

## “The Field Bazaar” and “How Watson Learned the Trick” by A. Conan Doyle: non-canonical works, self-parody or pastiche?

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**Abstract.** The article concentrates on the question of including Conan Doyle’s sketches “The Field Bazaar” and “How Watson Learned the Trick” to Sherlock Holmes 60-stories Canon. In order to confirm or disprove the hypothesis, these works are considered in terms of a few spacious criteria: features that discern them from the whole 60-stories Canon, features that are similar to pastiche, features that are similar to self-parody. A range of literary factors, stylish and semantic characteristics that exclude the sketches from the Canon was determined (viz. peculiarities that are most important, fundamental traits of Sherlock Holmes’ Canonical works). Based on the prevailing of the features of pastiche and self-parody in the sketches there was concluded that “The Field Bazaar” and “How Watson Learned the Trick” cannot be recognized as canonical.

**Key words:** Sherlock Holmes Canon, detective story, pastiche, self-parody.

### Introduction

The tradition of Sherlockiana’s existing as a result of Sherlock Holmes’ image immediate mythologization caused the problem and scientific necessity to separate fiction works about Sherlock Holmes, created by Conan Doyle and a wide range of other authors that aimed on mystification of the original image of the greatest detective and that resulted in the endless wave of feeble imitation. For this purpose, the concept of Sherlock Holmes Canon was developed by Ronald Knox, one of the earliest explorers of Conan Doyle’s literary heritage. He included into the Canon (allusion on the Holy Scripture) 60 stories: 4 novels and 56 short stories. The way of applying the methods of “Higher Criticism” to them was also started by R. Knox (Canon of Sherlock Holmes<sup>1</sup>). Stacey Lantagne is solidary with Knox: “Doyle featured Holmes in four novels and fifty-six short stories, and, in the process, without ever intending to, he also managed to pretty much invent modern fandom” (Lantagne, 2014). The functioning of the term “fandom” while speaking about Sherlock Holmes is very pointful as fandom arrange a priory envisage phenomena of strong sympathy to the object of fandomization and desire to broaden the measures, frontiers of the fetish. The fans in the strong desire of literary presence of literary characters will accept even those literary works that may seem outside by some aesthetic criteria: “Characters such as Sherlock Holmes, Tarzan, Falstaff, Superman, James Bond <...> may be better known and more valuable than any particular work in which they appear” (Kurtz, 1986: 438). This is one of the reasons why Sherlock Holmes “as one of the earliest fandoms can be an interesting way to provide context on the development of fandom through the years and the value it has added to the original works” (Lantagne, 2014).

It is interesting that the copyrights to the complete 60 Sherlock Holmes Canon officially expired in Canada in 1980 and in the United Kingdom in 2000 (Redmond, 2016). As Betsy Rosenblatt remarks, “in fact, the United States is the only remaining country where certain individual works in Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes literary canon still remain under statutory copyright protection” (Rosenblatt, 2013). Jessica Smith states that after 2022, when all the remaining copyright protections expire, writers will be free to make use of The Complete Sherlock Holmes 60 stories Canon (Smith, 2016: 554). So,

there is no copyright at all on extra Sherlock Holmes works by Conan Doyle which are under the consideration in this article.

On the website of The Baker Street Fandom in the article about extracanonial works about Sherlock Holmes one may find the hypothesis that “there exists no definitive body to argue what is, and what is not canon beyond the already established novels and stories, it is unlikely that any piece, no matter how good its claim to be “canonical” will ever be popularly received into published versions of the Complete Sherlock Holmes (Canon of Sherlock Holmes<sup>2</sup>). And the tendency remains in action nowadays. According to David Hutchinson and Ross Davies, “The Field Bazaar” did not appear anywhere other than *The Student* until the mid-1930s. Since then it has floated on the margins of the world of Holmes and Watson, denied not only canonical status, but also original illustration. It has been, really, an orphan work (Hutchinson and Davies, 2016: 465).

