

2014

# Magical Me: Self-Insertion Fanfiction as Literary Critique

Melody Strmel  
*Scripps College*

---

## Recommended Citation

Strmel, Melody, "Magical Me: Self-Insertion Fanfiction as Literary Critique" (2014). *Scripps Senior Theses*. Paper 486.  
[http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps\\_theses/486](http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/486)

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Scripps Student Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scripps Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact [scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu](mailto:scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu).

MAGICAL ME: SELF-INSERTION FANFICTION AS LITERARY CRITIQUE

by

MELODY STRMEL

SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

PROFESSOR PAUL BUCHOLZ  
PROFESSOR DARRYL A. SMITH

APRIL 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014

## Table of Contents

Introduction: An Ancestry of Fanfiction.....	1
Glossary of Terms.....	10
Chapter 1:“My Immortal”.....	10
Chapter 2:“Like the Rain”.....	15
Conclusion.....	24
Works Cited.....	30



## Introduction: An Ancestry of Fanfiction

Fan-fiction is an extremely recent development in the world of modern literature. It is fascinating and new. Fan-fiction evolved as a response to an ever-changing perception of literature, fiction, and authorship. To understand what fanfiction is, it's important to understand where it came from, what trends it's responding to, where those trends came from. In this chapter I will attempt to summarize trends of thinking about narrative in Western history and connect them to the evolution of fanfiction.

In Aristophanes' play *The Frogs*, written in 405BC, Dionysus travels to the Underworld to bring back a playwright to save Athens from its underwhelming tragic plays. He has his sights set on Euripides, but then he meets Aeschylus and brings him back from the dead instead. Euripides wrote over 80 tragic plays, two of the most famous being *Medea* and *Electra*. Aeschylus was no less prolific or influential, penning such works as the trilogy *The Oresteia* and *Prometheus Bound*. The men were not known to have had any rapport and Aeschylus, an old man, died when Euripides was only in his 20s (Borthwick.1999.623). But something about the two of them meeting and having a competition over who was the better playwright for Athens was important enough to Aristophanes, a comedian, to write a play.

Why he did such a thing is a matter of much debate among Classical scholars. Ralph M. Rosen of the University of Pennsylvania argues in his essay *Aristophanes' Frogs and the Contest of Homer and Hesiod* that the inspiration might have been an engagement with an earlier text, *The Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, which was another Greek narrative about a poetical contest, or certamen, between poets Homer and Hesiod. In *The Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, Rosen argues that Homer is the clear winner of the contest, but that the judge, a king, favors Hesiod for his peaceful subject matter and thus

declares him victor. He then goes on to extrapolate that in Aristophanes' *The Frogs*, Dionysus is forced to confront his personal appreciation for Euripides with the fact that Aeschylus might genuinely be better for the city of Athens:

“Indeed, when Dionysus speaks of his pothos for Euripides at the beginning of the play, and the *hêdonê* he feels for Euripidean poetry at the end, he uses what amounts to the vocabulary of a true “fan,” drawn in (to the dismay and disapproval of Aeschylus; cf., e.g., 1039–44) by the poet’s treatment of topics that remain irresistibly engaging to audiences even today, such as incest, madness, voyeurism, and transvestit-ism, to name only a few” (311).

Whether Dionysus is a stand-in for Aristophanes, Athenian society, or no one at all is another contentious matter among scholars, but at least one thing can be said regardless: both Aristophanes and the author of *The Contest of Homer and Hesiod* believed that there was something that they needed to say, and only could say, by creating a fictional competition between two real celebrities. The use of celebrities in satires and parodies is an old tradition, but these works are not a damning satire. It appears the authors have respect and admiration for these poets and perhaps they write about them because they cannot let their stories die and be forgotten.

Today the concept of dream teams or dream matches are very popular. People create fantasy football teams, or vociferously debate who would win in a fight between Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson (Smith, 2011). This obsession with wondering about interactions between celebrities and athletes has of course found a home in fanfiction as well. The fanfiction “Booze, Sex, and Very Deep Thoughts” by sk8rpssockpup, follows the 15 top ranked male figure skaters after the 2008 World championships, delving into their feelings about competitive figure skating and its affect on their lives. In “A World Without DJs” by kaakelilattia, a DJ duel between famous electronic musicians Skrillex and deadmau5 causes a strange cosmic reaction that results in a post-apocalyptic DJ-less universe. Fanfictions that explore scenarios between celebrities or other real people are known as Real Person Fics or RPFs.

While the Ancient Greeks had less interest in writing sexual scenarios involving two of their favorite celebrities,

the content of the majority of modern RPF, they seem to have felt a similar need to incorporate said celebrities in their work. Modern day celebrities inspire and enthrall the public with their works of art, or sometimes even simply their persona, and captivate their imaginations. Though the medium, subject matter, and writing quality may differ significantly from Aristophanes, RPF belongs to a tradition of having an artist speak to someone so meaningfully that they need to bring whatever that artist represents to them from the Underground of their imagination into a narrative forum.

The second half of the first century BC was a time of upheaval in Rome. The Republic had fallen, and Rome's citizens had recently endured a terrible series of civil wars. Today this period, beginning with the reign of Augustus in 27 BC, is known as the time of the Pax Romana, considered the longest time of peace and stability in the recorded history of all of Europe. Given the recent political upset, the Romans of the first century BC were less convinced of the future and prosperity of the Roman Empire. It was in the midst of this fear and uncertainty that Augustus' political adviser Gaius Maecenas (or as contemporary poet Propertius claimed, Augustus himself) hired the well known poet Virgil to devise an epic poem for Rome (Avery. 1957,p.225-229).

The resulting work was Virgil's most well known poem, *The Aeneid*. To create this work, Virgil wove the story of Rome's present and past into an epic poem that continued the story of Homer's famous epic, *The Illiad*. *The Aeneid* follows the story of a minor character from *The Illiad*, a lieutenant to Prince Hector of Troy named Aeneas, who is twice saved from death by the gods so that he may fulfill a mysterious destiny. He is the son of a prince of Dardania and the goddess Aphrodite. Aeneas' story, according to Homer, ends with Poseidon saving him from a fatal encounter with Achilles, and revealing that he will be the new king of Troy, which is then completely destroyed by the Greeks.

Virgil extrapolates upon this ending, interpreting Poseidon's words to mean that Aeneas will become the king of a new Troy, a better Troy, the great civilization that would become Rome. To accomplish this task, Virgil tells an epic tale in which the history of Rome is relived and retold, foretold, and shown through parallels to be necessary for the Roman civilization to thrive. In his essay "Creativity out of chaos: Poetry between the death of Caesar and the death of Virgil",

scholar Llewelyn Morgan notes the effect of Virgil's stylistic and content choice:

“This impression of [Virgil's] literary scope and ambition matches and reinforces the geographical and historical nationalisms which the poem communicates. Virgil's 'conquest' of the universal epic voice of Homer – the origin and essence of Greek literary culture – is closely analogous to Roman military dominion over the world. The Roman readers of the *Aeneid* experienced, besides everything else, an entire world of literary possibilities in Roman dress. It is with the *Aeneid* that Latin literature seemed to Romans once and for all to come into its own” (398).

In order to calm Rome after its period of uncertainty and upheaval, Virgil continued the story, and in some ways the voice, of the man revered as the greatest poet and used Homer's story to tell the story of his people. Morgan argues that through *The Aeneid's* incorporation and appropriation of *The Illiad* Virgil gave his people a voice within a grand tradition. By taking a story that inspired an enormous amount of important artistic content, and continuing it to frame Rome as its center, he was able to excite and quell many Roman minds by allowing themselves to imagine the story of their nation as one with possibilities as endless as the greatest of Greek literature.

Fanfiction today uses characters from pre-established stories to give a voice to the previously underheard. While many marginalized groups have found a voice in fanfiction such as the LGBTQ community or people of color, disabled authors have recently begun using fanfiction to rewrite the stories of disabled fiction characters to better represent their experiences with disability. Many disabled fans of the 2000's series *Battlestar Galactica* were enraged when the last few episodes have the disabled characters Gaeta, Anders, and Nicky disposed of in favor of the show's anti-technology message. One such fan, Sasha\_feather, commented, “It is a harsh fact of life that people with disabilities are vilified, ignored, institutionalized, and disposed of [...]to see these things echoed in science fiction storytelling—in American myth making—is heartbreaking and only reinforces ableism. When a high-technology, low-population society such as that of the *Galactica* treats its disabled people as it treated Sam Anders and Felix Gaeta, that is a bleak and hopeless message for the rest of the world” (Sasha\_feather.2010).

Sasha\_feather and other fans who have dealt with disability firsthand have been using fanfiction to fix the universes of their favorite television shows, offering a different space, that is inclusive of their own experiences. In 2009, Sasha\_feather and co-author anna\_bird wrote the fanfiction “Mirror Box” about *Battlestar Galactica* character Felix

Gaeta and his conflicts with his new dependence on technology due to the tragic loss of his leg. It runs parallel to the events of his character in the series, instead focusing on his inner dialogue and personal struggles with mobility. Writer esteeffee was upset with the lack of any disabled people on her favorite science fiction show, *Stargate Atlantis*, and wrote a fanfiction, ‘Fair Trade’ where the main character John Sheppard becomes disabled to highlight the lack of visibility of people with disabilities present in the series. The most recent explosion of fanfiction discussing ableism in a text is in the Mass Effect universe, a popular science fiction video game series which features a space ship pilot, Joker, with brittle bone disease. Stories such as sqbr’s ‘The Universal Laws of Motion’ series critique Mass Effect for minimizing Joker’s struggle with disability while simultaneously exploiting his disability for drama, by rewriting the events of the most recent video game, *Mass Effect 3*, from the perspective of Joker and altering plotlines or conversations which the author finds to be incongruous to their experiences of being disabled.

*The Aeneid* and the fanworks discussed above are arguably very different. *The Aeneid* was a text used to legitimize the greatness of the Roman Empire and its emperor, Augustus, by tying the political history of the nation to a beloved story and weaving its importance into the established mythological fabric. Fanfictions like ‘Mirror Box’ are used by marginalized individuals of society to critique and reclaim the representation of people like them in the media that they love. This is just one example of how fanfiction illustrates what many are calling the democratization of literature. In Ancient Rome and up until the past several decades, those wishing to publish a work of fiction to a wide audience had to convince whomever had the access and money to run the contemporary means of printing that their piece was worthy of dissemination. Today, on the other hand, anyone with access to a word document and the internet can post their literature on the internet, where it is available to anyone with an internet connection. I am not claiming that fanfiction is the utopian democratizing of literature that many scholars and journalists seem to hope it is. Even on the internet some are privileged above others, but it is still hard to imagine that the Augustan regime would have been as such a willing a patron if Virgil had written an epic poem that openly criticized Augustus and the Roman Empire without offering it redemption.

The first autobiography in English was written, or more accurately dictated, by Margery Kempe in the 1430s. Although *The Book of Margery Kempe* is a straightforward autobiography in many ways,

it also chronicles Margery Kempe's lengthy theological discussions with Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and other Biblical characters as well as her mystical journey to and interaction with important moments from the *Bible* such as Jesus' birth and crucifixion. Kempe's book is presented as autobiographical, one of its many controversial elements that is still debated today. During the 15<sup>th</sup> century she endured many inquisitions and arrests as a result of her alleged heresy in publishing such a book. These questioned the truthfulness of her text and whether or not she had the right to say anything about the *Bible* at all. She was always released or found innocent, but it remains unclear whether her text was meant as pure autobiography, brilliant fictional commentary on the church, or a spiritual autobiography, neither truth nor fiction, that existed as an intermediary kind of text when the Catholic laypeople were starting to read and interpret the bible themselves but before the rise of Protestantism (Staley.1994.xvii).

Regardless of the intent of the work, Margery Kempe inserted herself, either through her own literary will or through God's will, into some of the most crucial events in one of the most famous books in history. In doing so, she commented on how her life as a devout Catholic mother in England in the 15<sup>th</sup> century was affected by and affected her understanding of Biblical events and personages (Manter.2001).

Just as Margery Kempe's interactions with Biblical passages and people were a subject of hot debate in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, today what is known as self-insertion fanfiction or self-insert fic is the most controversial type of fanfiction. Self-insert fic happens when the author inserts themselves into a story or its universe, either directly or through a character avatar. In his ongoing *Doctor Who* fanfiction, “The Ben Chatham Adventures”, author Sparacus uses a self-insert character named Ben Chatham to change the events of the *Doctor Who* episodes to his liking, much to the chagrin of most *Doctor Who* fans. The *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* fanfiction “Through the Eyes of Another Pony” by CardsLafter deals with an author avatar waking up one day as a unicorn in the *My Little Pony* town of Ponyville, and trying to adjust to life as a pony and his relationships with the characters of the show. Margery

Kempe was living on the cusp of a moment when people were beginning to explore their own readings, interactions, and interpretations of the *Bible*. In *The Book of Margery Kempe* she explores that cultural moment through her spiritual autobiography. Today readers often question the place of their interpretations and interactions with their beloved texts. Self-insert fanfic is, among many other things, a way to reconcile a reader's experience and interpretation of a text and its bearing on their own life.

While the concept of a fan was born in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the live theater community, something aligning more closely to a modern definition of a fan emerged with the literature and serials of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Compulsory schooling for young children in Britain became more common and affordable throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century until finally the Elementary Education Act of 1870 required all children between the ages of 5 and 13 to go to school. During this time more and more British people were becoming literate, and the already popular fiction industry became unstoppable. The literature that garnered the most voracious fans were the serial stories published in magazines, like Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* stories that appeared in each issue of *The Strand* or those published individually such as Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*. The fanbase for these serial stories was so dedicated that in America, Dickens fans were known to wait all night at the docks for the next installment, bombarding the ship the moment it approached shore (Glancy.1999.p.215).

