VARIANT FICTION: LAURIE KING’S THE GAME IN DEFINING A NEW GENRE OF FICTION

Works of fiction have the potential to become more than just stories by single authors. Popular works of fiction have writings based on them, ranging from literary critics to fan writers. This essay primarily focuses on adaptations, fan fictions and a new way to classify particular works – variant fiction. By examining the processes involved in creating adaptation and fan fiction work, it is clear that there are works of fiction that do not follow these processes. Laurie R. King’s *The Game* takes place in the *Sherlock Holmes* universe with Sherlock as a secondary character and crosses over into Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*, where the title character makes an appearance. However, *The Game* offers a completely new story with an original main protagonist. While this sounds like a fan fiction sequel, it actually is a professionally published and printed novel. While adaptation theory can be quite broad and be inclusive to many types of fiction, it often aims to repeat stories, working within the constraints of the original. Fan fiction tends to veer wildly from original writing, and typically exists in the digital sphere online, often without consent. Variant fiction falls between fan fiction and adaptation frameworks, but is not either. The intended purposes of the three types of fiction are different, as well as regard for the original author’s intentions. As a result, classification can offer expectations to readers for a work. If fan fiction is too extreme in differences and adaptations start losing their luster, variant fiction works might just hit the spot.