that is *not* based on textual elements that the questionnaire task was unable to test for more extensively, though it also shows that the comment box afforded the space for fans to indicate such a differentiation.

Thirdly, some respondents were able to recognise the textual excerpts. Consequently, by their own admission, their choice was influenced by their previous knowledge of the work (e.g. SHQ233, SHQ401, SHQ413). This justified

my choice of not providing this information out of a concern that it might influence the respondents. Illuminatingly, the excerpt taken from an actual Canon story, while recognised by some, was not recognised by most of the respondents (and, conversely, some of the non-Canon examples where thought to be from the Canon). Most memorably, a respondent described all examples, including the Canon one, as 'poorly written' (SHQ019). Another described all works as 'fanfiction,' but classed their successfulness as a 'pastiche' as subcategory, with the Canon sample being described as 'overwrought pastiche' (SHQ069). One respondent classed as 'fanfiction' those that were 'a wee overdone – trying too hard to be Victorian' and included the Canon example amongst them (SHQ248). Amongst those who did not recognise the Canon example as such where therefore both some who considered it to be 'fanfiction' and some who considered it to be 'pastiche,' and this diversity holds true for all of the samples provided in the questionnaire.

This allows two conclusions on the fanfiction-pastiche controversy. Firstly, it clearly illustrates that some, though not all fans are happy to make a difference based on 'style.' The diverse range of what ended up being classified as 'pastiche' and what as 'fanfiction' even amongst only those that claimed to choose according to 'style' shows, however, how highly subjective these considerations of 'style' are, to the point where even an excerpt taken from the actual Doyle stories – i.e. a text that should be indisputably 'like Doyle' – can read more or less like Doyle's style depending on the individual fan. Secondly, the question also provided evidence of resistance against the fanfiction-pastiche distinction. This resistance as expressed in the questionnaire data takes primarily two forms: those that would be happy to make a fanfiction-pastiche differentiation, but not on a textual basis, and those that resist the notion that there is a difference between the two at all.

Ultimately, what all of this shows is that there is no objectivity in the 'fanfiction'/'pastiche' differentiation, in particular if measured on the degree of 'imit-

ation' of the Canon or 'closeness to the Canon.' Instead, *individual, subjective* judgements of 'style' are used to classify archontic works as 'fanfiction' or 'pastiche.' In other words, individual judgements of 'style' lead to individual different value judgements about the archontic works, and individually different choices of which work to sort into which category. In this way, the Line of Distinction of Canonicity is not only used or not depending on the individual fan, like all other Lines of Distinction also are, the very definition of what Canonicity means is highly dependent on the individual fan. One fan's 'close to the Canon' archontic text might not be considered such by another fan, and vice-versa. The differentiation between 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche' on the basis of Canonicity thus might have the appearance of objective judgement based on the 'style' of the Canon, but is, in fact, a highly individual construct.

However, the controversy around fanfiction-pastiche goes further than arguing that what one considers 'close to the Canon' is not what another fan might consider 'close to the Canon.' Instead fans, especially those that reject the fanfiction-pastiche differentiation, consider arguments around Canonicity a smokescreen for other, perhaps less seemingly objective, Lines of Distinction in play. To this I will turn in the next section.

5.3 Canonicity as a Smokescreen: Hidden Lines of Distinction

Above, I have cited how fans rejected the differentiation of 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche' as constructed and 'arbitrary' when asked which terms they used for their fiction writing around Holmes. However, when I asked respondents to explain their choice around the textual samples, a number of fans went beyond arguing that they saw no difference or had sorted by 'instinct' (e.g. SHQ043). So, too, does Amy Thomas in her response to Chris Redmond's article as cited above. She follows on from the notion that differentiation around Canonicity is not the

issue, per se, but that '[w]ords are not used in a vacuum, especially not in fandom.' (Thomas 2015, n.pag.). The implication is that there are elements that influence the decision of the fan that have nothing to do with the archontic texts themselves.

In an online blog post, Geri Schear, a writer of Holmesian archontic works, discusses her relationship to the terms 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche,' and, while she acknowledges the value and usefulness of 'fanfiction' both for her own career and more generally, she opens the blog post with an anecdote of her distancing herself from the term 'fanfiction':

> A while ago I told a friend I was writing a Sherlock Holmes novel. "Oh," she said. "I've read some of those stories. They're a bit naughty, aren't they? The things Sherlock and John get up to..."
>
> I explained that I wasn't writing fan fiction, but a pastiche, and that I was basing my novel on the original Conan Doyle writings, rather than the television adaptation. (Schear 2014, n.pag.)

While this also shows some generalising assumptions on part of the friend about fanfiction, it is revealing that Schear chose not to address these assumptions, but to distance her writing from 'fanfiction' through the use of 'pastiche' despite – as the remainder of her blog post clearly illustrates – holding no negative perceptions of 'fanfiction' herself. In many ways, this reveals an element of perceived acceptability, not just beyond fandom, but also within certain fandom circles. Similar to my own emphasis of the Canon as Entry Point at the BSI Weekend, this author of archontic works prefers to describe her work as 'pastiche' in certain circles because of an assumption that it is the more acceptable term, not because she considers the term 'fanfiction' in itself to be inappropriate or unwelcome.

This notion was also reflected in the questionnaire responses, as one fan wrote: 'I believe "pastiche" is a term people use when they don't want to say they write fan fiction' (SHQ300). Like my example around Entry Point in Chapter 4: Meeting Up, this notion of acceptability is indicative of intersecting Lines of Distinc-

tion. Some respondents firstly expressed incomprehension of a judgement based on quality along the 'fanfiction'/'pastiche' line, such as this respondent:

> I don't like/believe in the distinction between pastiche and fanfiction, so I don't want to characterize any of these as either. Of these selections, I am guessing that some would consider those that sound like Victorian language to be pastiche, while the others with modern language or what sounds like bad writing to be fanfiction. (Is that what you are trying to tease out here?) I have read incredible fan fiction – beautiful language, skillful [sic] craft, insightful characterization – that if published in book form would most certainly be called pastiche by the establishment. However, I believe if the characterization/love story is more prevalent over cases – especially if it is m/m – many would classify/demean such as fanfiction instead of pastiche. (SHQ037)

Even though this fan mostly focusses on the impossibility of making a differentiation on the basis of quality, there are already hints of the importance of where this judgement is coming from – 'the establishment,' indicating again that there are circles in which 'pastiche' has a veneer of higher acceptability. They also, very briefly, mention the 'demean[ing]' (SHQ037) of archontic works with queer content, certainly addressing Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings as a Line of Distinction and possibly hinting at a demographic Line of Distinction around fans' Sexual Orientation. This fan passes over these points quickly, but was echoed by other questionnaire respondents, for example:

> Pastiche is just a fancier word for fanfic, especially stuff that has been published. I have read fics that sound as good and nearly indistinguishable from published fic like Dust and Shadows by Lyndsay Fay or A study in emerald [Neil Gaiman]. These things are on AO3, a fanfic repository, but sound as good or better than a published

> fic/pastiche. I don't see why crappy fic gets published and gets to be called pastiche when it is more fit for a fire while these authors work on their novel sized fics and get laughed at just because they're not published and they're female (usually) fans. I have read so many fics that were better than some of the pastiches I own. (SHQ387, all spelling as in original)

In many points, SHQ387 echoes SHQ037 above, though they bring in yet a different category. They directly reference the notion of gender – or, indeed, Gender, as a Line of Distinction – the idea that some stories are termed 'fanfiction' only because the writers are 'female.' Another respondent wrote that '[p]astiche is just a fancy word for published fanfiction – usually written by men' (SHQ378), thus echoing the role of gender. Yet another respondent writes '["Fanfiction" and "pastiche" are] interchangeable. I only use pastiche ironically to make fun of fans who think they're better than "girls on the internet", like their stories are any better. (Spoiler alert: They usually aren't.)' (SHQ358). Through the use of the term 'girl,' this respondent brings in not only Gender, but also Age.

These respondents thus reveal three demographic categories – and Lines of Distinction – which seem to play a role in the 'fanfiction'/'pastiche' debate: Sexual Orientation, Gender and Age. As the next chapter of this thesis addresses the complexities of Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings and the connection to fans' own Sexual Orientation in more detail, I will focus here on the latter two: Gender and Age. What these respondents flag up, then, is that prejudices and Lines of Distinction around demographics of Gender and Age 'hide' behind the discussion around the use of terms of 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche.' That is, an archontic work written by a young woman automatically has less chance of being called 'pastiche' not because of its quality or 'style,' but because of the identity of its writer.

It is important to note upfront here that I have no active evidence of any respondent stating that a work written by a young, female fan would be 'bad.' I do,

however, as these quotes and the discussion below shows, have ample evidence of fans perceiving this judgement being made behind the 'smokescreen' of Canonicity. Amy Thomas makes this same point in her article, as she explains what she means by 'words are not used in a vacuum, especially not in fandom':

> Fandom context means that pastiche, as much as we'd like it to be, isn't just a technical term for a type of fanfiction. All too often, it's an in-word, a word used to describe what some consider to be the only "right" way to express creativity in the Sherlock Holmes world. Sure, there's a catchall category for what those *"other people" (often times young people, people of different gender, millennials, people of the Internet generation*) create, but it's not high and mighty pastiche. That word is only for the works of correct people, who write what they're supposed to write. (Thomas 2015, n.pag, emphasis mine)

Here, Thomas makes explicit that, behind notions of Canonicity, frequently are perceived to exist judgements about the demographic identity of the writer. Even as the differentiation of 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche' is presented as 'objective' judgement of style, prejudices around Age and Gender of the writers (at least also, if not primarily) influence which works pass judgement.

While Age and Gender are not the most mentioned Lines of Distinction overall, they are the most prominent *demographic* Lines of Distinction, both mentioned by approximately 13% of respondents each, with Age being only slightly more commonly mentioned. It is not a surprise, therefore, that the demographic Lines of Distinction that fans perceive in the 'fanfiction'/'pastiche' controversy would reflect this prominence in terms of demographic Lines of Distinction overall. Young and female writers, according to Thomas and my questionnaire respondents, are 'othered.' Therefore, their works are also 'othered,' and given the term 'fanfiction' as opposed to the 'self' term 'pastiche.' It is certainly also notable that the pushback against the differentiation of the terms 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche' is spearheaded by the Baker Street Babes, who aim to 'approach[...] the fan-

dom from a female point of view' and 'help provide a bridge between the older and often intimidating world of Sherlockiana and the newer tech savvy generation of fans' (The Baker Street Babes 2017a, n.pag.), and are therefore very much concerned with both Gender and Age. Thomas's article is not the only example of this – Baker Street Babe and author of archontic works Lyndsay Faye has expressed her view on the lack of difference between fanfiction and pastiche widely, including in Stein and Busse's academic work, where she emphasises the only difference in the 'hope to see work published commercially' of a 'pastiche' writer (Faye in Stein and Busse 2012, 3), so a differentiation that has nothing to do with textual content or demographics.

It is worth reiterating that I have no evidence in my data that fans who chose to make the differentiation between 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche' based their decision on demographics. This may have been due to the limitations of the questionnaire task, which simply did not give the respondents any information on writer demographics. Alternatively, it is possible that none of my questionnaire respondents would have taken Age and Gender into consideration when making the differentiation. However, it is equally possible that none *admitted* to making a demographic judgement or even just the fact that, from the questionnaire, they lacked the information to be able to make such a judgement. The fact remains that *in the perspective of some fans* the latter is very much the case.

The only possible indication of a de facto judgement around Age (or at the very least writing experience and/or expertise) in my data may be one unintentional result from the questionnaire task. One of the textual samples for the questionnaire contained a spelling error introduced in the transfer from the original work into the questionnaire (and consequently missed in proofreading the questionnaire). The presence of this single spelling error alone prompted a number of respondents to label that excerpt 'fanfiction,' mostly citing the error as the only reason, for example: 'The last one, however, is an exception. Since there was a glaring spelling error (and it is very badly written as a whole), it must be fan-

fiction also' (SHQ390). With the exception of one respondent who put the excerpts through an online search, none of the respondents who had picked up on the error to justify their choice considered the possibility that the error had been artificially introduced into the questionnaire. The respondent who had searched for the excerpts acknowledged that, had the spelling error been removed, they would readily have categorised the excerpt as 'pastiche' (SHQ413). While this is not a conclusive result that respondents would have made a judgement solely on the age of a writer if the writers' work had been free of errors, it certainly indicates that a writer with less surety in spelling would find it more difficult to be considered a 'pastiche.' Spelling skills, of course, might depend on a number of factors, such as being a less experienced writer regardless of age or a writer working in a second language, but *may* also be a question of age. Again, this result is certainly not conclusive. It does still indicate, however, that fans are willing to make a 'fanfiction' vs 'pastiche' decision based on something which *might* indicate a demographic, such as a spelling error. It therefore remains perfectly possible that either respondents were not consciously aware of making a decision based on demographics or were not prepared to admit as much.

Echoing this thought, all fans, including Thomas, who argued that there is a demographic-based judgement being made around the controversy, describe it as somewhat of an 'ugly little secret' (Thomas 2015, n.pag.) that remains largely unspoken. This, in turn, parallels the way in which fans argue that the acceptance criteria to the Baker Street Irregulars are not as objective as they appear, as I have examined in the Chapter 4: Meeting Up. The argument is that unspoken judgements are being made by criteria that some fans/factions may consider unpalatable, such as by demographics like Age and Gender, and that more palatable criteria are used as a smokescreen. These 'hidden' judgements are raised by those criticising either the differentiation and/or the fact that these unpalatable criteria are supposedly in play, but remain overall unspoken and unacknowledged by the people making the judgements.

5.4 Concluding Remarks: Lines of Distinction in Fiction Writing

It would be impossible for this thesis to claim that there is truly such an 'ugly little secret' (Thomas 2015, n.pag.) behind every or even some fans' decision to differentiate between 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche' and that any discussions of other criteria, such as Canonicity, are nothing but a smokescreen. Nonetheless, there are ultimately two points that can be taken away from this examination. Firstly, the most commonly raised textual Line of Distinction around the controversy is that of Canonicity. However, my own textual analysis and cross-referencing with the perceptions of all questionnaire respondents reveals that, while Canonicity certainly exists as a Line of Distinction and justification for differentiation between archontic works, it is a highly subjective construct on which no two fans seem to be able to agree. That is, while referencing Doyle's 'style' has the appearance of objectivity, the perceptions of what is part of this 'style' vary widely amongst fans. Consequently, which archontic works make up the two categories of what is a 'fanfiction' and what is a 'pastiche,' even if all fans purely choose on the basis of 'style,' also varies widely. Secondly, at least some fans perceive the argument around Canonicity and the 'fanfiction'/'pastiche' controversy more broadly as a smokescreen for 'hidden,' possibly unpalatable and therefore unspoken criteria for differentiation. These unspoken criteria are directly linked to demographic Lines of Distinction, primarily those of Age and Gender. This perception of the hidden prejudice behind the differentiation is one of the primary motivations that leads these fans to reject the differentiation entirely.

Ultimately, what the examination of the fanfiction/pastiche controversy reveals is the presence and intersection of several Lines of Distinction. First, there is the very narrowly focussed and highly textually specific Canonicity, which this analysis also reveals as highly subjective. Second, this Line of Distinction as applied to the differentiation between 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche' intersects with

or possibly even hides other Lines of Distinction. These, in turn, are focussed on neither the fandom object nor the fans' fiction writings – instead, they link back to the fans themselves and their demographics. In the next chapter, I will go on to explore a yet more complex intersection between discussions of the fandom object and the fans' personal identity. In it, I turn to Shipping as a Line of Distinction in fannish non-fiction writing.

Chapter 6

Non-fiction Writing: Shipping Sherlock Holmes and Fan Meta

Of all fandom controversies, those around pairings and ships are perhaps the most contentious. It is certainly not by chance that, of all things, adamant discussions around rival 'ships,' i.e. interpretations of character relationships as romantic and/or sexual, have gained the term 'shipwar' (Fanlore 2019c, n.pag.),[1] evoking battle imagery that is familiar to fans across fandoms. In my data of the Sherlock Holmes fandom Shipping also features prominently as a Line of Distinction. Nowhere else is the duality of Lines of Distinction as clearly visible: even fans who do not wish to engage with the activity of shipping at all invoke Shipping as a Line of Distinction, in that they mark the shipping fans as 'Other' (and frequently also 'bad'). This chapter, then, engages with the Line of Distinction around Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings on the case study of fans' non-fiction written engagement with their object of fandom, that is, 'meta' writing.

Both the activity of non-fiction writing and the Line of Distinction of Shipping immediately suggest a text-based focus. Fans' non-fiction writing naturally primarily engages with varying interpretations and standpoints towards the fan-

[1] Also 'ship war' or 'shipping war' (Fanlore 2019c, n.pag.). Often also referenced to in plural amongst fans, i.e. 'shipwars.'

dom text(s), and Shipping in itself is a Line of Distinction entirely concerned with the ways in which fans interpret the fandom text(s). Shipping is one of the most frequently raised Lines of Distinction overall, being the third most prominent Line of Distinction. The focus on such a frequently mentioned text-based Line of Distinction together with such an intrinsically text-based activity might suggest a lack of importance of other Lines of Distinction, especially those that are not based on the fandom object: those that concern attitudes towards fellow fans or the fans' own demographics.

However, as this chapter will show, these non-text based Lines of Distinction do emerge around the activity of non-fiction writing. Of these other Lines of Distinction, the most prominent are fans' Sexual Orientation, a demographic Line of Distinction, and Fan Behaviour, a Line of Distinction that concerns attitudes towards fellow fans. They might not be quite as obviously applicable as text-based Lines of Distinction, of which Shipping is used in this chapter as a focal point,[2] or indeed quite as prominent as Lines of Distinction in comparison to others overall. Nonetheless, both Sexual Orientation and Fan Behaviour address highly personal concerns. That is, they are raised around intimate aspects of the fans' identity and around how fans treat or should treat each other, respectively. Despite the on the surface very text-based focus of both the activity of non-fiction writing and Shipping as a primary Line of Distinction examined here, fans therefore often report these two other Lines of Distinction. This occurs both in direct relation to the activity of non-fiction writing and in active interplay with the text-based Line of Distinction around Shipping. I will examine this interplay below, using the activity of non-fiction writing as a lens.

[2] A reader referring back to the table in Chapter 3: Lines of Distinction in which I outline all Lines of Distinction observed in the Holmes fandom through the questionnaire data might observe two which seem to indicate a connection to non-fiction writing: Academic Approach and The Game. The former, in particular, is not insignificant in terms of mentions. However, all such mentions either occurred in conjunction with Thematic Knowledge, which I have addressed in Chapter 4: Meeting Up, or express a simple appreciation or dislike of 'academic' engagement with the fandom text, and as such provide no further insight into the relationships and relationship managements within the fandom. Mentions of The Great Game (explained below) as Line of Distinction were so few as to offer no basis for further analysis.