Like modern fans, 19<sup>th</sup> century popular literature fans would often write their own versions of the stories. According to Wired's "pop culture expert" Scott Brown, it didn't take Sherlock Holmes fans long to start writing their own stories: "Sherlockians called them parodies and pastiches (they still do), and the initial ones appeared within 10 years of the first Holmes 1887 novella, *A Study in Scarlet*. Fan-written homages began to appear in earnest not long after Conan Doyle infamously killed off Holmes[...]" (Brown.2009). After Conan Doyle killed off Sherlock in *The Final Problem* in 1893, fans in the UK wore black armbands in mourning and fans in the US formed "Let's Keep Holmes Alive" clubs where they would discuss plot holes in Sherlock's death, write essays to *The Strand* and Conan

Doyle on why Sherlock should not die, and write stories to “fix” Sherlock's death (Bachelot.2009.p.3). In utterly failing to kill his own character (at least in the eyes of his fans) Doyle may have inadvertently killed off the very concept of the author – Doyle killed Holmes, and the fans refused to let him die. One might go so far as to say that the Metaphysical Author took a bullet for the Great Detective.

While the most vocal fans of the Dickens and Sherlock Holmes serials were men, there are instances of young women using fictional worlds to write their own stories. When the Bronte sisters were in their teenage years and young adolescence they created a series of fictional worlds that they would obsessively plan out, inhabit, and write stories about. Andy Sawyer of the University of Liverpool states that the Brontes’ fictional worlds of Angria and Gondal “are one of the first examples of fan fiction, using favourite characters and settings in the same way as science fiction and fantasy fans now play in the detailed imaginary ‘universes’”(British Library.2011). Similarly, Jo March in Louisa May Alcott’s classic novel *Little Women* occasionally writes stories featuring her sisters' favorite literary heroes to cheer them up. (Rebaza.2009.p.199)

The term fanfiction was coined in the 1960s to describe stories about pre-established science fiction characters written by fans for fans and published in fanzines. With the expansion of the usage of the internet in the late 1990s, fanfiction quickly became an internet phenomenon. Today, fanfiction is an inescapable part of our everyday lives, with fanfiction writers being hired to write for shows like *Doctor Who* and with *Fifty Shades of Grey*, a disguised *Twilight* fanfiction, becoming the fastest selling paperback of all time. (Bentley. 2012) Fanfiction, however, is not a fad that has erupted overnight, but grows from a long tradition of interactions with beloved authors and texts. But why have certain ways of interacting with texts prevailed in the fanfiction community, while others have not? How have the cultural forces affecting peoples’ lives caused fanfiction to become such a force today?



## Glossary of Terms

**Authorship** is a term used to attribute the creative and intellectual origin of a literary work. While authorship may refer to a individual author, the term can also be used to discuss a work written by multiple authors, who may or may not have been working collaboratively. During the 1960s theorists such as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault questioned and altered the conventional understanding of the term “author”. In *Death of the Author*, Roland Barthes suggested that the author was a creator of words, not of meaning, and that the meaning of a text was primarily authored by the reader's interpretation of the words. Michel Foucault, in his essay *What is an Author?*, describes an author as a function. He claims that an author is a part of the societal function of a literary text that the reader uses to anchor the text to a specific place, time, and culture. The term authorship in this text will be used primarily to refer to the ideas of ownership and creativity regarding the writers of texts; however, postmodern ideas of authorship, like Barthes' and Foucault's, are essential to understanding the complex and nuanced ideas of ownership and authorship in modern fanfiction.

**Audiences** are people or groups who engage with a text and who did not have a hand in its origin or creation. Just as with authorship, modern literary theory is constantly questioning who or what an audience consists of; however, at this moment in time, audience in relation to fanfiction follows the more traditional definitions and ideas of defines the idea of an audience. The audiences that are primarily involved in fanfiction are known as **fans**. A shortening of “fanatic”, the term describes a subset of an audience that shows enthusiastic devotion. The term originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century from concert and theater goers who would obsessively attend performances by their favorite artists. (“Fan.” *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*.)

**Originality** is the idea that an entity has a unique aspect in its style, design, or content, usually

with a positive connotation. Though I will be talking about ideas of originality throughout western history, it is important to note that the term's first known use wasn't until 1742. (“Originality”. *Merriam-Webster*.) The term originality arose from the dissolution of identification through social boundaries in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. With individuals no longer able to identify themselves as part of a group inherent in a stable societal structure, Romanticism turned to the idea of the self, which defines a person by their ineffable qualities of being. The term originality was then described as an authority that emanated from an individual's self. (Gregory. 1996. p.12-15) The concept of the self and originality has been questioned by theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Rosalind E. Krauss. In Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, he refutes the idea of the self and the ability to produce original ideas by framing the conception of ideas as a product of evolution of discourse, and not as an expression of one's inner being. Krauss, in her essay *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, sets up originality and repetition as a constructed dichotomy, dependent on defining the two concepts against each other to create the possibility of original expression of the self, but in it constructed it has no inherent existence outside of the significance awarded to it through societal discourse. Fanfiction functions with the traditional romantic definition of selfhood and originality. The movement is more concerned not with the destruction of the idea of the self, but with questions of the importance of originality in self-expression and identification through appropriation.

A **textual universe** is “the image of a system of reality projected by a text. The textual universe is a modal system if one of its worlds is actual and opposed to other worlds of the system.” (Ryan. 1991. p.xvii) To elaborate, there are two main methods of reading a text. In the *Harry Potter* series, the eye color of Ginny Weasley, Harry Potter's girlfriend, is never mentioned. The first method of reading is to believe that Ginny has no eye color, since it was never mentioned in the text and exists only in the fictional world of the text. The second method of reading is to believe that Ginny has an eye color, but it is simply not mentioned in the books. The second method operates on the idea that the character of

Ginny is a representation of a human, and therefore must have an eye color. In this method, Ginny exists as part of a fictional textual universe that reflects, but is not identical to our own. The events of the *Harry Potter* series are simply one set of events that exist in this fictional textual universe, just as the events of an individual's life are only a small fraction of the events occurring in what is considered to be the actual world.

There are two main differences between a textual universe and a fictional world. The creation of a textual universe can come from any text or set of texts, regardless of whether society considers it fictional. For example, a friend of my mother's receives all of his information about the outside world from Fox News. Through its interpretation and presentation of real life events, it creates a textual universe that people like my mother's friend can use to frame their existence. All news and journalism serves this function to an extent, I am only picking on Fox News because more so than any other new source in America, Fox News has a large constituent of viewers that only receive their news through the Fox News Channel, making an easy example. The other primary difference between a textual universe and a fictional world is that a fictional world can be incomplete in its creation, as explained with the Ginny Weasley example above. A textual universe is a representation the image of a system of reality, meaning that it is a complete world that exists in the same way that our actual universe functions, even if biological, physical, or other scientific laws function differently.

The term **canon** is traditionally used to refer to a set of texts considered to be superlative and fundamental to a field of study (i.e. The works of the Western Canon, Philosophical Canon, Literary Canon, etc). In the world of fanfiction, canon is the conceptual material accepted as official or true in the textual universe by the work's fandom or by whoever has legal ownership over the textual universe. The idea of canon in the fanfiction movement comes out of the tradition of Biblical canon. The creation of Biblical canon differs from the creation of something such the Western canon. The Biblical canon is a series of texts written by different people that have been chosen to create a single, definitive version

of a narrative. The Western canon is a series of books, art, music, etc that were determined to be culturally significant to the evolution of Western society.

The purpose of canon in fanfiction is like that of the Biblical canon. It is composed of a set of texts collected by either the person or company who owns the intellectual property rights or by the fandom in order to create an authoritative and cohesive narrative. In the aggregate, the person or company of legal ownership is the primary authoritative source on what is considered canon. In general, if the texts of the author's or corporate canon contradicts a preexisting canon constructed by the fandom, the fandom constructed canon becomes known as **fanon**. As fan communities grow in size and importance as part of our cultural landscape and as a market consumer base, the divide between canon and fanon becomes more muddled.

The most famous example of this muddling is the Star Wars canon. In a DVD re-release of Star Wars IV, George Lucas changed the scene that introduces the character of Han Solo, so that during an argument, the alien Greedo shoots Han Solo first instead of the other way around. This small edit changes Han Solo's character from a morally ambiguous, selfish rogue to a persecuted man acting in self-defense. Most Star Wars fans felt this weakened his character arc of learning to care for others and society through his struggles in the Galactic Resistance against Darth Vader. Feeling the edit was uncalled for, fans of Star Wars took away George Lucas' authority to decide the canon of the Star Wars universe. The continued push of the Star Wars fandom against the creative decisions of George Lucas was even made into a documentary, *The People vs. George Lucas*.



## Chapter 1: “My Immortal”

### I

In fanfiction, an **alternate universe** happens when the author changes canonical elements of the story and focuses on how tweaking one or several elements affects the outcome of the text. Parallel worlds and alternate universes have long been a staple of fiction, especially science fiction. Some of the more iconic examples of parallel worlds and alternate universes in modern fiction include the cabinet world of Narnia from C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the classic Frank Capra film *It's a Wonderful Life*, and the Superman Bizarro World.

In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, four siblings named Susan, Peter, Edmund, and Lucy are sent to live in countryside manor with an old man to escape from the dangers of the Blitz of World War II in London. While exploring the manor, the children find an ornate cabinet that acts as the portal to another world. In this other world, Narnia, a classic fantasy world, the children learn that they are the lost monarchs of Narnia and must reclaim their throne from the evil White Witch who has cursed the land with eternal winter. In this example of an alternate universe the children either live in Narnia or in 1940s England, and can travel between the two different parallel worlds. This is a different setup from a book such as *Alice in Wonderland*. In *Alice in Wonderland*, a girl stumbles onto a strange world which she has never been to before, whereas in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the siblings always existed in Narnia as well as in the real world. It isn't a new world they visit, but an alternate world that is missing its versions of Susan, Peter, Edmund, and Lucy. They visit a world in which they already existed for the first time.

In Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, the protagonist, George Bailey, has made some mistakes

in his life and has decided that everyone he knows would be better off if he committed suicide. He wishes aloud that he had never been born, and an angel, Clarence, appears and takes him to an alternate universe where he had never been born. Clarence uses this alternate universe to show George Bailey that regardless of his financial and legal troubles, his kindness and existence has had a positive impact on the people in his life and convinces him not to commit suicide.

In the Bizarro World of the *Superman* comic books, Superman visits the cube shaped planet of Htrae (Earth, spelled backwards) where everything is the opposite of the way it is on Earth. The code of Htrae is as follows: "Us do opposite of all Earthly things! Us hate beauty! Us love ugliness! Is big crime to make anything perfect on Bizarro World!" (Seigel et al. 2000. p.13) The beloved super villain of Htrae is Bizarro, a mirror image of Superman. Superman is married to Lois Lane, is best friends with Jimmy Olsen, and sometimes fights crime with Batman, the "World's Greatest Detective". Bizarro is married to Bizarro Lois, is best friends with Bizarro Jimmy Olsen, and occasionally teams up with Batzarro, the "World's Worst Detective". Alvin Schwartz, writer of the original Bizarro strips, created this alternate universe because he felt that one could only truly understand the complexities of Superman's character when confronted with his opposite or shadow character. (Conroy. 2004. p.429)

## II

The different types of alternate universes one can create are as varied as can be imagined, but certain types of alternate universes in fanfiction have become so popular that they have branched into their own subgenres. The first subgenre of alternate universe fanfiction that will be examined here is the self-insertion fanfiction. As mentioned previously, self-insertion fanfictions occur when authors inserts themselves into the universe of a pre-established story, either directly or through an author avatar. This literary device is nothing new. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Dante Allegheri wrote *The Divine*

*Comedy*, an epic poem wherein he travels through the Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven of the Bible. Kurt Vonnegut's alter-ego, Kilgore Trout, appears in many of his novels. However, while *The Divine Comedy* and the character of Kilgore Trout are beloved and critically acclaimed, self-insertion fanfiction is one of the most reviled genres of fanfiction today.

In 1973, Paula Smith, a Star Trek fan and avid fanfiction reader, wrote a parody of Star Trek fanfiction called "A Trekkie's Tale":

"Gee, golly, gosh, gloriosky," thought Mary Sue as she stepped on the bridge of the Enterprise. "Here I am, the youngest lieutenant in the fleet - only fifteen and a half years old." Captain Kirk came up to her. "Oh, Lieutenant, I love you madly. Will you come to bed with me?" "Captain! I am not that kind of girl!" "You're right, and I respect you for it. Here, take over the ship for a minute while I go get some coffee for us." Mr. Spock came onto the bridge. "What are you doing in the command seat, Lieutenant?" "The Captain told me to." "Flawlessly logical. I admire your mind."

Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy and Mr. Scott beamed down with Lt. Mary Sue to Rigel XXXVII. They were attacked by green androids and thrown into prison. In a moment of weakness Lt. Mary Sue revealed to Mr. Spock that she too was half Vulcan. Recovering quickly, she sprung the lock with her hairpin and they all got away back to the ship.

But back on board, Dr. McCoy and Lt. Mary Sue found out that the men who had beamed down were seriously stricken by the jumping cold robbies, Mary Sue less so. While the four officers languished in Sick Bay, Lt. Mary Sue ran the ship, and ran it so well she received the Nobel Peace Prize, the Vulcan Order of Gallantry and the Tralfamadorian Order of Good Guyhood.

