

Transformative Works and Cultures, No. 21, special issue, The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work (March 15, 2016)

Editorial

Ika Willis, *The classical canon and/as transformative work*

Theory

Amanda Potter, *Classical monsters in new Doctor Who fan fiction*

Ika Willis, *Amateur mythographies*

Shannon K. Farley, *Versions of Homer: Translation, fan fiction, and other transformative rewriting*

Francesca Middleton, *Abusing text in the Roman and contemporary worlds*

Ahuvia Kahane, *Fan fiction, early Greece, and the historicity of canon*

Balaka Basu, *Virgilian fandom in the Renaissance*

Anna Wilson, *The role of affect in fan fiction*

Symposium

Tony Keen, *Are fan fiction and mythology really the same?*

Juliette Grace Harrison, *Shipping in Plato's Symposium*

Tisha Turk, *Oresteia as transformative work*

Review

Judith May Fathallah, *Fandom at the crossroads and Fangasm!*, by Lynn Zubernis and Kathy Larsen

Bertha Chin *Fan CULTure: Essays on participatory fandom in the 21st century*, edited by Kristin M. Barton and Jonathan Malcolm Lampley

Editorial

The classical canon and/as transformative work

Ika Willis

University of Wollongong, Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia

[0.1] *Abstract*—Editorial overview of *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 21, special issue, "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work."

[0.2] *Keywords*—Classics; Fan fiction; History; Medieval literature; Mythology; Renaissance

Willis, Ika. 2016. "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work" [editorial]. In "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work," edited by Ika Willis, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 21.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2016.0807>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] When *Transformative Works and Cultures* launched in 2008, with its focus on "transformative works, broadly conceived," my first thought, as a Classical reception scholar—that is, someone who studies transformative adaptations and rewritings of ancient Greek and Roman literary texts in the post-Classical period—was that this journal would be an ideal venue for exploring and expanding notions of transformative work by analyzing practices of transformation comparatively, across different cultural, historical, and material contexts. Eight years later, I am delighted to be editing this special issue on the relationships between Classical literature (and its afterlives) and contemporary fan work.

[1.2] In *Fandom* (2007), Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington argue that the contemporary third wave of fan studies is characterized by three things: first, by a move away from a focus on "possibly the smallest subset of fan groups," active producers of fan fiction (8); second, by an expansion of the range of fannish objects beyond narrative-based fandoms into, for example, sport and music fandoms; and third, by the insight that "rather than being a transhistorical phenomenon, fandom emerges in historical studies as a cultural practice tied to specific forms of social and economic organization"—those of "industrial modernity" (9). Contributors to this special issue, however, contribute to the third wave of fan studies by taking fan studies in a diametrically opposite direction. We retain the focus on fan fiction but

widen the historical scope of our enquiry beyond industrial modernity back through the Renaissance, the Middle Ages, and the Roman Empire, all the way to the oral culture of Homer and archaic Greece.

[1.3] As is noted repeatedly by the contributors to this special issue, contemporary fan authors often compare their practice to that of Classical, medieval, and/or Renaissance authors: the Latin author Virgil is often cited as an early fan fiction writer, as are the medieval writers of stories and poems in the Arthurian legend cycle and the Renaissance playwright Shakespeare, who borrowed and recycled characters and plots from existing works. Indeed, on a narratological level, what in this issue Ahuvia Kahane calls the "conceptual isomorphisms" (§0.1) between Classical literature and contemporary fan fiction are striking. Both are undeniably transformative modes of writing, whose authors use the techniques of allusion, appropriation, and transvaluation to expand on and/or to critique existing works; both address a highly knowledgeable and engaged audience. The existence of this conceptual isomorphism suggests a shared practice and, importantly, a shared aesthetic between fan fiction and Classical literature—that is, between one of the most delegitimized, lowest forms of cultural production in the contemporary world and one of the highest and most valued. Attending to the similarities between these two communities of practice thus enables us to invert and displace the high/low binary and to expand and nuance our model of transformative work.

[1.4] On the one hand, then, a formal isomorphism exists between Classical literary production and contemporary fan practices. On the other hand, however, there are, of course, significant differences between the historical periods and cultures discussed in this special issue. As every fan knows, context alters meaning: just as an intense moment of emotional connection between the Winchester brothers in an episode of *Supernatural* (2005–) becomes an acknowledgment of sexual attraction when the same moment is inserted into a new narrative context by a slash writer, so literary practices that might appear to be the same on a formal level are altered beyond recognition when they are repeated in different historical, cultural, social, linguistic, material, and technological contexts. Attending to the differences between Classical literature and fan fiction can sharpen our understanding of their specificities in important ways.

[1.5] The essays in this special issue, attending to both the formal isomorphism and the historical differences between Classical literature and contemporary fan fiction, expand the possible range of objects for fan scholarship and Classical reception studies alike. The double focus of the essays produces exemplary and sometimes startling readings of a dizzying range of texts: an inscription on a little clay drinking cup from Pithekoussai in the eighth century BCE; the second-century CE treatise *On His Own*

Books by the physician Galen; Sir Philip Sidney's late 16th-century *Arcadia*; a 21st-century fan story about the mythical Despoine, the daughter of Demeter and Poseidon, training *Supernatural*'s Dean Winchester in BDSM. In addition, these essays also expand our theoretical and historical frameworks for understanding and analyzing contemporary transformative work and its relationship to earlier forms. The theoretical orientation of this special issue is reflected in the fact that, perhaps for the first time in *TWC*'s history, all the full-length essays fall into the Theory rather than the Praxis section.

[1.6] As one might expect, this special issue contains several essays that examine the use of Classical material in contemporary transformative work—both fan work and commercially produced theatre—as well as essays that explicitly compare and contrast Classical practices with those of contemporary fan writers. Other essays intervene in our paradigms for analyzing transformative work, creating a definition broad enough to encompass both Classical and contemporary work yet historically informed enough to retain critical purchase on the specific characteristics of different communities of practice. Perhaps one of the most innovative aspects of the issue, however, is the use of concepts and theories drawn from contemporary fan practice and scholarship to illuminate medieval literature—a reversal of the usual historical and theoretical hierarchy. Here, fandom, its practices, and its vocabularies are used as a heuristic lens to open up new approaches to Classical, medieval, and early modern texts.

[1.7] The essays in this special issue thus expand both the possible range of objects for fan scholarship and Classical reception studies alike and the tools we have for thinking about the formal, aesthetic, cultural, and historical aspects of transformative work. I hope that they will lead to further scholarship in this area. In particular, I would be excited to see more work on canonicity, representation, and power relations, especially around class and race, two very vexed areas for both Classical scholarship and fandom. While I was editing this special issue, the news broke that black actor Noma Dumezweni was cast as Hermione Granger in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, a two-part London West End stage play scheduled to open in July 2016. The resulting #blackHermione hashtag can't help but remind a Classicist of the "black Athena" controversy that arose from the publication of Martin Bernal's book of that title in 1987. Comparisons between black Athena and black Hermione might help us deepen our understanding of both these powerful figures and of their very different historical and cultural contexts, just as the comparative work in this special issue deepens our understanding of Classical literature and of contemporary fan work.

2. Theory

[2.1] Amanda Potter's essay examines differences in the way that monsters from classical myth are treated in canon and in fan fiction in new *Doctor Who* (2005–). Through close readings of the Sirens and the Minotaur in two episodes and five fan stories, Potter demonstrates that fan writers synthesize the story worlds of Doctor Who and classical mythology more fully than canon writers do, frequently drawing on richly contextualized understandings of myth to create new stories. Canon writers, by contrast, tend simply to "raid the cultural archives" (§4.1) for monsters to fill a gap in a story, as when Stephen Moffat needed a monster at the heart of a mazelike hotel in 6.11 "The God Complex" and thought of the Minotaur.

[2.2] My own essay, like Potter's, deals with fan fiction and classical myth, but it focuses less on the use of mythological material in fan fiction and more on the theories and models of myth that are implicitly or explicitly articulated in fan fiction and fannish and scholarly meta. I show that fannish and critical appeals to myth to explain the structure and function of fan fiction are often undertheorized or dehistoricizing. Again like Potter, however, I conclude by arguing that specific fan fictional techniques, notably crossover, can be used to perform a satisfying synthesis of story worlds—which, moreover, can be understood as indeed mythic because fan fiction "intervenes not only in the narrative worlds of its source material but also in the social world of its telling" (§4.43).

[2.3] Shannon K. Farley's essay on "Versions of Homer" uses systems theory to understand and compare examples of transformative work from different historical and cultural contexts. Arguing that the difference between fan fiction and Classical literature is "more economic and cultural than narrative" (§3.1), her essay aligns with Keen's and Kahane's works in this issue in emphasizing the formal similarities between transformative works from different periods but also the important differences in authorial motivation and context. Through her comparisons between transformative reworkings of Homer from Pope's translation to Yuletide fan fiction, she suggests a new theoretical paradigm for transformative work that brings together translation studies, reception theory, and fan fiction studies.

[2.4] The concept of textual abuse, so often fleshed out in vivid metaphors of fan fiction as a violation of a canonical author's body (or children), is at the center of Francesca Middleton's rigorous and lively essay. She argues that we need to understand contemporary textuality and its anxieties in order to understand fan fiction, and she teases out such an understanding through a detailed and richly contextualized comparison of discourses of authorship in the Roman Imperial period and the late 20th/early 21st centuries. Where for Galen in the early second century "style and formal qualities are so significant to the text that a poorly written *Galen the Doctor* simply cannot be a Galen" (§2.12), today texts are understood both as

extensions of the author's self and as themselves extensible beyond their formal and material limits (for example, through sequels or transmedia adaptations), so that fan fiction becomes a prime site for textual anxiety.