After introducing both ‘meta’ and shipping in the first section of the chapter, I will proceed to the main analysis of this chapter. There, I will introduce the corpus of meta texts collected for this thesis and go on to illustrate how the Line of Distinction around Shipping is negotiated in a selection of texts from the corpus. This will allow me to indicate the ways in which these negotiations already hint at other, intersecting Lines of Distinction in the meta texts themselves. Broadening the focus, I will then examine how fans perceive the interplay of Shipping with the highly personal, non-text-based Lines of Distinction of Sexual Orientation and Fan Behaviour.

6.1 Introducing Meta and Shipping

In the following, I will provide a brief introduction into fannish non-fiction writing – often termed ‘meta’ – and some additional details on Shipping, both as a Line of Distinction and as a fandom staple that transcends specific fan activities, to set the scene for the main analysis.

6.1.1 Fannish Non-fiction Writing: Meta

As with the term ‘filk’ discussed in a previous chapter, the use and definition of the term ‘meta’ is not universal (e.g. Fanlore 2018c). For instance, ‘meta’ might not only describe writing about the fandom object, but also fandom discussions about the *fandom* rather than the *object* of fandom, and other terms such as ‘fan scholarship’ are in use. Academic literature about fans’ critical (written) engagement with their objects of fandom is also striking in its sparsity. Most fan studies scholars are happy to follow Jenkins in acknowledging that fanfiction can function as a fictional means of critiquing the source text(s) and in crediting fans’ ‘academic-like’ depth of knowledge about their object of fandom (Jenkins 2013, 86) as expressed through fiction. However, the published (online and offline) non-fiction written form of these discussions – ‘meta’ – has been largely

ignored, to the point where no definitions or methodology for the examination of such texts exist. *Textual Poachers* offers hints of what non-fiction fan discussions might entail, such as consolidating and explaining inconsistencies within their fandom object text(s), but assigns these 'speculations' a second-rank status behind the fiction that they might inspire. With regards to *Star Trek*, Jenkins provides an overt example of non-fiction writing in essay form, but describes it only as 'the basis for a series of fan narratives' (Jenkins 2013, 104).

However, this lack of attention to non-fiction writing as an independent activity is an oversight. In the questionnaire circulated for this thesis, I asked participants whether they had ever written 'critically' and/or 'creatively' about Sherlock Holmes. The choice of terms here was not to suggest that meta writing is not or cannot be a creative activity. Instead, it acknowledges issues around the terminology around the written activities within the fandom. Controversial and inconsistent use of terms exists around fiction writing as illustrated in the previous chapter and around non-fiction writing through the lack of universal definition and/or use of the terms 'scholarship' and 'meta.' The 'creative'-'critical' distinction was judged to be the closest commonly understandable approximation, though it might have led some participants to understand 'critical' only in the sense of 'critiquing' and 'creative' to also include their non-fiction written engagements, though, on the whole, no respondent directly indicated confusion about this choice of terms. Despite this possible caveat, the responses give an indication of meta writing as an important as well as independent activity.

Among my participants, approximately 59% indicated that they had 'written creatively' about Holmes as the object of fandom. 37.5% noted that they had 'written critically' about Holmes. In terms of *reading* such content, 'creative' written content was at 96% (and thus the most widespread of activities) and 'critical' written content at 85%. While 'creative' writing therefore is slightly more popular both for readers and writers, 'critical' writing and its consumption is still a wide-spread activity in its own right. There was also clear indication that some

fans write what they would describe as 'critical writing' about the object of fandom, but do not also engage in 'creative writing.' This belies the notion that meta only exists as precursor to fanfiction. In the sample of Holmes fans who responded to my questionnaire, 22.8% had 'written critically' about Holmes but not also 'creatively.' While it might be possible that these percentages are uncommonly high by comparison to other fandoms due to a Holmesian tradition of non-fiction writing ('The Great Game'[3]), Yaffe's observations from the Jane Austen fandom (Yaffe 2013, 172, 140) and my own experience of various media fandoms at least indicate that meta-style writing (without corresponding fiction output) is far from uncommon across fandoms.

An examination of meta more widely, even if limited to the Holmes fandom, would exceed the limits of this thesis, but it should be noted that a slight exception to the lack of academic attention paid to fannish non-fiction writing can be found in studies of literary fandoms. So, for instance, it plays a role in Yaffe's study of the Janeites (Yaffe 2013), in Brooker's on the Lewis Carroll Society (Brooker 2005a), and in various examinations of the tradition of The Great Game in the Holmes fandom. The Game is an important, though far from the only, type of meta writing in the Holmes fandom. It functions on the premise of defictionalising the Holmesian Canon and its characters. These latter examinations are often penned by scholars involved in the Holmes fandom themselves, such as by Ashley Polasek (Polasek 2012, 2017), Betsy Rosenblatt (Rosenblatt 2017), Andrew Solberg and Robert Katz (Solberg and Katz 2017) and Roberta Pearson (Pearson and Rosenblatt 2017).[4]

[3] As mentioned in Chapter 3: Lines of Distinction, this refers to the tradition of treating Holmes and Watson as real historic figures. More on the Game also below.

[4] One of the founding text of The Great Game, otherwise also referred to as The Grand Game or simply The Game, is generally considered to be an essay penned by Reverend Monsignor Ronald Knox in 1911. Polasek provides the most comprehensive introduction into the activity and to its origins. For examples of texts that engage in the Great Game, the Baker Street Irregulars have published a multi-volume edited collection of texts under the title 'The Grand Game: A Celebration of Sherlockian Scholarship' (ed. by Laurie R. King and Leslie S. Klinger, 2011), but individual issues of *The Baker Street Journal* may provide more accessible selected examples – though not all articles in the BSJ play the Game, nor is the Game limited to BSI members. For further examinations of The Great Game and its history as non-fiction fannish engagement see Vera Tobin (Tobin 2006) and Katharine Brombley (Brombley 2017).

Two final remarks with regards to meta more broadly need to be made before I go on to provide a working definition for this thesis. Firstly, Holmesian meta is not limited to meta that plays The Game, which is the focus of most, if not all, academic engagement with Holmesian non-fiction writing. Secondly, Holmesian meta is not limited or exclusive to examinations of the Canon. Non-fiction writing, both in the style of The Game and not, exists for all Holmesian texts, and on a multitude of topics.

For the purpose of this thesis, then, 'meta' will serve as a short-hand umbrella term for fans' non-fiction writings about their object of fandom only (not the fandom itself). Meta can occur on a multitude of topics, ranging from exploration of the story world and historical context to analyses of characters' identity, relationships and motivation. It is not limited to examinations of the source text, but encompasses all non-fiction engagement with all texts that are part of the archontic archive of the fandom object. While a textual analysis of meta contents and a detailed examination of the motivations behind its writing and the varied styles of meta is overdue, this thesis cannot engage in a wider exploration. Instead, it will look at meta through the lens of Lines of Distinction; that is, it will explore how Lines of Distinction find expression through and around meta writing. This encompasses both evidence of Lines of Distinction expressed in the actual text of the meta pieces as well as in discourses of and about meta-writing fandom factions.

I will now turn to a Line of Distinction that is very prominent and complex, and has also guided the selection of themes in the meta corpus used for the chapter: Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings.

6.1.2 Shipping and the Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings Line of Distinction

To recap, Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings as a Line of Distinction addresses the acceptance and celebration or, conversely, the rejections of particular

stances towards shipping, pairings and queer readings of/in the object of fandom. There will be fans adamantly opposed to all or certain types of shipping, fans who only like certain ships, fans who toy with speculation about characters' sexual orientation but do not see them in relationships with existing characters, and so on. Shipping with all its facets is one of the most hotly contested Lines of Distinction, as evidenced by the prominence of mentions in the questionnaire data as reflected in Table 3.1 in Chapter 3: Lines of Distinction, which make it the third most prominent Line of Distinction mentioned in the Holmes fandom overall. Even if the disagreements around shipping only take the form of 'you like this pairing, I like this other pairing, and that is fine,' fans will be more likely to gravitate towards fans who share their pairing preferences, and frequently the various ships/readings are in more heated competition.

This Line of Distinction is, of course, intimately connected to shipping as a common interpretative activity in fandom. Like so many fandom terms, 'shipping,' too, is not clearly defined, as it has historically evolved and changed in meaning. Fan studies scholarship also does not provide a suitably encompassing definition. In fact, most academic texts that engage with this activity at all tend to focus on male/male 'slash' defined as 'the movement from male homosocial desire to a direct expression of homoerotic passion, the exploration of alternatives to traditional masculinity, the insertion of sexuality into a larger social context' as engaged in by female (and generally also considered to be heterosexual) fans (Jenkins 2013, 186). 'Shipping' thus tends to be described as non-canonical, sexually explicit, and at least in some way linked to female desire around male characters. It thereby sidelines any interpretations that do not fit into this model, whether it be female/female pairings, mixed-gender pairings (both those that are in some way queer, including characters interpreted as bisexual, asexual and trans and those that are heterosexual in the strictest sense of the term), queer readings more broadly as well as pairings that are already overt in the source text(s), regardless of orientation and/or gender. It therefore fails to provide a methodology

that usefully examines all aspects of the diversity around shipping in fandoms. Like with meta, an extended discussion of shipping would exceed the limits of this thesis. For examples of academic analyses, though they tend to show these very limitations, consult Jenkins (Jenkins 2013, 185–222), Booth (Booth 2015) and Busse (Busse 2017). The last provides the most current perspective, but equally tends to prioritise female (and, mostly, those attracted to men) fans and their engagement with male characters. For a brief overview, relevant articles on Fanlore illustrate both the complexity of 'shipping' as activity and the development of the terminology (Fanlore 2018d, 2018e).

For the purpose of this thesis, I have out of necessity chosen to provide my own definition, attempting to cover as much of what has been related to 'shipping' in fandom as possible. This new definition is based on academic literature, but has been expanded with the aid of the data gathered for this thesis and my own experiences of contemporary fandom. This is to allow for a contemporary analysis and to have a functioning concept for quick reference around which to illustrate Lines of Distinction. 'Shipping' as an activity is thus understood in this thesis as encompassing all of the following: interpreting character relationships as romantic/sexual or celebrating canonical overtly romantic/sexual relationships regardless of pairing composition, as well as interpretation/celebration with regards to characters' sexual orientation, that is, queer readings that do not establish direct links to any one character relationship. 'Shipping' functions both as a verb – a fan 'ships' pairing X – and as a noun, both as 'ship' as synonymous to 'pairing' and as 'shipping' as descriptor for the interpretive activity. 'Shipping' can, but does not have to, be expressed through fan discussion or fan creation, such as written output like fanfiction or meta. Shipping therefore does not have to involve male characters, nor non-canonical pairings, nor sexually explicit fanfiction – or any fanfiction at all! Fans will freely 'ship' any characters, running the whole spectrum from the characters having barely interacted in the source text(s) to their relationship being defined explicitly as romantic and/or sexual in the canon

text(s), and regardless of the characters' gender(s). Fans will also engage in interpretation around the characters' sexual orientation, sometimes independently of the relationships between characters that they focus on.

However, despite the somewhat restricted focus of fan studies analyses with regards to 'shipping,' most discussions of 'slash' also at least hint at the controversies that surround 'shipping' in general. While Jenkins still primarily focusses on controversies around slash as a practice (Jenkins 2013, 187–88), Busse discusses arguments between fans of different pairings, which she describes as 'one of the clearest markers of interpretive communities' (Busse 2017, 110). While her use of 'interpretive communities' is very textual in focus, she highlights 'conflicts, online arguments, and even flame wars when respective supporters differ sharply over acceptable readings of the source text' (Busse 2017, 111). What Busse describes here, then, are conflicts between factions along a Line of Distinction that addresses fans' engagement with the object of fandom – the very same Line of Distinction that I have chosen to call Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings. When I speak about Shipping as a Line of Distinction, then, I apply an equally broad perspective as in my definition of shipping as an interpretative activity. It includes all issues surrounding shipping as defined here, and the ways in which fans negotiate the associated differences of opinion. While it would be impossible to touch on all shipping activities even within a single fandom, including the one surrounding Sherlock Holmes, it is necessary to sketch a brief overview to provide the reader with the most essential elements to be able to follow discussions around the phenomenon of shipping. I will therefore now provide some background of the history of shipping in the Holmes fandom, including evidence for Shipping as Line of Distinction. I will also address the most common ships in the Holmes fandom for reference in the analyses that will follow in this chapter. This overview is far from comprehensive, and aims only to form a basis of understanding for the subsequent analysis.

Most immediately, even by Jenkins's limited definition of pairings, the Holmes

fandom provides a prime pairing example in Holmes and Watson (Holmes/Watson, or Sherlock/John in particular in the BBC series *Sherlock*, often under the portmanteau Johnlock), drawn from the homoeroticism perceived in the Canon. Holmes/Watson is often perceived to be *the* pairing in the Holmes fandom, and there is evidence of the Holmes/Watson pairing in many stages of fandom development, long preceding newer adaptations such as the BBC's *Sherlock* (2010—).

The Holmes/Watson pairing definitely featured in fiction in print zines by the 90s, such as in *Friend of My Heart* (Fanlore 2018b), or in multifandom zines alongside more commonly mentioned TV-based pairings (e.g. *Paean to Priapus*, Oblique Publications). Works of meta like Nekosmuse's meticulous 'Decoding the Subtext' (Nekosmuse 2007), coming up to nearly 400 pages of analysis and covering the entire Canon, explored the pairing in the Canon. A now defunct Yahoo! group (Holmesslash, established 1999 (Fanlore 2017b)) and early LiveJournal communities (e.g. *Cox & Co*, established 2004) further document the early presence of the Holmes/Watson pairing in fannish online spaces. Finally, as early as 1988, Rohase Piercy's *My Dearest Holmes* (Piercy 2007, reprint) explored the pairing in published fiction. Piercy's novel is perhaps the oldest definite evidence for the Holmes/Watson pairing in particular in fiction (and its capacity of being controversial within the fandom (The Retired Beekeepers 2016)).

Despite the prominence of Holmes/Watson as male/male pairing, speculations about Holmes's private life – including his romantic and/or sexual life – are not limited to it, nor are these speculations a recent phenomenon. Rex Stout's 'Watson Was A Woman' was first delivered as a speech – at the Baker Street Irregulars Dinner no less – in 1941, and later published in the *The Saturday Review of Literature* (Stout 1941). It argues, largely on the basis that no man would describe a fellow man in the way Watson describes Holmes, that Watson was not only a woman but also Holmes's wife, ultimately concluding that she created a literary alter ego for herself in Irene Adler (SCAN). While Stout's speech was likely not meant entirely seriously, unlike many newer meta discussions around shipping, and is

certainly 'heteronormative' (Polasek 2017, 5.11) if not also sexist from today's perspective, it still proved controversial enough at the time to prompt even the *New York Times* to comment ('Another Holmes Mystery' 1941). Stout's speech is most certainly a piece of meta around shipping, at the very least of Holmes and a female Watson if not strictly of Holmes and Watson in the gender we take them for in Canon, and possibly also of Holmes/Irene Adler.

The pairing landscape today, if anything, has become even more complex, not least through different adaptations, featuring or re-emphasising characters that are marginal or non-existent in the Canon, or through changing the gender of characters. Still, it is nearly always Holmes that is shipped in Holmesian context; pairings with Watson (that are not Holmes/Watson in some way or form) appear to be much rarer, certainly in anything beyond Watson/Mary Morstan, Watson's wife in the Canon (SIGN).[5] However, it has to be said that other pairings not involving Sherlock Holmes do exist, such as Watson/Mary, Mycroft/Lestrade ('Mystrade') for BBC's *Sherlock* or Joan Watson/Jamie Moriarty in *Elementary*. Holmes has been paired with a variety of women, for instance Irene Adler (also with regards to BBC's *Sherlock* as 'Adlock') or Violet Hunter, both of which are characters in the Canon, but also Molly Hooper ('Sherlolly'), who is original to the BBC series, or characters specifically created as Holmes's romantic partner, such as Mary Russell in Laurie R. King's ongoing series of archontic novels, the first volume being *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* (King 1996). *Elementary* conflates Adler with Moriarty (turned female as Jamie Moriarty) and canonises a past romantic involvement between her and Holmes, therefore creating a pairing that is simultaneously Holmes/Moriaty and Holmes/Adler. In terms of relationships with other men, Holmes/Watson is by far the most frequent. Around *Sherlock* especially, Holmes has also been paired with Jim Moriarty (male in *Sherlock*; 'Sheriarty'), Lestrade and incestuously as Sherlock Holmes/Mycroft Holmes ('Mylock,' 'Holmescest').

[5] Or of Watson and his *wives*, owning to timeline inconsistencies of the Canon.

Like the historic examples of Stout's speech and Piercy's novel, shipping to this day is not uncontroversial in the Holmes fandom. SHI02 said that:

> [t]here are of course theories that canonical Holmes is, you know, is gay, so it is being discussed. I think it's very controversial, I think it's also... changing, this opinion of "oh, no, no, no, he was absolutely straight and they're just friends" [...] I think there's a sort of, loosing up of this sort of knee-jerk reaction of, oh no, our holy Holmes, he can't be anything, he's ase– [presumably asexual] or even that people don't understand, he just, he's not interested in women, he's a machine, and if he was it's, I don't know. I think it's changing, but it is still very controversial, because I think the problem is, as with anything that people are emotionally involved in, is that you tend to... think that your version is the right one? [...] I think it would be less controversial if people said that, I don't know, that Sherlock Holmes is a lizard king [laughs] [...] (SHI02a)

While this interviewee indicated a change towards more acceptance of readings of Holmes's sexual orientation, they also describe the controversies around such interpretative activity. The questionnaire responses are equally indicative of the controversial nature of shipping in the Holmes fandom to this day. To the question of whether there were any 'inappropriate' topics for writing on Holmes in the respondents' view, most respondents indicated that there were no inappropriate topics, and some were quite vehement in arguing that *all* topics were appropriate (e.g. SHQ029, SHQ097). Some specified that there were topics they did not want to read, but would rather just avoid than declare 'inappropriate' (e.g. SHQ003, SHQ099).