However the disease finally got to her and she fell fatally ill. In the Sick Bay as she breathed her last, she was surrounded by Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy, and Mr. Scott, all weeping unashamedly at the loss of her beautiful youth and youthful beauty, intelligence, capability and all around niceness. Even to this day her birthday is a national holiday of the Enterprise."

This fanfiction is famous for coining the term Mary Sue. The **Mary Sue** is a fanfiction character archetype that encapsulates all the elements of self-insert fic that fanfiction readers tend to despise. The Mary Sue is usually a prodigy with a unique background that makes her even more special (the secret child of a popular adult character, the last of her species, etc) who quickly becomes the prettiest, smartest, and most popular character of the story. The author's favorite character or characters fall instantly in love with her, while the mentor, teacher, or intellectual characters begin to rely on her intelligence to solve all of their problems. Whenever trouble or danger arises, the Mary Sue solves the

problem expertly, often without needing the assistance of the other characters. At the end of the story, she either lives happily ever after with the author's fictional crush or dies a ~~sad~~ tragic death that is mourned by the other characters, usually even the villains.

Any character who encompasses enough of these characteristics is generally considered to be a Mary Sue, even if the character is not a self-insert or original character (the act of turning a canon character into a Mary Sue is known as “Sue-ifying”). In fact, there is a popular 175 question online quiz, “The Universal Mary Sue Litmus Test”, that a writer can take to find out if their story contains a Mary Sue character. The author who inserts themselves into a fictional universe as a Mary Sue is commonly presumed to be a young girl, usually in her teens, who uses her fanfiction and her self-insert character as a form of escapism and wish fulfillment. The author is believed to be insecure and “boy crazy”, using the self-insertion form of fanfiction to create a world in which she is inherently special, is desired by the men she finds attractive, and is considered a useful and important member of society. While not all Mary Sue stories are written by women, use female author avatars (the male equivalent is known as a Gary Stu), or engage in heterosexual relationships, Mary Sue self-insertion fanfictions are generally assumed to be written by young cisgender heterosexual females.

The reason for hatred of Mary Sues has been a topic of much discussion. Paula Smith wrote “A Trekkie's Tale” because she wanted to encourage *Star Trek* fanfiction writers to pen more varied characters. She noticed an increasing number of fanfictions with this specific character type and she began to find the story tiresome and overused (Walker. 2011.) Internet commenter Chefofdeath believes the hatred is related to human jealousy and insecurities: “1: Some of it is just plain old jealousy, we simply don't like the idea of someone who exceeds ourselves so completely. 2: There is some level of uncanny valley disgust going around. There just seems to be something wrong, something not human, about a character that is just THAT perfect.” (Posted to: “Why We So Hate Mary Sues.” 2012.) According to livejournal user deird1: “The problem is when the story starts warping itself – when

everything, and everyone, and every single piece of anything ever is all bound up in the one character. With no room for anyone else.”

In Camille Bacon-Smith's book on women in *Star Trek* fandom, *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*, she argues that one of the contributing factors to Mary Sue hatred is sexism: “Other fans have noted that James Kirk himself is a Mary Sue, because he represents similarly exaggerated characteristics of strength, intelligence, charm, and adventurousness. They note that the sobriquet 'Mary Sue' may be a self imposed sexism – she can't do that, she's a girl.” (Bacon-Smith. 1992. p.97) Blogger Rose B. Fischer refutes Bacon-Smith's claim because “original characters are outsiders. They're not part of the established group or team that readers already care about and want to interact with. Canon characters get to be perfect — or at least way better than average — because the audience already knows who they are and what function they fill.” She adds that the Mary Sue is so hated because she is an abject figure: “I think fic writers don't like Mary Sue because she makes us uncomfortable. She's embarrassing. We've all written her, and we don't like to be reminded of that. So, we see an OC [original character] and a few cliches and then there's a knee-jerk defensiveness.”

The widespread hatred of self-insert fic and Mary Sues seems to come from the author's perceived lack of originality and her willingness to bend the plot and characters to create a world that exists for her own personal desires, which are often seen as childish and negatively feminine. Even if one believes the stereotypes about the Mary Sue and her author, the Mary Sue subgenre of self-insertion fanfiction can often contain hidden depths. If nothing else, its continued existence and popularity with writers despite the vocal hatred against it is meaningful.

To investigate the ways in which self-insertion fiction reflects individuals' ever-changing interactions with literature and narrative, one must compare an honest self-insertion fanfiction, unlike the parody above, to one that contains the vilified Mary Sue. For a character to truly count as a Mary Sue, the author cannot be intentionally trying to invoke the characteristics of a Mary Sue. If the author deliberately writes a character as a Mary Sue, as in "A Trekkie's Tale" above, it is considered a parody and not a Mary Sue story.

Perhaps the most famous self-insert Mary Sue fic ever written is the *Harry Potter* fanfiction "My Immortal". Considered widely to be the worst fanfiction ever written, (Know Your Meme. 2012 "My Immortal" has a huge cult following who consider it "so bad it's good", similar to Tommy Wiseau's *The Room* or Ed Wood's *Plan 9 From Outer Space*. "My Immortal" was published in 2006 on fanfiction.net, the most popular fanfiction website at the time, by 11 year old Tara Gilesbie under the screen name XXXbloodyrists666XXX. The first 15 chapters were edited by Tara's best friend Raven, bloodytearz666. Between chapters 16-18, Raven no longer collaborated as Tara refused to communicate with her after Raven failed to return a borrowed sweater. After chapter 22 was published, Tara's fanfiction.net account was hacked. Due to her account being hacked and the shift in writing style, it is generally accepted that chapters 23-44 were written by another author attempting to mimic and parody Tara's story. As such, only chapters 1-22 will be examined here.

The story of "My Immortal" begins as follows:

"Hi my name is Ebony Dark'ness Dementia Raven Way and I have long ebony black hair (that's how I got my name) with purple streaks and red tips that reaches my mid-back and icy blue eyes like limpid tears and a lot of people tell me I look like Amy Lee (AN: if u don't know who she is get da hell out of here!). I'm not related to Gerard Way but I wish I was because he's a major fucking hottie. I'm a vampire but my teeth are straight and white. I have pale white skin. I'm also a witch, and I go to a magic school called Hogwarts in England where I'm in the seventh year (I'm seventeen). I'm a goth (in case you couldn't tell) and I wear mostly black. I love Hot Topic and I buy all my clothes from there. For example today I was wearing a black corset with matching lace around it and a black leather miniskirt, pink fishnets and black combat boots. I was wearing black lipstick, white foundation, black

eyeliner and red eye shadow. I was walking outside Hogwarts. It was snowing and raining so there was no sun, which I was very happy about. A lot of preps stared at me. I put up my middle finger at them.”

Ebony Dark'ness Dementia Raven Way has many characteristics of a self-insert Mary Sue. She has a beautiful, uncommon, and mysterious name that has a lot of personal meaning to the author. In this case Tara Gilesbie has given her author avatar a long and complicated name full of dark imagery that reflects her gothic persona. She has an unnatural hair color. Often Mary Sues are born with pink or purple hair, though Ebony clearly dyes her hair to further reflect her rebellious nature. To add to her inherent specialness, Ebony is a vampire, a creature that is considered rare in the Harry Potter universe; In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Harry's professor, Slughorn, throws a Christmas party where he invites a vampire acquaintance to impress the attendants, since most of them have never seen a vampire before. Furthermore, she has beautiful and poetic features and she resembles her favorite female celebrity. The title, “My Immortal”, is a reference to a popular 2004 song of the same name by the American goth rock band Evanescence, led by singer Amy Lee. As the story continues, Ebony will amass more traits common to the Mary Sue character.

If the reader had any doubt that Ebony is an extension of Tara Gilesbie, in Chapter 2 she reveals Ebony's best friend, Willow: “My friend, Willow (AN: Raven dis is u!) woke up then and grinned at me. She flipped her long waist-length raven black hair with pink streaks and opened her forest-green eyes. She put on her Marilyn Manson t-shirt with a black mini, fishnets and pointy high-heeled boots.” The addition of Willow, whom Tara states outright in her author's note is supposed to represent her best friend Raven, makes it fairly obvious that Ebony is supposed to represent Tara Gilesbie.

There are two main types of author avatars used in self-insertion fanfiction. Some characters more or less resemble their author, with a few differences in background or ability that allow them to fit into the setting and characters. Others represent a mixture of the person the author perceives themselves to be and the person the author wishes they could be like. Ebony is an example of the second type of

self-insert character. When Tara Gilesbie wrote “My Immortal” she was between 11 and 12 years old and, according to her Myspace photo, had dirty blond hair and wore baggy pants. It is very possible that Ebony is a representation of the woman Tara hopes she will grow to become. She's older, sexier, and what Tara believes to be the perfect embodiment of a gothic woman. She has the agency to dye her hair unnatural colors and buy clothes exclusively from Hot Topic, her favorite store. The clothes she does wear aren't baggy, but form fitting and sexy, and physiologically she looks like herself, if she looked just a little bit more like her favorite female celebrity, Amy Lee.

Finally, at the end of the introduction, Ebony flips off a group of “preps” who derisively glance at her. “Preps” is a slang term for a group of people who are “preppy”. The term originally described someone who attended a private college preparatory school in Northeast America. It would later describe a manner of dress and taste associated with that environment, such as wearing khaki and boat shoes or playing squash. In the early and mid 2000s, the term “prep” was used amongst teens and pre-teens to identify adolescents who wore clothing brands like Abercrombie and Fitch and listened to artists like Britney Spears because they were considered popular or trendy. The opposite of a prep was a goth or a punk or an emo, any adolescent who participated in an “alternative” subculture. This last definition of preppy is most likely the one that Tara Gilesbie, who was in middle school during the mid 2000s, intended. When Ebony flips off the preps in the story, it further solidifies Tara's alter persona as a “goth”, since she is rejecting the people that represent everything she defines herself against.

“AN” stands for “Author's Note”. As fanfiction is an interactive and collaborative medium, the author of a piece will often leave author's notes to the reader. These notes can appear at the beginning of a chapter, at the end of a chapter, or, as shown here, inside the text of the chapter. “My Immortal” contains an author's note at the beginning of every chapter and occasionally within the text. Author's notes can contain anything from an appeal for positive reviews: “AN: stup flaming ok! btw u suk frum

no on evry tim sum1 flams me im gona slit muh ristsz!”(Ch.15)<sup>1</sup>; an explanation of a section that the author would like to improve on or was misunderstood by readers: “AN: I sed stup flaming ok ebony’s name is ENOBY nut mary su OK! DRACO IS SOO IN LUV wif her dat he is acting defrent! dey nu eechodder b4 ok!” (Ch.4)<sup>2</sup>; or a shout-out to a friend or fan who helped with a section of the text: “AN: Fangz 2 bloodytearz666 4 helpin me wif da chapta! BTW preps stop flaming ma story ok!” (Ch.2)<sup>3</sup>. In the above author’s notes, Tara makes multiple allusions to flaming. Flaming is the act of intentionally writing negative and/or inflammatory comments in response to a fanfiction, article, or other internet product with the express intention to incite a reaction from either the creator or fans of the piece.

#### IV

The plot of “My Immortal” is as follows: Ebony, who is a Satanist, meets Draco Malfoy, who is also a gothic Satanist, at the Great Hall and he asks her to attend a Good Charlotte concert with him as a first date. They do some unnamed drugs while they fly in Draco’s enchanted Mercedes-Benz to the concert, where they have an amazing time. They then drive/fly to the forbidden forest, where Draco and Ebony have sex for the first time. Just as Ebony is about to climax, they are caught by Headmaster Albus Dumbledore. Draco and Ebony declare their love to each other in front of Dumbledore.

The next day, during breakfast, Ebony runs into an attractive goth boy with black hair, red contact lenses, no glasses, and a pentagram scar on his forehead. This is Vampire (nee Harry) Potter. He used to have a lightning bolt scar on his head, but he converted to Satanism and it changed to a

---

1

Translation: Stop flaming, okay! By the way, you suck. From now on, everytime someone flames me, I’m going to slit my wrists!

<sup>2</sup> Translation: I said stop flaming, okay?! Ebony’s name is Ebony, not Mary Sue, okay? Draco is so in love with her that he is acting different! They knew eachother before, okay?

<sup>3</sup> Translation: Thanks to bloodytearz666 for helping me with the chapter! By the way preps, stop flaming my story, okay?

pentagram. After breakfast, Draco takes her up to his dorm and they begin to engage in intercourse again when Ebony notices a tattoo on Draco's butt. It is a heart with Vampire's name in it. Assuming he has been cheating on her with Vampire Potter, Ebony storms off to confront Vampire.

She finds Vampire Potter in potions class, where she confronts him about his relationship with Draco. In this scene we learn that Ebony is also friends with a character named B'loody Mary Smith. B'loody Mary Smith was known for years at Hogwarts as Hermione Granger, but she recently found out that she was adopted by muggle parents and her real parents were dark wizards of the surname Smith who were killed by Voldemort. Upon finding this out she changed her name from Hermione Granger to B'loody Mary Smith, converted to Satanism, and transferred from Gryffindor to rival house Slytherin.

Vampire Potter explains to Ebony that Draco is his ex-boyfriend and that they haven't been together in quite some time. Ebony, still upset, takes a walk in the Forbidden Forest to clear her head. While there, she is approached by a terrifyingly pale man with red eyes. It isn't another gothic boy, but Voldemort. Ebony tries to run away, but Voldemort casts a mind control spell on her so that she cannot escape. Ebony manages to break the spell, but Voldemort shoves a gun in her arms and threatens to kill Draco if Ebony does not shoot Vampire Potter dead. Voldemort leaves and Ebony patches things up with Draco.