[2.5] Ahuvia Kahane's essay on canonicity once more takes up the theme of the formal similarities and cultural/historical differences between Classical literature and fan fiction as he attempts to steer a "middle road that on the one hand will highlight historical difference...but that on the other hand will expose meaningful isomorphism" (§1.3). Using theories of canonicity drawn from fan studies, Classics, and music history, he reads several material artifacts from archaic Greece in ways that do indeed expose meaningful—and startling—similarities between practices of textual poaching in this period and in our own. In the process, the essay evolves a new theory of canon as a practice of containment, developed in response to textual "surplus."

[2.6] Balaka Basu's essay uses terms and theories drawn from fandom to read selected poems from the English Renaissance period, for example characterizing Lady Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* as a Mary Sue fic and Anna Weamys's *A Continuation to Sir Philip's Sidney's Arcadia* as a curtain fic. This use of contemporary terminology for texts from a different historical period insists on continuity, rather than difference, across time; the affective connections we might make with texts from the distant past; and the importance of affective connection for the writers it describes. Basu thus elaborates a theory of fan fiction as a practice of wandering, uncontainable, queer desire that crosses both textual and temporal boundaries.

[2.7] This theory is developed further in Anna Wilson's essay on fan fiction as an affective hermeneutic—a way of knowing texts and pasts through attachment, empathy, and emotion rather than through critical detachment. Wilson grounds her theoretical argument in contemporary scholarship on noncritical and affective reading practices but also in accomplished close readings of Yuletide letters about historical real person fiction. These readings demonstrate the way in which fans negotiate different, apparently oppositional, ways of knowing the past (scholarly and fannish, detached and attached), as well as the way in which they/we use affective hermeneutics to fill gaps in historical knowledge.

3. Symposium and reviews

[3.1] Tony Keen's Symposium contribution returns to the questions about fan fiction and mythology addressed by Amanda Potter and me in the Theory section, but it focuses on enumerating and analyzing the significant qualitative differences between classical literary treatments of myth and contemporary fan work. In particular, he

focuses on the different status of canon in each period and the way in which the hierarchical valuation of canon over fan fiction in the 20th and 21st centuries means that fan fiction tends to fill in gaps in texts, while Classical literary texts often retell core mythic stories, thus functioning more like reboots than fan fictions. Juliette Harrison, by contrast, finds important but unexpected parallels between Achilles/Patroclus shipping in Plato's *Symposium* and Dean/Castiel shipping in *Supernatural* fandom, arguing that both function (*pace* much scholarship on slash as a counterhegemonic queer reading practice) to bring same-sex relationships more closely into line with their contemporary norms. Tisha Turk reads Robert Icke's 2015 London production of the *Oresteia* as a "transformative adaptation" enabling an "active re-engagement" (§5.1) with the themes of Aeschylus's trilogy for a contemporary audience.

[3.2] One of the two book reviews that close out this issue, Judith May Fathallah's review of *Fandom at the Crossroads* and *Fangasm!*, returns to the complexities of the relationship between scholarship and fandom that many of the essays in this special issue have addressed. The two books that Fathallah reviews—one more scholarly and the other more fannish in its orientation, and both by the same authors, Kathy Larsen and Lynn Zubernis—were originally designed to be a single text breaking down the scholar/fan divide, but publishing norms made this ambition impossible. Meanwhile, Bertha Chin's review of Kristin M. Barton and Jonathan Malcolm Lampley's edited collection *Fan CULTure* focuses on its historical aspects—its attention to "old" fandoms like the original *Battlestar Galactica*—and its expansion of the usual objects of analysis in fan studies beyond fan fiction and media texts to fannish interactions with LEGO, Disneyland, and sports, so that, despite its contemporary focus, it neatly complements the ambitions of this special issue.

4. Acknowledgments

[4.1] I thank Kristina Busse for suggesting this special issue back in 2013, and the editors and production team members of *Transformative Works and Cultures* for all their work.

[4.2] It is not possible to properly acknowledge the depth of appreciation we feel toward everyone who has helped make this issue of TWC possible. They have suffered hard deadlines, late nights, and short due dates. As always, we thank the authors in this issue, whose original work makes TWC possible; the peer reviewers, who freely provide their time and expertise; the editorial team members, whose engagement with and solicitation of material is so valuable; and the production team members, who transform rough manuscripts into publishable documents.

[4.3] The following people worked on TWC No. 21 in an editorial capacity: Ika Willis (guest editor); Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson (editors); Cameron Salisbury (Symposium); and Louisa Stein and Katherine Morrissey (Review).

[4.4] The following people worked on TWC No. 21 in a production capacity: Rrain Prior (production editor); Beth Friedman, Shoshanna Green, and Christine Mains (copyeditors); Claire P. Baker, Sarah New, Rebecca Sentance, and Gabriel Simm (layout); and Carmen Montopoli, Amanda Retartha, and Latina Vidolova (proofreaders).

[4.5] TWC thanks the Organization for Transformative Works, which provides financial support and server space to TWC but is not involved in any way in the content of the journal, which is editorially independent.

[4.6] TWC thanks all its board members, whose names appear on TWC's masthead, as well as the additional peer reviewers and Symposium reviewers who provided service for TWC No. 21: Balaka Basu, Chris Baswell, Louise D'Arcens, Shannon Farley, Conseula Francis, Sean Gurd, Una McCormack, Francesca Middleton, Amanda Potter, and Anna Wilson.

5. Work cited

Gray, Jonathan, Cornell Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington, eds. 2007. *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*. New York: New York University Press.

Praxis

Classical monsters in new *Doctor Who* fan fiction

Amanda Potter

Open University, United Kingdom

[0.1] *Abstract*—Although a number of classic *Doctor Who* episodes featured story lines and characters drawn from Greek myth, no new *Who* episodes based on Greek myth appeared until seasons 5 and 6, in 2010 and 2011. These episodes featured Pandora's box, the Minotaur, and a Siren. They all use the mythical monster or artifact outside of its ancient Greek context, and I argue that the mythical monsters were additions to earlier story ideas. I compare this with the treatment of the myths of the Minotaur and the Sirens in five stories posted to FanFiction.net between 2008 and 2013. These stories all engage with classical myths, and the longest, "Lure of the Sirens," even engages with different versions of the myth of the Sirens. In this article I discuss how the writers use the classical myths within their stories, and how the myths fit in with the primary aims of the writers, for example in developing romantic relationships between characters.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Greek myth; Minotaur; Sirens; Theseus

Potter, Amanda. 2016. "Classical Monsters in New *Doctor Who* Fan Fiction." In "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work," edited by Ika Willis, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 21.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2016.0676>.

1. Introduction: New *Who* and Greek myth

[1.1] Story lines and characters from Greek myth have been borrowed by classic *Doctor Who* writers repeatedly, though infrequently. The first story to do so was "The Myth Makers" serial (1965), from the third season of *Doctor Who*, starring William Hartnell as the Doctor. "The Myth Makers" was based on the story of the Trojan War, which it treated as a historical event to which the Doctor and his companions time-traveled. "The Myth Makers" has been referred to by some critics as a "historical" serial, with features in common with other early historical serials such as "Marco Polo" (1964), "The Aztecs" (1964), and "The Romans" (1964) (Kilburn 2007; Keen 2010a, 2010b). Later serials featuring story lines taken from Greek mythology include "The Mind Robber" (1968), "The Time Monster" (1972), "Underworld" (1978), and "The Horns of Nimon" (1979–80). These latter two feature Tom Baker as the Doctor, and shift the stories of Jason and the Argonauts and Theseus and the Minotaur into space.

[1.2] When *Doctor Who* returned to our television screens, with Russell T. Davies as showrunner, after a 15-year hiatus, the mix of historical episodes alongside episodes set in space returned (note 1), although as Lisa Kerrigan has commented, the historical settings in the first season tended to be used as "background" rather than being placed at the heart of the story (2010, 149–50). The *Doctor Who* spin-off series included episodes based on Greek myth: *Torchwood* included "Greeks Bearing Gifts" (1.7, 2006), based loosely on the story of Philoctetes (Potter 2010), and *The Sarah Jane Adventures* included the two-part episode "The Eye of the Gorgon" (1.3–4, 2007). However, it was not until 2010 that Greek myth overtly returned to *Doctor Who*, with four episodes in quick succession. The climax of Steven Moffatt's first season as showrunner included the appearance of the Pandorica, a version of Pandora's box, in "The Pandorica Opens" (5.12) and "The Big Bang" (5.13). These episodes were followed in 2011 by "The Curse of the Black Spot" (6.3), featuring a Siren, and "The God Complex" (6.11), featuring a Minotaur and written by Toby Whithouse, who had also written "Greeks Bearing Gifts" for *Torchwood*.

[1.3] What all these episodes have in common is that they use a monster or (in the case of the Pandorica) an artifact from Greek mythology, but remove it completely from its mythical context. In "The God Complex" an alien creature, which is called a Minotaur, is imprisoned in a maze-like hotel, feeding on people who have strong belief systems, until the Doctor removes this food source and allows the Minotaur to die. In "The Curse of the Black Spot" a Siren appears and takes people from a pirate ship when they are injured or sick. The pirate crew, the Doctor, and his companions initially believe that she is preying on the weak. Later they find out that she is an alien hologram taking the sick and injured to her spaceship to be treated. In "The Pandorica Opens" (5.12) and "The Big Bang" (5.13) the Pandorica is a trap conceived by the Doctor's enemies on the basis of his companion Amy's memory of the story of Pandora's box, her favorite story in childhood.