Among those that indicated 'inappropriate' topics, however, romantic/sexual relationships were most frequently raised. For example, one respondent classified 'things that were not reflected in the stories at all (such as homosexual overtones, space travel, time travel, etc)...' (SHQ002) as inappropriate, another

instructed ‘don’t write about romantic/sexual relationships between characters who have only ever been platonic’ (SHQ049). Some objected to specific pairings: ‘I think writing porn between the Holmes brothers is somewhat out of line’ (SHQ085) or ‘I refuse to read and block anyone who posts about Mycroft/Sherlock pairings’ (SHQ158), or ‘[s]traight romances between Sherlock and someone else [are inappropriate] because he’s so obviously gay and in love with John, even in adaptations where the writer meant for him to be straight’ (SHQ288). Others objected to sexual content based on their character interpretation: ‘Usually sexually related [topics are inappropriate] because it’s very out of character for a virginal character’ (SHQ173) or ‘It’s always strange for me to see the book Holmes written into any romantic relationship – he doesn’t struck [sic] me as a person who would seek them’ (SHQ080). While most of these responses imply reasons other than merely dislike of ships – such as objections to lack of canonicity, incest or character interpretation – they ultimately tie back to Shipping as a Line of Distinction.

In light of the diversity and complexity of shipping as interpretative activity, and, consequently, as a Line of Distinction, it is necessary to set some limits to the examination of Shipping as a Line of Distinction so as to be able to provide an evidence-based analysis of sufficient depth. I have done so through filtering the discussion firstly through the activity of meta writing and secondly through working with a selected corpus of meta texts. In the following, I will outline the process of arriving at this corpus. I will then go on to show how Shipping as a Line of Distinction is visible in these texts, before engaging with the interplay of Shipping with the highly personal Lines of Distinction from non-text categories, Sexual Orientation and Fan Behaviour.

6.2 A Corpus of Meta Writing

In the following, I will outline the corpus of meta that I analyse more deeply in this chapter, so as to set the scene for the analyses. I have clarified above that not

all meta has shipping as defined for this thesis as a topic, but the diversity of topics is so great that an analysis without pre-defined limits would be all but impossible. Hence, in addition to limiting the selection of meta thematically to shipping, I also limited the selection to meta concerning the Canon and the BBC series *Sherlock* as the two Holmesian texts with which I am personally most familiar and therefore have the necessary knowledge to be able to follow meta pieces. I have also concentrated solely on spaces of publication that are primarily fannish, written primarily for the consumption of fellow fans, exempting, for example, articles in academic journals. This is not to suggest that there is an indisputable difference between 'real academic work' and meta (in fact, like in the case of fanfiction, it is often impossible to tell whether fandom meta writers have a professional academic background, or whether professional academics writing on Holmes are not also fans). Instead, this is an acknowledgement that Queer Theory and therefore discussions on characters' sexual orientation have found more traction in academia, in both the field of literary studies and in cultural studies, than is reflected in the fandom attitudes and discourses around shipping. Non-fiction writing that addresses itself firstly to fellow fans thus tends to approach the topic differently – and, indeed, tends to reflect in-fandom Lines of Distinction more accurately – than essays written for academic audiences. As this thesis aims to explore relationships between fans, it is only appropriate to limit the selection to texts that have fans as authors and intended audience.

However, even with these limits, it is difficult to arrive at a representative sample of meta writing. As meta is seldom collected in archives as fanfiction is, it is frequently spread across platforms – both online and in print – and rarely collated in any kind of single or even frequently used let alone searchable or database-like form. I have therefore collected pieces of meta whenever I have encountered them during the data gathering period of this thesis in the course of my participant observation of the Holmes fandom to form a corpus for analysis. I have no reliable measure of how popular these individual pieces are – both in the

fandom in general and in comparison to each other – nor do I claim that they are exemplary or the most frequently read for their chosen topic. I have, however, aimed to collect them from a diversity of sources – printed and published books that play the Game, essays in society publications, and on the internet, primarily on Tumblr, posted by various users – and on a variety of shipping-related topics. Through this, I attempt to at least cover some of the diversity in readings and address the topics that I have most frequently encountered in my observation of the fandom. All meta used for this chapter is, or was at the point of retrieval, publicly accessible. Especially on the internet, meta can develop in threaded discussions of various participants, and I have ensured that, at the point of data collection, all iterations of the posts included in my corpus were public (not locked under Tumblr's 'dashboard view only' privacy filter) and not deleted (though they may have been since). While the paratextual context of these Tumblr posts (profile description, theme, personal hashtags) might offer some information about the writers' demographics, I have not gathered this data, and will only refer to the writers by their usernames (Tumblr URLs) and neutral pronouns.

This allowed me to arrive at a corpus of nineteen pieces, encompassing one published and one self-published book, two print journal articles (one from the *Baker Street Journal*, one from *The Serpentine Muse*, ASH's publication), one speech, later published, one piece found on the fanworks archive Archive of Our Own, one posted on the journalling platform Dreamwidth, and the remainder posts from various Tumblr users. Of these approximately twenty, half look at the BBC series and half the Canon, with one text referencing both. In terms of topics, they cover various possible pairings (mainly Holmes/Watson, Holmes/Violet Hunter, Holmes/Irene Adler) and discussion about Holmes's sexual orientation regardless of pairing, primarily homosexuality and asexuality. One piece is also concerned with Holmes's gender identity. The meta directly cited below is drawn from this wider corpus. I have selected those that most clearly give expression to Shipping as a Line of Distinction within the fandom, amongst

fans/factions, while also aiming to cover at least some of the variety of topics. In this way, I have arrived at five pieces of meta that form the core of the subsequent analyses, though I have supplemented them with findings from other pieces of the corpus. The five pieces of meta thus selected from the corpus are Nick Rennison's *Sherlock Holmes: The Unauthorized Biography*, bug-catcher-in-viridian-forest's Tumblr post 'Heteronormativity caught you in a haste? Here some quick replies to copy paste!,' anagnori's multi-part Tumblr essay on reading Sherlock as asexual, JayEz's 'Johnlock 101' from Archive of Our Own and mildlunacy's tumblr exploration of 'TJLC & the shipping problem' (Rennison 2005; bug-catcher-in-viridian-forest 2015; anagnori 2013; JayEz 2014; mildlunacy 2014), though it is worth emphasising again that I have not used them in isolation and have drawn on other pieces of meta in the corpus for context, even though they may not be directly cited below.[6]

In the following, I will examine how these pieces give expression to Shipping as a Line of Distinction in various ways, as well as what they reveal about intersections with other Lines of Distinction. Firstly, I will explore how the Line of Distinction is raised in the actual text of the meta pieces, echoing the prominent presence of Shipping as a Line of Distinction as perceived by my questionnaire respondents. Then I will go on to show how meta, Shipping, and the non-text Lines of Distinction Sexual Orientation and Fan Behaviour interplay on an example each.

6.3 Shipping as a Line of Distinction in Meta

Before looking at the selected meta texts proper, it is worth remembering that Shipping, like all Lines of Distinction explored in this thesis, was extrapolated from responses to the questionnaire circulated amongst fans for this thesis. That is, fans report perceiving issues around shipping as differences that are associated with value judgements amongst fans. These value judgements fuel differen-

[6] An overview over the full meta corpus can be found in Appendix D.

tiation between 'self' and 'other' where the 'self' side is considered 'right' and the 'other' 'wrong.' Given that Lines of Distinction are expressed through practice, we have to expect meta to give written evidence of such a differentiation. Before I demonstrate this phenomenon with the aid of textual examples, it should be noted that meta is not necessarily written with the intention to engage in discussion around alternative points of view. Instead, my participant observation of the fandom suggests that commenting on meta with the intention to criticise or refute it is considered poor taste, if not entirely unacceptable, at least online on Tumblr. Instead, fans are encouraged to make their own posts for their respective reading and seek out factions/fans that agree with them.

With that in mind, meta on questions around shipping themes is often written to point out 'evidence' or toy with what-ifs for the enjoyment of already like-minded shippers or at the very least those open to alternative points of view. Thus, Shipping as expressed through meta has, as all Lines of Distinction, both inclusive and exclusive elements. It can make the like-minded reader go 'Yes, I was thinking that, too!', furthering the inclusion within factions of certain interpretative stances around shipping, as much as it can simultaneously meet the total rejection of a differently inclined reader and/or actively turn such a reader away. This is the case even when the meta does not directly address itself against specific fans/factions. Consequently, there exist pieces of meta (also within this thesis' corpus) that explore their respective reading without any direct reference to the readings the writer considers 'other' and 'wrong.'

However, there are also pieces of meta which overtly seek to support their argument through refuting another reading. In these pieces, this other reading is mostly presented as irreconcilable counterargument, one that stands as direct contradicting 'other' to the author's preferred reading. It is in these pieces that Shipping as a Line of Distinction is expressed most overtly within the actual meta text. I have therefore chosen to explore three of these as the first directly cited examples of meta in this chapter. Firstly, I will look at Rennison, and the way in

which he introduces his own reading through deconstructing opposing readings. Then, I will look at bug-catcher's piece, which refutes others' counterarguments against the bug-catcher's ship with bug-catcher's own arguments against these counterarguments. Finally, I will look at how anagnori's meta avoids drawing a Line of Distinction through emphasising the validity of several co-existing readings.

The 'self'/'other' aspect of Shipping becomes most obvious when fans and meta writers try to paint their own reading as 'more correct' by exploring what is 'wrong' with other/opposing readings. This is the case in Rennison, where the author elaborates on the ways other readings are 'wrong' before even outlining his own reading. Nick Rennison's *Sherlock Holmes: The Unauthorized Biography* aims to do precisely what the title suggests: to provide a biography of Sherlock Holmes. It is written firmly in the style of the Great Game; that is, it treats Holmes as a historical figure and the Canon as real biographical accounts. Very little indicates Holmes's fictionality in the book itself (the only exception being the book reviews cited on the cover and inside the book before the title page), and the edition I draw on for this thesis even classifies the work as 'Biography' rather than 'Fiction' on part of the publisher (Rennison 2005). Deeply immersed in the Game, then, the *Biography* aims in style and content to remain within the purview of a legitimate biography, dedicating chapters to all stages and aspects of Holmes's life. It also discusses the reliability of 'sources' on Holmes's life, which, if they are not the Canon, are often other texts playing the Game, archontic works of fiction or outright made up by the author. As such, the *Biography* is a piece of meta following the specific tradition of the Great Game and firmly embedded in fandom discussions around Holmes's life. Though shipping is not its most central concern, the book dedicates one chapter to Holmes's romantic life.

All chapter titles in the book are drawn from Canon quotes, and the relevant chapter is aptly titled 'I should never marry' (Rennison 2005, 120–34), which

gives an immediate indication of the stance Rennison ultimately takes. He begins the chapter with an exploration of Holmes's relationship to women before he goes on to address speculations about specific supposed relationships of Holmes's. Of these, he primarily covers two: Holmes/Irene Adler, and Holmes's possible homosexuality (unlinked to any specific pairing). On the subject of Holmes/Adler, Rennison writes:

> Probably more nonsense has been written about Holmes's relationship with Irene Adler than any other part of his life. Assorted fantasists, driven to distraction by the thought of Holmes's celibacy, have dreamed up elaborate scenarios about a hidden sex life and, to these people, Irene Adler has proved a godsend. Holmes had an affair with her. Holmes had children with her. These are the stories some writers have committed to paper. It is worth stopping for a minute to consider the shaky foundations on which they have built their baroque edifices. (Rennison 2005, 120–21)

In reading this section, we have to bear in mind that the entire *Biography* is written in the style of the Great Game. Thus, a certain tongue-in-cheek attitude is often to be expected, and the terms aimed at Holmes/Adler shippers here ('nonsense,' 'fantasists' etc.) might be intended to be taken in the same playful spirit rather than as stark insults. However, the dismissal of the reading remains. Rennison goes on to criticise Holmes/Adler on the basis that, in Rennison's view, the Canon directly contradicts the pairing and ultimately concludes that '[t]he romance between the detective and the opera singer [is] no more than a fantasy invented by gullible Holmesians' (Rennison 2005, 124).

Again, the terms used here are probably intended to be more light-hearted than they at first glance appear, but the fact remains that Rennison engages in the process of 'othering' not just the Holmes/Adler reading, but also those 'Holmesians' that support Holmes/Adler. This is the case even if we assume that it is done in an affectionate manner and that all readers would recognise this tone. Rennison

himself clearly does not see himself as one of these 'fantasists,' or at least affects as much in this piece, and he claims that their reading is contradicted by the 'evidence,' primarily the Canon.

Rennison takes a largely equivalent stance when he goes on to discuss the reading of Holmes's sexuality as homosexual. Firstly, he speaks of 'those who are convinced that Holmes's sexual orientation was towards men' (Rennison 2005, 125). Again, 'those' communicates distance from Rennison himself. Similarly as with Holmes/Adler, Rennison then proceeds to criticise those fans for their inadequate treatment of their sources (in the sense of 'historical evidence'):

> It is, however, both difficult and dangerous to apply a twentieth-century word retrospectively to an essentially nineteenth-century man. 'Homosexual' as a description of same-sex attraction was not used at all until the 1860s [...] Certainly Holmes knew a number of men who could be described as [homosexual] [...]. Equally certainly, Holmes knew and liked the work of so called 'decadent' writers and artists of the 1880s and 1890s, many of whom were homosexual. [...] None of this is proof that Holmes was homosexual any more than his admiration for Irene Adler's nerve and intelligence shows that he had an affair with her. (Rennison 2005, 125–27)

In almost exactly the same way as the Holmes/Adler reading – and, indeed, equating the two readings – Rennison also 'others' the homosexual Holmes reading. He distances himself both from its supporters (though in less directly dismissive terms than in the case of Holmes/Adler) and from their reading, ultimately declaring it unsupported by 'evidence.' Only after these two 'otherings' does Rennison reveal his own reading, in that Holmes, 'by the time he met Watson [...] had already decided that his life was not to be a sexual one.' Beyond that, Rennison speculates vaguely about the impossibility of tracing Holmes's earlier sexual activities (with female partners) (Rennison 2005, 127). Ultimately, then, Rennison takes the position of reading Holmes as strictly celibate, but probably het-

erosexual. Notably, Rennison does not back his own reading up with any extended 'evidence' – instead, the 'othering' and deconstruction of the opposing readings seems to stand as justification for Rennison's reading. In this way, Rennison establishes his own stance, the 'self' side around shipping with regards to Holmes nearly entirely through the 'othering' of readings he dismisses. Whether this is merely an affectation as part of the Game or Rennison's true conviction remains ultimately impossible to determine from the text.

However, Rennison's means are nonetheless revealing about how Shipping as a Line of Distinction functions in meta. Overall, Rennison's meta very much emphasises Shipping as a Line of Distinction. He supports his own reading almost entirely through saying that the two other readings he explores are 'wrong.' He also includes the supporters of such readings in his 'othering' – not only does he criticise the reading in itself, but he also dismisses its supporters. This reveals a tendency in arguments around shipping of combining textual discussions with ad hominem arguments, in that not (only) the textual reading is discredited, but the person supporting/making said reading. That is, Shipping as a Line of Distinction as expressed through meta not only draws lines between different textual readings, but also between its respective supporters. This can occur covertly or even unintentionally simply through a fan/faction being in disagreement with meta they encounter being spread, posted, supported or written by another fan/faction. It can also happen overtly, as it does here, by the meta text directly positioning itself against another fan/faction. I will explore the escalation of ad hominem arguments around Shipping further below in the section around personal stakes and the intersections of Shipping with Lines of Distinction that are more concerned with the behaviour of the fans than with the fandom object text(s).

Firstly, however, it is necessary to look at two other ways in which Shipping as a Line of Distinction appears in shipping-related meta, as Rennison's emphasising stance is by no means the only way in which the Line of Distinction emerges through meta texts. The example I want to examine next is a BBC *Sherlock* meta

around the Holmes/Watson ship. In fan discourse about *Sherlock*, this pairing is most often referred to as Johnlock (i.e. a portmanteau of John/[Sher]lock) in reference to the show's preference for first names for both the characters of John Watson and Sherlock Holmes. 'Heteronormativity caught you in a haste? Here some quick replies to copy paste!' is a Tumblr post by bug-catcher-in-viridian-forest, written for Johnlock shippers to address common counterarguments against the ship (bug-catcher-in-viridian-forest 2015, n.pag.). It takes the form of bullet point lists of varying lengths, in which each bullet point presents a counterargument for the anti-Johnlock statements that structure the meta as subheadings. Bug-catcher lists eleven separate anti-Johnlock statements, each of which is followed by several bullet points of counterarguments, for example:

> *"THEY AREN'T TOGETHER IN THE BOOKS" ARGUMENT:*
>
> - This is not a faithful adaption [sic]. Even if for many things the creators have stuck to the ACD canon, for many others they have not, there's no reason why the relationship status cannot be touched while other relevant aspects have been.
> - Moreover, the possibility that Sherlock and John were in love with each other in the ACD canon has been discussed for decades.
> - It was illegal in Victorian times to for men to be in a romantic relationship, so, even if Sherlock and John had been compatible enough to wish for a romantic relationship, they would have committed a crime and would have tried to avoid the thought.
> - Also, the stories were reported by Dr. Watson. This means that, even if they were in a romantic relationship, he wouldn't have published it, because they could have been arrested.
>
> (bug-catcher-in-viridian-forest 2015, n.pag)

Reminiscent of the style of the Great Game, bug-catcher notes that Watson

could not have written about homosexuality in the circumstances of his time, while also arguing that *Sherlock*, as 'not a faithful adaption [sic]' can take liberties in how it transforms the Canon. This convergence of both in-story and 'real world' arguments is a consistent feature in this meta. The piece includes sections on 'The "Creators say no" Argument,' which cites interviews and social media post by the creative team involved in the show, as well as on 'The "Sherlock and John are just friends" Argument,' which is the longest section by far and draws on textual and visual evidence from the TV show. However, despite this convergence of the fictional world with the real that we also find in Rennison, it is immediately obvious that bug-catcher's meta is different from Rennison's, not only in the reading it supports, but also in the approach it takes to express this support. While Rennison discredits other readings to support his own, bug-catcher seeks to support their own reading through discrediting arguments against it.

It is tempting to therefore see bug-catcher's meta as more defensive, forced to justify itself against attacks from others. However, the meta does, in fact, make a stronger case for its own reading than Rennison's, in that it provides a great number of arguments in its support for each possible counterargument. Conversely, Rennison arrives at the reading he supports only through deconstructing other readings and provides little to no evidence or arguments for his own. It is also necessary to avoid a knee-jerk reaction prompted by the reference to 'heteronormativity' in bug-catcher's meta's title to the effect that a queer reading would naturally find itself in the defensive. While such might be the case in a wider societal context, where fans of queer readings come in contact with a still predominately heteronormative society and, consequently, largely heteronormative media, the same hierarchies are not necessarily reflected *within* fandom, as I have previously argued in this thesis, following Bury's caution against 'romanticiz[ing] communities that are formed out of exclusion and/or marginalization' (Bury 2005, 15).