The next day, Ebony is practicing with her heavy metal band, Bloody Gothic Rose 666, which consists of her, Draco, Vampire Potter, Bloody Mary Smith, Diabolo Weasley (the name that Ron Weasley took when he converted to Satanism), and Hagrid. Ebony can't focus on practice, and tells her friends about her encounter with Voldemort. Draco panics and tries to commit suicide by slitting his wrists. Ebony runs away to her room where she cuts herself and then takes a bath while considering suicide herself. Ebony then hears a noise and sees professors Snape and Lupin riding on brooms outside of her window, Snape videotaping Ebony and Lupin masturbating to the footage. Ebony takes

the gun that Voldemort gave her and shoots Snape and Lupin, destroying the video camera in the process. It is then revealed that Hagrid, who is now a student and a Satanist, convinced Snape and Lupin to tape Ebony because he was in love with her but could never be with her since she was in love with Draco.

Suddenly, Vampire Potter's scar starts to hurt. He has a vision. Voldemort has taken Draco hostage. Ebony and Draco rush to Dumbledore's office, but Dumbledore refuses to help them since he's resentful of how many rules Ebony, Draco, and Vampire have broken. Vampire gets fed up and instead magics himself and Ebony to Draco's location. They rush in, expecting to confront Voldemort, but instead find Wormtail torturing Draco. They prepare to fight Wormtail, but instead he falls madly in love with Ebony and begs her to have sex with him. Ebony gets upset at this proposal and stabs him in the heart, killing him. They escape and return to Hogwarts, where the now free Draco comforts Ebony while she sobs about how she wishes she was less pretty and talented so that everyone wouldn't be in love with her and trying to sleep with her all the time.

To celebrate their reunion, Draco and Ebony go to a My Chemical Romance concert in the neighboring, all-wizard village of Hogsmeade. Before the concert, B'loody Mary takes Ebony to a super secret clothing store only for true goths. They head to the concert, but it is a trap. Voldemort is waiting for them. All seems lost until Dumbledore, who is now a goth and has converted to Satanism, flies in and saves them. But the next day they realize that Dumbledore was really only having a mid-life crisis, and is just a poser (someone who pretends to lead an aforementioned "alternative" lifestyle, but actually has no knowledge or interest of the elements of that lifestyle and is only trying to fit in). Chapter 22 ends with Dolores Umbridge trying to close the school since several students have been attacked by Voldemort there.

Throughout the piece Ebony continues to display classic traits of a Mary Sue: most of the male characters are in love with her or physically desire her; the female character whom she respects, Hermione (Bloody Mary), is her best friend; she is able to break Voldemort's mind control spell, one of the three most powerful spells in the series, with no effort; Lupin, Snape, and Dumbledore, three of the most powerful adult wizards in the series, are made into impotent fools, making Ebony more capable than them; and the entire plot revolves around Ebony.

The blatant Mary-Sueism of the piece is one of the main reasons that “My Immortal” is considered one of the worst fanfictions ever written, along with its atrocious spelling errors, nonsensical plot, and the lack of adherence to the canon of *Harry Potter*. Inconsistencies include, but are not limited to: Draco, who despises muggles, using a car and listening to muggle bands; everyone converting to Satanism when religion is not a huge part of the lives of wizards; Ron, Harry, and Hermione joining a band when none of them can play instruments; students being able to enter the forbidden forest; students being able to transfer between classes; Hagrid's inclusion as a student instead of the adult groundskeeper; the use of a video camera (muggle technology does not work at Hogwarts); and Harry and Ebony magically transporting themselves to Draco's location (magical transportation, or apparition, is impossible at Hogwarts, an important plot point throughout the series).

One might be confused as to why readers would be upset over these changes when “My Immortal” is a self-insert fic, a sub-genre of alternate universe fic, and the point of alternate universe fanfictions is to alter the universe. One explanation is that while Traditional alternate universe fanfictions are a form of play wherein an author changes one or more aspects of a universe to explore how that would alter the sequence of events, “My Immortal” changes the universe into something barely recognizable, ignoring previous rules of the universe (muggle technology being used at Hogwarts) and characterization (Hagrid's change into a student) without any clear purpose.

In fact, many commenters questioned whether she had read the texts at all. In the author's note of Chapter 9, Tara Gilesbie admits as such: “AN: stop flaming ok! I dntn red all da boox! dis is frum da movie ok so itz nut my folt[...]”<sup>4</sup> Depending on the fandom, it could be acceptable to base a fanfiction solely on an adaptation of the original text. In the Jane Austen fandom, fanfictions based off of the 1995 BBC Miniseries version of *Pride and Prejudice* are numerous and popular. Even if Tara Gilesbie had based “My Immortal” off of the films, however, the changes that she made to the universe or characters would still make little sense.

## VI

I would like to argue that Tara Gilesbie is basing “My Immortal” off of the Hot Topic version of Harry Potter. Hot Topic is a store located in shopping malls nationwide that sells pop culture related clothing and accessories, rock music and posters, and gothic-themed comics and literature. Hot Topic began in the late 1980s as a store that catered specifically to music-themed merchandise. The store really took off a little over a decade later, when CEO Orv Madden altered the store's image to include not only music-themed items, but also a slew of different merchandise associated with “alternative” cultures such as punk, goth, and industrial. The stores “were constructed to look like a mix between a night-club and a teenage fun house, with music played loud enough to match both environments.” (Funding Universe) Similar to Starbucks, which was also taking off at that time, Hot Topic boomed due to the store's ability to present and sell a lifestyle. Although Hot Topic brands itself as a store that caters to those living the punk or goth lifestyle, it commodifies those aesthetics in such a way that alienates them from their original meaning, offering less an alternative to mainstream culture than a different flavor of it.

As Hot Topic grew in popularity among the 12-22 age group, more and more media companies

---

<sup>4</sup> Translation: Stop flaming, okay?! I didn't read all the books. This is from the movie, okay? So it's not my fault

made deals to sell their merchandise there. Beginning in 1998 with the subversive cartoon *South Park*, Hot Topic soon began to cut merchandising deals with everyone from Nintendo to Disney. In 2004, to promote the release of the *Harry Potter and The Prisoner of Azkaban* film, Hot Topic began selling Harry Potter themed merchandise. At first, they only sold one limited edition unisex t-shirt featuring a mugshot of Sirius Black. The shirt was so popular that consumers stood in line outside of malls before opening in order to purchase a shirt. Hot Topic then reprinted the shirt and devoted an entire section of their store to Harry Potter themed merchandise.

Tara Gilesbie states several times throughout “My Immortal” that Hot Topic is her favorite store, and all of the changes she makes to the original Harry Potter text and universe make perfect sense when viewed through the lens of the commodified “alternative” lifestyle that Hot Topic was selling at the time. Ebony and all of her friends are Satanists. Though Tara Gilesbie does not seem to know much about Satanism (while Satanism is generally considered an atheistic religion, Ebony prays to Satan at one point), Hot Topic did sell *The Satanic Bible* by Anton Szandor LaVey during the time “My Immortal” was written (at the Hot Topic in my home town, *The Satanic Bible* was displayed between *The Communist Manifesto* and *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac*). Furthermore, Ebony makes constant references to bands whose CDs and merchandise were sold at Hot Topic, such as Good Charlotte, Green Day, My Chemical Romance, and Evanescence.

While Hot Topic never made any moves to explicitly alienate the parents of its target demographic (who were most likely making many of the purchases), it promoted an image of youthful rebellion against the “establishment”. This explains many of the changes to the adult characters in “My Immortal”. For example, Dumbledore refuses to help Ebony and Vampire Potter when Draco is in mortal peril because he is upset with them for breaking too many school rules. There exists a plethora of children's and young adult literature where adults are ineffectual in their rule abiding and the children must save the day, such as Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, which was also

very popular at the time “My Immortal” was written.

*Harry Potter*, however, is not one of those series. While Harry Potter is the hero, and ultimately saves the day, he is surrounded by competent and intelligent adults without whom he would not be able to succeed. Dumbledore, in particular, does not conform to the stereotype of a rule-enforcing, ineffectual adult, as he is portrayed in “My Immortal”. At the end of the *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* film, Dumbledore confronts Ron and Harry in his office to discuss the ramifications of their adventure in the chamber: “You two realize, of course, that in the last few hours, you have broken perhaps a dozen school rules? And that there is sufficient evidence to expel you both? Therefore, it seems only fitting... That you both receive Special Awards for Services to the School. And -- let me see -- yes, I think two hundred points apiece, which I believe, should be more than enough to secure Gryffindor the House Cup.” Although in the books and films Dumbledore continually rewards Harry and his friends for breaking the rules, his actions do not conform to the “adults just don't get it” and “rebel against authority” images that Hot Topic projected.

The portrayal of sexuality in “My Immortal” also supports viewing the *Harry Potter* series through the lens of Hot Topic brand culture. In “My Immortal” with the exception of Dumbledore, Wormtail, Voldemort, and Diabolo (Ron) Weasley, all of the male characters are bisexual. In both the *Harry Potter* films and books, there are no characters that are explicitly described as queer. In October of 2007, J.K. Rowling would out Dumbledore as gay, but as this occurred a year after “My Immortal” was published, Dumbledore's sexuality is irrelevant to this reading. Although Hot Topic did not specifically cater to queer consumers in the mid-2000s, queerness inevitably became wrapped up in the anti-mainstream, reject authority message of the culture.

In Chapter 13 of “My Immortal”, when Draco is being held captive by Voldemort, Harry begins to cry and talk about how much he loves Draco. Accompanying this segment is an author's note that

reads: “(AN: don’t u fik gay guyz r lik so hot!)<sup>5</sup>” It is very common in fanfiction for a relationship between two male characters to be written erotically for women. There exists a large variety of homosexual romantic and erotic fanfiction, but often these relationships are romanticized due to a perception of queer men being more sensitive, since their patriarchal oppression is more obvious than their heterosexual counterparts. This view of male queerness fits well with Tara's portrayal of the majority of her male characters as bisexual. Even her author's note on the attractiveness of queer men comes not after an erotic moment between two men, but after a moment of deep sensitivity and emotional vulnerability. By choosing to make the majority of her male characters bisexual, she can portray the sensitive, emotionally intuitive stereotype of a queer man that is considered desirable in her community, who can at the same time be attracted to and in love with her author avatar, Ebony. Furthermore, their queerness emphasizes how non-mainstream Tara believes her versions of the Harry Potter characters to be.

As shown in Ebony's introduction, as well as Willow's, Tara Gilesbie is very concerned with exactly what her characters are wearing at every moment. While it is not uncommon for an author to go into great detail about a character's appearance when introducing them, Tara Gilesbie describes the hair, makeup, and clothing choices for almost every character in every scene. Her characters are often described wearing clothes of certain brands, specifically Hot Topic, or bands, such as Marilyn Manson. In the Harry Potter series, subcultures that are expressed through aesthetic self-representation are not discussed. The majority of the series takes place at Hogwarts, where the students all wear a uniform. When clothing is discussed in detail, it usually acts as a marker of class. The Weasleys wear handmade sweaters and hand-me-down robes, while characters such as Harry and Draco purchase fashionable and new clothes that are custom tailored. One character, Nymphadora Tonks, is described as displaying a punk aesthetic; however, it is implied that she purposely dresses in muggle clothes to align herself with

---

<sup>5</sup> Translation: Don't you think that gay guys are like so hot?!

the non-magical half of her family and outwardly show her scorn towards the elitist pureblood half (Tonks' mother was disowned by her family for marrying a man who was born to non-magical parents).

This is another discrepancy that can be illuminated by viewing it through the lens of Hot Topic brand culture. Although Hot Topic presents itself as a hub of alternative culture, it does not actually espouse the values of punk or goth communities. Hot Topic is not a community space. There are no message boards where members of the local “alternative” communities can post events. There are no meetings or parties or concerts held at Hot Topic stores. They offer no avenues to meet other people who identify as goth or punk, beyond bumping into them at the store. Hot Topic is a store. In the Hot Topic brand of “alternative” culture, you prove to yourself and others that you are punk or goth through your purchase of goods. In the Hot Topic world, the more CDs and clothes and accessories you own the more dedicated you are to being “alternative”. If Tara Gilesbie is indeed trying to reconcile the universe of Harry Potter with a Hot Topic brand “alternative” culture, one of the primary ways she would ~~do~~ accomplish this is by showing how these characters are good consumers of “alternative” cultural products.

The above explains why Draco Malfoy, who in the *Harry Potter* books, would rather cut off his own ears than attend a concert by a muggle band, loves My Chemical Romance, a muggle band, in “My Immortal”. Unsurprisingly, Tara Gilesbie's dedication to Hot Topic culture is also reflected in her conception of Slytherin House. In “My Immortal”, Slytherin is painted as an “alternative” paradise full of Satan worshipers who all wear Hot Topic and streak their hair with bright colors. In the *Harry Potter* series, Slytherin is a traditionalist house that draws the students with the most money, best connections, and purest lineages. It's more akin to Yale University's Skull and Bones club than the liberal, counterculture environment described by Tara Gilesbie.