[1.4] None of these episodes engage directly with the ancient sources of the myths; the monsters and artifact are convenient plot devices. In "Heartbreak Hotel," a 2011 episode of *Doctor Who Confidential*, writer Whithouse explains that the initial idea for "The God Complex" was developed out of Steven Moffatt's suggestion that "the Doctor and Amy are stranded in a hotel, and the corridors and rooms keep shifting, so that they're completely lost. When discussing what monster might lurk at the heart of this maze I immediately thought of the Minotaur." Similarly, Steve Thompson, writer of "The Curse of the Black Spot," was asked by Steven Moffatt "to write a pirate episode" (Hickman 2011, 51), and a Siren was only later chosen as a suitable creature for sailors to meet at sea. It is useful to compare the treatment of Greek mythology in these episodes with the treatment of the Gorgon in *The Sarah Jane Adventures* two-part episode "The Eye of the Gorgon," written for a younger audience. In this story,

although the Gorgon is an alien who resides with a community of nuns in modern-day London, Sarah Jane reads the story of the Gorgons from Greek mythology to her young protégée Maria. The tie-in book goes even further in explaining the myth behind the story (Ford 2007). It would seem that an important purpose of "The Eye of the Gorgon" is to educate the young viewers about the myth, a purpose that is missing from the new *Who* episodes (note 2).

[1.5] As a classicist and a fan of *Doctor Who*, I was ambivalent about "The Curse of the Black Spot" and "The God Complex." On the one hand I was pleased to see the monsters sympathetically portrayed in them. Particularly refreshing was the portrayal of the Siren in the first; it is often depicted as a femme fatale, but in "The Curse of the Black Spot" the Siren cures sick men rather than luring them to their deaths. And while the Minotaur had been portrayed as a mindless monster to be destroyed in two episodes of classic *Who*, "The Mind Robber" (1968) and "The Time Monster" (1972), and Minotaurs (Nimons) as a race of (evil) aliens seeking to dominate another planet in "The Horns of Nimon" (1979–80), in "The God Complex" it is a character who wants to stop killing people and die. That these monsters appear in the episodes at all indicates that they are a part of our shared heritage, passed down from Greek mythology via children's books through to film and television. Whithouse states that he "immediately" thought of a Minotaur as a suitable monster to appear in a maze, and the viewer is expected to recognize the monster with little need for explanation, as Amy does in "The God Complex," asking whether it is "a Minotaur, or an alien, or an alien Minotaur?"

[1.6] On the other hand I did not find the mix of ideas in these episodes to work well together, as there was not enough space in each episode to explore any of them fully. In "The God Complex," I felt that more space should have been devoted to the idea of rooms containing one's deepest fears, as well as the parallel between the Doctor and the Minotaur. Similarly, in "Curse of the Black Spot," the lengthy exposition of what the monster was and what she was doing did not provide enough space to fully explore the notion of the Siren as a holographic doctor. The "Curse of the Black Spot" episode of *Doctor Who Confidential* implies that it was a pirate story that only happened to include a Siren; showrunner Steven Moffatt and members of the crew discuss how it includes all the elements expected in a pirate story: a stowaway, a storm at sea, the black spot (a marker for a pirate chosen to die in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*), walking the plank, and swordfights. This episode of *Doctor Who Confidential* focuses on the fight choreography and the special effects required to create the storm and only mentions the Siren once, when she makes Amy fall backward, for which the actress needed a stunt double. This Siren in *Doctor Who*, like the Sirens in Greek mythology, has only a voice to sing, and no voice to speak, which for me somewhat undermined the ostensibly positive representation of a female

monster. I realize that I am perhaps hoping for more sophistication than a 45-minute episode of a family show allows, but I was not alone in my reaction to these two episodes.

[1.7] I collected fan reactions to the episodes by posting links to online surveys on *Doctor Who* fan sites in November 2011, less than two months after "The God Complex" was first broadcast on BBC1 (note 3). Nearly all respondents knew the Greek myths of the Sirens and the Minotaur, and many were, like me, ambivalent about the use of these myths in the episodes. For example, although many fans liked the use of the Minotaur in "The God Complex," some felt, as I did, that the mythical Minotaur was "shoehorned in" and "could have been explored more." Viewers were also ambivalent about the Siren. Many liked the "twist" that she turned out not to be a monster at all, but many also felt that, as one viewer stated, ultimately she was "yet another female character without the ability to speak for herself."

[1.8] I decided to look into whether fan fiction writers had used these monsters from Greek mythology in their stories and, if so, whether they had made the mythic characters more central to their stories than the recent episodes had. This article considers five *Doctor Who* stories posted on FanFiction.net (note 4). One featured the Minotaur and four featured the Sirens. Three of the stories included the Tenth Doctor, played by David Tennant, and the other two included the Eleventh, played by Matt Smith. Four were short works of less than 7,000 words and one was the length of a short novel, with 56,000 words split into 29 chapters. This might seem to be a very small sample compared with the large corpus of *Who* stories posted on FanFiction.net (over 69,000 in September 2015), but a similar search for the Gorgons and the Furies found no stories. Clearly the Minotaur and the Sirens have resonated with at least a few *Doctor Who* television and fan fiction writers, when other classical monsters have not.

2. A trip back in time to meet the Minotaur

[2.1] "The Maiden and the Minotaur," written by greengirl666 in 2008, differs from the other four stories not only in that it features the Minotaur rather than the Sirens, but also in that it is a "historical" story, like "The Myth Makers." In it, the Doctor travels in time to ancient Crete. (He is clearly the Tenth Doctor, played by David Tennant, since the story takes place after the season 3 finale and describes his blue suit, Tennant's costume, as looking out of place in ancient Crete.) The story includes an original character, the 16-year-old Elphie or Elphis, whose name comes from the Greek *elpis*, "hope." Readers of fan fiction would tend to see Elphie as a "Mary Sue" character, a representation of the writer, a device sometimes frowned upon by other fan fiction writers and readers when it is used instead of a canonical character (Busse

and Hellekson 2006, 11). However, as Ika Willis has argued, a writer can place a Mary Sue character in a subject position not available to the canonical characters (2006). Elphie becomes the Doctor's companion when he finds her injured and bleeding and takes her to the TARDIS to tend to her injuries. At her request he puts the TARDIS on "random" in order to "just see where we turn up."

[2.2] The writer of "The Maiden and the Minotaur" engages directly with the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, and in a short story (less than 3,000 words) she includes references to two other myths. She seems to be using the story to display her knowledge of these myths. First Elphie offers to tell the story of King Midas to children who are waiting to be taken to the Minotaur's labyrinth. Then the Doctor tells Elphie the story of Pandora:

[2.3] "Pandora and her husband were given a box by the gods that they had to look after, but never open. Of course curiosity got the better of Pandora and she opened it. All that is wrong poured out of the box. Hate, jealousy, anger, death, old age. But the last thing to leave the box was a tiny silvery butterfly." He pulled out her necklace. There was a tiny silver butterfly on it.

[2.4] "It was Elphis. Hope. They [the children] think that you are a personification of hope."

[2.5] This is a version of the Pandora story familiar from children's books, where hope is often shown as a butterfly (e.g., Alexander 2011, 45). There is no evidence that greengirl666 has looked at ancient sources of the myth of Pandora; indeed, the Doctor's story includes the modern concept of Pandora's box, rather than the *pithos* (jar) mentioned in Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. However, the box would be more familiar to most modern readers of the story, and so perhaps she has deliberately chosen not to refer back to the original but less familiar jar. She is, after all, aware that the Greek word for hope is *elpis*, although she uses "Elphis," the name of the character, in this passage.

[2.6] The story of Theseus and the Minotaur is changed to offer a more compassionate ending for the creature than appears in ancient sources, such as Ovid's poem *Metamorphoses* (8.166–82) and the compendium of Greek myths known as Apollodorus' *Bibliotheka* (1.7–10). As in popular versions of the story, seven boys and seven girls are to be sacrificed to the Minotaur, and one of these boys is Theseus, although he initially gives his name as Ares, that of the god of war. He tells Elphie, "I came here of free will. My father knows I am here and I vowed to kill the Minotaur." The daughter of the king of Crete gives him a ball of string to help him find his way out of the labyrinth, although she is not named as Ariadne. When face to face with the

Minotaur in the labyrinth Theseus produces his sword, but the Doctor uses his sonic screwdriver to stop the Minotaur and talks to it: "Hello, I'm the Doctor. You don't want to eat them. Look at them, all skin and bones. Am I right in thinking that you are not from here? Would you like to go home?" Theseus is surprised by the Doctor's behavior, saying, "It is a monster! I must destroy it!" but the Doctor asks, "And how do you think he sees you, hmm? You don't have to kill everything that you don't understand."

[2.7] Theseus pretends that he has slain the Minotaur and becomes a hero, and the Doctor and Elphie take the Minotaur back to its "desolate home" planet in the TARDIS. Anticipating the sympathetic treatment of the Minotaur in "The God Complex," we find that the Doctor can speak to the Minotaur and that it is a lonely creature that just wants to go home to its family. With the Doctor's intervention, the story can remain the familiar myth of Theseus killing the Minotaur, but the Minotaur can also be saved.

[2.8] Although it is an unsophisticated story probably written by a young and inexperienced writer (it has many grammatical and typographical errors, and the style is not proficient), to me "The Maiden and the Minotaur" is a more satisfying reworking of the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur than both the *Doctor Who* serial "The Horns of Nimon" and the episode "The God Complex." "The Horns of Nimon" resorts to thinly veiled clues to the origin of the story and includes numerous creatures that are not particularly believable as monsters. "The God Complex" uses the Minotaur as a monster, and although our sympathy is engaged the Minotaur is not integral to the story. In "The Maiden and the Minotaur" the sympathetic Minotaur is saved through the intervention of the Doctor, while the original story is simultaneously maintained to be told as we know it today.