Instead, in certain factions of the fandom or amongst specific fellow fans, the Johnlock reading is, in fact, the dominant reading, and a fan/faction with a reading that might be more common in society at large will quickly be 'othered' *within* the fandom. It is, in fact, this same process of 'othering' contrary readings that is in action around bug-catcher's meta. While the meta suggests that Johnlock shippers encounter these anti-Johnlock arguments, the meta itself does not represent the strictly defensive reaction of an 'underdog' amongst fannish readings to a direct attack. Instead, we must look at bug-catcher's meta in the spirit that it was intended: as a quick list for fellow Johnlock shippers to efficiently and easily be able to refute any possible counterargument against their own reading. The meta is thus more of an offensive arsenal than a defensive stronghold. Through the arguments bug-catcher provides for copy-pasting, Johnlock emerges as the 'victorious' 'correct' reading, whereas all other readings are 'othered' as easily refutable and therefore 'wrong.' In this way, the reference to 'heteronormativity' is not (or at least not only) an acknowledgement of the reading's position as not culturally normative – instead, it is a broad accusation that those who argue against Johnlock *are* heteronormative.

For instance, in the section on 'The "Sherlock and John are just friends" Argument,' bug-catcher states, in relation to their perceived romantic coding of the Johnlock pairing:

> Failure to recognise this [...] is the result of heteronormativity, which creates a double standard between queer and non queer couples. [...] For as much as one would like to believe themselves free from heteronormativity, if you are not queer, it is nearly impossible to be free from it, unless you have actively studied the matter for a long time, and, even if you are queer, you might still be affected from [sic] it, especially if you have not give the matter much thought. (bug-catcher-in-viridian-forest 2015, n.pag)

Bug-catcher therefore not only considers the 'failure to recognise' the romantic

coding a heteronormative reading of the text, but argues that the *people* who 'fail' here must be 'heteronormative.' The fact that 'heteronormativity' functions here as accusing 'othering' is further indicated by the fact that the meta not only discredits arguments that stem from actual heteronormative readings of the show, but also addresses itself against other queer readings that might present an obstacle to the Johnlock reading, such as the reading of Sherlock as asexual in 'The "Sherlock isn't interested in sex" Argument.'

In this meta, again, we therefore find a conflation of arguments about the text with one about the fans: Bug-catcher 'others' not only the arguments they list as anti-Johnlock on a textual level (and discredits them with counterarguments in support of Johnlock), but also equates them and their supporters in an ad hominem argument with 'heteronormativity.' This ultimate 'other' of 'heteronormativity' is thus also targeted at (queer) readings that are not Johnlock *and* (queer) fans that are not also Johnlock shippers. Like Rennison, then, bug-catcher also engages in the 'othering' of arguments that contradict their own reading *and* of the fans who raise these arguments. However, while Rennison does so on the level of these fans' ability to read the source, that is, their behaviour, bug-catcher does so also on the level of their identity: anyone in support of anti-Johnlock arguments must be 'heteronormative.' I will return to this branch of ad hominem arguments below under Personal Stakes where I discuss the intersection of Shipping as a Line of Distinction and the fans' own Sexual Orientation as a Line of Distinction.

First, however, I want to illustrate the way in which meta touches on Shipping in one final brief example, which provides a contrast to these previous two. While both Rennison and bug-catcher emphasise Shipping as a Line of Distinction, actively 'othering' different readings and their supporters, anagnori's meta takes a diplomatic stance of careful negotiation. Anagnori's nine-part exploration of Sherlock's asexuality (focussing on the BBC series) on Tumblr is a prime example of meta that has the length and structure reminiscent of an academic essay. It includes both explanations of what asexuality is, readings of specific scenes

in *Sherlock*, and nods towards what fan writers can do with this information and what it means for their shipping. All parts are illustrated with screen captures from the show and are meticulously linked from part to part (something which needs to be done manually on Tumblr), originating from a single introductory post. It is worth quoting one of the opening paragraphs, to illustrate the approach to the topic anagnori takes:

> This is merely my interpretation, or headcanon, as a fan of the show. In fact, I believe that the portrayal of Sherlock as asexual is an accident that none of the writers considered when creating the show. But even though it's an accident, it's uncannily similar to the lived experiences of me and many other asexual people. It's not canon, but it's eerily plausible given the canon we have to work with. (anagnori 2013, n.pag.)

Whereas the previous two metas we have examined directly address and discredit opposing readings, 'othering' them firmly as 'wrong,' anagnori does not do so. Instead, they describe their meta as 'merely' one reading, implying that it is neither the *only* 'correct' one nor the *most* 'correct' one. These assurances that they do not intend to discredit other readings are a consistent feature of all parts of anagnori's meta. For instance, in anagnori's view, the asexual reading also should not be a barrier to any shipping. Anagnori stresses this explicitly in the opening comments around the table of contents: 'This essay is 100% free of ship-bashing. Johnlock shippers need not worry' (anagnori 2013, n.pag.). Ship-bashing, like the related character-bashing, is a fan term for open hostility towards a particular ship, usually when expressed through a fanwork, such as fanfiction, or, in this case, meta. In this way, some of the texts I have examined above could be considered ship-bashing, in that they seek to discredit a particular ship/reading. 'Bashing' is also frequently associated with a certain degree of violence, as the term suggests – in the context of character bashing, for example, it is sometimes expressed through exploring how to kill off the hated character in often

brutally explicit ways. As such, anagnori explicitly distances their meta from brutal attacks against other ships. Indeed, the meta tends to avoid any 'othering' at all, including that of other readings and their supporting fans. Instead, anagnori frequently seeks to reassure the reader that they are not out to discredit other ships or readings through explicitly acknowledging the validity of multiple (even contradictory) interpretations. To give another example from later in the meta:

> I should also point out that I have no objection to interpretations of Sherlock as homosexual. I am fully supportive of those interpretations, and I'm not trying to start an argument or rain on anybody's parade. I'm just explaining why I, personally, think an asexual interpretation is also plausible. (anagnori 2013, n.pag.)

Here, anagnori firmly presents their reading as one of many, one that is 'also plausible' and can stand alongside differing (queer) readings. While these readings are not their own, anagnori does not 'other' them as wrong or in any way less 'plausible.' References like these are dotted throughout the meta, but are especially dense in the part 'Reasons not to think of Sherlock as gay,' which indicates an awareness of the prevalence of reading Sherlock as homosexual elsewhere in the fandom, and a judgement that those fans would need to be appeased more than those who read the character as straight (which the previous part of the meta addresses, and which features fewer such references).

In this way, anagnori negotiates Shipping as Line of Distinction in a completely different way than the previous two pieces of meta. Anagnori's meta clearly shows an awareness of the existence of other readings, but in reassuring fans with other readings (and/or ships) that they do not want to 'start and argument or rain on anybody's parade,' anagnori is deliberately *avoiding* drawing Shipping as a Line of Distinction. The above two pieces of meta seek to back up their own positions by 'othering' and discrediting different readings (and their supporters), emphasising Shipping as Line of Distinction. Anagnori's meta, by contrast, de-

emphasise Shipping as a Line of Distinction. Whether this technique works is up to other fans or factions, of course, nor should we consider anagnori's diplomacy as indicative of *all* supporters of this particular reading. Nonetheless, it provides an important contrast to the previous two pieces, and one that is necessary to acknowledge when speaking about Shipping around meta writing. While anagnori is no less aware of Shipping as a Line of Distinction than the previous two writers, their piece seeks to break out of the temptation to brutally, 'otheringly' deconstruct other readings for the support of their own. In doing so, it avoids both 'othering' different readings in the sense of labelling them as 'wrong' *and* avoids directing ad hominem arguments against their supporters.

In the following, however, I want to return to these ad hominem arguments in an exploration of how Shipping, as expressed in and around meta, intersects with other Lines of Distinction. The two such intersecting Lines that have emerged through my data are Sexual Orientation and Fan Behaviour.

6.4 Personal Stakes: an Interplay of Lines of Distinction around Meta

Shipping as a Line of Distinction is, firstly and foremost, grounded in approaches to the object of fandom, i.e. to the text(s). It is about how a fan/faction reads the text, how they interpret the characters' relationships and sexual orientation. However, as fans congregate together around their respective readings, it is frequently the case that arguments around Shipping are no longer based solely on criticising readings of the text, but also direct themselves at the fans of the respective readings. In this way, supporters of other readings become 'fantasists' or 'heteronormative,' as we have seen – judgements which direct themselves against other fans, not their reading. Similarly, as we will observe more below, fans of the 'self' group are supported and praised for who they are as well as the way in which they engage in shipping. These judgements are still grounded in the 'other' fans'

approach to the text, such as that supporters of this particular readings have not engaged with the source text correctly. However, these ad hominem arguments also begin to take a different, perhaps escalating shape. They start to address themselves against fans' behaviour and identity, rather than just the way in which they engage with the fandom object. As such, these arguments stand at the intersection of Shipping with other Lines of Distinction. This thesis has examined such intersections between Lines of Distinction before, but the ones addressed here are perhaps the most personal examined in this thesis: Sexual Orientation and Fan Behaviour.

This section of the chapter is separated in two case studies. First, it will return to the asexual reading of Holmes as represented by anagnori's meta, to explore the ways in which fans raise their own sexual orientation as relevant to their shipping and to how they perceive Shipping as a Line of Distinction. Second, the chapter examines the fan faction of The Johnlock Conspiracy which engages in active meta production and around which a heated discourse on Fan Behaviour has emerged. Both of these illustrate how Shipping as a Line of Distinction can intersect with others to become highly personal.

6.4.1 Asexual Holmes: Queer Readings and Sexual Orientation

I have so far been careful not to overstate the connection between the Line of Distinction around Shipping and that around (the fans' own) Sexual Orientation. This is because Shipping as a Line of Distinction affects fans independently of their own Sexual Orientation – queer and non-queer fans alike come in contact with Shipping as a Line of Distinction, also but not only because shipping as interpretive activity is not limited to queer pairings/readings. Nor should we equate an unfavourable stance towards queer shipping entirely with heterosexual fans,[7]

[7] Indeed much of the academic literature around shipping and slash seeks to explain why heterosexual fans, primarily women, would be interested in something so 'unconventional' (Busse 2017, 1) as (fictional) male/male relationships (cf. Busse 2017, 80), largely disregarding the

or even entirely with real-life homophobia, as the dislike of any particular fictional pairing does not have to reflect an opinion on real-life queerness. That is not to say that attitudes towards real-life queer people cannot play a role in a fans' stance regarding queer readings and queer ships, simply that the Lines cannot be so clearly drawn through outside observation. While my sample of respondents included those critical of (queer) shipping, it would be a baseless assumption on my part to claim that they would be homophobic in real life contexts. Related, there has been criticism by fans who are themselves queer towards the practice of shipping as reflecting heteronormative patterns and having little to do with real life queer relationships (e.g. Jenkins 2013, 219–22, also SHQ412). In this sense, Shipping as a Line of Distinction may or may not affect fans regardless of whether they share the sexual orientation proposed for the characters, and regardless of whether that character interpretation is queer in the first place.

However, it would be erroneous to argue that fans' queer shipping and the Shipping Line of Distinction around it can *never* overlap with their own sexual orientation, and the way in which this real life orientation is negotiated in fandom spaces. As Table 3.1 of Chapter 3: Lines of Distinction shows, fans' own Sexual Orientation is a Line of Distinction in its own right. It can function as an including or excluding force within fandom. The Line of Distinction frequently became most visible in my data in conversations around the topic of shipping. Elinor Gray in *About Being a Sherlockian*, for instance, states that her shipping of Holmes/Watson is directly influenced by her own queerness: 'I'm bringing my queerness with me wherever I go, and it extends to my readings of literature. This is how I "play the Game"' (Gray in Redmond 2017, 152). As a result, criticism of the latter can read as criticism of the former:

> My interpretation was invalid [in the eyes of a fan panelist]. Simultaneously, though not intentionally implied by the panelist, my identity was invalid. [...] Not perceiving Holmes and Watson as

possibility of queer fans engaging in the activity.

> life partners wasn't the problem; it's the scoffing dismissal of that romantic readings as possible, as if anyone who sees things that way must be mad, that I object to. Queerness is not an insult to the characters because being queer isn't a bad thing to be. (Gray in Redmond 2017, 151)

These two testimonies by Gray reveal two possible intersections of Sexual Orientation and Shipping. Firstly, a fan's sexual orientation may immediately influence which stance they take towards shipping in general and which ships they prefer – and, consequently, towards which fandom factions they gravitate and how they position themselves when it comes to raising Shipping as a text-based Line of Distinction. Secondly, certain criticisms of text-based readings can read as dismissive not just of the interpretation as such, but of the respective sexual orientations reflected in the interpretation. This is especially potent if a fan shares or empathises with this textually interpreted identity. Consequently, it has implications for the perceived acceptance of this sexual orientation in real life, between fans. This, as Gray explains, is not solely a question of a fan disliking a queer ship, but the way in which this dislike is expressed. It is here that Sexual Orientation as a Line of Distinction raises its head most prominently in discussions around shipping, in that a sexual orientation in itself is framed as 'bad' or laughable, that is, is 'othered.' These two ways or modes of intersection I will henceforth label Identification and Acceptance, respectively.

It is worth noting that my data and participant observation show that not all defenders of a queer ship are as inclined to emphasise the importance of tone and 'live and let live' as Gray asks for in the final words of her contribution: 'I don't need you to believe. I just need you to let *me* believe [...]. And in return I'll leave your Irene Adler fantasies alone.' (Gray in Redmond 2017, 152). More frequently, Identification and Acceptance are blurred. For instance, fans who have found their faction and text-based stance around Shipping based on their own sexual orientation as per Identification might be wary of encounter-

ing (lack of) Acceptance, even if they have not (yet) had any related experiences (e.g. SHQ210, SHQ160). Alternatively, fans defending their ship might be tempted to simultaneously defend the Acceptance of the included sexual orientation (e.g. SHQ180). They thus receive *any* opposition to the textual interpretation (regardless of tone) as criticism on their own sexual orientation. This can lead to accusations of real-life homophobia, of which bug-catcher's label of 'heteronormativity' is a somewhat milder form. Elinor Gray's contribution to *About Being a Sherlockian* functions as an effective first example of these two intersections, unlinked to any specific fandom activity. I want to go on now to explore Identification and Acceptance and their intermingling in more detail on a case study drawn from my own data and from the corpus of meta used in this chapter. The chosen example looks at a queer readings in particular, regardless of pairing constellations – that of reading Holmes as asexual, and of asexuality as a sexual orientation amongst Holmes fans.

'Asexual,' as a sexual orientation, is defined through a person not or very rarely experiencing sexual attraction. This lack of attraction does not have to extend to *romantic* attraction or to a lack of sexual contact; either can exist without the other. Holmes's apparent lack of sexual and indeed romantic *interest* is frequently cited, not rarely by arguing that he is, in fact, misogynistic, or in order to discredit any attempt of pairing him up, such as in Rennison's work examined above. Closer explorations of Holmes being asexual in terms of sexual orientation, that is, not experiencing sexual *attraction*, are still a fairly recent phenomenon, owning also to an increasing cultural visibility of this particular sexual orientation. In Doyle, Holmes has what Anthony Bogaert, a leading scholar on asexuality, calls an 'asexual aura.' While the character reads as asexual (and possibly also aromantic) from a perspective of a modern day queer reading, Holmes's lack of interest is firstly a way of portraying him as 'driven by intellect' as opposed to the 'pleasures of the body,' which also extends to other such 'pleasures' such as food (Bogaert 2012, 36). This portrayal is thus more closely aligned with the

notions of asceticism and celibacy than a deliberate decision to represent a person of asexual sexual orientation in the character. Given this 'aura' in the Canon, however, it is unsurprising that a modern day adaptation would be scrutinised in terms of a potentially asexual – rather than 'just' celibate – Holmes. Hence, this particular queer reading has found expression primarily in discussions about the recent Holmes adaptations, *Sherlock* in particular, of which anagnori's meta is an excellent example. The discussion about an asexual Sherlock has now also reached academic works about *Sherlock*, such as in an article by Karma Waltonen in *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes* (Farghaly 2015, 192–207), but I have exempted such academic articles from analysis for this thesis for the reasons stated above.

I have chosen asexuality here as a case study to illustrate the intersection of Shipping and Sexual Orientation as Lines of Distinction for two reasons. The first is that even in fandom circles where shipping is somewhat commonplace, asexual readings are still rare and are often perceived as a threat to shipping in general or specific pairings in particular, something which anagnori seeks to negotiate in their meta. The second reason is that thanks to the composition of my research participants, asexuality allows me to explore the intersection of fans' own sexual orientation and their queer readings of the text (both in terms of Interpretation and Acceptance) not only in the hypothetical, but by drawing directly on concrete examples from my data. Amongst the respondents to the questionnaire approximately 16% of those who chose to answer the question about their sexual orientation identified as asexual, with a further 0.8% identifying as aromantic asexual. This makes asexuality the third most frequent sexual orientation within my sample, superseded only by heterosexual (38.3%) and bisexual (23.5%), bearing in mind that, in total, over 50% identified as in some way not heterosexual.

Even considering that 'anecdotal evidence and informal polls suggest that the number of self-identified nonstraight women is proportionally greater in fandom

than in the population at large' (Busse 2017, 159), the high degree of respondents identifying as asexual in particular is surprising. The figure is a high percentage even compared to, for instance, the UK National LGBT Survey, published July 2018, which surveyed members of the LGBT community rather than the population at large and in which still only 2% of respondents identified as asexual (Government Equalities Office, UK 2018, n.pag.). In a survey of the entire population, the percentage of asexuals would presumably be even lower, even considering that not all asexual individuals might also identify as members of the LGBT community. While there might therefore be unknown factors influencing the low percentage in the LGBT Survey, the difference in percentages to the respondents to my survey is not insignificant. It is unlikely that fandoms in general should attract an unusually high number of asexual people, and it is therefore not unthinkable that fans of asexual sexual orientation are drawn to Sherlock Holmes specifically *because* of the possibility of reading the character as asexual.

In this way, the asexual reading becomes exemplary for Identification, the first way in which Sexual Orientation and Shipping intersect – by guiding the fans towards their respective readings and fan factions. Anagnori's meta gives written evidence for this process. Not only does the author identify themselves as 'aromantic, asexual,' they also stress the importance of this for the meta and for their interest in its topic:

> Sherlock is quite dear to my heart, because not only do I see him as being asexual like myself, but he is actually the reason why I realized that I was asexual in the first place. There are many parallels between my experiences as an asexual person and Sherlock's experiences in the show, so I will often add in personal anecdotes, and this will be a semi-autobiographical essay. (anagnori 2013, n.pag)

Here, anagnori describes not only being guided by their sexual orientation in settling on a particular reading of the show *Sherlock*, but also an intimate connection between their exploration of their sexual orientation and their reading of

the character as asexual.