Hence, more and more often modern explorers of the Sherlock Holmes phenomena demand to expand the 60-pieces circle and include to the Canon at least a few works by Conan Doyle, where Sherlock Holmes and doctor Watson figure. They are: “The Field Bazaar” (1896), “How Watson Learned the Trick” (1924). Peter Haining admit that “since the author's death, professional and amateur Holmesians have discussed endlessly the expansion of this canon, to include other works by Doyle, including works in other media, into the current complete adventures” (Haining: 1993: 8).

We are aimed to analyze whether literary legal or not is their adding to the Canon. For this their composition, author style, pre-history of creation, stylistics, etc. have to be analyzed in details.

If we take *Wikipedia* as well as *Baker Street Fandom* as an authoritative sources of modern reference Internet editions on the question, we'll find that they still list traditional 56 plus 4 stories as canonical (Canon of Sherlock Holmes<sup>1</sup>, Canon of Sherlock Holmes<sup>2</sup>). This exactly means that the question of expanding the Canon is still debatable among the scientists. Though if refer to other competent source like *The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia*, we'll discover that the Canon here has been already expanded and include “The Field Bazaar” (Fig. 1) and “How Watson Learned the Trick” as “The 62 Sherlock Holmes stories” (The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia). 2017<sup>th</sup> year edition “Sherlock Holmes - Complete Collection: 64 Novels & Stories in One Volume” by *E-artnow* publisher also has already included the listed above two short stories (with remark “sketches”) and added even two works more: plays “Sherlock Holmes: A Drama in Four Acts” and “The Crown Diamond: An Evening with Sherlock Holmes” (Doyle, 2017).

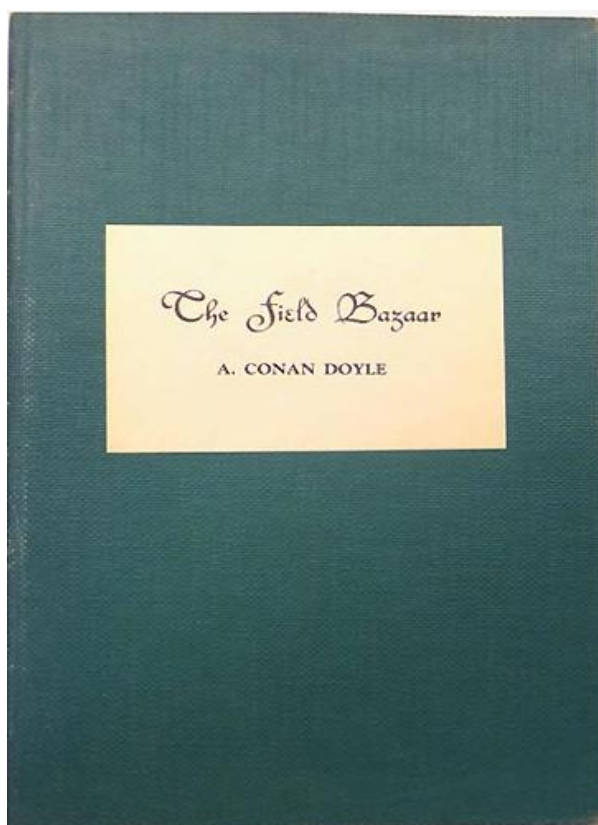


Fig. 1. The Field Bazaar (The Pamphlet House Publisher, 1947). Source: <https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php?title=File:The-pamphlet-house-1947-the-field-bazaar.jpg>

Presently speaking about non-canonical Sherlock we admit the short stories “The Field Bazaar” and “How Watson Learned the Trick” as such that pretend to be the closest to the Canon: they depict two common characters and they are in the paradigm of epic poetry. In order to state or object the legacy of being included to the Canon all pro and contra will be examined in the current article.

### Methods

Such methods of research were applied in the research study:

- historical method (study of creating the Sherlock Holmes Canon, the history of the concept and its functioning within the diachronic cut and nowadays);
- hermeneutical method (study of textual and semantic models of the canonical short stories and the two that pretend to be included to the Canon);
- comparable and evolutionary method (study of the evolution tendencies of the Sherlock Homes stories (1887-1927), and principles of world construction, poetics, compositional structures, author ideas of the main characters, author intention etc.);
- poetical method (study of the poetical structures in constructing characters, narration etc.).