3. Sirens from space

[3.1] The writers of the four stories featuring the Sirens—"The Sirens of Titan," "The Volcano of Ignitus," "Songbirds and Sirens," and "Lure of the Sirens"—seem to be more experienced fans than greengirl666; three of them have posted significantly more stories to FanFiction.net than she has, and the online profile of the fourth makes clear that she is widely read in fan fiction. "Songbirds and Sirens" is a slightly longer story than "The Maiden and the Minotaur"; its author, who goes by "Prone to Obsession," first posted it in 2009 and updated it in 2011. She indicates to her readers, "I'm not really comfortable with this type of story," as "I mainly do one-shots of fluff," and her reviewers have made some suggestions for improvement, which she has taken up: she "split the last chapter into two parts, hopefully built up a little more dramatic tension at the end here before delving straight into the resolution." This is a good example of collaboration among fan fiction reader/reviewers and writers, and illustrates how to some extent all fan fiction is "work in progress" (Busse and

Hellekson 2006, 6–8) that is always growing and never fixed. (Reviewers of "The Maiden and the Minotaur" similarly suggested that its author check for errors and display dialogue more clearly; such comments are meant as encouragement to continue writing and to improve.)

[3.2] "Songbirds and Sirens" features the Tenth Doctor and the canonical characters Sally Sparrow and Larry Nightingale. Sally Sparrow is thought of by some viewers as a Doctor Who companion who never was, as she only appeared in one episode, "Blink" (2007, 3.10; Den of Geek, "10 Doctor Who Companions That Might Have Been," August 21, 2008, <http://www.denofgeek.com/tv/doctor-who/19616/10-doctor-who-companions-that-might-have-been>). Larry Nightingale was Sally's best friend's brother in "Blink," and the episode ends with Sally and Larry hand in hand and potentially about to embark on a romantic relationship. "Songbirds and Sirens" takes place in Brighton a year and a half after the end of "Blink," and Sally and Larry have been dating all this time. They meet the Doctor unexpectedly on Brighton Pier. This is the first time the three of them have met since "Blink," and as they start to talk they see "three women sitting on the large rocks a few meters out. The women were singing some...ancient...haunting...song..."

[3.3] It transpires that these three women are Sirens ([note 5](#)). The Doctor explains, "The La'amas, what you know as Sirens, crash landed on Earth hundreds of years ago. Went terrorizing, well, Greece, apparently. Then they just disappeared. No trace. It would appear they've fallen through time and landed here." The Siren song affects both Larry and Sally, as the Doctor tells them that the Sirens/La'amas are able to use their song to "form a psychic link with their...prey," allowing them to control the brain while "feeding off of our brain wave energy." Although these La'amas appear particularly "vicious" to the Doctor, his initial aim is not to kill them but rather to communicate with them. The Doctor rejects Sally's idea to use earplugs, following the example of Odysseus' use of beeswax in the *Odyssey*, as the La'amas "can get inside your head, transmit the song psychically, they don't need literal music." Instead the Doctor uses a bicycle helmet to make "a psychic damper. Like, beeswax, for a psychic song." However, he is unable to enable two-way communication using the helmet, and thinks back to the example of Odysseus, who "didn't use the beeswax. He strapped himself to the mast, but he was basically vulnerable." The Doctor removes the helmet and speaks directly to the La'amas/Sirens, telling them, "I know you crashed, but that doesn't mean you can stay. I can take you home."

[3.4] As in "The Maiden and the Minotaur," the Doctor in this story wants not to kill the monsters, but to take them back to their own time and place. Unlike the Minotaur, the Sirens will not "leave peacefully," but instead "[bare] vicious fangs as they [swim] the few metres to the shore," causing the Doctor to collapse. With the help of a

remote control provided by the Doctor, and Sally's instructions from the TARDIS on which buttons to press, Larry manages to destroy the "La'ameraz, who were a foot away and ready to lunge forward," but instead "suddenly collaps[e], writhing in agony, then slowly [fall] still." Once revived, the Doctor explains that the remote "magnified the psychic field, reversed it. Drowned them in energy. Burnt up their brains." The story ends with Sally and Larry leaving with the Doctor for further adventures.

[3.5] In this story all three characters work together to save Brighton from the Sirens, and although the Doctor can be seen as an Odysseus figure, allowing himself to hear the Sirens, it is only with the help of his companions that the Sirens can be destroyed. Of the trio it is Sally who remembers the story of Odysseus tying himself to the mast and plugging the ears of his crew with beeswax, and Larry displays the courage to face the Sirens with the remote control, aided by the psychic dampener built into the bicycle helmet and by Sally's instructions, which she reads from a screen in the TARDIS. Unlike Odysseus, the Doctor displays sympathy for the Sirens, while Odysseus is merely curious to hear their song. But ultimately the Sirens/La'ameraz in "The Song of the Sirens" will not accept the Doctor's offer of help to get them home, and have to be destroyed. A superior hero on two counts, the Doctor, aided by his companions, first tries to save the Sirens and then causes their destruction, when Odysseus only manages to sail past them without casualties, leaving them to find new victims, or to die because they have been passed by (Murgatroyd 2007, 47).

[3.6] "The Volcano of Ignitus," written by 101sophist, is a 7,000-word story featuring the Eleventh Doctor and Clara, and was posted to FanFiction.net in 2013. The writer states that the story "was created by my friend and I" and so is a collaborative work. Although 101sophist has posted only one other story on FanFiction.net, she is clearly an experienced reader of fan fiction, listing 169 favorite stories and 94 favorite authors on her profile page, where she states that she loves "fangirling." In this story the Doctor intends to take Clara on a sightseeing tour on board a submarine, "through a boiling ocean to a mildly active volcano." On their way to the submarine Clara is tricked into wanting to swim in what seems like a calm sea, but the Doctor points out that this is an illusion intended to lure her to her death. Clara sees "the scariest thing she has ever seen" in the water, a creature with "shiny, transparent skin, fanged teeth, and webbed hands and feet," and the Doctor explains that this is a Siren. They meet a young human soldier who tells them that submarine tours have been stopped and the area is under quarantine, as the Sirens have been killing people. The soldier explains that "if you hear them singing it is too late for you." Clara remembers reading about the Sirens in the *Odyssey* at school and is keen to know whether these creatures, who turn out to be called the Sereia, are in fact the Sirens of Greek mythology. She hopes that "they aren't the same thing because hardly anyone can escape them." The Doctor initially tells her that the mythological Sirens do not exist.

When she returns to this theme, hoping this time that the creatures will turn out to be Sirens, the Doctor chides her for treating the situation like a "game" featuring "little creatures out of a fairy tale," rather than the reality of events where "people have died" and more "people will die."

[3.7] The Doctor offers to help the soldiers, and he and Clara board the submarine to go to find the Sirens. The submarine is attacked by one of the Sereia, who is shot by Taylor, one of the soldiers. Before it dies it explains that the Sereia will not give up their planet or become slaves to the humans. The Sereia have been killing the humans in order to save themselves, before the humans wipe them out. The Doctor offers to talk to the Sereia to try to come to a peaceful agreement, before the soldiers blow up the volcano in order to destroy them. The Doctor and Clara are taken to the Prime, leader of the Sereia, and the Doctor offers peace with the humans, but the Prime does not believe that the humans would honor this agreement and would rather have the Sereia die with their "freedom" and "pride" intact than risk enslavement by the humans. The Doctor is also unconvinced that the humans would treat the Sereia honorably should they agree to peace. As he says to Clara, "It's better if they all die now than later, imprisoned and dying a slow death." The Doctor and Clara escape as the volcano is destroyed, and along with it all the Sereia; he tells her that the "great Sereia race" has become "another group of creatures I couldn't save." But Clara tells him that he is a "hero" because he tried to help the Sereia, who "chose not to listen." As in "Songbirds and Sirens," the Doctor only allows the Sirens to be destroyed when they do not agree to a peaceful solution. However, we have sympathy for the Sereia, as their home has been taken over by the humans who have tried to enslave them, and—like the Sereia and the Doctor—we are unsure whether the peace offered by the humans would have been true peace or imprisonment and enslavement.

[3.8] In this story, Clara's knowledge of Greek mythology does not help her and the Doctor to either save or defeat the Sirens, as it does in "Songbirds and Sirens." It turns out to be irrelevant, in a story that focuses on the cruelty of a war between humans and other species, which the humans think of as "beasts" rather than the "sentient, intelligent" beings that they are, and on the danger a life with the Doctor poses to companions and friends. The Doctor thinks back to people he has been unable to save, like Rita, who is taken by the Minotaur in "The God Complex," and Astrid, who sacrifices herself in "Voyage of the Damned" (2007). The story includes a flashback to Tegan, the companion of a previous incarnation of the Doctor, who chose to leave him because "a lot of good people died" and she had "become sick of it." The Doctor is worried about putting Clara in constant danger, as he has done with so many women before her, and tells her that traveling with him "isn't always going to be fun." But at the end of the story she hugs him, reminding him that he is a hero. He tells her,

"Clara Oswin Oswald, you never stop surprising me," and both the Doctor and readers of the story realize that this "newest companion" is here to stay.

[3.9] "Sirens of Titan" is the shortest of the stories, with less than 2,000 words, and its author, tasty-kate, describes it as "a bit of a songfic" (it's based on the lyrics of the Art in Manila song "Time Gets Us All") but "with plot." Posted in 2010, it features the Eleventh Doctor, played by Matt Smith, and his companion Amy Pond. The context of the story is the romantic relationship between the Doctor and Amy, which is more than hinted at in canon (in "Flesh and Stone" [5.5], first broadcast two months before tasty-kate posted her story, Amy attempts to seduce the Doctor on the night before her wedding). They have arrived on Titan, in the Chvolaps galaxy, to see and hear the Sirens. The Doctor tells Amy,

[3.10] Sirens are creatures that you've probably heard [of] from mythical tales, yet they're slightly different from what you've read about. They have a humanoid-like figure yet instead of wings that come out of their backs like a bee's, their extensions are connected to what we consider our forearms and biceps. They are a sexless being, being neither female nor male and do not speak, more or less, except to sing...Sirens only sing when they have a Muse. These Muses can be any living being, yet they won't sing for anyone. They're psychic creatures that take an imprint of your unconscious and form a song on [the] spot. It will be a completely unique song and one you will have never heard, nor will ever hear again.