This experience of their own asexuality being directly connected to exploring *Sherlock* as a text was echoed by one of my interviewees. Having been active in an asexual online forum, they discovered references to Sherlock Holmes which prompted them to engage with the text, in particular again with the BBC's *Sherlock*:

> Before I watched the BBC's version, I was vaguely aware of the series through gifs and friends who were fans, and as a kind of a meme in the asexuality message board I lurked on
>
> After starting the series, I actually went back to the AVEN[8] message boards to try to find what people had said about Sherlock (because it had really resonated with me not just on a fan level, but on an asexual-representation level as well), and found a thread of fic recs, and just plowed my way through them, haha
>
> Before long I was lurking on individual Tumblr pages, then I made my own Tumblr so I could more easily archive favorite posts by reblogging them, then I started making my own collection of bookmarked fics to read later
>
> Eventually I started low-key interacting with other fans
>
> And then writing my own fic
>
> (SHI04; text chat interview, paragraph breaks and spelling preserved as in original.)

SHI04 thus described a kind of feedback loop in their experience of the fandom – they became aware of *Sherlock* through their involvement in online communities around their sexual orientation, and then both returned to the asexual community to talk about their fandom and brought their experiences of asexuality into how they engaged with the fandom by means of Identification. When asked whether

[8] The Asexual Visibility and Education Network, self-described as the currently 'world's largest asexual community' online forum (The Asexual Visibility and Education Network 2018).

asexuality had been a great part of their fandom experiences, SHI04 went on to explain that they also engaged with fan-produced texts around other readings, but limited their own writing to those around an asexual reading of Sherlock (the character). They explained that this intermeshing of their own sexual orientation was 'some of the most satisfying parts of being in a Sherlock fandom' (SHI04). Identification is thus at the very core of their engagement with the fandom. Not only do they view Sherlock the character as a reflection of their own sexual orientation, this interpretation of the character also majorly shapes the fanworks they produce to the point of exclusivity.

While SHI04 described this as pleasurable, they also stated that, at the same time, 'fan interactions that are hostile toward any asexual representation or headcanon of Sherlock have been the worst part too' (SHI04). Here, they are clearly touching on the second way of intersection between Sexual Orientation and Shipping, Acceptance. They went on to explain that they had the impression that it was primarily asexual fans who enjoyed 'an asexual interpretation, and some segments of the Tumblr fandom at any rate are reeeeally [sic] hostile towards interpretations that are not gay!Sherlock/bi!John' (SHI04). Hence, while individuals and factions might not set out to attack fans based on the *fans'* sexual orientation, 'hostility' towards a specific queer reading is perceived as 'hostility' against said sexual orientation – even if that is not the intention, similar to Elinor Gray's experience cited above. Therefore, SHI04 reports on the existence of fans/factions that, while not explicitly excluding asexual fans based on their sexual orientation, through their 'hostility,' their lack of Acceptance, effectively *do* exclude asexual fans (not just their reading). This lack of Acceptance was perceived by this interviewee as 'the worst part' of their fandom experience. At the same time, Acceptance and Identification together have also provided SHI04 with an including experience. They have encountered *Sherlock* through their asexual community, and have encountered fellow asexuals within the *Sherlock* fandom who also enjoy the same reading of the text (effectively forming a faction). In this

way, even as two Lines of Distinction intersect, they still form both an including and excluding force.

Apart from this particular interviewee, similar experiences around asexual readings and asexuality as the fans' sexual orientation were also reported by several of my questionnaire respondents, some of whom even foregrounded their asexual sexual orientation (rather than their asexual reading of the text) as primary reason for exclusion:

> I guess generally sometimes I feel a bit excluded by those who believe "Johnlock" is the *only acceptable interpretation*, or at least make it out like that's what they believe. These are blogs who have things like "JOHNLOCK IS CANON" in their descriptions, or pass around posts saying how xyz is conclusive proof that Conan Doyle intended for them to be together and which imply that *no other interpretation* is acceptable. As an asexual not only do I feel excluded in those moments when I see those things, I also find that rather small-minded and arrogant. (SHQ307; emphasis mine)

This respondent, for example, addresses precisely the strongly 'othering' application of Shipping as a Line of Distinction as we have observed in Rennison and bug-catcher above: claiming that 'only one' interpretation around shipping/queer readings 'counts.' This questionnaire response does not make entirely clear how SHQ307's objection relates to their asexuality. That is, they leave open whether their sense of exclusion is through engaging in an asexual reading of the text for which they have found no support – because it is one of those 'other interpretation[s]' – or whether their asexual orientation makes it difficult to relate to Johnlock as a ship. While it is clear that they perceive an intersection between Shipping and Sexual Orientation, it is therefore impossible to determine whether their sense of exclusion is based on Identification, Acceptance or both. Still, the interconnectedness between both Lines of Distinction is strongly expressed.

If we consider this fan-reported intersection of two Lines of Distinction around

the asexual reading, we may also return to anagnori's careful avoidance of emphasising Shipping as a Line of Distinction in their meta. We may now view it in a slightly different light. Anagnori's diplomacy or cautiousness might stem from a sensitivity towards the Acceptance intersection of Shipping and Sexual Orientation. As they present a reading of the text that is intimately connected with their own sexual orientation, their tone might be designed to avoid encountering or provoking a lack of Acceptance from the readers of their meta. Fear of such possible criticisms was also expressed by another of my questionnaire respondents, when asked whether they ever felt exclude:

> I don't really try to engage with people who I feel would exclude me. But I do have a soft spot for asexual Sherlock/don't really want to speculate about his sexuality a lot of the time and I'm aware that there are others who would judge me for that. (SHQ103)

This tendency for self-exclusion or avoidance of potential conflict around Acceptance might also play a part in anagnori's diplomacy. At the same time, anagnori's own awareness of the intersection around Acceptance might have prompted them to avoid alienating fans of differing sexual orientations. By avoiding criticising their respective queer readings, anagnori is in turn asking the same Acceptance for their own. This latter 'live and let live' is indicated especially through anagnori's greater number or reassurances of validity towards other queer readings specifically, which I have pointed out above.

Beyond a simple, otherwise unprompted dislike of drawing Shipping as a Line of Distinction, then, an increased awareness of intersections between Shipping and Sexual Orientation is quite likely to have directly influenced the way in which anagnori frames their meta writing. Not only do they stress their own Identification, they also seek to mediate Acceptance. While both Lines of Distinction, that of Shipping and that of fans' Sexual Orientation, can and do exist independently of each other, there are also instances in which they might overlap. These overlaps can significantly influence fans' experiences within the fandom. Further,

they directly shape fans' activities within the fandom. So, for instance, sensitivity to this overlap or lack of such sensitivity can change how fans present their reading or ship in their meta writings, as is the case in anagnori's. Other fans (both asexual and not), of course, might not make the connection between a rejection of a particular queer reading and their own sexual orientation, that is, they might experience the intersection of Identification, but not encounter or fear to encounter (lack of) Acceptance. However, the example of asexual readings exemplifies both potential overlaps and interplays between the two Lines of Distinction of Shipping and fans' Sexual Orientation.

The example to which I want to turn as the second case study equally illustrates an intersection between Lines of Distinction. I turn away from Sexual Orientation, which has been the focus in this section, and look instead at the intersection of Shipping with Fan Behaviour. This I will explore through the discourses and framings of The Johnlock Conspiracy, a faction of *Sherlock* fans that engages in very active meta production.

6.4.2 The Johnlock Conspiracy: a Queer Reading and Fan Behaviour

The Johnlock Conspiracy (so titled by the fans themselves, often shortened to TJLC; its supporters call themselves TJLCers) is a brand of meta-theorising about the BBC show *Sherlock*. As the name suggests, the pairing of Johnlock, i.e. Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, is at the core of its theories, but TJLC goes beyond a preference for the Johnlock pairing. It functions on the basic premise that the show *Sherlock* is deliberately written in a way that indicates that, before long, Sherlock Holmes and John Watson will overtly become a couple. As such, the meta produced under the umbrella of TJLC is not restricted to a specific topic, but to a common premise. Beyond an interpretation of Sherlock and John's relationship as romantic, TJLC meta proposes that the TV show contains hidden clues as to this eventual development of the characters' relationship in the future of the

show. It argues that these clues were placed deliberately by the show's creators to hint at their future intention of overt Johnlock and that these clues are waiting for the fans to discover or decode them. In this way, TJLC regards Johnlock *as canonical*, or at least as *becoming* canonical, rather than as one possible interpretation of the canon of the show.

Next to none of the academic literature on *Sherlock*, such as Stein and Busse's edited collection *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom: Essays on the BBC Series* (Stein and Busse 2012), focusses in any great detail on shipping in general or Johnlock in particular, let alone TJLC. This is partly due to the apparent date of emergence of TJLC at around *Sherlock*'s third series (January 2014). There is very little academic research dealing with series three and four of *Sherlock*. This lack of academic material on the *Sherlock* fandom and TJLC in particular combined with academia's lack of interest in fannish meta texts makes it difficult to establish a precise history of the TJLC line of thinking or the use of the term as descriptor. In the interest of providing some necessary context for the phenomenon and for the state of TJLC at the point of the data collection for this thesis, I will make an attempt at giving a rough history of TJLC and introduce its key concepts, before I enter into the discussion of discourses around TJLC, which reveal an intersection of the two Lines of Distinction of Shipping and Fan Behaviour.

What evidence is available indicates that TJLC formed around *Sherlock's* third series. In an exception to the lack of literature on TJLC, Christensen and Jensen's very recent article pinpoints 'one impetus' for TJLC on an individual Tumblr post penned just after *Sherlock*'s third series (Christensen and Jensen 2018, 3.5). In their introductory 'About' page for the newly interested, a Tumblr dedicated entirely to TJLC under the eponymous username 'tjlc' more narrowly locates the 'sprouting into existence' of TJLC to just after the airing of 'The Sign of Three,' the second episode of *Sherlock*'s third series (tjlc 2016). JayEz's 'Johnlock 101 – An Introduction to The Johnlock Conspiracy' (an example of meta archived

on AO3) concurs, pointing to a founding text posted on Tumblr on January 7th 2014 (JayEz 2014). However, many of these first TJLC posts have now been deleted, sometimes along with the poster's Tumblr accounts, and thus, like many phenomenons in fandom, the precise origins of TJLC are difficult to retrace. My own active experiences of the fandom up until after the second series of *Sherlock* (January 2012) suggest that there were indications of a strong belief towards Johnlock 'becoming canon' at least after the second series, together with a rising Line of Distinction around Shipping expressed as dismissal of those who did not 'see' Johnlock, if not (yet) under the label of TJLC. At the time around TJLC's apparent emergence, online fandom more broadly was also in a transition period between platforms, from LiveJournal to Dreamwidth to Tumblr,[9] so it might ultimately be impossible to trace the exact point at which the notion of (future) canonical Johnlock, i.e. TJLC, first arose. The difficulty in pinpointing the starting point of the TJLC line of thinking and consequently its meta premise doubtless also lies in the fact that TJLC emerged from an active tradition of meta around the Johnlock pairing, though TJLC is not synonymous to Johnlock shipping. The Johnlock meta tradition, alongside Johnlock fanfiction, began as early as *Sherlock*'s first series, and, as we have seen, stands in the tradition of speculations about Holmes/Watson in other Holmesian adaptations and in the Canon.

At the point of writing, TJLC's premise of Johnlock becoming canon has not been realised – or, put in different terms, conclusive proof that such a plan for canonical Johnlock exists has not appeared. Presently it is also uncertain whether the series *Sherlock* will ever continue beyond its fourth series. Consequently, TJLC has experienced a decline from its heyday, and fewer fans now associate themselves with the premise (participant observation for this thesis, also see Christensen and Jensen 2018, 1.6). At the primary point of data collection for this thesis, around and shortly after the fourth series of *Sherlock* (2017), how-

[9] To explain this in full would exceed the limits of this thesis, but suffice it to say that the exodus from LiveJournal was largely prompted by the introduction of fan-unfriendly policies on the platform. For a brief overview, see Fanlore's article on LiveJournal (Fanlore 2019b).

ever, TJLC was still prominently in evidence, even though some TJLC fans were vocal in expressing their disappointment with the recent series. Post-series four TJLC meta writing is of interest in itself, as it expresses an attempt to reconcile the unrealised hope for overt Johnlock and for the resolution of the 'conspiracy,' but it is beyond the purview of this thesis as it reveals nothing further about Lines of Distinction around TJLC.[10]

Even excepting the special case of post-series four TJLC meta, TJLC, all in all, is (or was, given the aforementioned decline) primarily expressed through non-fiction writing. Only non-fiction writing appears to have afforded the space to examine a future direction of the show by showing the 'evidence' of a plan for such a direction in the already existent episodes. Meta thus is the perfect platform for TJLC, and TJLC meta is distinctive in its premise, setting it apart from other pieces of meta examined here so far.

Most accessible to first-time TJLC readers are the numerous 'TJLC primers' provided by TJLC members. These 'primers' offer definitions, summarise key arguments and frequently link to other meta posts the author considers most essential. In the corpus of this chapter, 'Johnlock 101' by JayEz is such a piece of TJLC meta. It remains readable without chasing up now largely defunct source links and is thus accessible to both fans and researchers years after it was originally posted. Notable in the case of this meta is the still-present conflation of general Johnlock meta and TJLC, in that JayEz describes TJLC firstly as 'one interpretation of BBC's Sherlock and its subtext' (JayEz 2014, n.pag.). This makes their piece more closely reminiscent of anagnori's diplomatic stance of multiple possible interpretations than many future TJLC pieces of meta which tend to lay

[10] For some discussion about the post-series TJLC speculation around a hidden fourth episode in which Johnlock would be realised (which also, as yet, has not emerged), refer to Christensen and Jensen (2018). Christensen and Jensen also explore in more detail the nature of TJLC's premise, conceptualising it as a 'a version of secularized eschatology – secularized because TJLC is not a religion, yet the actions of its proponents express characteristics of forms of eschatology common to many religions' (Christensen and Jensen 2018, 1.4) in that it 'relies on the group's belief regarding what must inevitably happen at the end of the program: John Watson and Sherlock Holmes (JohnLock) must get together romantically' (Christensen and Jensen 2018, 1.6).

claim to the singular 'truthfulness' of their reading, as we will see below.

'Johnlock 101' can thus be considered a comparatively early example of TJLC meta, published in the summer after the airing of the third series. JayEz summarises key arguments for Johnlock across these three series, but also already displays TJLC's characteristic extremely close reading based on, for example, cinematographic choices, like set lighting that resembles the colours of the bisexuality pride flag. It also already draws on real world sources in the form of creator interviews which later become a staple of TJLC meta. Finally, its conclusion indicates the belief that the examined signs for Johnlock are indications for a plan for future overtly canonical Johnlock, which is TJLC's key characteristic. However, this perspective towards future canon still takes up a comparatively minor role in the 'Johnlock 101' meta in favour of highlighting the hints at already existing romantic feelings between the characters. As such, JayEz's meta is on the cusp between meta that explores subtextual signs of the Johnlock pairing without any view to the show's future development, and meta that reads these signs as definite and deliberately placed indicators that Johnlock will be overtly realised in future episodes. It is this latter which is the key characteristic of TJLC meta. In the pursuit of proofs for this plan, TJLC meta might even sideline the visible playing out of Sherlock and John's relationship in favour of searching for such hidden 'clues,' for instance in set design.

Given that 'Johnlock 101' is a transitional piece, TJLC clearly needs to be considered a part of the shipping-related meta tradition, and shipping-related meta around Johnlock or Holmes/Watson in particular. There are similar pieces both in their attention to detail and in their shaping of a unique way to engage with a Holmesian text, for instance the premise of the Great Game. What does distinguish TJLC from the Game is that TJLC, for the most part, is taken seriously by its participants, and that any inherent irony, if it ever existed, is largely invisible. Christensen and Jensen argue that at least some of the impetus of TJLC might have intended 'not to be taken seriously' (Christensen and Jensen 2018, 3.4), but

there is little evidence that TJLC proceeded to preserve that possibly humorous origin. At the very least, I could find no such indications in the corpus of meta texts, nor during my time as participant observer. TJLC instead is serious not only in the intensity of engagement, as the Game also is, but also in actual belief.

Fans show strong identification with the TJLC stance. Not only does it exist as a hashtag on Tumblr, but is also in use as label on AO3 both for meta and fan-fiction, in the latter of which it has come to indicate the author's affiliation which the TJLC branch of the fandom more than it reflects the fics' content. The degree of personal identification with the 'Conspiracy' is also evidenced through the questionnaire circulated for this thesis. Asked what term participants would use to describe themselves with regards to their engagement with Sherlock Holmes texts, approximately 2% of respondents identified themselves as TJLCer beyond any other terms, such as 'fan' or 'Sherlockian.' Notably, 'TJLCer' was not given as an option requiring just a tick of a box – therefore, the fans who identified as such did so with deliberate consideration, going out of their way to write in the self-description to the question and rejecting other descriptors in its favour. A further 0.5% identified as 'Johnlocker,' though whether they would also have identified as 'TJLCer' is not a given, considering that TJLC goes above and beyond general Johnlock-related meta.

Previous analyses in this thesis should caution the reader against conceiving even of TJLC as an entirely cohesive group, as, indeed, does JayEz in their meta (JayEz 2014, n.pag.). Nonetheless, Christensen and Jensen's characterisation of the 'conspiracy' as 'a version of secularized eschatology' (Christensen and Jensen 2018, 1.4) adequately expresses not only the overriding importance of TJLCers view towards Johnlock as planned 'endgame,' to be realised in the future of the show, but also the zeal shared by many TJLCers. It should again be noted that the questionnaire was circulated shortly after the airing of *Sherlock*'s fourth series, which dissatisfied many fans, but also fans of Johnlock and in particular TJLCers, who had strong hopes their belief would be actualised in the fourth series.

Consequently, by the time the questionnaire was circulated, the presence of TJLC was fresh in many fans' minds, but a number of TJLCers themselves had already quit the fandom in frustration and might therefore not have wanted to engage with the questionnaire and/or identify as TJLCer.

What can be taken away from this is that TJLCers represent a faction within the fandom. As such, TJLC and its members draw specific Lines of Distinction to define themselves and distinguish themselves from other fans/factions. At the same time, other fans/factions seek to distinguish themselves from TJLC in turn. In the following, I will explore what these Lines of Distinction drawn around the TJLC faction are. Firstly, I will look at how TJLC is perceived by other fans in terms of Lines of Distinction, before engaging with how TJLC describes itself. Together, they illustrate the intersection of Shipping as a Line of Distinction with a further Line of highly personal stakes – that of Fan Behaviour, i.e. whether or not a fan is behaving in an acceptable manner in the eyes of other fans.