### Results

“The Field Bazaar” was first published in 1896. Previously it was already mentioned that its genre is determined by *E-artnow* publisher as a sketch. At the same time David Hutchinson and Ross Davies named “The Field Bazaar” as “odd little Sherlock Holmes and John Watson vignette”. In the Collins Dictionary the explanation of vignette is

explained like a short graceful literary essay or sketch” (Hutchinson and Davies, 2016: 465). Such a way explorers admit fictional qualities of this Conan Doyle’s work but as well they stress the features by which it occurs beyond 56 canonical short stories. First of all, if the appearance of other works about Sherlock Holmes was caused prevalingly by author’s inspiration, “The Field Bazaar” was composed to order of *The Student* (Edinburgh University Journal) and with definite pragmatic aim of gathering money (it is well-known that Sherlock Homes was not only a myth, variant of superman, Nietzsche’s Overman, Victorian super-sleuth, but what is equally important – a very successful financial project, so the idea of fundraising by the means of Holmes’ popularity was blossoming): “Of course, Conan Doyle would not have given the story to anyone other than *The Student*. It was a charitable gift, written just for the occasion in support of Edinburgh University’s real-life field bazaar” (Hutchinson and Davies, 2016: 465). David Hutchinson and Ross Davies concluded that “The Field Bazaar” has long been regarded by experts not as a canonical Sherlock Holmes story, but as a pastiche. In other words, the “The Field Bazaar” is not a true glimpse of the world Conan Doyle created (or the life Watson lived), but, rather, a mere echo (a humorous, exaggerated one) created in the style of a genuine Sherlock Holmes story” (Hutchinson and Davies, 2016: 467).

Another point of attention is the sketch “How Watson Learned the Trick”. Though written 28 years after “The Field Bazaar”, this is almost a companion piece to that story (Canon of Sherlock Holmes<sup>2</sup>). These two works are very similar with each other, still the latter is not the continue of the first.

In order to analyze the genre and stylistics, poetics, image-making means, and, at last, canonical or extracanonial character, “The Field Bazaar” and “How Watson Learned the Trick” will be analyzed by a few criteria:

- features that discern them from the whole 60-stories Canon;
- features that are similar to pastiche;
- features that are similar to self-parody.

*Features that discern “The Field Bazaar” and “How Watson Learned the Trick” from the whole 60-stories Canon*

First of all, these works are the shortest ones. The sketch “How Watson Learned the Trick” contains only 503 words. There is no detective problem in its usual Doyle’s appearance, no client, no victim, no criminal. It’s well-known that there is a wide range of Doyle’s canonical detective stories where there was no any criminal. E.g., “A Case of Identity”, “The Man with the Twisted Lip”, “The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor”, “The Adventure of the Yellow Face”. Nevertheless, the whole story was organized around true detective riddle that seemed hard to solve even for the best London’s detectives, except of Holmes. The reader in such a stories became a speculator and an outsource partner of the sleuth aimed on gathering all the puzzle of a mystery. There was evidently present so peculiar to Doyle’s manner elements of drama and intrigue. All the plot elements became present.

Speaking about “The Field Bazaar” and “How Watson Learned the Trick”, one can see that there is no a true detective riddle, no true human problem that must be sold and on which human’s lives depend, no extreme incandescence of emotions, tension, and no heat of the struggle between known and unknown, good and evil. Hence, it is possible to distinguish all common compositional elements. “The Field Bazaar” is taken as an example in Table 1.

Table 1. Plot construction of “The Field Bazaar”

Element of a plot	Citation from the text that confirms the element
Introduction	"...my companion had been eating his breakfast with his attention entirely centered upon the <u>paper</u> which was propped up by the coffee pot"
Rising Action	"I should certainly do it," said Sherlock Holmes. "Do what?" I asked.
Climax	"I may be very obtuse," said I, "but I confess that I am unable to see how you have managed to know that I was... I was..." "Asked to help in the Edinburgh University Bazaar..."
Falling Action	"The fact is, my dear Watson, that you are an excellent subject," said he. "You are never blase".
Resolution	"I should be glad to know how your arrived at your conclusions," said I.