[3.11] Hearing the Siren's song is not always a pleasurable experience; the Doctor tells Amy that "some cite it to be therapeutic while others wish they never were sung to." Amy first encounters a Siren singing to an alien of a different species of "pain and horrors"; the Siren is turning red like blood, and causes the alien to collapse when the song is finished. Amy becomes concerned that she might become the subject of a Siren's song: "Not only could her deepest, darkest memories or secrets be thrust out in front of her, anyone who would be around would be there to witness it...including the Doctor."

[3.12] However, when she is confronted by a Siren Amy stands her ground, as she initially cannot think of anything that she would rather keep hidden. But then "she felt something tug inside her mind which she wrote off as the Siren gaining access to her memories, and then at her heart. Oh. Right. There was that bit." To Amy's discomfort, the Siren sings a song of Amy's love for the Doctor, thinly veiled by the words of the song, that is heard by the Doctor and other passers-by. When the song is over the Doctor declines a song of his own, and back on the TARDIS "Amy supposed the memory of the song would be filed under the 'Things We Don't Talk About' folder," a

record of "her and the Doctor's not-relationship," which she would perhaps talk about with him "another day."

[3.13] In this story, as in "The Volcano of Ignitus," the Greek mythological background has little, if any, relevance. The only similarity between the Sirens of Greek mythology and the Sirens of Titan is that they both sing. In "Sirens of Titan" the Sirens are a plot device to allow Amy to reflect on her relationship with the Doctor, using song lyrics that resonate with the writer: lyrics about time, and one kiss, and moving on to another relationship, as Amy has with her fiancé Rory. The story is classified by the writer as Romance/Sci-Fi, and in its focus on the relationship between the Doctor and his companion it has more in common with "The Volcano of Ignitus," which is classified as Sci-Fi/Hurt/Comfort, than it does with "The Maiden and the Minotaur" and "Songbirds and Sirens," which are classified as Adventure. Although the Siren in this story bears much less resemblance to the Sirens of Greek mythology than do the La'ameraz in "Songbirds and Sirens," or even the Sereia in "The Volcano of Ignitus," the figure of a female who lures a man to his death seems to be a useful character for a writer like tasty-kate, who, like many writers of fan fiction, is primarily interested in relationships between characters (Pugh 2004).

[3.14] The longest story of the five, "Lure of the Sirens," was started in 2010 and completed in 2011, and also focuses on a romantic relationship between characters from the series. The main relationship of focus is that of Rose and the Tenth Doctor, although the character of Jack Harkness is also featured. This is the only story of the five I analyzed that is rated M (suitable for mature teens and adults); the others are rated K+ (some content may not be suitable for young children) or T (contains content not suitable for children). The M rating denotes adult themes, including sex scenes between Rose and the Doctor. In her author's notes to various chapters, reddwarfaddict teases the reader as to whether there really is any "TenRose" content or whether she is, as she protests, "entirely innocent" of writing such material, and—for example—Rose is "asleep and simply snuggled up to him, like any half-asleep woman would."

[3.15] The story begins with Rose, the Doctor, and Jack taking a holiday: "a boat cruise, just the three of them, on the beautiful island of Cha'po on the planet Kail." The trio sail into a storm and hear "a beautiful piece of music emanating from across the ocean." Jack wants to follow the music, and when the Doctor tries to stop him, fearing that Jack is under some sort of "hypnotic control," Jack shoots him in the leg. Rose knocks Jack out, and he is conveniently unconscious throughout the hurt/comfort episode that follows, beginning with Rose tending to the Doctor's wound (on hurt/comfort, see Busse and Hellekson 2006, 10–11, and Green, Jenkins, and Jenkins

2006, 84–85). Meanwhile the Doctor reveals to Rose that he has heard about music like this before, "something that's only been written about on Earth." He explains,

[3.16] "Greek Mythology. Nothing's too concrete, but the most common story is that the Sirens were three sea nymphs who lived on an island in the middle of the sea, playing beautiful music that lured unknowing sailors to the Sirens' island and to their deaths."

[3.17] "So we're caught in the middle of a myth?" She got the bullet out, and began to work on bandaging the wound up.

[3.18] He shrugged. "Like you say, it's just a myth. But that doesn't mean it didn't stem from somewhere. Something real from this planet itself that's somehow echoed across the Universe and straight into Earth's history."

[3.19] TenRose, a romantic and sexual relationship between the Tenth Doctor and Rose, is one of the main purposes of the story, and Jack could easily become superfluous or create an inconvenient potential love triangle. Therefore the author has him break through the side of the ship as soon as he regains consciousness and swim toward the sound of the Sirens. He is killed by a shark-like Kailan Leviathan and, although he is immortal, he takes some time to revive. Meanwhile the Doctor and Rose have plenty of time alone to share intimate moments swimming for shore and drying their clothes on the island where they are shipwrecked. Once he has revived, Jack must be tied to a tree to prevent him from following the Sirens' music again. However, released from the tree when the Sirens stop singing, Jack soon needs to save Rose and the Doctor from the "widowmakers," the native bears, dying and reviving a few times while his wounded companions get away. This provides the opportunity for more hurt/comfort for the Doctor and Rose without Jack.

[3.20] The Doctor, Rose, and Jack are found by local villagers. The Doctor spends time convalescing, recovering from the bullet wound inflicted unintentionally by Jack, and he and Rose declare their love for one another. Rose is already expecting a happy ending, as she has met a future version of the Doctor and their children. They find that the male villagers are kept in a "holding area" at night to prevent them from following the Siren's song, and Jack and the Doctor need to be detained with them, as now the Doctor is also being affected. In his wish to follow the music the Doctor hurts Rose, and to prevent this happening again they are "bonded"; the Doctor tells Rose, "We'll always be a part of each other, and we'll know what the other's feeling." This bonding process is followed by a lot of sex. However, overnight the men break out of the holding area, and although Rose saves the Doctor, Jack and the other men leave to follow the Siren's song. The Doctor decides to go after them, and Rose accompanies him. On the way the Doctor explains the myth of the Sirens to Rose:

[3.21] According to Greek Mythology, and believe me there are a million different versions, but my favourite story is that they were human handmaidens of the Goddess of Spring Bounty, Persephone. She was abducted by Hades as an adolescent, dragged to the Underworld in order for her to be his Queen because he had a bit of a crush on her. Persephone's Mother, Demeter, the Goddess of Bountiful Harvest, was so worried for Persephone she began a massive search, and the Sirens joined in. They prayed for wings to help the search, and the gods granted their wish, turning them into half-human half-birds. But they gave up and settled on an island. There they played their enchanting music, luring unsuspecting sailors to a messy death on the rocks."

[3.22] The story of the Sirens' transformation into birds can be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (5.552–62), where the poet conjectures that the maidens might have prayed for wings to help search for their mistress Proserpina. In the Latin compendium of myths known as Hyginus' *Fabulae* (141) the Sirens are turned into winged creatures as a punishment for not helping Proserpina, and in Apollonius' *Argonautica* (4.896–99) we are told that they were attendants to Persephone and are now part girl, part bird, but no detail is given as to how or why this transformation occurred.

[3.23] Reddwarfaddict goes on to relate the more well-known stories of Odysseus, who saved his crew from the Sirens, and Orpheus, who helped the Argonauts avoid them (*Odyssey* 12.39–55, 12.158–200; *Argonautica* 4.891–920; *Bibliotheka* 1.9.25; *Fabulae* 14.27; see Murgatroyd 2007, 44–56).

[3.24] "Don't suppose it mentions how to beat them?" Rose wondered, tentatively grinning.

[3.25] "Well..." The Doctor thought for a moment, lips pursed. "There are two stories of people that passed them by. Orpheus, and later Odysseus. Luckily Orpheus was very good at hammering out a tune himself, so he was able to drown out the Siren's music with his own so his crew weren't lured. Odysseus sailed by a bit later, ordering his men to stuff their ears with wax and tie him to the mast, and not to let him go no matter what he said because he was intrigued to hear what the song sounded like. They made it out of hearing range. The Sirens were so distraught that someone had heard their music but passed them by that they drowned themselves." He looked [at] her, [and] gave a half shrug. "Well, that's one of the versions anyway."

[3.26] The writer displays an understanding that Greek myths exist in many different versions. Fans are often used to working with multiple versions of stories in different media created across extended time periods (note 6). In *Doctor Who*, for example,

stories exist in the classic and new television episodes and films and in authorized novels, audiobooks, and comics—as well as, of course, in fan fiction. In displaying the Doctor's knowledge of multiple versions of the story of the Sirens, the story also displays the writer's. Then the Doctor turns to perhaps the most well-known source of the myth, the story of Odysseus, as his inspiration. He instructs Rose to use his sonic screwdriver to make him temporarily deaf, before they enter the "the extravagant temple-like construct" that is home to the Sirens. These Sirens are winged "humanoid women as the top half" and "with the bottom half the legs of birds with claws for feet." They are blue in color, and blind.

[3.27] The Doctor is held captive and apart from Rose for some time, and is bitten by a Siren and turns partially into one. As he has failed to communicate with the Sirens, he eventually uses music to attract their attention. This could be seen as an inversion of the Orpheus story, using music to attract rather than drown out the Siren song, but the Doctor uses a recording of the band Cheeky Girls on Rose's iPod rather than the lyre, like Orpheus. He finds out that the Sirens crash-landed on Kaila, and the females were separated from their male soulmates. The females sang to attract the males, but the males were too far away to hear. The song instead had a "side effect," attracting other males, including the Doctor, Jack, and the men of the native population. The Doctor helps the female Sirens by recording and playing their song throughout the planet to find the males, and the Siren couples are reunited. Finally the Doctor takes a pregnant Rose on a flight while he still has his Siren wings.