Both in fandom and outside of it, The Johnlock Conspiracy has gained an unpleasant reputation. Harrison Kitteridge, in *About Being a Sherlockian*, largely blames TJLC for 'the continuing toxification of the *Sherlock* fandom,' and firmly argues that TJLCers 'weren't the stereotypical sobbing, acned teenage fanboys and fangirls. [...] Adults, some of them middle-aged, are poisoning fandoms because they revel in rejecting context and take a fundamentalist approach to the interpretation of fictional works' (Kitteridge in Redmond 2017, 141). Kitteridge goes so far as to describe TJLC as causing 'a civil war of sorts' (Kitteridge in Redmond 2017, 141). Kitteridge's age estimate is not directly confirmed by the self-identified TJLCers in my questionnaire responses. While the questionnaire was limited to participants above the age of sixteen, all of those who identified as TJLCer were below the age of 25 and thus included in the younger demographics that also formed the majority of total respondents, though a too small sample in the case of self-identified TJLCers might be to blame for this. Further, Kitteridge's choice of words is uncomfortably reminiscent of old stereotypes levelled

against fandom in general.

Even so, Kitteridge serves to highlight the controversies around The Johnlock Conspiracy in stark terms and echoes voices against TJLC from my questionnaire data. For instance, consider the words of one questionnaire respondent:

> [...] I ended up feeling very excluded from the online Sherlock fandom because of the *very aggressive* JohnLock shippers. I think entitlement can be a problem in any fandom and unfortunately it seems that this faction of JohnLock shippers began to feel *very entitled* to their interpretation of the Sherlock/Watson relationship, to the point that they insisted that their interpretation was 100% correct (even though the show's producers had repeatedly stated that that was not the direction they were taking it), spent all their time microanalysing camera angles and "acting choices" etc etc to "prove" that their interpretation was correct, and *aggressively attacked* anyone who disagreed with them, *accusing* them of being homophobic. To give them the benefit of the doubt, I can understand that representation is important to people and it would have meant a lot to people to have a canonical gay relationship in the show and there was also a lot of queer-baiting in the show, making it seem like maybe it might happen, for which I blame the producers who liked to tease the possibility whilst having no intention of going there. But ultimately the *behaviour of these vehemently entitled fans* made the fandom a toxic and unwelcoming place for anyone who didn't share their entitled views. (SHQ088, emphasis mine)

While SHQ088 does not directly address TJLC by name (speaking instead of more generically of 'JohnLock shippers'), the description of their activities ('microanalysing camera angles') and insistence on their analysis being '100% correct' and indicative of a future 'direction' of the show are markers of TJLC. We can therefore take this questionnaire response as directly concerning TJLC fans.

The response reveals several layers around Lines of Distinction around TJLC that are worth dissecting. Firstly, there is a definite criticism of the behaviour of TJLC fans: they are 'very aggressive,' 'very entitled,' 'attack[ing]' and 'accusing.' Like Kitteridge, this questionnaire respondent also blames TJLC for making 'the fandom a toxic and unwelcoming place.' As such, this respondent does not foreground TJLC's textual reading through emphasising a Line of Distinction around Shipping. In fact, the fan brings up TJLC's shipping as a somewhat redeeming value, in consideration that TJLC are pushing for queer representation. What the respondent raises as a Line of Distinction instead is TJLC fans' 'behaviour,' repeatedly 'othering' it as unacceptably 'aggressive.'

Noteworthy here as elsewhere in discussions of TJLC is that TJLC is perceived negatively primarily by those who are *not* part of the group. This does not rarely reach the point of TJLC being actively described as everything wrong with the *Sherlock* fandom. The issue for non-TJLC fans throughout is not the shipping of Johnlock – Kitteridge, too, for instance, identifies as Johnlock shipper, in *Sherlock* and beyond (Kitteridge in Redmond 2017, 140). The 'problem' with TJLC in the view of other fans and in the words of Christensen and Jensen, then, is not necessarily the content of TJLC's thinking and meta, but that

> one group of fans starts to divide fans into believers and unbelievers, into those who are right thinking and those who should be persecuted and shamed for their perceived disbelief. These groups find common ground in their spreading of the one true belief and in their fierce fighting of anybody who opposes them. (Christensen and Jensen 2018, 3.7)

The Line of Distinction that is evoked by non-TJLCers is therefore *not*, as one might assume, Shipping, but Fan Behaviour. In this way, non-TJLCers do not object to TJLC's Approach to the Fandom Object, but to TJLCers' Fan Attitudes towards their fellow fans. It is therefore not unsurprising that fans who object to TJLC are not, by default, against Johnlock or even against Johnlock becoming

overtly canonical. While there are certainly fans who dislike Johnlock alongside TJLC, and thus draw on Shipping as a Line of Distinction alongside Fan Behaviour, the quotes above and further responses gathered through my questionnaire give indication that it is also often Johnlock shippers themselves who object to TJLC. Christensen and Jensen, too, concluded their exploration by describing TJLC almost entirely in negative terms, highlighting aspects that fall clearly under Fan Behaviour and are perceived as unacceptable:

> TJLC has for years been blamed for many transgressions within Sherlock fandom, including doxxing, harassing, and bullying other fans on- and off-line. [...] It is not inclusive and diverse, and it is not based on the idea of a better world. Rather, it is exclusive: in TJLC, fans do not embrace diversity or criticism but rather enforce a certain kind of singularity. (Christensen and Jensen 2018, 7.1)

To summarise, then, while non-TJLCers are by no means a cohesive group, their uniting Line of Distinction as raised against TJLC is that of Fan Behaviour. Otherwise, non-TJLCer might not share many, or any, Lines of Distinction – they might, for instance, ship Johnlock, or be against Johnlock entirely. However, as has been the case with all Lines of Distinction we have so far examined, there is a need to look at both sides, as frequently each side considers their own approach to be the 'good' one. While it might be true that TJLC's range of who gets to be included is narrow, one should not underestimate the potential of TJLC to be at least *including* of those who follow the 'Conspiracy,' if not necessarily 'inclusive' in the sense that it accepts multiple points of view. To condemn the faction based on certain 'prerequisites' for inclusion alone is a fallacy – after all, the range of who is allowed to be included in the Baker Street Irregulars is similarly as narrow. Drawing on Lines of Distinction is not, in itself, negative; in fact, it is essential for a cohesive faction to exist in the first place. This holds true even when the Line of Distinction others raise against the faction in question is Fan Behaviour in the most vehement of terms. It is a mistake to categorically label TJLC as 'not

inclusive or diverse' (Christensen and Jensen 2018, 7.1). Lines of Distinction always function in both directions: to define and include members within a faction, as much as they distance the faction from other factions/individuals.

Even as SHQ088 cited above directs themselves against TJLC, their response gives indication of Lines of Distinction drawn by TJLCers against others. Firstly, the response references TJLC's distinctive activities, i.e. a Line of Distinction that relates to the approach to the fandom object, and, secondly, it references TJLCers' perceiving of others as 'homophobic.' The latter is reminiscent of the intersection of Shipping with Sexual Orientation that we have examined in the previous case study, and also of bug-catcher's reference to 'heteronormativity.' While non-TJLCers often condemn TJLC-related behaviour in the strongest terms and thus make Fan Behaviour the primary Line of Distinction around TJLC, TJLC itself has its own Lines of Distinction against other fans. Notably, I have in my research only encountered one example of a TJLCer who felt turned away by their own group (participant observation).

Those who have identified as TJLCer in the questionnaire have either not indicated feeling excluded at all, or have indicated that they have felt excluded by those fans who are not TJLCers:

> Yes [I have felt excluded], but since I have a group of people that agrees with me I don't really mind being excluded from others that *wouldn't take me seriously* in the first place. Our readings are incompatible and *they refuse to try to see others [sic] point of view*. (SHQ016, emphasis mine)

This fan clearly expresses feeling included by fellow TJLCers and excluded by others. Similarly, Tumblr user tjlc alludes to the negative labelling of TJLCers: 'If you think this post sounds like the ramblings of a deluded lunatic: fine, that's nothing new' (tjlc 2017, n.pag.). In referencing not being taken seriously and being described as 'deluded lunatic[s],' TJLCers thus cite being the recipient of just such dismissive behaviour that non-TJLCers accuse TJLCers of engaging in.

TJLCers seek to distance themselves from this Fan Behaviour as much as non-TJLCers seek to distance themselves from what they perceive as inappropriate Fan Behaviour on part of TJLC.

However, Fan Behaviour is neither the only nor the most prominent Line of Distinction TJLCers themselves raise. Non-TJLCer often highlight *only* Fan Behaviour as a Line of Distinction. Sometimes, such as the fan cited above, they deliberately reject the notion that they object to TJLC's reading and/or canonical Johnlock, that is, that they draw a different Line of Distinction around Shipping. By contrast, TJLCers reporting on their own experiences of exclusion consistently also draw on fandom object-related Lines of Distinction, with Shipping emerging as the most frequently cited. References to non-acceptance of their reading are at least equally as, if not more, prominent than references to unacceptable behaviour by other fans. In the quotation by the TJLCer SHQ016 above, both clearly go hand in hand – 'they refuse to try to see others [sic] point of view' indicates both unwelcoming Fan Behaviour in itself, and also that the TJLC fan considers the unwelcoming attitude to be levelled at their particular reading of the text.

While this specific fan does not make explicit that the dismissed 'point of view' is one concerned with Shipping, remarks from TJLCers elsewhere strongly indicate as much. For instance, a TJLCer writing under the name mildlunacy on Tumblr responds to criticism against TJLC in a piece of meta that distinguishes between a 'reading' and a 'ship preference':

> The reason is because TJLC is a *reading of the show*. Johnlock, on the other hand, is a *ship preference*. Problems arise when people conflate these two things in analysis or even just conversation.
>
> Having a ship preference [...] has *no inherent truth value*. It cannot be right or wrong (just annoying or pleasant to others). [...] But when I say that BBC Sherlock was constructed as a romance between John and Sherlock, that has a testable, concrete truth value. It is a

> claim that can be right or wrong, because it is concerned with a future direction of the show that is currently under dispute. When I say these concrete things about BBC Sherlock, I'm not describing a preference, but making an analysis: a completely different process. [...] [O]verall, as a *theory*, TJLC is making a truth claim, even if as a community, it occupies a grey space in the way of any fannish ship-centric community. Communities – and people in general – are always irritating or affirming or tiresome or what have you, depending on where you stand. Shippers are probably irritating just by virtue of being shippers. The only thing I'd personally defend is the artistic merit of the show itself, and the practice of amateur literary analysis that includes prediction. I can only hope the inherent differences become clear in time... along with canon Johnlock. (mildlunacy 2014, n.pag., emphasis in original)

Mildlunacy's insistence on verifiable 'truth claims' is representative of much of the tone of TJLC meta, which insists that what it 'reads' about the future of the show is, in fact, what *is going to* happen, and not just what *might* happen.

Most TJLC meta is not as cautious about distinguishing emotional investment in the characters' relationship as Johnlock and a TJLC 'reading' of the show as mildlunacy is here. Mildlunacy goes so far as to argue that a 'ship preference' for Johnlock is not necessary to subscribe to the 'reading' that underlies TJLC. In stressing this distinction, however, mildlunacy also indicates how essential TJLC's closely defined Queer Reading is to the cohesion of the Conspiracy as community. That is, those who are included amongst TJLCers draw a very specific Line of Distinction around their reading, around Shipping. Just shipping Johnlock is not enough or even necessary. TJLC goes beyond it in a 'predicti[ive]' reading of the show, and exploring this reading through 'amateur literary analysis' (mildlunacy 2014, n.pag.) demarcates the Shipping Line of Distinction for TJLCers. This Line of Distinction defines their own belonging and

cohesiveness as a faction and is how they differ from other fans and factions.

TJLCers thus primarily emphasise the Shipping Line of Distinction as core of their self-differentiation. Even when they reference Fan Behaviour, they perceive unwelcoming attitudes by others as directly connected to their shipping, conflating Fan Behaviour and Shipping as Lines of Distinction. TJLCers are a faction united both through rejecting a lack of understanding by other fans (Fan Behaviour) and in joining in the same way of reading the text (Shipping and Queer Readings). When TJLCers speak about their own faction, they consistently do so in positive terms, while highlighting the adversity they face from elsewhere. SHQ016 quoted above highlights the pleasure of having found a 'group of people that agrees with me,' and another respondent explained their choice of TJLC as self-descriptor as 'because i [sic] identify very much with tjlc [sic] and have found most of my friends there' (SHQ084). One respondent, in the optional section for additional comments at the end of the questionnaire, indicated that 'BBC Sherlock and TJLC made my life better, even if I was mosly [sic] a spectator' (SHQ135). In a Tumblr post from after series four addressed to fellow TJLCers, Tumblr user tjlc explains that:

> [t]he Johnlock conspirators remain the most dedicated, passionate, interesting, smart, diverse, and brave group of individuals I have ever encountered, and never would have encountered without the power of the internet. [...] [R]emember even a fraction of some of the beautiful, intricate details we have collectively discovered, metaphors or plotlines or dialogue or musical motifs, each so deliberate and meaningful it's impossible they're accidental, you remember that we've done something amazing. You've done something amazing: against mountains and mountains of misinformation and contradictory evidence, against "fake news," against heteronormativity and homophobia and the dominant opinion, you gathered information with your own eyes. You used the internet to read the findings

> of your fellows and judged for yourself which ones you believed to be legitimate. You are watching the greatest trick ever played on television, and, right before the prestige, you look at the magician and you notice how it's done.
>
> You're fantastic.
>
> (tjlc 2017, n.pag.)

Here, tjlc praises the members of the Conspiracy for their personalities as well as their meta-related skills, and distinguishes their reading in reference to Shipping: 'against heteronormativity and homophobia and the dominant opinion.' It is worth noting again that, like in bug-catcher's meta discussed above, references to 'heteronormativity and homophobia' do not necessarily have to indicate an actual intersection with the Line of Distinction around Sexual Orientation (though they can). Instead, we also have to regard them as 'othering' statements towards all those who criticise the TJLC reading. The reference to 'the dominant opinion' directly following is also indicative of this. Tumblr user tjlc portrays their fellow members of the TJLC faction as morally righteous underdogs in order to further emphasise the positive and supposedly morally superior 'self.'

Strikingly, this positive self-description relies almost entirely on aspects that related to TJLC's shipping-related activities and analysis. It thus highlights again the textual reading as central distinguishing feature of the TJLC faction. As such, TJLCers tend to both emphasise a feeling of having found 'their people' amongst TJLC and the importance of the common shipping-related reading and consequently of Shipping as a Line of Distinction. This goes hand in hand with a focus on the production of meta texts as important for both the cohesion of the group and the fans' own pleasure with regards to engaging with the show. Rather than addressing primarily Fan Behaviour, then, TJLCers themselves firstly draw on Shipping as a Line of Distinction.

There remains no doubt that the descriptor TJLC circumscribes a fandom faction. TJLC therefore is, by definition, surrounded by Lines of Distinction. As

Lines of Distinction are not inherently negative, neither can we limit our perspective on TJLC to the perspective of other fans or factions, even if one such Line raised against TJLC is that of Fan Behaviour. Fan Behaviour is the only, or at least the primary Line of Distinction that is raised against TJLC by non-TJLCers. They do not necessarily object to TJLC's reading or the shipping of Johnlock, but to the 'aggression' displayed by (some of) its members. Meanwhile, TJLC defines itself primarily through the way in which they engage with the text, the BBC's *Sherlock*. They describe their cohesion as a faction through the ways in which they read the text, their specific queer reading, and consequently the ways in which they construct and write, often communally, their meta. As such, meta in the style of TJLC is (or at least was) a strong, community forming force, which draws on the Line of Distinction around Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings in a unique way. Only secondarily do TJLCers also unite in opposition to exclusion by others' Fan Behaviour. However, while non-TJLCers deliberately distinguish their critique of Fan Behaviour from a critique of Shipping, TJLCers tend to perceive unacceptable Fan Behaviour by others as directly linked to their particular Queer Reading.

Clearly, then, TJLC represents an intersection of the two Lines of Distinction of Shipping and Fan Behaviour as played out around a particular brand of meta writing. Non-TJLCers tend to deny drawing Shipping as a Line of Distinction when they raise Fan Behaviour against TJLCers. TJLCers, by contrast, talk of Fan Behaviour only as interconnected to Shipping. This case study thus shows that while Lines of Distinction frequently intersect, the degree and way in which they do so, or are portrayed as doing so, can and does depend on the position of the individual fan, revealing a clear difference between those that consider themselves part of the TJLC 'self' and those that do not.

6.5 Concluding Remarks: the Shipping Line of Distinction in Meta

Throughout this chapter, I have examined the Line of Distinction around Shipping, Pairings and Queer Readings in the case study of fans' non-fiction or 'meta' writing. I have first offered an introduction to meta and shipping, both generally in fandom and in the Holmes fandom in particular, in which I define 'meta' as non-fiction writing about the object of fandom. I have then explored various ways in which Shipping as a Line of Distinction emerges in and around meta texts.

Beginning with a discussion of some exemplary works from the meta corpus, I have explored how meta texts themselves express Shipping as a Line of Distinction. We have observed how the deconstruction of opposing readings leads meta writers to not only 'other' these readings, but also the fans who support them, emphasising Shipping as Line of Distinction. By contrast, anagnori's meta shows an attempt to avoid any 'othering' of both fans and readings, and thus tries to avoid drawing Shipping as a Line of Distinction. Moving on from this evidence that arguments against other shipping-related readings often also address themselves to and against the supporters of such readings, I have turned to examining the interplay of Shipping as a Line of Distinction with two other Lines of Distinction that are very personally connected to the fans themselves rather than their approach to their fandom object, Sexual Orientation and Fan Behaviour. In the former, I have explored how a fan's own sexual orientation can influence their engagement with fandom shipping, and how Sexual Orientation and Shipping can intersect as Identification, drawing a fan to a reading that reflects their own identity, and Acceptance, in which attitudes towards a queer reading can influence the inclusion of fans with corresponding sexual orientations. In the latter, I have examined the phenomenon of The Johnlock Conspiracy and the contrast between which Lines of Distinction are emphasised in discourses around this faction, depending on whether we look at a description of a faction by non-members or by the members

themselves.