The introduction and rising action elements are interrelated. The first replica that may certainly be regarded as a rising action is interrupted by the description of the situation, entourage. The plot construction from introduction to climax is extremely short. But the resolution, common element of Conan Doyle's detective stories where Holmes opens the mystery of his suggestions, deductions and joins all the existed links of logical chain, is very long, much longer in proportion to all previous elements.

As usual, the narration is led by Watson in "The Field Bazaar". But in the sketch "How Watson Learned the Trick" there is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person narration that is not very typical for the Canon (only two are narrated from the 3<sup>rd</sup> person). Yet the prevailing method of narration for both Canon-pretend sketches is a dialogue, characters open through the dialogues and the events are retold also by means of dialogues.

So, externally, especially taking into account the narration manner, all seems very similar to canonical detective stories. But if consider Sherlock Holmes stories in the paradigm of middle-literature, what is definitely right and motivated, it must be admitted that stories like "The Field Bazaar" and "How Watson Learned the Trick" are very schematic, deprived of deep senses of a conflict between light and dark forces, sense of overcoming the iniquity. Holmes here arises like still like a perfect logician, educated person that aimed at endless spiritual and intellectual self-growing. Watson, despite living with Holmes for such a long time and learning his method in the closest way and most detailed, could not draw nearer to Holmes genius even in very simple mysteries. All his conclusions, in spite of looking very Holmes-like (*Your methods, said Watson severely, are really easily acquired*), at the end of the sketch "How Watson Learned the Trick" turned out totally wrong (Watson: *"You mean that I was mistaken"*). However, Holmes is a genius of ideation in the context of reality, constructed by Doyle in "The Field Bazaar" and "How Watson Learned the Trick", he cannot function as a Savior and Overman, so, cannot implement and bear the deepest ideas that the author provides him with.

#### *Features that are similar to pastiche*

Usually pastiche is a means of stylization and denotes precise imitation of genre and stylish manner of a definite author or literary group, etc. (Greene et al., 2012: 1005). Indispensable condition of pastiche is a reproduction of the very spirit, mood of the literary work that is liable to the pastiche interpretation.

Pastiche differs from parody as pastiche is emotionally neutral. Also pastiche saves the peculiarities of a high literature, or, at least, a literary range to which the original texts belong.

But in the case with Conan Doyle we deal with the phenomena of self-pastiche. Scientists stress an advertising winsomeness of the pastiche literary works. Mechanisms are to use already existed popularity of literary characters and produce success based on this – to continue the popularity. Said Zahr stresses that Sherlock Holmes is one of “...the mere names of these once-litigated figures evoke the market power and popular significance characters can possess” (Zahr, 2013). It is well-known that every detective story about Sherlock Holmes became an incredibly noticeable, expectable event among Victorian and Post-Victorian readers. All projects with attraction of allusions on Holmes and Watson, especially worked up with artistic taste, proved to be successful long years even after publication the last true Conan Doyle’s work about Baker-Street sleuth and nowadays. Thus, every publication of story about Homes by Doyle was doomed to success and popularity beforehand. All the thesis fits the best especially to “The Field Bazaar”.

Conan Doyle, pastiching himself, really construct the fiction environment like at every Sherlock Holmes canonical story. We see Sherlock and Watson as they are common for readers’ comprehension. For this aim Doyle uses traditional attributes: “*He [Sherlock Holmes – L.R.] smiled as he took his slipper from the mantelpiece and drew from it enough shag tobacco to fill the old clay pipe with which he invariably rounded off his breakfast*” (“The Field Bazaar”). As usual, dialogues between Watson and Holmes based on ironical attitude of Holmes to Watson’s mental ability. But Watson who usually regard with extreme reverence and honor to Holmes’ super-brain, let himself in the sketch “How Watson Learned the Trick” to try on himself his abilities and glory. Certainly, in vain, but the unusual fact is a fact. This is very unlike to Watson’s usual passive line of behavior as Holmes’ *Boswell*.