In the films, and especially in the merchandise, Slytherin is portrayed as dark and mysterious. In the books, what denotes Slytherin as a villainous place is its racism, classism, and lack of empathy. The

films and merchandise, however, visually code villainy through association with “bad” and “wicked” things such as darkness, black clothing, romantic and aristocratic clothing and hair, snakes, and spiders. This is done to visually differentiate Draco Malfoy, the villain, who only wears shades of black and deep green, with Hermione, the hero, who wears a pink sweatshirt with a rainbow belt. While this is used by Warner Bros as shorthand to differentiate between evil and good, it is easy to see how Tara Gilesbie would take these subtle visual cues and associate them subconsciously with “alternative” culture and “prep” culture. Viewed within this dichotomy, Slytherins appear to be misunderstood rebels who refuse to conform to the dominant society, whereas Gryffindors are mindless rule followers who unfairly judge those who are different.

The reason Tara Gilesbie has Harry, Ron, and Hermione transfer from Gryffindor to Slytherin instead of setting them up as enemies that she can defeat is clear: Harry, Ron, and Hermione are likeable characters, good friends, and most importantly are portrayed by attractive actors. There are no Slytherin characters in Harry's year who are loyal and likeable, and since Tara hasn't read the books she doesn't know about any of the minor, undeveloped Slytherin characters whom she could co-opt to be Ebony's best friends. The only student Slytherin characters besides Draco who are featured in the first four films (the fifth film wasn't released until after “My Immortal” was written) are his cronies, Vincent Crabbe and Gregory Goyle. In the films, Draco is dressed and made up to have a dark elegance about him, while Crabbe and Goyle wear ill-fitting clothing and have funny haircuts that are used to make them look brutish and unintelligent. If Tara Gilesbie is using “My Immortal” and Ebony as a form of wish fulfillment where she attends Hogwarts and interacts with all her favorite characters, it is far easier to make the likeable and attractive main trio into Slytherins than to recreate the character and appearance of Crabbe and Goyle.

Because of Tara Gilesbie's and Harry Potter's association with Hot Topic, "My Immortal" is a perfect reflection of society's changing relationship to and experience with literature. When, at 14, I waited outside of Hot Topic for two hours to purchase my Sirius Black t-shirt, it was a way for me to outwardly express my love of the Harry Potter books and movies. My t-shirt and its association with Hot Topic, which at the time was the only retailer selling official Harry Potter clothing, was not a supplement or lens through which I interpreted the books, its atmosphere, or characters. However, to Tara Gilesbie, Harry Potter was an inextricable part of Hot Topic and vice versa. Clothing and accessories depicting or referring to television, video games, books, or films have saturated the market. "Geek" and "nerd" culture are in, and according to modern society one of the best ways to prove "nerd cred" is to wear clothes and accessories associated with beloved cultural products. Even today, where clothing depicting characters or slogans is the norm, people rarely if ever consider how their interaction with consumer products associated with a narrative affects their conception of said narrative.

Tara Gilesbie's "My Immortal", though an extreme example, demonstrates just that. Since 2004, Harry Potter merchandise has been sold at Hot Topic stores. Although Harry Potter was not created by Hot Topic to sell its lifestyle brand, it was able to market the series in a way that fit with the company's image. The marketed goods of Harry Potter create Hot Topic's own adaptation of the narrative. It may not be as coherent as a film adaptation, and to some extent it requires at least some knowledge of the content of the story it's promoting, but it creates its own take on the narrative nonetheless.

"My Immortal" is one 11-year-old girl's attempt to reconcile and flesh out the narrative created by a story's merchandise. Perhaps that is the real reason "My Immortal" garners so much hate, and even those who love it refuse to take it seriously. It inadvertently exposes the effect that capitalism and consumerism have on the narratives that people hold dearest. But as merchandising for books and films becomes more and more profitable, the connection between the experience of a narrative and the

experience with the merchandise promoting that narrative becomes harder to ignore as books and movies and television series are published or created based on their ability to sell merchandise.

Two recent examples of this phenomenon are *The Hunger Games* series and the television show *Young Justice*. I would be very surprised if the decision to publish *The Hunger Games* wasn't at least partially influenced by the profits made on the incredibly popular Team Edward and Team Jacob shirts from the *Twilight* series as well as the plethora of Harry Potter merchandise sold that centers around purchasing items emblazoned with the heraldic symbol of the consumer's favorite Hogwarts house. *The Hunger Games* has both a hotly debated love triangle where Katniss must choose between Peeta and Gale (similar to Bella's choice between Jacob and Edward in the *Twilight* series) as well as 12 distinct districts each with their own personality that readers can identify between. You can purchase both Team Peeta and Team Gale shirts, as well as a shirt for each of the 12 districts. Similar to the way that Hot Topic pretends to sell consumers a community by creating a lifestyle around their products, *The Hunger Games* shirts create a false sense of community through capitalism by telling you to choose a side and proudly declare it by wearing it around. Unsurprisingly, Hot Topic sells *Hunger Games* merchandise.

On the other side of the coin, the incredibly popular animated television adaptation of DC Comic's *Young Justice* was pulled from Cartoon Network due to its inability to sell certain types of merchandise. When DC Comic's legend, Paul Dini, appeared on Kevin Smith's Batman themed podcast, *Fatman on Batman*, he revealed that the reason for the sudden cancellation of the popular and acclaimed *Young Justice* was that its audience consisted of too many female viewers. Cartoon Network derives most of its merchandising revenue from action figures, which are not typically purchased by girls.



## Chapter 2: “Like the Rain”

### I

Not all self-insertion fanfictions are Mary Sue fanfictions. A fanfiction's author avatar can act as a secondary character or be well-rounded, with flaws that are recognized by the author avatar and other characters. The prolific fanfiction.net author Charlotte Blackwood writes such fictions. She is most famous for her short fanfiction “The Forbidden Fruit”, in which the character Draco Malfoy engages sexually with a granny smith apple. It was popularized when Mark Oshiro, the internet celebrity behind “Mark Does Stuff”, posted a video on youtube of himself reading the fiction aloud. (Oshiro. 2012)

The practice of reading fanfiction aloud on YouTube or other video sites is a common one. Mark Oshiro's videos consist of him reading a book or fanfiction, watching a film or television series, or playing a video game and sharing his reactions and thoughts regarding the cultural product. Generally, fanfictions that are considered bad or shocking are the topics of such videos. The format and experience of such videos is very similar to that of the television series *Mystery Science Theater 3000* (*MST3K*), in which a man is trapped on a space ship and forced to watch cheaply made B-movies from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s as part of a sinister psychological experiment. Each episode mainly consists of the man and his three robot companions watching said films and providing amusing running commentary that is usually satirical in nature. In the article “Frame Work, Resistance and Co-Optation: How *Mystery Science Theater 3000* Positions Us Both in and against Hegemonic Culture”, author Michael Dean acknowledges the debt these types of videos owe to *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, while acknowledging the radically different social space from which they emerge:

“Nevertheless, even definitions of audience and community are undergoing radical changes in the wake of the internet's radical reimagining of society. The audience of the World Wide Web is both

dispersed and focused into infinitely variable nodes of interest. The Web's technical possibilities combined with the iconoclastic attitudes fostered by projects like *MST3K* and *RiffTrax* [...] have generated guerrilla pop-culture critique/interaction in the form of DIY YouTube parodies, mash-ups, remixes, redubs, sound samples, recaptioned comic strips – and the cult phenomenon known as MSTing, which directly applies the *MST3K* technique of interjected commentary to pop-cultural fiction. For corporate owned properties, copyright laws have provided the greatest defense against *MST3K*-style satirical commentary. Most MSTers confine their “riffing” to original fan fiction rather than scripts from corporate-owned entertainment properties, which renders such twice-removed MSTing somewhat toothless: the cannibalizing parody of a pastiche. There's no denying, however, that among the MSTers a strong sense of community persists, as well as an equally strong dedication to reappropriating pop-cultural concepts and texts.” (Dean. 2011. p.126)

The practice of MSTing fanfiction, especially Mary Sue fanfictions like “My Immortal”, is indeed a popular one, but it is somewhat unfair to refer to them as toothless parodies. Fanfiction is an expansive medium containing numerous genres and subgenres that have far surpassed the objective of pastiche. Fanfiction is a mode of cultural reappropriation itself, and fanfiction authors purposely deform their source texts just as often as they purposely mimic them. When MSTers perform their craft using fanfiction, it isn't a poor man's substitute for the original text, but a critique of a particular interpretation of that text. While Dean highlights the effects of the internet upon *Mystery Science Theater 3000* style critique and the online community fostered by MSTing, he fails to understand that MSTers belong not only to the community of those who perform and watch MST videos, but to the fan community of the work they are MSTing. When MSTers make videos about fanfiction they are adding to the greater discussion of meaning and interpretation surrounding that text, as well as commenting on the tropes and structures specific to fanfiction and its genres.

Furthermore, Dean underplays the enjoyment of a text that often occurs simultaneously to its critique. *Mystery Science Theater 3000* and YouTube MSTers both revere and despise the texts they choose. As discussed in the previous chapter, many find “so bad it’s good” films and literature both attractive and enjoyable. The point of MSTing isn't necessarily to cannibalize a text, but to revel in its “badness” and to connect with others over this shared experience of media. Often fictions, such as

Charlotte Blackwood's "The Forbidden Fruit", are written to specifically evoke such a response in the reader, and when Mark Oshiro reads "The Forbidden Fruit" he is just as in awe as he is disturbed by the tale.

## II

While "The Forbidden Fruit" might be Charlotte Blackwood's most well-known work, she primarily writes romance fanfictions (of her 88 works, only 9 aren't love stories). 76 of her fanfictions occur within the Harry Potter universe, and of those, 15 are explicitly revealed to contain self-insertions of Charlotte Blackwood or her friends (several stories are co-authored with her friends). Between October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011 the focus of Charlotte Blackwood's self-insert fics changed. Prior to November 29<sup>th</sup> Charlotte Blackwood's self-insert fics focused on the romantic relationship between Sirius and her character. "Like the Rain", published on November 29<sup>th</sup>, is a story of romance between Remus Lupin and Charlotte Blackwood's author avatar and begins with this author's note: "A/N: This is probably the beginning of a new 'career' as a Remus/OC writer. I'm sorry for those of you who liked my Sirius/OC stories. I will finish them, for I love each story as if it were a child of mine, but I just don't love Sirius anymore. He was useful for telling the stories I needed and wanted to tell, and I loved him once, but I have grown up, moved on, and Remus is the new love of my life. I hope you will continue this journey with me, and for those of you who are newly discovering my work, welcome aboard!"

The term OC is an abbreviation of Original Character. An original character is any character a fanfiction author introduces that does not exist in any of the source material. An original character can be as innocuous as a nameless waiter who delivers one line to the main character of the fanfiction. Using "My Immortal" as an example, Ebony Dark'ness Dementia Raven Way is an original character in

addition to acting as an author avatar and Mary Sue; the store clerk at the “punkgoff” boutique that Ebony and Bloody Mary Smith visit at Hogsmeade is also an original character. Bloody Mary Smith, Tara Gilesbie's reimagining of the character Hermione Granger, is not an original character. Even though Bloody Mary Smith has a different name, look, and backstory than canon Hermione Granger, since Tara Gilesbie states that Bloody Mary Smith is Hermione Granger, she cannot be considered an original character.

In the above author's note, Charlotte Blackwood refers to her stories as either “Sirius/OC” or “Remus/OC”. Two names separated by a forward slash symbol(/) is used in fanfiction to designate a story as a “shipping fic” between those two characters. Shipping is a shortened form of the word “relationshiping”, a verb form of the word relationship. The term first appeared on a thread in an *X-Files* message board titled “my problem with the 'relationshipers””, in which a fan of *The X-Files*, user Tony R. Boies, argues that the main characters Fox Mulder and Dana Scully should not be in a relationship. *The X-Files* was a science fiction mystery television drama that ran from 1993 to 2002 in which FBI agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully investigate the titular X-Files: the FBI's unsolved, confidential paranormal cases. Though it initially only had a small, but dedicated cult following, *The X-Files* soon became a cultural phenomenon. The show's success is often attributed to its appeal to mistrust of government following the end of the Cold War, as well as the show's portrayal of a secular spirituality through connection with extraterrestrial life. (Powers. 1995.)

The show was also the first science fiction television series that attracted an equal number of male and female fans through its character-driven drama and strong female lead, Scully. (Scodari. 2000.) Although the show's creator, Chris Carter, never intended for Scully and Mulder's relationship to surpass a professional friendship, a large and vocal group of *X-Files* fans became very dedicated to unpacking the sexual tension present between Mulder and Scully in each episode, creating websites dedicated to the pairing where like-minded fans could post their romantic Mulder/Scully fanfiction or

discuss and debate the particulars of the pairing on message boards. These members of *The X-Files* fan community are the “relationshipers” to whom Tony R. Boies was referring above.

Though *The X-Files* fandom may have coined the term “shipper”, fans had been writing romantic and erotic fanfiction about their favorite fictional relationships for decades. Unsurprisingly, the trend began in the *Star Trek* fandom. In 1974, fanfiction author Diane Merchant wrote “A Fragment Out of Time”, the first romantic fanfiction between Kirk and Spock, and irrevocably changed the face of fanfiction forever. Two years after her story was published, the first *Star Trek* fanzine dedicated exclusively to the romantic and sexual relationship between Kirk and Spock was published, and by 1987 almost half of all *Star Trek* fanzines published focused on this subject. (Verba. 2001.) Before and during this transformation of the *Star Trek* fanfiction community, fanfictions that explored the platonic friendship between Kirk and Spock were also very popular. In order to differentiate between the two, fanfictions about Kirk and Spock’s friendship were labeled K&S, whereas fanfictions about Kirk and Spock’s romantic relationship or erotic encounters were classified K/S. (Kustritz. 2003. p.371-384)

K/S, when uttered aloud, becomes “Kirk Slash Spock”, and so fanfiction written about the romantic or sexual relationship between two men became known as slash fanfiction. (Penley. 1997. p.100-107) Its lesbian counterpart, femslash, became popular a decade later with the television series *Xena: Warrior Princess*. (Staff. 2006.) Although the practice of using a “/” between two characters’ names was originally associated with fanfiction concerning a homosexual relationship, the symbol is now used for all romantic or sexual pairings, regardless of gender.