These examples not only show the ubiquity of Shipping as a Line of Distinction around meta writing on these topics, but also the various ways in which it can be played out: emphasised, de-emphasised, and even pushed to the side in favour of other Lines of Distinction, even while one faction considers it their defining feature. It has also become clear that Shipping, like all of the Lines of Distinction we have examined before, intersects and interplays with other Lines of Distinction, such as Sexual Orientation and Fan Behaviour. In the first case, a Shipping Line of Distinction can, largely unintentionally, also be read as a Line of Distinction around Sexual Orientation. In the second case, a particular queer reading is a defining feature of the TJLC faction – and the key Line of Distinction TJLCers draw against others, even supporters of the same ship – but from the perspective of outsiders, Shipping is de-emphasised in favour of the Fan Behaviour Line of Distinction. All of this finds expression around the particular fan activity of non-fiction 'meta' writing about the object of fandom, in this case the fans' chosen Holmesian text. It also evidences that even a Line of Distinction that is on the surface so purely text-based as Shipping always also influences the relationship dynamics between fans, whether directly through a conflation of criticising a fans' reading and criticising the fan making said reading, or through intersection with other Lines of Distinction.

This examination concludes the final case study chapter of this thesis. In the next chapter, I will offer some concluding remarks and an outlook to possible future directions of research.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Remember: You are attending a Sherlock Holmes fan meeting – it is your first; you've only just discovered the World's Greatest Detective, Sherlock Holmes, for yourself a few months ago. This will be your first time meeting other Holmes fans in person. You're nervous, sure that they have all been in the fandom much longer than you, that they are all going to know much more about Holmes than you. Granted, you have devoured all episodes of the BBC's *Sherlock*, and have had a good go at the original Doyle short stories, but you've found the four novels a bit long and daunting. Thankfully, you quickly find some people to chat to. You share your enthusiasm for *Sherlock*, and the conversation eventually loops around to the original stories. Hesitantly, you confess that you have found the novels difficult to get into. You've managed *A Study in Scarlet*, but... One of your conversation partners, Sasha, nods: 'Yes, it's those long sections that don't have Holmes or Watson in them, isn't it?' You readily agree, but another fan, Addison, is frowning at you and says: 'You haven't even read *The Hound of the Baskervilles*? You can't really be a *proper* Sherlock Holmes fan, then, can you?'

With this imaginary scenario at a fan meeting I introduced the thesis and its topic in the Introduction. Now, at the end of the thesis and its analyses, we have the critical framework and the necessary information to examine this scenario.

Let us take it apart, then, and flag up the Lines of Distinction it contains.

Firstly, your entry point as a Holmes fan is the BBC's *Sherlock*. You have read some of the Canon, but your main focus and the first Holmesian incarnation you have encountered is *Sherlock*. The shortness of your involvement contributes to a sense of 'impostor syndrom' with regards to your thematic knowledge around Holmes, even though you have not been 'tested' on it – you are nervous of exclusion on the basis of the Thematic Knowledge Line of Distinction, as well as the Depth/Time of Engagement Line of Distinction. There is also a sense that you might lack Social Knowledge, that is, you know no fellow fans and possibly also none of the big name fans. Thankfully, you encounter some fellow fans, Sasha and Addison, who have no immediate issue with *Sherlock* as an entry point. In this first instant, at least, even if your conversation partners would draw a Line of Distinction around Entry Point elsewhere, they consider *Sherlock* acceptable, and fans with *Sherlock* as entry point part of their self group. The opportunity to share your enthusiasm for *Sherlock* also furthers your own sense of inclusion, beginning to make you feel like part of this 'self' group. Sasha also makes a reference to a bit of insider knowledge about the Doyle novels that you are familiar with: 'those long sections that don't have Holmes or Watson in them.' Though a little more outside of your fannish comfort zone, this is something you have encountered in your attempt to read the Canon, so recognising this insider fact serves to include you within the 'self' group even more. Then, however, you encounter Addison's disapproval for not having read *Hound*, and therefore your first active experience of being 'othered.' It is not immediately clear which Lines of Distinction underlie Addison's reaction. Possibly, they consider *Sherlock* an adequate entry point only so long as the fans have also read *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, so ultimately leading back to a Line of Distinction around Entry Point. Alternatively, they might also disapprove of your reticence to read the novels in general, which might be one of the otherwise unspecified Line of Distinction around Approach to the Fandom Object. There might also be a judge-

ment here based on Thematic Knowledge, i.e. if you do not even know *Hound* there cannot be much to your Thematic Knowledge about Holmes in general. Whatever the real underlying Lines of Distinction are (and, indeed, you might draw different conclusions on what these Lines are), you end up being 'othered.'

Following on from this encounter, there are several ways in which it might resolve. Potentially, you feel that you have no chance to be part of the 'self' group with Addison. Possibly also repulsed by Addison's Fan Behaviour (drawing a Line of Distinction yourself), you therefore go on to avoid them in the future, seeking your own, other 'self' group within the fandom that cares less about *Hound*. Alternatively, you attempt to defend your fannish credentials on the spot – for instance through claiming that you know the plot (also possibly via your engagement with *Sherlock*'s adaptation of it) and still plan to read it – trying to maintain your position within the 'self' group of Addison. Finally, it is also possible that Sasha intercedes on your behalf. If Sasha, for example, criticises Addison for their Fan Behaviour immediately, Addison becomes 'othered' in turn and you remain included in a 'self' group with Sasha.

What all of this ultimately serves to show is that even such everyday micro-scale interaction between fans can be effectively analysed with the critical framework introduced in this thesis. Lines of Distinction, as differences associated with value judgements, are a tool that permits us to understand the interactions between fans *within the same fandom* through 'self'/'other' dynamics. This framework allows for differences associated with value judgements that are highly specific to the fandom. It enables making sense of power dynamics as shifting and fluid as Foucault's conceptualisation of 'power' suggests while also avoiding assumptions of fixed hierarchies or 'black boxing.' Instead of merely shedding light on the ways in which fans, as an example of members of a cultural group, negotiate their position against outsiders to their (own) fandom/cultural group, Lines of Distinction are an effective analytical tool for the ways in which fans/members manage their relationships *within* their own fandom/cultural group.

7.1 Looking back: Lines of Distinction in the Sherlock Holmes Fandom

This thesis began by questioning the tendency of cultural studies and fan studies in particular to consider specific cultural groups only through the ways in which they are distinct from an outside Other. This is certainly to some degree necessary in order to define what makes a cultural group a specific cultural group in the first place, such as in the Birmingham School definition of subcultures: '[S]ub-cultures are sub-sets – smaller, more localised and differentiated structures, within one or other of the larger cultural networks.' (Clarke et al. 2003, 13). A 'subculture' can only be defined in relation to 'larger cultural networks.' As such, cultural groups like subcultures only come into being by being defined as distinct to everybody else (or to a specific somebody), in the same vein that Woodward states that identities are 'mark[ed] [...] in relation to another' (Woodward 1997, 1–2). What this leads to, however, is taking these cultural groups as 'black boxes,' with little or no internal differentiations, let alone distinctions.

It is here that this thesis positions itself. It opens up these 'black boxes,' and develops a comprehensive framework for the analysis of their internal dynamics. To do so, it draws on the conceptualisations of Bourdieu and Foucault when it comes to the structural dynamics of society as a whole – distinction and power, respectively. By divorcing the Bourdieusian concept of 'distinction' from its intrinsically singly-hierarchical connotation and combining it with Foucault's understanding of power as diffused and constantly shifting, I arrive at the concept of Lines of Distinction. 'Distinction' is here defined as difference associated with value judgements, and Lines of Distinction explore the dynamics of where these differences associated with value judgements are expressed through practice, between people.

The largest part of this thesis has been devoted to testing out this concept of Lines of Distinction on the case study of the Sherlock Holmes fandom. Primar-

ily based on the questionnaire data, that is, reports directly from fans, I have been able to establish three broad categories of Lines of Distinction within the examined section of the Holmes fandom. Firstly, there are those Lines of Distinction that relate to the Approach to the Fandom Object, that is, the ways in which fans 'do' fandom. Secondly, we have those Lines of Distinction which refer to Fan Attitudes, so the approaches from fans to fellow fans within the fandom. Finally, the category which requires the least explanation is that of Demographics, such as Age and Gender. The four most prominent Lines of Distinction that emerged through the research for this thesis are Entry Point, Depth/Time of Engagement, Shipping and Thematic Knowledge. All of these four primarily reference the Approach to the Fandom Object, but all also show intersections with other Lines of Distinction that were less prominent overall and come from all categories.

I have dedicated three chapters to exploring these interplays on practical examples. To do so, I have chosen three fannish activities as case studies: fan meetings, fannish fiction writing, and fannish non-fiction writing. While all three chapters have started from a concern with Approaches to the Fandom Object as their first category of Lines of Distinction, they all also draw on Lines of Distinction from the other two categories.

In Chapter 4: Meeting Up, I have looked at how Lines of Distinction that concern the fandom object occur in fan in-person meet-ups. I began with the Line of Distinction of Entry Point, the most prominent Line of Distinction in my data overall, and often the first to be invoked. I have then examined the Line of Distinction of Thematic Knowledge, especially the notions of self-imposed exclusion via 'impostor syndrome' and inclusion through insider jokes. I concluded the chapter by analysing the Baker Street Irregulars 'investiture' as example of Lines of Distinction in a formalised context. The chapter served as a first example of how Lines of Distinction function in practice. There I already highlighted the intersection of different Lines both within and beyond the same category, such

as between Entry Point (Fandom Object) and Age (Demographics). I have also illustrated, on the example of the BSI 'investiture,' that Lines of Distinction, even when they have been somewhat formalised as 'entry requirements' to a specific fandom faction, depend on the perspective of the individual fan or faction, in that some Lines can be perceived as a smokescreen for others.

Following on from this thought, I have explored a fandom controversy in Chapter 5: Fiction Writing. The controversy centres on the terms 'fanfiction' and 'pastiche,' and whether they describe two distinct categories of fannish fiction writing. I have first explored what the most prominent way of differentiating the categories is, exploring the Line of Distinction of Canonicity, i.e. 'closeness to the Canon.' Using academic framing to analyse a corpus of fannish fiction texts as well as the results of a quiz put to my questionnaire participants, I have concluded that the notion of Canonicity is highly subjective. I have then returned to the idea of Canonicity as a smokescreen Line of Distinction, in that some fans perceive it as 'hiding' less palatable Lines of Distinction around fannish fiction writing, such as Age and Gender.

Finally, Chapter 6: Non-fiction Writing analysed the third most prominent Line of Distinction from my data, that of Shipping, on the case study of fannish non-fiction writing aka 'meta.' While Shipping, again, is primarily concerned with the fandom object, examinations of fannish non-fiction writing quickly reveal ad hominem arguments against fans with other Shipping-related stances. I have shown that there are varying ways in which meta can engage with Shipping as a Line of Distinction – either emphasising or de-emphasising it – before turning to two highly personal ad hominem arguments that are also Lines of Distinction, Sexual Orientation and Fan Behaviour. I have engaged with the former on the example of asexual readings of *Sherlock*, and with the latter by looking at the discourses of and around The Johnlock Conspiracy fandom faction. Both show that even a Line of Distinction that appears to be so purely text-based as Shipping also influences the relationship dynamics between fans beyond approaches to the

fandom object. In meta, this happens through a conflation of criticising a fans' reading and criticising the fan making said reading and/or through intersection with highly personal Lines of Distinction such as Sexual Orientation and Fan Behaviour.

Throughout all three of these chapters, I have therefore explored the ways in which Lines of Distinction intersect and play off each other, and also the ways in which they have a dual function of both inclusion and exclusion. Lines of Distinction cannot be analysed in isolation from each other, not least because a fan or faction will hardly ever come in contact with only a single Line of Distinction. The interplay of different Lines instead allows us to capture the complexity of inner-fandom relationship dynamics, of the dense web of inclusions and exclusions, 'self' and 'other' that are in play. These interplays occur both generally within the fandom, and specifically in situations or around individual activities. Lines of Distinction ultimately allow us to examine dynamics within fandoms without reducing any of their seeming contradictions or complexities.

7.2 Looking forward: Lines of Distinction in Other Cultural Groups

The Sherlock Holmes fandom forms a case study here, but I have already hinted at the possibility of applying the concept of Lines of Distinction to other fandoms. If we return to the examples from the Introduction, we can surely understand GamerGate as a Line of Distinction around Gender. Questions around sequels and re-adaptations as in *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* can certainly be linked back to Entry Point, but possibly also Thematic Knowledge, i.e. you are only a 'proper' fan if you know *all* iterations of the object of fandom. And what of the now-female Doctor in *Doctor Who*? Possibly an intersection of Entry Point and Gender. Of course, specific Lines of Distinction will vary between fandoms, and possibly most so in fandoms that move beyond the more traditional 'media

fandoms' (i.e. film, TV, games, literature, though the latter two are also understudied), such as to music and sports fandoms. Equally, however, it is not difficult to imagine that, amongst fans of a specific football club, the amount of matches a fan has attended might constitute a Line of Distinction – Depth/Time of Engagement, perhaps? – or that, amongst fans of a band where the lead singer has changed, fans of the first singer might consider themselves superior to fans of the second – Entry Point, maybe? But even where specific Lines of Distinction might not work for all or even very many fandoms, the broad three categories – Approach to the Fandom Object, Fan Attitudes and Demographics – are likely to apply. Further research, particularly into fandoms that are in some way unusual or at least not traditionally the focus of fan studies as an academic discipline, is in order to test out the concept of Lines of Distinction more around fandoms.

However, Lines of Distinction as an analytical framework can be taken beyond the study of fandom and to other cultural groups, *in particular* those that have been defined primarily in opposition to an outside Other. As a consequence of this definitional process, many of these cultural groups have, to some degree, been homogenised internally. My broader research engagement suggests that this is at the very least true of many style and music subcultures, but also of communities and movements such as the LGBTQIA+ community and the (Western) feminist movement. Lines of Distinction as an analytical framework aims to provide a more balanced, dynamic and ultimately realistic picture of the relationship dynamics *within* cultural groups rather than *between* cultural groups. I have proven in this thesis that it does so for the Sherlock Holmes fandom in particular and fandoms in general. In the remainder of this conclusion, I want to explore briefly how the framework might be translated to different cultural groups.

To do so, let us return to the three categories into which I have distributed the Lines of Distinction of the Sherlock Holmes fandom, which I think apply to all fandoms, though what is contained within the categories is likely to vary: Approach to the Fandom Object, Fan Attitudes towards fellow fans and Demo-

graphics. Certainly the last needs no adjustment to be applicable to other cultural groups – demographics are likely to matter, if in different ways and with differing importance, in any context. The first two categories as I have put them down here, however, refer directly to fandoms and fans. Nonetheless, if we were to replace the terms 'fandom' and 'fan,' the applicability of the former two to other cultural groups should become visible. At its core, Approach to the Fandom Object seeks to describe the members' approaches to the 'thing' which makes them a cultural group in the first place – within fandoms, that is the fandom object, i.e. the thing the fans are fans of. For other cultural groups, that 'thing' equally is their unifying 'culture' as common 'lived practice' (Hall 2005, 21). The category could, for example, be rephrased as 'approaches to the cause' for movements, 'approaches to the subcultural object' for subcultures etc. In essence, it describes the members' approach to the 'culture' which makes their group a group in the first place – whether that is a fandom or a common goal or anything else. It is highly unlikely that all members of a cultural group would unanimously agree on this approach, and, therefore, the category of Lines of Distinction remains. Similarly, Fan Attitudes towards fellow fans essentially describe the ways in which the members of a cultural group engage with their fellow members. Thus, by removing the term 'fan,' we are again left with a broad category that can be translated to other cultural groups. As a cultural group is always a collective of people, the ways in which these people engage with each other are likely to throw up Lines of Distinction. What we are left with, then, are the three categories of Demographics, Members' Attitudes towards fellow members and Approaches to the Group-Defining 'Object.'

As between different fandoms, the specific Lines of Distinction in other cultural groups are likely to vary. They would also vary between different cultural groups in the same category, such as between different subcultures and so on. The individual *importance* of specific Lines as well as the importance of the categories of Lines of Distinction may also vary. Within fandom, we have observed

that the Lines that address the object of fandom always appear as the most immediate, if not necessarily the most impactful or personal. However, it is certainly conceivable that, in other cultural groups, the category of Demographics, for instance, would matter first. It is, of course, also possible that a specific group might raise a new overall category of Lines of Distinction which was not raised within the Sherlock Holmes fandom and by its members, whose data forms the basis of all examinations of this thesis. Again, further scholarship into cultural groups unrelated to fandoms is necessary to explore the broader applicability of Lines of Distinction as analytical framework.

All in all, this thesis proposes the analytical framework of Lines of Distinction to offer a tool for breaking open the 'black boxes' of cultural groups defined against outside Others. It tested the framework on the specific 'box' of the Sherlock Holmes fandom, and has moved towards a more nuanced understanding of this fandom through examining its Lines. There remain, however, countless other 'boxes' out there, both within fandoms and beyond, of which we have had only a glimpse of the complexities they contain. Hopefully, Lines of Distinction, as a tool like Holmes's 'first-class, up-to-date burgling kit' in 'Charles Augustus Milverton' (CHAS, II:1017), will allow future scholarship to open some of them.

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Appendix A

Abbreviations for Sherlock Holmes Stories

Presented here is the full list of abbreviations for the Arthur Conan Doyle Sherlock Holmes stories, i.e. the Canon. For each story, the abbreviation, the full title, and the pages on which it may be found in the edition I referenced for this thesis, the *New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* edited by Leslie Klinger (3 volumes, 2005–2006), are given. The stories are listed in the order in which they usually appear in editions of the Canon. This is generally also equivalent to their original publication order, the exception being 'The Cardboard Box.' The four novels are recognisable by their italicised titles and stand alone. The short stories are separated into blocks according to the collections into which they are usually sorted, from top to bottom: *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, *His Last Bow*, and *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes*. Titles with an asterisk are sometimes preceded by 'The Adventure of'; many editions omit this.