[3.28] "Lure of the Sirens" has attracted over 200 reviews, with some reviewers commenting repeatedly as they read further. Readers express their praise for the story, and some specifically mention the use of mythology, liking that the Sirens turn out "to be good after all." However, it is the humor and plot twists that most readers comment on. Many have enjoyed reddwarfaddict's other stories; since 2006 she has posted over 60 stories featuring the Tenth Doctor to FanFiction.net.

[3.29] Reddwarfaddict has displayed a comprehensive knowledge of the myth she has chosen to base her story on. Of course her story is by far the longest of the four, giving her greater space to explore the myth of the Sirens as well as the TenRose relationship, including Rose's pregnancy and glimpses of their future and their children. She explains that she loves TenRose and babies, and she incorporates both of these into "Lure of the Sirens." The Sirens are sympathetic characters who want to find their soulmates, while the Doctor and Rose discover that they too are each other's soulmate. As in greengirl666's simpler story "The Maiden and the Minotaur," the Doctor is able to help the stranded alien creatures, who turn out not to be monsters after all. In tasty-kate's "Sirens of Titan" the Sirens are not monsters, but a race of aliens with unusual telepathic powers. In Prone to Obsession's story "Songbirds and

Sirens" the La'amerases/Sirens do turn out to be monsters who have to be destroyed, but the Doctor does so only reluctantly, first trying to help send them home. And in "The Volcano of Ignitus" the Sereia/Sirens are killers, but they have been driven to this by human persecution, and again the Doctor tries to save them. This trend of making creatures from Greek mythology more sympathetic echoes the *Doctor Who* episodes "The God Complex" and "The Curse of the Black Spot," and new *Who* has done so with other monsters as well, including the most iconic monster of the *Doctor Who* mythos, the Dalek, in "Dalek" (1.6, 2007). The fan fiction writers I discuss here, particularly tasty-kate and reddwarfaddict, are interested in writing about the romantic relationships between characters and use the Sirens of Greek mythology to help explore these relationships. Greek mythology has, of course, been used by writers to explore relationships from the earliest ancient sources onward. When asked to defend the study of fan fiction, I have half-jokingly suggested that Shakespeare wrote Ovid fan fiction. There is also a large body of online fan fiction based primarily on mythology, rather than on modern texts like *Doctor Who*, and I have argued elsewhere that Madeline Miller's 2011 novel *The Song of Achilles*, which won the Orange Prize for Fiction, is *Iliad* fan fiction (Potter 2015, 228).

4. Conclusion

[4.1] Fan fiction writers can have more space to explore the creatures of Greek mythology than the commercial writers for *Doctor Who*, who have only the length of a 45-minute episode. In a world of "work in progress," with no writing deadline or production schedule to meet, fan fiction writers can choose to write as little or as much as they like. Yet, irrespective of story length, to a greater or lesser degree each of the five fan fiction writers I discuss here has chosen to explicitly ground her story in the world of Greek mythology, in a way that the television writers have not. 101Sophist, Prone to Obsession, and reddwarfaddict specifically mention the *Odyssey* or Odysseus; greengirl666 refers to a number of stories from Greek mythology; and tasty-kate brings together two concepts from Greek mythology, the muse who encourages the artist and the Siren who sings. I would suggest that they have used the myths as a starting point to create their own stories about the Doctor and his companions, while the television writers have used them to fill a gap, the need for a monster within a predetermined story about, for example, a hotel or a pirate ship. This strategy is used by other long-running series that need a monster of the week, and whose writers raid the cultural archives to supply this need. Examples include the US series *Charmed* (1998–2006) and *Supernatural* (2005–), which have episodes featuring Furies and Amazons, respectively, as well as other monsters such as vampires and werewolves. As Dunstan Lowe has found, "symbols from the classical tradition are often decontextualized, and freely mixed with elements from other cultures or from fantasy"

in video games and in popular media more generally, and creators, viewers, and players can choose to "reject or invert cultural canons and hierarchies, but—first and foremost—they are free not to recognise them in the first place" (2009, 85). Lowe provides an example of the use of Medusa in the *Castlevania* series of games, which are "primarily inspired by gothic horror" (85).

[4.2] Two *Doctor Who* stories from season 15, "Underworld" (1978) and "The Horns of Nimon" (1979–80), are built around the myths, but rely on audience members having "certain privileged information" that enables them to identify the character of Jackson in "Underworld" with Jason and that of Seth in "The Horns of Nimon" with Theseus (Tulloch and Alvarado 1983, 146). Producers Graham Williams and John Nathan-Turner would disagree with this claim; Williams, who was series producer for "Underworld" and "The Horns of Nimon" believes that that "[Underworld] as a story, I think it stands on its own," while Nathan-Turner, who replaced Williams as series producer, thinks that making "a sort of in-joke of the whole thing" and relying on "a small percentage of the audience" picking up that "Underworld" is a retelling of the story of Jason and the Argonauts is "not very clever at all" (Tulloch and Alvarado 1983, 146). I tend to agree with Nathan-Turner, and find that using myth in this way results in less entertaining episodes. At the other end of the spectrum, "The Curse of the Black Spot" and "The God Complex" do not rely on the audience having prior knowledge about the mythical monsters in the episodes, any more than a player of *Castlevania* needs to know the story of Medusa. But personally, as a classicist and a fan, I find the stories created by the fan fiction writers more interesting than the episodes in the way that they reuse and reinvent the classical monsters, putting them at the heart of the stories, while providing enough context for readers unfamiliar with the myths to understand where they have come from. And since *Doctor Who*, like so much fan fiction, can be described as a work in progress, with over 50 years so far of new writers telling new stories of new Doctors, then in the future we may find that classical myths are reinvented in new and exciting ways, both onscreen and in fan fiction.

5. Notes

1. A number of historical periods have been featured, including the Roman Empire, 16th-century Venice, 18th-century France, Shakespearean London, and Victorian and World War II Britain.
2. *Doctor Who* was initially conceived as having an "educational brief," but this soon lapsed in favor of pure entertainment (O'Mahony 2007, 61). On the use of new *Who* material on the Internet for educational purposes, see Evans 2013.

3. The surveys can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/H8KHXYX> and <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LHTYFPV>.
 4. I found these stories by searching FanFiction.net for *Doctor Who* stories containing the word "Siren," "Sirens," or "Minotaur," and discarding results that were unfinished, that were crossovers with unrelated properties, or that rewrote existing episodes rather than describing original adventures.
 5. Although Homer gives the number of the Sirens as two, it is not surprising to have three represented. Three Sirens are named in Apollodorus' *Bibliotheka* (7.18) and in Hyginus' *Fabulae*, Theogony 30, although the accounts give them different names. Supernatural female characters in Greek mythology often appear in threes, such as the Fates, the Graeae, and the Gorgons, and in later sources the Furies. The *Xena: Warrior Princess* episode "Ulysses" (2.19) also presents three Sirens.
 6. I found in my doctoral research that fans of *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Charmed* tended to be more aware that myths exist in different versions than were my control group of nonfan, nonclassicist viewers, who tended to believe that there must be one true version of each myth.
-

6. Works cited

- Alexander, Heather. 2011. *A Child's Introduction to Greek Mythology: The Stories of the Gods, Goddesses, Heroes, Monsters, and Other Mythical Creatures*. New York: Black Dog and Leventhal.
- Busse, Kristina, and Karen Hellekson. 2006. "Work in Progress." Introduction to *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 5–32. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Evans, Elizabeth. 2013. "Learning with the Doctor: Pedagogic Strategies in Transmedia *Doctor Who*." In *New Dimensions of Doctor Who: Adventures in Space, Time and Television*, edited by Matt Hills, 134–53. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Ford, Phil. 2007. *The Eye of the Gorgon*. London: Penguin.
- Garner, Ross P., Melissa Beattie, and Una McCormack, eds. 2010. *Impossible Worlds, Impossible Things: Cultural Perspectives on Doctor Who, Torchwood, and The Sarah Jane Adventures*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars.
- Green, Shoshanna, Cynthia Jenkins, and Henry Jenkins. 2006. "'Normal Female Interest in Men Bonking': Selections from the *Terra Nostra Underground and Strange*

Bedfellows." In Henry Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*, 61–88. New York: New York University Press.

Hickman, Clayton, ed. 2011. *Doctor Who: The Brilliant Book 2012*. London: Random House.

Keen, Anthony G. 2010a. "It's about Tempus: Greece and Rome in 'Classic' *Doctor Who*." In *Space and Time: Essays on Visions of History in Science Fiction and Fantasy Television*, edited by David C. Wright, Jr., and Allan W. Austin, 100–15. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Keen, Anthony G. 2010b. "Sideways Pompeii! The Use of Historical Period to Question the Doctor's Role in History." In Garner, Beattie, and McCormack 2010, 94–117.

Kerrigan, Lisa. 2010. "'Not Sure if It's Marxism in Action or a West-End Musical': Class, Citizenship, and Culture in New *Doctor Who*." In Garner, Beattie, and McCormack 2010, 145–60.

Kilburn, Matthew. 2007. "Bargains of Necessity? *Doctor Who*, *Culloden*, and Fictionalising History at the BBC in the 1960s." In *Time and Relative Dissertations in Space: Critical Perspectives on Doctor Who*, edited by David Butler, 68–85. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Lowe, Dunstan. 2009. "Playing with Antiquity: Videogame Receptions of the Classical World." In *Classics for All: Reworking Antiquity in Mass Culture*, edited by Dunstan Lowe and Kim Shahabudin, 64–90. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars.

Murgatroyd, Paul. 2007. *Mythical Monsters in Classical Literature*. London: Duckworth.

O'Mahony, Daniel. 2007. "Now How Is that Wolf Able to Impersonate a Grandmother? History, Pseudo-history and Genre in *Doctor Who*." In *Time and Relative Dissertations in Space*, edited by David Butler, 56–67. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Potter, Amanda. 2010. "Beware of Geeks Appropriating Greeks: Viewer Reception of the Myth of Philoctetes in *Torchwood*." In Garner, Beattie, and McCormack 2010, 79–93.

