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Sherlock Holmes and the Leap of Faith: The Forces of Fandom and Convergence in Adaptations of the Holmes and Watson Stories

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Adaptation, Volume 6, Issue 2, 1 August 2013, Pages 158–171,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/adaptation/aps024>

Published: 24 September 2012

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Abstract

Using Thomas Leitch's seminal *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents* (2007) and Henry Jenkins' work on convergence and fan cultures as starting points, this

article explores the connections between Sherlock Holmes fandom and religious faith, and in particular the correspondences between films representing the life of Jesus and those purporting to be about the secret life of Holmes. The article also argues that the two most recent Holmes franchises—the Guy Ritchie films starring Robert Downey Jnr and Jude Law, and the BBC modernisation starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman—both make use of transmedia forms of meaning making, from videogames and the cult film *Withnail and I* to the actors' own celebrity and Doctor Who fandom. The essay ends by evaluating the long-term prospects of fictional 'universes' that are maintained and populated by fan-fiction authors, as well as professional screenwriters.

Keywords: [Adaptation](#), [Sherlock Holmes](#), [fan fiction](#), [Doctor Who](#), [Gospels](#), [Withnail and I](#).

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