STUD	*A Study in Scarlet*	III:3–202
SIGN	*The Sign of the Four*	III:209–379

SCAN	A Scandal in Bohemia	I:5–40
REDH	The Red-Headed League	I:41–73
IDEN	A Case of Identity	I:74–100
BOSC	The Boscombe Valley Mystery	I:101–132
FIVE	The Five Orange Pips	I:133–158
TWIS	The Man with the Twisted Lip	I:159–193
BLUE	The Blue Carbuncle*	I:197–224
SPEC	The Speckled Band*	I:227–259
ENGI	The Engineer's Thumb*	I:264–290
NOBL	The Noble Bachelor*	I:291–318
BERY	The Beryl Coronet*	I:319–350
COPP	The Copper Beeches*	I:351–383
SILV	Silver Blaze*	I:387–418
YELL	The Yellow Face*	I:449–473
STOC	The Stock-Broker's Clerk*	I:474–500
GLOR	The "Gloria Scott"*	I:501–527
MUSG	The Musgrave Ritual*	I:528–553
REIG	The Reigate Squires*	I:557–581
CROO	The Crooked Man*	I:582–605
RESI	The Resident Patient*	I:608–631
GREE	The Greek Interpreter*	I:635–663
NAVA	The Naval Treaty*	I:665–712
FINA	The Final Problem*	I:713–745
HOUN	*The Hound of the Baskervilles*	III:382–614
EMPT	The Empty House*	II:781–815

NORW	The Norwood Builder*	II:829–860
DANC	The Dancing Men*	II:864–898
SOLI	The Solitary Cyclist*	II:901–928
PRIO	The Priory School*	II:932–971
BLAC	Black Peter*	II:976–1005
CHAS	Charles Augustus Milverton*	II:1006–1032
SIXN	The Six Napoleons*	II:1033–1063
3STUD	The Three Students*	II:1064–1089
GOLD	The Golden Pince-Nez*	II:1092–1122
MISS	The Missing Three-Quarter*	II:1123–1157
ABBE	The Abbey Grange*	II:1158–1188
SECO	The Second Stain*	II:1189–1222
VALL	*The Valley of Fear*	III:633–836
WIST	Wisteria Lodge*	II:1231–1271
CARD	The Cardboard Box*	I:422–448
REDC	The Red Circle*	II:1272–1297
BRUC	The Bruce-Partington Plans*	II:1300–1334
DYIN	The Dying Detective*	II:1341–1361
LADY	The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax	II:1362–1388
DEVI	The Devil's Foot*	II:1392–1423
LAST	His Last Bow	II:1424–1443
ILLU	The Illustrious Client*	II:1449–1481
BLAN	The Blanched Soldier*	II:1482–1507
MAZA	The Mazarine Stone*	II:1511–1531
3GAB	The Three Gables*	II:1534–1554
SUSS	The Sussex Vampire*	II:1555–1575

3GAR	The Three Garridebs	II:1581–1601
THOR	The Problem of Thor Bridge	II:1602–1632
CREE	The Creeping Man*	II:1636–1663
LION	The Lion’s Mane*	II:1667–1691
VEIL	The Veiled Lodger*	II:1692–1705
SHOS	Shoscombe Old Place*	II:1707–1729
RETI	The Retired Colourman*	II:1730–1751

Appendix B

Questionnaire

Below is a version of this thesis' questionnaire, including the Project Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form. This is the full list of questions contained in the questionnaire circulated for this thesis. As the questionnaire was distributed online, containing interactive elements, I have chosen to present it here as screenshots from the clean (no background graphics) version of the questionnaire in order to approximate it most closely to how the questionnaire was received by the participants. The formatting has therefore been adapted slightly for the inclusion in this appendix, but the content has remained unchanged. Personal information such as email addresses has been redacted.

As the excerpts from archontic works in the quiz part of the questionnaire are separated from any information as to their source for the reasons detailed in Chapter 5: Fiction Writing, the references are given here. They are as follows, in order of appearance:

'Lending a Hand' by mistyzeo (mistyzeo 2010, n.pag.)

'The Resident Patient' by Arthur Conan Doyle, constituting the single excerpt from the Canon (Doyle 2005-2006, I:608)

The Whitechapel Horrors by Edward B. Hanna (Hanna 2010, 17)

‘The Shocking Affair of the Dutch Steamship Friesland’ by Jaelijn (Jaelijn 2014, n.pag.)

The House of Silk by Anthony Horowitz (Horowitz 2011, 8) [including the spelling mistake ‘influenca’ introduced in the questionnaire]

The informed consent form for *interviews* as well as some common topics/questions for interviews can be found in the next appendix.

Questionnaire - Distinctions within Fandom: Sherlock Holmes

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my research into lines of distinction within fandoms on the case study of the Sherlock Holmes fandom. In the following questionnaire, you will be asked a number of questions relating to your experiences in the fandom, any of which you are free to skip if you feel in any way uncomfortable. You will also be given the opportunity to volunteer for more in-depth follow up interviews.

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may opt out of the participation in the project at any time without prejudice, including after the start of the participation. Participants must be 16 or older.

You will be accorded full anonymity, and your answers will not in any way be linked to you as a person in the dissemination of the research results.

All data gathered in this research will be stored on a secure server and password protected. Personally identifiable data, such as your email address, will be kept separate from research data (your questionnaire answers). Dissemination will take the form of academic publications, such as journal articles and academic books, and conference papers.
You are free to contact me (details below) or the University of Nottingham, Department of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies Ethics officer Jennifer Birks [redacted] with any questions and concerns related to the project.

Thank you again for your participation.
Julia Knaus
Midlands3Cities Postgraduate Researcher
University of Nottingham
E-Mail: [redacted]
Twitter: [redacted]
Academic Profile: [redacted]

*Required

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Informed Consent

This questionnaire is designed to gather data for my doctoral thesis titled "Distinction within Fandom: Sherlock Holmes".

The thesis aims to examine moments of separation, established (cultural) hierarchies and conflicts within a fandom environment, on the case study of the Sherlock Holmes fandom. You will be asked questions relating to your experience of the fandom, especially whether you have experienced instances of groups of the fandom distinguishing themselves from other groups.

Any answers you give in the questionnaire will be fully anonymised, and you are free to skip any question you feel uncomfortable with.

If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to contact me under Julia Knaus, [redacted] at any point.

Before we begin, please read carefully and answer the following consent questions and confirmation question (compulsory).

1. **I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without consequence.** *
   Mark only one oval.
   - ◯ Yes
   - ◯ No

2. **I understand that all data are anonymous and that there will not be any connection between the personal information provided and the data.** *
   Mark only one oval.
   - ◯ Yes
   - ◯ No

3. **I understand that there are no known risks or hazards associated with participating in this study.** *
   Mark only one oval.
   - ◯ Yes
   - ◯ No

4. **I confirm that I have read and understood the above information and that I agree to participate in this study.** *
   Mark only one oval.
   - ◯ Yes
   - ◯ No

5. **I confirm that I am over 16 years of age.** *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

6. **Confirmation: By submitting this questionnaire I agree that my answers, which I have given voluntarily, can be used anonymously for research purposes.** *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes *Skip to question 7.*
- ◯ No *Skip to "No Consent Given."*

Skip to question 7.

No Consent Given

Thank you for your interest in my research and the associated survey. You have been redirected to this page because you selected "No" for the confirmation question in the informed consent section.

Without your consent, I will not use any of your data, and you have therefore decided not to participate in the survey / my research. I would still like to thank you for your interest.

If you feel like you were redirected here by error, feel free to re-open the link to the survey and start again.

Stop filling out this form.

General Experiences

7. **How did you first encounter Sherlock Holmes?**

8. **Which term would you chose to describe yourself in regards to your engagement with Sherlock Holmes?**
   Mark only one oval.
   - ◯ Sherlockian
   - ◯ Fan
   - ◯ Other: _____

9. **Why do you chose the above term?**

10. **Do you (wish to) interact / connect with others about Sherlock Holmes? How and where? Why (not)?**

11. **How would you define a Sherlockian?**

12. **How would you define a Sherlock Holmes fan?**

13. **Have you experienced / are you aware of any arguments about the "proper" way to engage with Sherlock Holmes? How / when / where?**

14. **Have you ever felt excluded by other Holmes enthusiasts? By whom? What, do you think, were the reasons?**

Activities

15. **Have you ever (tick all that apply):**
Tick all that apply.

- [ ] attended a meeting of Holmes enthusiasts?
- [ ] written creatively about Sherlock Holmes?
- [ ] read creative writing about Sherlock Holmes not by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle?
- [ ] written critically about Sherlock Holmes?
- [ ] read critical writing about Sherlock Holmes?
- [ ] collected items related to Sherlock Holmes?
- [ ] Other: _____

16. **For those you haven't ticked, or if you haven't ticked any, why do you chose not to engage in these activities?**

_____

17. **For those you have ticked, what prompted you to engage in these activities?**

_____

18. **Do you have any of the below to talk about Sherlock Holmes? Tick all that apply.**
Tick all that apply.

- [ ] blog
- [ ] website
- [ ] social media presence
- [ ] in-person community
- [ ] Other: _____

Specific Questions regarding Activities

The following section contains more specific questions regarding the activities you have ticked above. If you haven't ticked any, or have only ticked "others", you can skip the section by answering the following question "No". If you have ticked any, please answer "Yes" and you will be directed to further questions.

19. **Have you ticked any of the activities above (excluding "others")?**

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes *Skip to question 20.*
- ◯ No *Skip to question 32.*

Specific Questions regarding Activities

In this section, please only answer the questions regarding the activities you engage in and skip the others.

Meetings

20. **How did you become aware of such meetings?**

_____

21. **How frequently do you attend them?**

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Once every few years
- ◯ Once per year
- ◯ Several times a year but not monthly
- ◯ Every month
- ◯ Weekly
- ◯ Other: _____

22. **Have you ever felt excluded / unwanted / unwelcome at any meetings? If yes, why?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Creative and Critical Writing

If you read and/or write both, please apply the questions to both types and be specific as to which part of your answer refers to which type(s) of writings.

23. **Where do you seek out / find / encounter these writings?**

24. **Which term would you use for these writings? Why?**

25. **Which topics do you wish to have addressed / do you address in your own writing?**

26. **Do you feel that there are topics that are inappropriate for writing on Holmes? Why?**

27. **If you write yourself, do you publish these writings? Why (not)? Where?**

Collecting

28. **What type of material do you collect?**

29. **Which type of material do you exclude? Why?**

30. **Do you share these collections in any way?**

31. **Would you describe yourself as "collector"?**

Creative Writings

In this section, you'll find samples of Holmesian creative writing. Which would you label as fanfiction, which as pastiche?

32. **My friend, Sherlock Holmes, is a very independent creature. He is also very particular in his habits, and prefers to do things in his own way at his own time. This is beautifully effective when he solves an untold number of murders and petty crimes and protects the citizens of London from themselves, but, at times, these characteristics can make living with the man very demanding.**

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Fanfiction
- ◯ Pastiche
- ◯ Other: _____

33. **Glancing over the somewhat incoherent series of Memoirs with which I have endeavored to illustrate a few of the mental peculiarities of my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes, I have been struck by the difficulty which I have experienced in picking out examples which shall in every way answer my purpose.**

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Fanfiction
- ◯ Pastiche
- ◯ Other: _____

34. **"A perfectly marvellous, gruesome experience," observed Sherlock Holmes brightly as he and Watson wended their way through the crowds streaming out of the theater into the gaiety and glare of the gaslit Strand.**

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Fanfiction
- ◯ Pastiche
- ◯ Other: _____

35. **Of the numerous cases in which my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes was involved, there are a great number which I have never chronicled. Often, it was because they held little interest to anyone but the criminal expert, or because they were so unremarkable in their features that it seemed inappropriate to include them in these collections of most singular affairs.**

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Fanfiction
- ◯ Pastiche
- ◯ Other: _____

36. **"Influenca is unpleasant," Sherlock Holmes remarked, "but you are right in thinking that, with your wife's help, the child will recover soon.""I very much hope so," I replied, then stopped and gazed at him in wide-eyed astonishment.**

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Fanfiction
- ◯ Pastiche
- ◯ Other: _____

37. **Why have you selected the terms you have chosen?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Final Section

Please use this section for any additional remarks and to enter some demographic details. They, as all of the questionnaire, are of course completely anonymous, and none of the questions are compulsory. You can also enter "prefer not to say".

38. **Do you have any further comments or additions to the questions above?**

39. **What is your age?**

40. **What is your gender?**

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Other:

41. **What is your sexual orientation?**

42. **Are you a native speaker of English? If no, please also enter your native language in "Other".**

Tick all that apply.

- Yes
- No
- Other:

Thank you for your participation!

Thank you for completing the questionnaire and assisting me in my research!

43. **If you wish to volunteer for a follow-up interview, please enter email address, tumblr name or twitter handle and a name by which I may address you below.**

These will be kept separately from your questionnaire answers and will not be used to link you to your answers or identify you in research dissemination in any way, shape or form. These contact details will only be used to approach you for follow-up interviews (to be conducted via Skype or text chat). If I approach you, you are still free to decide not to participate in the follow-up interview at any time.

Appendix C

Interviews

Below are the texts of the Project Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form for interviewees. As the interviewees were recruited from questionnaire participants, the information sheet contains primarily the information necessary for the interview process, rather than the thesis project in general. Personal contact information has been redacted.

These forms were distributed to and returned by all interviewees via email before setting a date for the interview; interviewees were reminded of the key aspects at the start of the interview proper. The signed consent forms are on file for all interviewees.

As the interviews were semi-structured and developed according to the interviewees' responses, there was no set list of questions. I have, however, included the rough list of topics/questions I aimed to cover in each of the interviews below.

C.1 Project Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form

C.1.1 Project Information Sheet

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my research into lines of distinction within fandoms on the case study of the Sherlock Holmes fandom. During your participation, I will ask you a number of open questions, any of which you are free to skip if you feel in any way uncomfortable. I may also follow up on your answers to explore a topic further.

Participation in this project is *completely voluntary*. You may opt out of the participation in the project *at any time* without prejudice, including after the start of the participation. Participants must be 16 or older.

If you are being interviewed in a professional capacity, you will be asked to consent to being identified in the research dissemination (by real name and professional role). You are free to revoke this consent at any time. Otherwise, you will be accorded full anonymity, and your answers will not in any way be linked to you as a person in the dissemination of the research results.

All data gathered in this research will be stored on a secure server and password protected. Personally identifiable data, such as your email address, will be kept separate from research data (your questionnaire answers). Dissemination will take the form of academic publications, such as journal articles and academic books, and conference papers. No audio will be disseminated.

You are free to contact me (details below) or the University of Nottingham, Department of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies Ethics officer Jennifer Birks ([Redacted]) with any questions and concerns related to the project.

Thank you again for your participation.

Julia Knaus

Midlands3Cities Postgraduate Researcher

University of Nottingham

E-Mail: [Redacted] or [Redacted]

Twitter: [Redacted]

Academic Profile: [Redacted]

C.1.2 Informed Consent Form

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my research into lines of distinction within the Sherlock Holmes fandom. This interview is designed to gather data for my doctoral thesis titled "Distinction within Fandom: Sherlock Holmes". The thesis aims to examine moments of separation, established (cultural) hierarchies and conflicts within a fandom environment, on the case study of the Sherlock Holmes fandom. You will be asked questions relating to your experience of the fandom, especially whether you have experienced instances of groups of the fandom distinguishing themselves from other groups.

The interview will be audio-recorded, but only a transcript will be used in research dissemination. Alternatively, the interview will be conducted via a text-based online chat, and the chat log will be used in research dissemination.

If you have any questions about the project, you are free to ask them at any time during or before your participation, or contact me under Julia Knaus, [redacted], at any point after.

Before we begin, please read carefully and answer the following questions.

Yes|No I confirm that the purpose of the study has been explained and that I have understood it

Yes|No I have had the opportunity to ask questions and they have been successfully answered

Yes|No I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without consequence

Yes|No I understand that all data are anonymous and that there will not be any connection between the personal information provided and the data

Yes|No I understand that there are no known risks or hazards associated with participating in this study

Yes|No I confirm that I have read and understood the above information and that I agree to participate in this study

Yes|No I confirm that I am over 16 years of age

Yes|No I consent to my data being transcribed and wish to be referred to anonymously in written forms of dissemination

Yes|No I consent to my data being transcribed and to be identified by name and job title in written forms of dissemination (Only applicable if participant is interviewed in professional capacity)

C.2 Interview Topics

General questions:

- Favourite Holmes
- What was your first experience with the Holmes fandom?
- What do you want most from the fandom?
- What was your best experience in the fandom? Worst?
- What are your wishes and hopes for the fandom?
- What is your favourite Holmes-related activity?
- Are you passionate about other things the way you are about Holmes – if so, which?

Questions about the Baker Street Irregulars:

- Do you want to be/have you always wanted to be a BSI member? Why?
- What is your favourite/least favourite thing about the BSI?

Appendix D

Meta Writing Corpus

Below I list the nineteen meta texts from the corpus for Chapter 6: Non-fiction Writing, as sorted by the Holmesian text they reference. One work references both the BBC series and the Canon, and therefore appears in both lists. The ones I have directly drawn on in greater depth in the chapter are followed by an asterisk. The full citation for all of these works can be found in the bibliography.

Meta referencing the Canon (grouped by place of publication, then sorted by date from oldest to newest):

‘Watson Was A Woman’ by Rex Stout; speech (Stout 1941)*

Sherlock Holmes: The Unauthorized Bibliography by Nick Rennison; published book (Rennison 2005)*

Decoding the Subtext: Being an examination of the homoerotic subtext contained within the Sherlock Holmes Canon by Nekosmuse; online self-published book (Nekosmuse 2007)

‘The Holmes/Hunter Marriage’ by Evelyn Herzog; *The Serpentine Muse* (Herzog 2017)

’Take a Walk on the Wilde Side’ by Michael J. Quigley; *The Baker Street Journal* (Quigley 2018)

‘Ace Manifest: Sherlock Holmes (Sherlock)’ by scienceofdeduction; Dream-width (scienceofdeduction 2010)

’On reading canon Holmes as trans’ by holmesguy; Tumblr post (holmes-guy 2017)

‘Irene Adler’ by norburylibrary; Tumblr post (norburylibrary 2017)

‘I’m confused. How does Holmes being an Aesthete...’ by conan-doyles-carnations; Tumblr post (conan-doyles-carnations 2018)

’The Adventure of the Three Garridebs’ by acdhw; Tumblr post (acdhw 2018)

Meta referencing the BBC series *Sherlock* (grouped by place of publication, then sorted by date from oldest to newest):

‘Ace Manifest: Sherlock Holmes (Sherlock)’ by scienceofdeduction; Dream-width (scienceofdeduction 2010)

‘Johnlock 101 – An Introduction to The Johnlock Conspiracy’ by JayEz; AO3 (JayEz 2014)*

‘Sherlock Holmes as an Asexual Character’ by anagnori; Tumblr posts (anagnori 2013)*

‘Sherlock’s Sexual Identity and Season 3’ by xistentialangst; Tumblr post (xistentialangst 2014)

‘Johnlock for Dummies OR Everything Happens For a Reason [On TV]’ by 221bmeta; Tumblr post (221bmeta 2019)

‘TJLC & the shipping problem’ by mildlunacy; Tumblr post (mildlunacy 2014)*

‘Just something about Asexual Sherlock Holmes’ by nerdvi; Tumblr post (nerdvi 2015)

‘Sherlock (TV series) – Heteronormativity caught you in a haste? Here some quick replies to copy paste!’ by bug-catcher-in-viridian-forest; Tumblr post (bug-catcher-in-viridian-forest 2015)*

‘About’ by tjlc; Tumblr post (tjlc 2016)*

‘Attic notes, post-bomb blast:’ by tjlc; Tumblr post (tjlc 2017)*