Potter, Amanda. 2015. "Slashing *Rome*: Season Two Rewritten in Online Fan Fiction." In *Rome Season Two: Trial and Triumph*, edited by Monica S. Cyrino, 219–30. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781474400275.003.0018>.

Pugh, Sheenagh. 2004. "The Democratic Genre: Fan Fiction in a Literary Context." *Refractory* 5. <http://blogs.arts.unimelb.edu.au/refractory/2004/02/03/the-democratic->

genre-fan-fiction-in-a-literary-context-sheenagh-pugh/.

Tulloch, John and Manuel Alvarado. 1983. *Doctor Who: The Unfolding Text*. New York: St Martin's Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-17289-4>.

Willis, Ika. 2006. "Keeping Promises to Queer Children: Making Space (for Mary Sue) at Hogwarts." In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 153–70. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Theory

Amateur mythographies: Fan fiction and the myth of myth

Ika Willis

University of Wollongong, Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia

[0.1] *Abstract*—This paper draws on classical scholarship on myth in order to critically examine three ways in which scholars and fans have articulated a relationship between fan fiction and myth. These are (1) the notion of fan fiction as a form of folk culture, reclaiming popular story from corporate ownership; (2) the notion of myth as counterhegemonic, often feminist, discourse; (3) the notion of myth as a commons of story and a universal story world. I argue that the first notion depends on an implicit primitivizing of fan fiction and myth, which draws ultimately on the work of Gottfried von Herder in the 18th century and limits our ability to produce historically and politically nuanced understandings of fan fiction. The second notion, which is visible in the work of Henry Jenkins and Constance Penley, is more helpful because of its attention to the politics of narration. However, it is the third model of myth, as a universal story world, where we find the richest crossover between fan fiction's creative power and contemporary classical scholarship on myth, especially in relation to Sarah Iles Johnston's analysis of hyperserial narrative. I demonstrate this through some close readings of fan fiction from the Greek and Roman Mythology fandom on Archive of Our Own. I conclude the paper by extending Johnston's arguments to show that fan-fictional hyperseriality, specifically, can be seen as mythic because it intervenes not only in the narrative worlds of its source materials but also in the social world of its telling.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Joseph Campbell; Hyperseriality; Narrative

Willis, Ika. 2016. "Amateur Mythographies: Fan Fiction and the Myth of Myth." In "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work," edited by Ika Willis, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 21. doi:10.3983/twc.2016.0692.

1. Introduction

[1.1] The term *myth* recurs across multiple scholarly and popular contexts. It is slippery in its definition, as Csapo's tripartite schema suggests: is it to be defined according to its content ("traditional tales"), its context ("a narrative which is considered socially important"), or its function ("transmitting something of collective importance")? (Csapo 2005, 9). It is manifold in its referents: the word *myth* might be used to refer to ancient Greek and Norse stories about gods, heroes, and monsters; to margarine advertisements, Romans in films, or Greta Garbo's face (Barthes 1972); or, of course, to fan fiction. In this paper, I will draw on approaches to myth from both scholarly and amateur contexts in order to investigate the usefulness of the term

myth, and the limits of its usefulness, for our understanding of fan fiction as narrative form and as social practice.

[1.2] The concept of myth has been important to the practice and analysis of fan work, including fan fiction, on three levels: content, form, and theory. On the level of content, various traditional tales—including classical and Norse mythologies—have provided characters, narratives, monsters, and story worlds for fans to use in the generation of new fictions, as attested by the 1,520 stories in the Greek and Roman Mythology fandom on Archive of Our Own (AO3) and the 3,200 stories labeled Greek Mythology on FanFiction.net (as at November 7, 2015). Classical myth thus forms part of the rich and diverse content of fan fiction and its multiple, crisscrossing story worlds. More importantly, however, the idea of myth has been used by both scholars and fans to generate, structure, and analyze fan fiction on a formal and a theoretical level. As a narrative form, fan fiction, like classical myth, is characterized by its multiple, self-contained but (at least potentially) overlapping or crisscrossing story worlds; as a social practice, it has been theorized as a counterhegemonic or resistant practice of mythopoesis.

[1.3] However, although "the theme of the fan community creating a popular myth has been a central facet of fan studies," as Hellekson and Busse put it (2014, 21), echoing the subtitle of Camille Bacon-Smith's foundational *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* (1992), the idea of contemporary popular culture as myth has found little traction among classical myth scholars. Some classical scholars using a content-based definition of myth study contemporary popular forms which transmit or deliver ancient myth (for example, Kovacs 2011, 11: "the masses have always been consumers of myth, though the mode of delivery changes frequently"). This approach, however, tends to lead to readings of contemporary popular texts which are entirely centered on and circumscribed by questions about the accuracy with which such texts transmit their ancient mythic content. Thus, for example, Amanda Potter's essay on the Furies in *Xena* (1995–2001) and *Charmed* (1998–2006) worries that "viewers who had only the episodes on which to base their readings of the Furies could come away confused about the myth" (2009, 233–34); Ghita and Andrikopoulos, writing on the videogame *Rome: Total War* (2004), wonder whether they should "condemn the product for propagating inaccuracies and creating false beliefs about the ancient world, or praise it for reviving the interest of the public in antiquity, by whatever means" (2009, 119). Either way, the contemporary text is seen only as a transmission or mediation of past content, not—as fan studies would usually have it—as a present-day contribution to the still-living tradition of myth.

[1.4] Classical scholars who define myth not simply in terms of content but in terms of context or function are also disinclined to make connections between ancient and

contemporary myth. Instead, they are concerned to emphasize the particularity of classical myth, and—particularly since the 1980s/1990s—have understood myth as being necessarily and irreducibly embedded in its social, historical, and cultural context. In his 1994 book *Imaginary Greece: The Contexts of Greek Mythology*, Richard Buxton defines myths as stories that are "socially embedded" in contrast to "idiosyncratic narratives" constructed by particular authors for particular ends (1994, 17). Citing Claude Calame's highly influential 1988 book *Métamorphoses du mythe en Grèce antique*, Buxton argues that if the terms *myth* and *mythology* "are so used as to elide cultural differences in the context and content of story-telling, then they are doing more harm than good" (1994, 13).

[1.5] Yet fans and pop culture audiences more often than not use these terms precisely to "elide cultural differences," to make connections between stories from widely different historical and cultural contexts. At the very same moment that classical scholars were turning away from comparativist decontextualizing models of myth toward an understanding of myth as "socially embedded," a strongly universalizing reading of Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) was infusing through popular storytelling, viewing, and critical practices, via George Lucas and Christopher Vogler (a story consultant at Disney who circulated a memo on the Hero's Journey in 1985, expanded into *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters* in 1992) (note 1). This model of myth sees it as an underlying universal pattern for storytelling which can be found—in the words of Vogler's memo—in "every story ever told" since "in his study of world hero myths Campbell discovered that they are all basically the same story," one that "springs from a universal source in the collective unconscious" (n.d.). This model has been influential on fans and remains important to at least some scholarly work on fan fiction: for example, Natalie Montano cites Campbell as "one of the foremost scholars on myth" (2013, 695) in a paper on fan fiction and intellectual property law to which I will return below.

[1.6] Classicists who follow Calame and Buxton in rejecting Campbell's model and moving to a definition of myth as socially embedded story have tended simply to dismiss popular cultural forms and practices which draw on this model, seeing them as fundamentally theoretically flawed and thus unworthy of scholarly analysis. However, instead of seeing these uses of myth in contemporary popular culture as irrelevant and/or incompetent contributions to scholarly discourse on myth, it might be more productive to see the interaction between fan fiction and classical myth as a site of intersection, negotiation, and contestation between different ways of doing myth. Indeed, as Bruce Lincoln points out in his book *Theorizing Myth*, the domain of myth has always been a site of exchange between amateur and scholarly knowledges: in the 19th century in particular, discourse on myth "moved freely across academic and

popular settings" (1999, 74). Moreover, Lincoln argues that discourse on myth is itself a form of mythmaking in that it tells "a story with an ideological dimension" (216) about the past in order to situate us in the present. Thus the methodologies of the myth scholar should also be used to uncover and analyze the mythmaking aspects of discourses on myth, both popular and scholarly.

[1.7] In this paper I will take up Lincoln's suggestions to explore the notion of fan fiction as contemporary amateur mythography ([note 2](#)). I will focus on three interrelated myths of myth: the myth that myth is a form of folk culture owned by the people; the myth of myth as counterhegemonic discourse; and the myth of myth as a commons of story or a universal story world.

2. The myth of myth as folk culture

[2.1] The term *myth* is persistently used in fannish and scholarly contexts to argue for common or popular ownership of stories, often explicitly or implicitly invoking parallels with ancient myth. Will Brooker addresses this point explicitly in his book on Batman, *Hunting the Dark Knight*, in which he distinguishes three modes of continuity in the Batman universe, three "senses of Batman": myth, brand, and canon. He writes: "We could call the first sense of Batman the *myth*. 'Metatext' would also serve—in Reynolds's words, 'a summation of all the existing texts plus all the gaps that those texts have left unspecified'—but 'myth' captures better the sense that this Batman belongs to everyone; to the public, to popular memory, to a modern folk culture" (2012, 152).