In fact, a fanfiction author is expected to use the CharacterA/CharacterB format in the fanfiction’s description for all of the romantic or sexual pairings present in the text. Especially with fanfictions that specifically deal with romance or sex, readers are often looking to read about certain character pairings and avoid others. This is why an author like Charlotte Blackwood, who had previously written almost exclusively Sirius/OC fanfictions, would be expected to alert her readers to

the shift to Remus/OC.

### III

Romance is a central theme in the majority of self-insertion fanfictions. Even if a romantic relationship is not the main focus of a self-insert fic, the story usually includes romantic or sexual interactions between the author avatar and their favorite character. As Paula Smith shows in her parody, “A Trekkie's Tale”, the practice of readers using self-insertion fanfiction to become the object of their favorite character's romantic affections has existed for decades. Though it may have been a relatively small population of authors and fans in Smith's time, expressing romantic sentiments towards a fictional character has become very common in modern fan communities.

This phenomenon is most obvious in the “waifu” movement among fans of anime, manga, and Japanese video games, known as otaku. The waifu movement is a popular trend in fandom where a fan refers to a character as their waifu (or wifey) or huzbando. When a fan expresses such a statement it's meaning can vary from a character who exhibits qualities they look for in a mate to the fan actually feeling as though that character is their true soul mate. Often fans will look towards their waifu for encouragement or as a method of self-improvement wherein they try to become the type of person their waifu would love back. Many fans often describe the experience of having a waifu as akin to a religious experience in that they have the concept of a person who inspires them and is a source of unconditional love they can draw from in difficult times. (Posted in: "Waifu F.A.Q.")

Within the otaku community in Japan, the act of calling or thinking of a character as a wife has existed for some time, (Boleware. 2011.) but the concept grew in popularity abroad in the late 2000s. The term itself originates from with the anime *Azumanga Daioh*, a surreal, slice of life, sketch comedy manga and anime series that focuses on a group of female high school classmates and several of their

professors. In once scene, a professor refers to a girl in a picture frame on his desk as his wife; however instead of saying the Japanese word for wife, *tsuma*, he calls her “my wife” in English. Because of his thick, Japanese accent, it sounded to English-speaking viewers as though he had said “mai waifu”. (Memor-X et al. 2013)

The term became popular with English-speaking fans of anime and manga on the internet chat board /4/chan as a term of endearment used towards one's favorite female anime or manga character. Although the term emerged from the anime and manga community, the usage has spread to fandoms of all mediums. Recently, an anonymous man wrote a very detailed letter to an artist of *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* erotic fanart, demanding he remove his erotic images of the character Twilight Sparkle, whom the man referred to as his fiancée. (O'Neal. 2013.) The trend has similarly spread to young adult fiction, especially books aimed at teen and pre-teen girls. Within the *Twilight* fandom it is especially common for girls to refer to fan-favorites Edward or Jacob as their boyfriend. Kristen Stewart, the actress who portrayed *Twilight* protagonist Bella Swan, dated Robert Pattinson, the actor who portrayed her love interest Edward, for the duration of the shooting of the *Twilight* films and would often receive death threats from fans who believed Edward was their boyfriend. Robert Pattinson has filed numerous restraining orders against fans, including one who bit his neck, (Shone, 2011) even though he is only the actor who portrays Edward and not the actual character.

#### IV

Although in the author's note above, Charlotte Blackwood states she is “in love” with Remus Lupin, it is probably not in the same fashion as the above examples of romantic attachments listed above. However, her self-insertion fanfictions are part of a larger cultural shift about the way in which we relate to fiction. Charlotte Blackwood, on some level, was in love with her perception of the

character of Sirius Black, and then suddenly she realized that either her perception of his character was wrong or her desires in a romantic partner had changed. “Like the Rain” is an exploration of these realizations by juxtaposing the characters that Charlotte Blackwood considers romantically ideal, the love of Kitty and Levin from *Anna Karenina*, which she considers to be the ideal romance, and a fictional version of herself.

## V

The preface chapter of “Like the Rain” occurs during *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, in an imagined scene where Remus Lupin and Sirius Black are making small talk with Nymphadora Tonks, Sirius' cousin and Lupin's future wife. Tonks mentions the fact that, while at Hogwarts, she was sorted into Hufflepuff House. This reminds both Sirius and Lupin of Lupin's first love, a Hufflepuff girl he dated while at Hogwarts. This discussion is used as a framing device for the story to travel back temporally to Lupin and Sirius' time at Hogwarts and detail the relationship between Lupin and his first love, Lyric Swanson.

The year is 1977. The First Wizarding War and Voldemort's reign over Wizarding Britain as Dark Lord have been in effect for the past 7 years. Although they feel the effects of the war in their home lives, the students are shielded from the conflict while at Hogwarts. It's Remus Lupin's final year of school. He is Gryffindor's male prefect, a position of student authority at British boarding schools who helps enforce school policies and maintain the safety of its students. After reconnecting with Hufflepuff prefect, Lyric Swanson, on the train to Hogwarts, Remus realizes he has feelings for her. He has no intention of acting on these feelings as he sees very little of a future for himself. Remus Lupin is a werewolf, a secret unbeknownst to all except his closest friends and family and the administration of Hogwarts. While the professors at Hogwarts keep his secret from the other students, Remus Lupin is

legally required to divulge his status as a werewolf to employers. As far as Remus Lupin is concerned, all that waits for him outside the walls of Hogwarts is a life of poverty and seclusion spent hiding from Lord Voldemort and his Death Eaters.

Lyric Swanson is also beginning her final year at Hogwarts. Lyric feels stuck in mediocrity: she's pretty, but by no means the most attractive girl at Hogwarts; she's smart, but not the top student in her year; she has many friends, but doesn't feel particularly close to any of them. Although Lyric, like Remus, is a school prefect, she feels ultimately alienated from the community. She's interested in politics and effecting change in the world, but ultimately ineffectual from the safety of Hogwarts. Unsure how to add meaning to her life other than reading her favorite book, *Anna Karenina*, for the thousandth time, Lyric makes it her goal to become the school's Quidditch commentator, hoping the increased engagement within her community will bring her some form of fulfillment.

Sirius Black, also a 7<sup>th</sup> year, is a rebel at heart. The first in his family to get sorted into a house other than Slytherin, he delights in breaking the rules at Hogwarts and the hearts of its female students. He comes from an old, aristocratic family who sides with Voldemort in the war. Disagreeing with their politics, he has recently taken his inheritance and moved out.

When his friend, Sirius Black, mentions a casual interest in Lyric, Remus Lupin decides that he must ask her out if only to spare himself from the pain of having to watch her with another man. Lyric isn't particularly interested in Lupin, but when he reveals that he read *Anna Karenina* to impress her and thinks of her as the Kitty to his Levin, her heart immediately melts. Lupin and Lyric quickly become an item. Through their relationship, Lyric's feelings of mediocrity and purposelessness become forgotten until Sirius Black starts flirting with her. Although Lyric is in love with Remus Lupin and very content in their relationship, Sirius' attentions flatter her ego and soothe her insecurities in a way Lupin's affections never could.

One afternoon, near the end of the school year, Lupin catches Sirius and Lyric kissing in the

library. When Sirius returns to their dormitory, Lupin confronts him about what he saw. Sirius claims he was testing Lyric's devotion to Lupin and apologizes, hoping to put the matter behind them. Lupin does not accept his apology and convinces himself that Lyric cheated on him because of he is a werewolf and could never be good enough for her. He convinces himself that she would be better off, and in fact truly deserves, a man like Sirius and forces Sirius to become Lyric's new boyfriend. Although Sirius and Lyric don't want to date each other, they go along with the arrangement to placate Lupin and find comfort in one another at losing Lupin as a friend and lover respectively.

They graduate several weeks later, and Sirius asks Lyric to move in with him. This decision is made not out of a mutual desire to become closer, but as a precaution for Lyric's safety in times of war. When Sirius Black disowned his family and moved out, he made his disdain of Voldemort and his cause known. Because of this, he is considered an enemy of the Dark Lord and since Lyric was publicly his girlfriend she is also in danger as well. Lyric severs ties with her family, who are hiding out in Birmingham, to protect them and moves in with Sirius. They join in the fight against Voldemort and become members of the Order of the Phoenix, the secret society headed by Albus Dumbledore dedicated to stopping Voldemort. Although Sirius and Lyric are both deeply unhappy in their relationship they maintain the facade of a couple, both feeling that they deserve to be unhappy for betraying Lupin.

The facade eventually breaks when Sirius starts physically assaulting Lyric. When Lupin discovers Lyric's abuse at Sirius' hands, he apologizes for forcing them to be together. Lyric tells Lupin that she's still in love with him and they reconcile. She moves in with him that night, and though they both face constant danger from Voldemort and his armies, they are happy together.

Several days later, Remus is asked by the Order of the Phoenix to go undercover and join the army of werewolves Voldemort is gathering. Eventually, Fenrir Greyback, the werewolf in charge of Voldemort's werewolf forces, discovers Lupin's affiliation with the Order of the Phoenix. Lupin returns

home one evening to find the door ajar and Fenrir Greyback holding Lyric captive. Fenrir Greyback rips open Lyric's throat with his teeth, telling Lupin to warn Dumbledore that he will do the same to the rest of the members of the Order of the Phoenix should he not back down and pledge his allegiance to Voldemort.

The text then returns to the scene from the preface. Tonks has left, leaving only Sirius and Lupin together. Sirius urges Lupin to move on with his life. Lupin claims that he will never stop loving Lyric, but half-heartedly denies it's relation to his refusal of Tonks' advances. The fanfiction ends with him performing a blood ritual in anniversary of Lyric's death.

## VI

Essential to the understanding of “Like the Rain” is the story of Kitty and Levin in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. At the end of chapter 7, Charlotte Blackwood includes an author's note encouraging her readers to read *Anna Karenina* alongside her fanfiction: “AN: [...] THIS IS BASED STRONGLY ON ANNA KARENINA, if you hadn't noticed that yet, so if you've got time to kill and are looking for an actual novel to read, I recommend it profusely. Or watch a film version if you just want to be quickly familiarized with the story. Everything will be more rewarding if you know this story! (And not Anna's story, but Levin and Kitty.)”

*Anna Karenina* is a Russian novel by Leo Tolstoy published originally as a serial from 1873 to 1877. Considered one of the greatest novels of all time, it continues to be favored by critics and respected authors such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Vladimir Nabakov, and William Faulkner. The book is usually printed at over 1,000 pages and deals with a variety of topics from the Russian feudal system to double standards of gender to the practice of religion. The protagonist is the titular Anna Karenina, a married aristocratic woman, who becomes swept away in a scandalous love affair with the

sophisticated Count Vronsky. While I could describe the entire plot of *Anna Karenina* in great detail, since Charlotte Blackwood claims that her text only deals with the parts of the book concerning supporting characters Kitty and Levin I will focus on their involvement in the text.

Kitty is the sister of Anna Karenina's sister-in-law. Kitty is considered very beautiful and has many suitors, including the wealthy Count Vronsky. Levin is a passionate but shy aristocrat who prefers to spend time at his sprawling country estate instead of attending aristocratic engagements in Moscow. He is friends with Stiva, Kitty's brother-in-law, and through their acquaintance has fallen in love with Kitty. Although Kitty is very fond of Levin, she has been urged by her mother to focus her attentions on Count Vronsky, who is considered to be more sophisticated than Levin and a better match to Kitty's social standing, and when Levin asks Kitty to marry him she refuses.

Later that evening at a lavish ball, Kitty expects Count Vronsky will dance with her and propose marriage; however, Vronsky dances almost exclusively with Anna Karenina, and Kitty fears she has fallen for Anna. When Kitty confronts Vronsky about his feelings towards her, he admits that he was only casually flirting with her and had assumed that her affections were equally as casual and that he has no intention of marrying her. Kitty leaves the ball heartbroken.

As she continues to reflect on her situation, she becomes tortured both by Vronsky's rejection and by her shameful treatment of Levin. She is so distraught that her health begins to fail, and her mother takes her to a health spa in hopes that it will help her recover. At the spa in Germany, Kitty meets the disabled Madame Stahl and her adopted daughter Varenka, who are devoted to living a pious, Christian life. Kitty becomes close friends with Varenka and tries to similarly devote herself to piety, until she discovers that Madame Stahl is faking her disability. Confused and disappointed by this information, she and her mother return to Moscow.

Levin, still affected by Kitty's rejection, becomes obsessed with the idea of falseness and spends much of his time farming on his estate while thinking of how to rid the world of false ideas and people.

Levin visits Kitty's sister, Dolly, who explains to him the reason behind Kitty's rejection. Levin is not affected by Dolly's pleas and has decided to find a peasant woman to marry, believing it is less false than marrying another aristocrat; however, he spots Kitty as he is leaving and realizes that he is still in love with her.

Stiva arranges a meeting between Kitty and Levin where they reconcile and are quickly married. The marriage at first is difficult and Kitty and Levin find themselves smothered by the constant presence of the other. Then Levin learns his brother, a popular writer, is dying of consumption, and Levin and Kitty travel to see him. Kitty competently and tenderly cares for Levin's brother in his last days, reminding Levin of why he loves Kitty and strengthening their relationship. When they return to their estate, Kitty discovers that she is pregnant.