Holmes is commonly shown as a fan of sport, esp. cricket: “I should certainly do it” (“The Field Bazaar”) (meant to donate funds to enlarge the Edinburgh University cricket field). And as well he is shown as a “queer fellow”: “...*excuse me if I return to this very interesting article upon the trees of Cremona, and the exact reasons for the pre-eminence in the manufacture of violins. It is one of those small outlying problems to which I am sometimes tempted to direct my attention*”. It is known from the canonical works that Holmes is fond of music, esp. violin. And is not only a skillful performer, but a talented compositor. As well here Holmes supports a principle of constructing his brain like an attic where he may found necessary thing when they are necessary.

#### *Features that are similar to self-parody*

Parody is an intertextual genre of fiction which demand usage of satire or humor. Gustav Kofman following John Vickery regard self-parody as a radicalizing of the myths (Kofman, 2015: 57). In our opinion from two works under our consideration the sketch “How Watson Learned the Trick” fits more to the definition of self-parody. Speaking about mentioned above “radicalizing of the myths” we may cite as an example centralization of such myths as Holmes’ intellectual superiority and, on the contrary, Watson’s intellectual ignorance. This semantic dilemma become central for this Conan Doyle’s work.

Accomplishing of self-parody by imitating author’s own characteristics features of characters building and world-constructing is common for self-parody. But because of operating the same means by the same author, a self-parody is potentially difficult to distinguish from especially characteristic productions (Self-parody: 2018). Radicalization, stressing, playful usage of definite notable features of author’s idiostyle are certainly the stylish markings of self-parody. Wikipedia notices that sometimes critics use the word “self-parody” figuratively to indicate that the artist’s style and preoccupations appear as

strongly in some work as they would in a parody. Such works may result from habit, self-indulgence, or an effort to please an audience by providing something familiar (Self-parody: 2018).

There were in some way already mentioned some semantic awkwardness: all Watson's creative work of retelling, translating Holmes' detective deeds in a fiction plus documentary-style way may be described like undoubted laudation of his glory. Almost in every canonical detective story an attentive explorer will find image-making verbal means of highlighting Holmes' exclusiveness, exceptionalness, so-called "image of exceptionality" supported by author, Watson, other characters throughout the detective canon. In spite of being smoothed over, Watson in the sketch under our consideration allows himself almost heretical exclamation: *"I have no doubt that I could find other points, Holmes, but I only give you these few, in order to show you that there are other people in the world who can be as clever as you"* ("How Watson Learned the Trick": 1924). Such a trick may also be considered as a self-parody. On base of this another aspect, radicalization of Holmes' exceptionality myth, becomes even more evident: *"And some not so clever," said Holmes. "I admit that they are few, but I am afraid, my dear Watson, that I must count you among them"* ("How Watson Learned the Trick": 1924).

### Conclusion

Close analysis of two Conan Doyle's works about Sherlock Holmes that pretend first to be accounted to the traditional 60-stories Canon – "The Field Bazaar" and "How Watson Learned the Trick" – allows to make definite conclusions about their legitimacy to be included to the Canon. The very definition "Canon" means smth. stable and unchangeable like a Bible text. It is known that the word Canon was used exactly to fix true stories about Sherlock Holmes and prevent them from plagiarism. So, any changes and additions should be under a very strict control.

Consideration of the two proposed works (which even at this stage have been already included in several collections of Conan Doyle's modern above-mentioned collections of works about Sherlock Holmes) for the defined criteria of similarity of compositional and style manner, the way of constructing the artistic reality, the selection of elements of pastiche and self-parody made it possible to concentrate attention on all pro and contra within the debatable question of inclusion then into the Canon.

As a result, "The Field Bazaar" and "How Watson Learned the Trick" have features that in more cases exclude them from the Canon as they have lack of the most important, fundamental peculiarities of Sherlock Holmes' Canonical works:

- true detective puzzle;
- true plot outside Baker-Street flat;
- aspect of victim is absent, so Holmes cannot reveal his potential of a Savior of almost biblical scope and importance;
- Holmes here does not compete with evil, injustice; this eliminates the conceptual components of his myth.

So, the sketches "The Field Bazaar" and "How Watson Learned the Trick" most justly should be counted to "other", non-canonical works of Conan Doyle about Sherlock Holmes. Moreover, there are other works of Conan Doyle about Sherlock Holmes that may broaden non-canonical collection.

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