That summer, Kitty's mother, sister, and her sister's children spend the summer and her and Levin's estate. Levin prefers a simple life of solitude, and is made uncomfortable by the constant presence guests at his estate. He reaches his limit when a visitor, Veslovsky, playfully flirts with Kitty. Levin becomes extremely jealous and forces Veslovsky to leave.

Levin then takes a short trip to Moscow where he becomes wrapped up in high society, city life. He goes on lavish and expensive outings with Vronsky and Stiva, including a trip to a gentleman's club. When Levin returns home, Kitty learns that he spent some time with Anna. Terrified that he will leave her for Anna as Vronsky did, Kitty becomes very upset and jealous. After a long discussion in which Kitty and Levin realize the toxic affects of the Russian aristocrat urban social sphere, they reconcile.

Levin's brother's last book is published posthumously, but is received terribly by both the public and critics. This convinces Levin that he must join the pan-Slavic movement, which he believes will bring about the good his brother wished for. He has several other life-changing moments in this final chapter. First, a lightning storm strikes the estate and barely misses Kitty and his son, causing Levin realizes how much he loves his son. Levin then has a life-changing conversation with a peasant on his

estate, where he realizes that although his relationship with religion has complicated, he truly does believe in the principles of Christianity and the Bible. At peace with his political, familial, and religious life, the novel ends with Levin optimistically trying to lead a meaningful life.

## VII

Charlotte Blackwood's "Like the Rain" adapts the story of Kitty and Levin's romance to her life through the text of *Harry Potter*, and while she expresses the ways in which she wishes her life to emulate that of Kitty and Levin's, she simultaneously critiques it. Her critique is not a typical academic critique of the text wherein she might compare Levin and Kitty's religious philosophies to passages of the Bible, or examine the ways in which late 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian politics inform the characters' decisions. Through self-insertion, Charlotte Blackwood critiques the applicability of and compatibility with *Anna Karenina* to her own life.

In "Like the Rain", Charlotte Blackwood explicitly acknowledges the impact of media on our perceptions of reality. After Remus Lupin quotes Levin, the character of Lyric, whom Charlotte Blackwood admits is a "carbon-copy" of herself in the author's notes of chapter 8, expressly states that Kitty and Levin are her example of the ideal romance:

"It was beautiful to hear his voice whisper those words, the words that had so long been to her what love really ought to be. She had wondered if she had a Levin, would she do as Kitty had done and turn him away. Would she get a second chance? Life didn't typically give second chances, and wonderful men like Levin who actually worshiped girls didn't really exist. Especially girls as un-Kitty-ish as herself. After all, she wasn't a princess, she wasn't beautiful (although she was reasonably attractive), and she certainly didn't have the attention of all the eligible boys (ch. 4)."

Lyric's, and by extension Charlotte Blackwood's, idea of what it means to be in love and in a relationship have been irrevocably influenced by the story of Kitty and Levin in *Anna Karenina*. However, she realizes that while she desires Kitty's romance, she and Kitty are very different.

Lyric/Charlotte Blackwood also expresses a desire for a Levin of her own, but dismisses her desire as foolish since men like Levin don't "really exist".

The meaning of this sentiment can be read in a couple of different ways. Including this sentiment as a part of Lyric's inner monologue could act as a form of dramatic irony wherein Lyric believes that she will never find a Levin several lines of text before the character who represents her idea of Levin asks her on a date. It could also act as an acknowledgment of her difference from Kitty. If she is different from Kitty in certain ways, then her ideal romantic partner must differ from Levin in ways that compliment her. This second reading is further supported by the fact that Charlotte Blackwood is writing a self-insert fic focusing on her author avatar's relationship with Remus Lupin, opposed to a self-insert fic where her author avatar replaces Kitty and romances Levin. Furthermore, Charlotte Blackwood states that she is in love with Remus Lupin, and nowhere in any of her fanfictions or on her blog does she state that she is in love with Levin, only that she wants a love like that of Kitty and Levin's. If this is the case, then "Like the Rain" is an argument as to why Remus Lupin is the Levin to her Kitty and Sirius Black is not.

In addition to exploring why Remus Lupin, or someone like him, qualifies as her ideal match, through the process of adapting the love story between Kitty and Levin to her author avatar and Remus Lupin, she highlights the ways in which the function of Kitty and Levin's romance succeeds and fails to meet her needs. In *Anna Karenina*, Levin worries that he is not good enough for Kitty because he is not as glamorous as Count Vronsky or as social as some of Kitty's other suitors. In "Like the Rain", Remus Lupin also worries that he is not good enough for Lyric for the same reasons. Because he is a werewolf, it is likely he will never be able to get a job and therefore will be unable to participate in wizarding society to the same extent that Lyric will be able to. He has another moment of insecurity in chapter 6, where Sirius lends him expensive clothes to wear on his first date with Lyric. He compares his own wardrobe with Sirius' and wonders if Lyric would ever truly be interested in someone who isn't as

fashionable and suave as Sirius.

After revealing that he is a werewolf to Lyric, he confesses that he feels as though his condition makes him unlovable:

'Let's say...let's say knowing everything you know about me, I sit here and ask you out. Even if there were a chance you liked me, you'd have to take into consideration that I turn into a horrible, dangerous monster once a month. I'd never be able to get a real job, nothing long-term. I'd probably never be able to have children, not with a risk of passing on my condition. It would have to color the way you looked at the situation.'

'I suppose,' Lyric said, biting her lip a little. He was right, it was an important factor. 'But I'm odd, Remus. To me, all of those things are positives. Sure, your girl probably would mind, but if she were anything like me, she might consider you an even better catch. I mean, honestly, you're the perfect tragic hero, unable to hold on to a real job, live the life you've dreamed of because of circumstances out of your control.... It's beautifully dark. Think of how hard I'll have to work to top a backstory like that.'

[...]He did seem to be a bit of a tortured soul, which was incredibly attractive to her. Remus had never seemed to mind her quirks, like the fact that she showed up incredibly early for most things and late for everything else, the fact that she hated socks, her morbidity, even her yellow-and-black necktie [...] Remus was flawless, and she was a walking freak show” (ch. 4).

Here the first major difference between Lupin and Levin materializes. As previously established, Lyric finds herself less attractive, wealthy, influential, and desirable than Kitty, and in this segment she refers to herself as a “walking freak show”. Kitty was a kind and beautiful princess and her watch was a sweet and wealthy aristocrat. What Remus has that Levin does not is his status as an outsider. While Levin rejects certain aspects of society throughout the novel, it is always his choice to do so, whereas Remus has no control over whether or not he can engage in society. Lyric sees herself as a social outsider who is unable to fit in to dominant society the same way Kitty does in *Anna Karenina*, and so Lyric/Charlotte Blackwood's Levin too must be a social outcast in a way that *Anna Karenina's* Levin is not.

Another difference between Lupin and Levin, is Lupin's feelings of primal lust towards Lyric. While Levin certainly finds Kitty very attractive, the novel itself is not overtly sexual and Levin is never stated to be overcome with lust. Remus Lupin, as portrayed in “Like the Rain”, often struggles

with his extreme feelings of lust towards Lyric:

“He felt like such a monster, he hadn't even taken her out yet and he was already mentally referring to her as his mate! She would probably back out instantly if she knew, if she somehow found out how primal his regard for her was. But it was so much more than that. It was primal, yes, but cerebral at the same time” (ch. 5).

Remus often has passionate erotic fantasies about and feelings towards Lyric. In response to these feelings he first feels shame, usually associated with his condition as a werewolf, followed by a resolve to act as a perfect gentleman and suppress the parts of him that he considers inhuman because of his idealized Kitty-like perception of Lyric. However, to his surprise and delight, every time Remus Lupin acts on his animalistic urges, Lyric enthusiastically reciprocates. For Lupin, creating Lyric into a Kitty allows him to prove to himself that he is a gentleman and not a monster. Because the humanoid monster refuses to acknowledge the humanity of the monstrous, expressions of humanity become a caricature of themselves. In order for him to feel human, he must transcend what it actually means to be human and become a character. His refusal to recognize Lyric's human flaws maintains this idea of what it means to be truly human.

The association of the sexual with the animalistic and the monstrous, and a human-like monster, such as a vampire or werewolf, trying to suppress those urges to properly court the one he loves has become a particularly popular romantic trend. The most popular recent example of this is Stephanie Meyers *Twilight* series, in which the protagonist Bella Swan falls in love with Edward Cullen, a tortured vampire. Stephanie Meyers is Mormon and uses Edward's lust for human blood as a vampire as a metaphor for male sexual desire. This allows for a great deal of sexual tension to build between Bella and Edward without the explicitness that is generally frowned upon in Mormon culture. Furthermore, the male monstrous love interest trying to curb his sexual appetite for the protagonist because of how much he loves her, allows the female protagonist to have a sweet and chivalrous

romantic interest who will also satisfy her sexual desires. Furthermore, it emphasizes the specialness of the female protagonist because this character could act on his animalistic sexual desires, but doesn't because the female protagonist is so special to him. By invoking this trend, Charlotte Black attempts to reconcile the reverent way in which Levin treats Kitty with her desire for sexual pleasure and her desire to be sexually desired by her lover.

## VIII

In acknowledging the differences between herself and Kitty, Charlotte Blackwood must also change elements of the plot of Kitty and Levin's story. In *Anna Karenina*, Kitty first refuses Levin because she believes that she can snag Count Vronsky, who is socially considered to be a better match for her. She soon realizes that Vronsky is in love with Anna, and regrets her decision with Levin. But since Charlotte Black/Lyric is not Kitty, her problem is not pride but insecurity. Instead of the Vronsky character rejecting Charlotte Black/Lyric, making her humble enough to realize that she actually prefers Levin/Lupin regardless of the social status of her other suitors, she must instead reject Vronsky in order to go after what will truly make her happy.

In "Like the Rain", Lyric is in love with Lupin, but cheats on him with Sirius, who symbolically plays the role of Vronsky without embodying the character in the same way Charlotte Blackwood's Lupin embodies Levin, because of the feeling of specialness and social power that it gives her. In chapter 8, Lyric contemplates cheating on Lupin with Sirius:

"And really, she knew she shouldn't even be asking herself such questions, she shouldn't be entertaining such ideas, because she shouldn't be letting him get anywhere near as close as he was, but Lyric's vanity disregarded all such moral knowledge. He was attractive. He found her attractive. She found his finding her attractive irresistible. She knew if he made a move, she wouldn't likely push him

away right off” (ch. 8).

Sirius is mentioned multiple times in “Like the Rain” as the most eligible bachelor at Hogwarts due to his wealth, charisma, beauty, and sexual proficiency. While Lyric knows that she doesn't have feelings for Sirius and would prefer to be with Lupin, the idea that Sirius would desire her, the girl who identifies as a walking freak show, soothes her insecurities and quells the doubts of her own mediocrity. Charlotte Blackwood knows that she wants a Levin, not a Vronsky, so it would not make sense for Kitty's rejection of Levin for Vronsky to occur within “Like the Rain”. Charlotte Blackwood must instead draw upon her own flaws and weakness, her personal insecurities and her need to be special, to identify the type of personal growth she would need to undergo to be good enough for her Levin.

In fact, the style and structure of “Like the Rain” further emphasize Charlotte Blackwood's desire to be special. Instead of setting “Like the Rain” during the time line and story of the *Harry Potter* books or in an alternate universe where Remus Lupin does not die at the end of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Charlotte Blackwood sets her fanfiction before the setting of the books, during Lupin's time at Hogwarts, while still maintaining the plot of the *Harry Potter* books through her use of a framing device set during *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*.

When at Hogwarts, Sirius, Remus, James, and their other friend Peter, called themselves “The Marauders”. In the *Harry Potter* fandom, the time period between 1971, the year The Marauders began attending Hogwarts, and 1981, the year Lily and James die and the *Harry Potter* books begin, is referred to as “The Marauders Era”. Fanfictions that occur during The Marauders Era are very common for numerous reasons. In addition to The Marauders, many other popular adult characters such as Severus Snape, Lily Evans (Harry's mother), and Lucius Malfoy attended Hogwarts during that period, giving fanfiction authors a chance to have many of their favorite characters interact in a school setting. Furthermore, beyond a few key events, very little is known about The Marauders Era. This creates an

atmosphere of familiarity with the source text and characters, while allowing the fanfiction author more creative freedom without having to diverge from canonical events. Authors who set their stories during the time in which Harry Potter attended Hogwarts, where the details and events are more concrete, have less freedom in this regard.

Some fanfiction authors disregard character timelines, like Tara Gilesbie in “My Immortal”, who changed Hagrid's age from 69 to 17 so that he could join the group of Ebony's Satanist friends. However, Charlotte Blackwood is attempting a feat entirely different from that of Tara Gilesbie's. The following is the description for “Like the Rain”: “Before moving forward, one must look back. Before Nymphadora Tonks, there was Lyric Swanson. The real story as to why our favorite professor pushed away love.” Charlotte Blackwood, the author, has realized that she is in love with the character Remus Lupin, but she has no interest in creating a drastically different alternate *Harry Potter* universe where they can live “happily ever after” like Tara Gilesbie and Draco Malfoy. With “Like the Rain”, Charlotte Blackwood wants to live in the *Harry Potter* universe as it exists in canon, and the way she can achieve both an exploration of her feelings for Remus Lupin and an existence within the canonical version of *Harry Potter* is to set her fanfiction during The Marauders Era. In the fanfictions discussed in the previous chapter, the tendency is for author avatars to become the central and most important characters to the narrative. This too is the case with Charlotte Blackwood's author avatar in “Like the Rain”, Lyric Swanson. She inserts her author avatar as the lost first love of Remus Lupin and forges her role as a contributing factor in his reticence to commit to a relationship with Tonks. In doing so, she not only places herself within the Harry Potter canon but also plays an important contextual role in the interpersonal relations between Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, and Nymphadora Tonks.

Conclusion: Why does self-insertion fanfiction matter?

Knowledge is constructed. Through interactions with the natural world, other people, and forms of media, individuals gather knowledge that creates a conception of their possible world. In the influential sociological work, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman argue that reality is socially constructed: “The social distribution of knowledge thus begins with the simple fact that I do not know everything known to my fellowmen, and vice versa, and culminates in exceedingly complex and esoteric systems of expertise. Knowledge of how the socially available stock of knowledge is distributed, at least in outline, is an important element of that same stock of knowledge” (p.46). Basically, humans rely on each other for information. As we gain experience we create patterns to understand and predict the world around us and we project our expectations onto others. After an expectation is projected enough times it becomes habituated and institutionalized within societies, and people unconsciously perform within the expected paradigms.

With the expansion of the presence of technology in daily life, media becomes the predominant mode of socially constructed reality. Western society is unable to escape the presence and influence of media, as the forces of capitalistic consumption have inundated us with endless options of how to experience mediated life (de Zengotita.2005). The practice of distracting the consumer through the presentation of countless options is essential to the creation of fan communities – people bond over having chosen the same options of mediated experience.

The insertion of the self into a literary text distorts the central functions that construct the fictional world, invading the text with elements of the author's constructed reality. This blurs the line between the reality of a fictional universe and the socially constructed, mediated reality of the author's universe. This exposes both the failure of a fictional universe to form an existence that can comprehensively reflect the experiences of the actual world, as well as exposing the mediated nature of

the author's constituted reality. In doing so, it exposes the inabilities of our constructed realities to form complete systems of knowledge through the modal system of fictional universes.

In this way, self-insertion fanfiction implicitly acknowledges the author's inability to create knowledge objectively. It is impossible to understand and evaluate a text without reflecting and evaluating your own relationship within its context. Self-insertion fanfiction then becomes a literary critique wherein a work is explored and evaluated from a subject position within the text.



## Works Cited

- AfterEllen.com Staff. "Fan Fiction Comes Out of the Closet." *AfterEllen.com*. N.p., 04 Jan. 2006. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.afterellen.com/fan-fiction-comes-out-of-the-closet/01/2006/>>.
- Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy*. N.p.: Oxford UP, 1961. Print.
- Anna\_bird, and Sasha\_feather. "Mirror Box." *Archive of Our Own Beta*. N.p., 09 Dec. 2009. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://archiveofourown.org/works/27428>>.
- Aristophanes, and Dudley Fitts. *The Frogs*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955. Print.
- "Author (literature)." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 13 Nov. 2013.
- Avery, W. T. (1957). "Augustus and the "Aeneid"". *The Classical Journal* **52** (5): 225–229.
- Bacon-Smith, Camille. *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1992. 97. Print.
- Barthes, Roland, Stephen Heath, and Mary Dove. *The Death of the Author*. N.p.: n.p., 1977. Print.
- "The Ben Chatham Adventures." *Blogspot*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://chathamben.blogspot.com/>>.
- Bentley, Paul. "'Mummy Porn' Fifty Shades Of Grey Outstrips Harry Potter to Become Fastest Selling Paperback of All Time." *Mail Online*. Associated Newspapers, 18 June 2012. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2160862/Fifty-Shades-Of-Grey-book-outstrips-Harry-Potter-fastest-selling-paperback-time.html>>.
- Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality; a Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966. Print.
- Blackwood, Charlotte. "Like The Rain." *Fanfiction.net*. N.p., 19 Nov. 2011. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<https://www.fanfiction.net/s/7595869/11/Like-The-Rain>>.
- Boies, Tony R. "My Problem with the "relationshipers"" *Google Groups*. N.p., 14 May 1996. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <[https://groups.google.com/forum/?hl=en#!topic/alt.tv.x-files/0XiH-dux\\_6Y%5B1-25-false%5D](https://groups.google.com/forum/?hl=en#!topic/alt.tv.x-files/0XiH-dux_6Y%5B1-25-false%5D)>.
- Boleware, Derek, Jr. "Otaku Culture: Husbando & Waifu." *Rok the Reaper*. N.p., 26 Dec. 2011. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.rokthereaper.com/2011/10/otaku-trend-husbando-waifu.html>>.
- Borthwick, E.K. "Aeschylus Vs. Euripides: A Textual Problem At `Frogs' 818-19." *Classical Quarterly* 49.2 (1999): 623. *Academic Search Premier*.

- Brown, Scott. "Sherlock Holmes, Obsessed Nerds, and Fan Fiction." *Wired.com*. Conde Nast Digital, 20 Apr. 2009. Web. <[http://www.wired.com/techbiz/people/magazine/17-05/pl\\_brown](http://www.wired.com/techbiz/people/magazine/17-05/pl_brown)>.
- Carroll, Lewis, and Martin Gardner. *The Annotated Alice: Alice's adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking Glass*. New York: C. N. Potter, 1960. Print.
- Cereal Velocity. "Equestria Daily: Story: Through The Eyes of Another Pony." *Equestria Daily*. N.p., 01 Oct. 2011. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.equestriadaily.com/2011/08/story-through-eyes-of-another-pony.html>>.
- Chefodeath. "Why We So Hate Mary Sues." *The Escapist Forum*. N.p., 15 Jan. 2012. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.escapistmagazine.com/forums/read/18.338294-Why-do-we-so-Hate-Mary-Sues>>.
- Conroy, Mike. *500 Comic Book Villains*. Hauppauge, NY: Barrons Educational Series, 2004. Print.
- Dean, Michael. "Frame Work, Resistance and Co-Optation: How Mystery Science Theater 3000 Positions Us Both in and against Hegemonic Culture." *In the Peanut Gallery with Mystery Science Theater 3000: Essays on Film, Fandom, Technology, and the Culture of Riffing*. Ed. Robert G. Weiner. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011. 126. Print.
- Deird1. "What I Mean By Mary-Sue and Why I Hate Her." *The Mezzanine*. N.p., 15 Apr. 2010. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://deird1.livejournal.com/255173.html>>.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976. Print.
- Dini, Paul. "Fat Man on Batman." *SModCast*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://smodcast.com/channels/fatman-on-batman/>>.
- Esteeffee. "Fair Trade." *Archive of Our Own Beta*. N.p., 08 Apr. 2009. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://archiveofourown.org/works/3979/>>.
- Fischer, Rose B. "100 Things I've Learned by Writing Fanfiction, #19: Mary Sue and Why We Hate Her." *Wordpress*. N.p., 01 Feb. 2014. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://rosebfischer.wordpress.com/2014/02/01/100-things-ive-learned-by-writing-fanfiction-19-mary-sue-and-why-we-hate-her/>>.
- Foucault, Michel. *What Is an Author?* N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.
- Gilesbie, Tara. "My Immortal." *My Immortal Rehost*. N.p., 2008. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://myimmortalrehost2.webs.com/>>.
- Glancy, Ruth (1999). *Student Companion to Charles Dickens*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company.

- Grann, David, and Louis Bachelot. "Mysterious Circumstances: The Strange Death of a Sherlock Holmes Fanatic." *The Devil and Sherlock Holmes: Tales of Murder, Madness, and Obsession*. 1st ed. N.p.: Doubleday, 2010. N. pag. Print
- Gray, Jonathan. *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*. New York: New York University Press, 2007. Print.
- Gregory, Elizabeth. Introduction. *Quotation and Modern American Poetry: Imaginary Gardens with Real Toads*. Houston, TX: Rice UP, 1996. 12-15. Print.
- Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Dir. Chris Columbus . Perf. Daniel Radcliffe and Rupert Grint and Emma Watson . Warner Bros. Pictures, 2002. DVD.
- "Hot Topic, Inc. History." *FundingUniverse*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/hot-topic-inc-history/>>.
- It's a wonderful life*. Dir. Frank Capra. Perf. James Stewart and Donna Reed and Lionel Barrymore. Paramount Home Entertainment, 2007. DVD.
- Kaakelilattia. "A World Without DJs 2." *DeviantART*. N.p., 20 Aug. 2011. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://kaakelilattia.deviantart.com/art/AWWD2-Chapter-1-253992840?q=gallery%3Akaakelilattia&qo=1>>.
- Kempe, Margery. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1985. Print.
- Krauss, Rosalind E. *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1985. Print.
- Kustritz, Anne. (2003), Slashing the Romance Narrative. *The Journal of American Culture*, 26: 371–384.
- Lewis, C. S. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. New York: HarperCollins, 1994. Print.
- Manter, Lisa. *Passionate Imaginings: The Mystical Remythologies of Richard Rolle, Julian of Norwich, and Margery Kempe*. Ann Arbor, Mich: U.M.I, 2001. Print.
- Memor-X, Eric, and Senshin. "Where Does the Term “Waifu” Come From?" *Anime & Manga Stack Exchange*. N.p., 11 Aug. 2013. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://anime.stackexchange.com/questions/4754/where-does-the-term-waifu-come-from>>.
- "My Immortal / The Worst Fanfiction Ever." *Know Your Meme*. N.p., 2010. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/my-immortal-the-worst-fanfiction-ever>>.
- O'Neal, Sean. "The Internet Finally Reaches Its Apex as Man Marrying My Little Pony Character Writes Angry Email to Erotic Pony Artist." · *Newswire · The A.V. Club*. N.p., 22 Mar. 2013. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.avclub.com/article/the-internet-finally-reaches-its-apex-as-man-marry>>.

94206>.

"Originality." *Merriam-Webster*. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 13 Nov. 2013

Oshiro, Mark. "Mark Reads 'The Forbidden Fruit'" *YouTube*. YouTube, 01 July 2012. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1k5ud1eNt4>>.

Penley, Constance. *NASA/TREK: Popular Science and Sex in America*. New York: Verso, 1997.

Rebaza, C. M. (2009). *The modern coterie: Fan fiction writers as a community of practice*. (Order No. 3392447, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, , 199.

Rosen, Ralph Mark. "Aristophanes' Frogs And the Contest of Homer and Hesiod." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 134.2 (2004): 295-322. Print.

Rowling, J. K.. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2005. Print.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991. Xvii. Print.

Sasha\_feather. "From the Edges to the Center: Disability, "Battlestar Galactica," and Fan Fiction." *Transformative Works and Culture*, 2010. Web. <<http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/227/181>>

Scodari, Christine; Felder, Jenna L. (2000). "[Creating a Pocket Universe: 'Shippers', Fan Fiction and The X-Files Online](#)". *Communication Studies*

Shone, Tom. "Reality Bites: Robert Pattinson on the Price of Fame." *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group, 18 Apr. 2011. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/8433026/Reality-bites-Robert-Pattinson-on-the-price-of-fame.html>>.

Siegel, Jerry, John Forte, Wayne Boring, and Curt Swan. *Superman: Tales of the Bizarro World*. New York, NY: DC Comics, 2000.

Sk8rpssockpup. "Booze, Sex, and Very Deep Thoughts." *Archive of Our Own Beta*. N.p., 06 Apr. 2008. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <[http://archiveofourown.org/works/1056858?view\\_adult=true](http://archiveofourown.org/works/1056858?view_adult=true)>.

Smith, Marcus. "Mike Tyson vs. Muhammad Ali: An In-Depth Analysis of Who Would Really Win." *Bleacher Report*. Turner Broadcasting, 24 Jan. 2011. Web. <<http://bleacherreport.com/articles/582929-mike-tyson-versus-muhammad-alian-in-depth-analysis-of-who-would-really-win>>.

Smith, Paula. "A Trekkie's Tale." *The Original Anti "Universal Mary Sue Litmus Test"* N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.wiccananime.com/amslt/amslttrekkiestale>>.

Sqbr. "The Universal Laws of Motion." *Archive of Our Own Beta*. N.p., 27 Mar. 2012. Web. 25 Apr.

2014. <<http://archiveofourown.org/series/16927>>.

Staley, Lynn. *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994. Print.

*Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*. Dir. George Lucas. Perf. Mark Hamill and Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher. Twentieth Century Fox, 2004. DVD.

Taplin, Oliver. *Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A New Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

*The Brontës' secret science fiction stories*, British Library, 11 May 2011

Homer. *The Illiad*. N.p.: Paw Prints, 2011. Print.

*The People vs. George Lucas*. Dir. Alexandre O. Philippe. Lionsgate, 2011. DVD.

"The Universal Mary Sue Litmus Test." *Springhole.net*. N.p., 06 Mar. 2013. Web. 24 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.springhole.net/writing/marysue.htm>>.

Verba, Joan Marie. *Boldly Writing: A Trekker Fan & Zine History, 1967-1987* (2 ed.). FTL Publications.

Virgil, and Robert Fitzgerald. *The Aeneid*. New York: Random House, 1983. Print.

"Waifu F.A.Q." N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <<http://i0.kym-cdn.com/photos/images/original/000/043/914/1269187012895.png>>.

Walker, Cynthia W. 2011. "A Conversation with Paula Smith." *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 6. [doi:10.3983/twc.2011.0243](https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2011.0243).

William F. Powers. "'X-Files': Signs of Intelligent Life; Cult Favorite Gains a Following Among the Masses." *The Washington Post*. Washingtonpost Newsweek Interactive. 1995.

Zengotita, Thomas De. *Mediated: How the Media Shapes Your World and the Way You Live in It*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2005. Print.