[2.2] As Brooker's discussion makes clear, the use of the term *myth* here specifically invokes a folkloric model linked to a particular understanding of intellectual and cultural property: "Batman belongs to everyone" because he is part of "a modern folk culture." The same argument about myth as a mode of folklore and therefore as a mode of ownership is made, repeatedly and with particular intensity, about George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977). One fan, Mark Magee, whose arguments have been given quasi-canonical status in academic fan studies by being cited in Henry Jenkins's book *Convergence Culture*, writes:

[2.3] If you were a kid in the seventies, you probably fought in schoolyards over who would play Han, lost a Wookiee action figure in your backyard and dreamed of firing that last shot on the Death Star. And probably your daydreams and conversations weren't about William Wallace, Robin Hood and Odysseus, but, instead, light saber battles, frozen men and forgotten fathers. In other words, we talked about our legend. (quoted in Jenkins 2006, 150)

[2.4] One of the key functions of the appeal to myth (or legend) here is to refuse or deny one of the most obvious differences between ancient myth and contemporary mass culture: the economic conditions of its production and circulation. Unlike Robin Hood and Odysseus, Han Solo is trademarked; his name and likeness are the intellectual property of Lucasfilm. Through childhood play, parody, conversational references, and transformative fan works, Han circulates in contexts far beyond the original three films in which he appears—even far beyond the officially licensed novels, films, comics, video games, and merchandise—but he is not available for any playwright or vase painter to use at will for commercial gain.

[2.5] Such appeals to myth that frame contemporary popular culture as folk culture thus construct a historical continuity and/or a conceptual parallel between, on the one hand, texts produced and circulated by the modern culture industry and, on the other hand, premodern folk culture. These appeals thus position themselves on one side of a major and ongoing debate in the study of popular culture: whether there is such a thing as a modern folk culture in a corporate cultural/media landscape and, if so, what such a thing might be. The debate goes back to the 1930s, when the Marxist cultural critic Theodor Adorno coined the term *mass culture*, referring to cultural products which are "mass-produced for mass consumption" (Storey 2012, 8); the culture industry (another phrase coined by Adorno) is thus just another manufacturing industry using mass-production techniques to turn out standardized products designed to maximize profit for producers and advertisers. Mass culture, according to Adorno's analysis, promotes passive listening practices and is the polar opposite of popular culture in the sense of an authentic folk culture, "the culture that originates from 'the people'" (Storey 2012, 9). Instead, mass culture is a mechanism of cultural control, a key part of the workings of capitalist hegemony.

[2.6] However, a strong distinction between mass and popular culture no longer seems tenable to most media scholars and cultural critics, especially since studies of fan production have shown how intertwined certain popular forms are with mass culture. Henry Jenkins writes, "The story of American arts in the twentieth century might be told in terms of the displacement of folk culture by mass media... Increasingly, the commercial cultures generated the stories, images, and sounds that mattered most to the public" (2006, 139). "Having buried the old folk culture," he goes on to argue, "this commercial culture becomes the common culture" (2006, 141). And fan fiction, as he has argued elsewhere, explicitly linking the debate to questions of ownership, "is a way of the culture repairing the damage done in a system where contemporary myths are owned by corporations instead of owned by the folk" (quoted in Harmon 1997).

[2.7] Describing the texts of popular culture as myths is, then, a way of claiming commercial culture as common culture and ultimately as the basis for a genuine popular or folk culture—fan culture—that exists outside capitalist networks of production, distribution, and consumption (or at least in a tense or resistant relationship to those networks). Another *Star Wars* fan, Elizabeth Durack, also cited by Jenkins, takes this argument to its logical conclusion and claims that *Star Wars* belongs—morally, at least—to its fans:

[2.8] Perhaps the fans have a moral right to use *Star Wars*—related names and creative concepts at will because *Star Wars* is such a deeply ingrained part of our culture. The very success and ubiquity of the franchise is what makes it hover (dangerously?) close to the border of being something no longer privately-owned, but public cultural property. It has been observed by many writers that *Star Wars* (based purposely on the recurring themes of mythology by creator George Lucas) and other popular media creations take the place in modern America that culture myths like those of the Greeks or Native Americans did for earlier peoples. Holding modern myths hostage by way of corporate legal wrangling seems somehow contrary to nature. (Durack 2000)

[2.9] Durack's argument here is cited by Henry Jenkins as evidence that "the fans wanted to hold on to their right to participate in the production and circulation of the *Star Wars* saga which had become so much a part of their lives" (2006, 153) and ultimately as part of his argument that fan fiction and fan creativity in general is an example of modern folk culture. The same move—the appeal to myth to argue for the rights of fans to own popular cultural properties—is made more recently in a scholarly context by Natalie Montano, who writes that "the public should have access to stories, characters, and other aspects of original works in order to perpetuate myth" (2013, 695).

[2.10] I want to attend carefully to the specific terms in which Durack frames her thinking, however, not because I see Durack's argument as intended to stand up to extensive scholarly scrutiny, but because precisely in its ephemerality, its everydayness, and its appeal to common sense and consensus, it reveals a fundamental and productive contradiction underlying many fannish and scholarly appeals to myth.

[2.11] Durack suggests that *Star Wars* belongs to its fans because its place in the settler society of the modern United States is analogous to the place and function of myth in Ancient Greek and Native American societies: *Star Wars* as myth therefore has an organic and authentic cultural significance that means that it cannot be owned by corporations. This claim rests on the idea that myth works in the same way in both

traditional and modern societies. However, Durack's argument also rests on a strong distinction between the two types of society—between the modern Enlightenment practices of legal wrangling and copyright and the natural practices of myth. In fact, the culture myths of Indigenous peoples in both North America and Australia are themselves the subject of a great deal of legal wrangling, precisely because the rights of the stories' owners have not been respected, and sacred stories have been appropriated, circulated, and sold for profit by settlers (note 3). Myth is thus being used here to elide or obscure the particular contemporary social, cultural, and legal dynamics of fan fiction rather than to illuminate them.

[2.12] Durack's argument works rhetorically by associating myth both with nature and with a dehistoricized and romanticized picture of traditional societies (the Greeks or Native Americans) and then opposing this natural authentic folk culture to corporate legal wrangling and to modern capitalist models of private ownership. This in itself, as Bruce Lincoln points out, is an inherently mythic move: "The misrepresentation of culture as nature is an ideological move characteristic of myth, as is the projection of the narrator's ideals, desires, and favored ranking of categories into a fictive prehistory that purportedly establishes how things are and must be" (1999, 149). Durack, Jenkins, and Montano are all doing exactly this when they appeal to a "fictive prehistory" (belonging indifferently to the Greeks, the Native Americans, and 19th-century US settler culture) which establishes our contemporary right to "perpetuate myth" (Montano 2013, 695). The specific myth about myth that Durack retells in abbreviated form here, and that Jenkins's and Montano's arguments also rely on, can be traced back ultimately to the work of Johann Gottfried Herder in the 18th century.

[2.13] In his account of the history of myth scholarship in *Theorizing Myth*, Bruce Lincoln shows how Herder's theory of myth transforms the mythos/logos binary set up by Plato. Plato (himself inverting an earlier set of associations found in Hesiod and Homer) associates logos with masculine, authoritative, truthful, and rational speech, and mythos with feminine, manipulative, misleading, and irrational speech: Herder inverts Plato's value system and valorizes myth as an authentic, organic, and primordial form of knowing. Myths, for Herder, belong to and define a *Volk*: shared mythology that creates and defines a community, a culture, a race, and a homeland or nation. In Herder's response to the Gaelic epic poetry of Ossian, collected/ discovered/ forged by James Macpherson from 1760 onwards, "mythic poetry, which the Enlightenment disparaged as a form of primitive irrationality, [was] retheorized under the signs of authenticity, tradition, and national identity" (Lincoln 1999, 51).

[2.14] Understandings of fan practice as folk culture are thus rooted in a Herderian model of myth as the unifying factor that produces and defines an authentic national community or culture: as, that is, a counterhegemonic popular discourse. The chapter

of Jenkins's *Convergence Culture* that cites both Durack and Magee opens with the claim: "*Star Wars* has become their 'legend,' and now they are determined to remake it on their own terms" (2006, 135).

[2.15] Fannish claims to ownership of popular texts on the basis of a myth about myth as folklore thus seem to justify some of the criticisms made by classical scholars about the poverty of a decontextualized understanding of myth that elides cultural and historical differences in storytelling practices as well as flattening out power differentials. However, as I turn away from fannish theories of myth to fan fictional practices in my next two sections, I hope to show that the practice of fan fiction is richer and more interesting than its theory. In particular, fan fiction is far ahead in its capacity to articulate arguments about story, hegemony, and power.

3. The myth of myth as counterhegemonic discourse

[3.1] The understanding of fan fiction as myth as folk culture sketched above highlights a central debate in myth and pop culture studies. Is myth to be understood, as Jenkins argues (via Magee and Durack), as a counterhegemonic popular discourse, a common culture which can potentially resist or subvert an ideologically driven mass culture? Such a model of myth can be found in many places both in myth scholarship and in pop culture studies, but it is in direct opposition to another model that constructs myth as fundamentally and essentially hegemonic: thus Barthes defines myth as a form of "depoliticized speech" (1972, 142), belonging to the Right rather than to the Left (148), which "transforms history into Nature" (128); Lincoln, similarly, calls myth "ideology in narrative form" (Lincoln 1999, 147).

[3.2] The claims made about myth and cultural ownership discussed above, in their appeal to the natural rights of the folk to the ownership of myth, are not very useful in developing a sufficiently complex understanding of the relationship between story, culture, society, and power. This is because they ultimately, if unwittingly, draw on Herder's primitivizing theory of myth. In *Theorizing Myth*, Bruce Lincoln analyzes the ways in which Herder's model has implicitly continued to shape both academic and popular understandings of myth throughout the 20th century. He argues that instead, we should attend in more detail to the way in which agency operates in the "act of narration" of myths and use "a more dialectic, eminently political theory of narration, one that recognizes the capacity of narrators to modify details of the stories that pass through them, introducing changes in the classificatory order as they do so, most often in ways that reflect their subject position and advance their interests" (1999, 149).

[3.3] Lincoln's call for a theory of narration that "recognizes the capacity of narrators to modify details of...stories...in ways that reflect their subject position and advance their interests" precisely echoes the way in which fan fiction studies has understood transformative fan work ever since the pioneering work of Constance Penley and Henry Jenkins. Jenkins's and (especially) Penley's analysis draws on a theory of myth as female-voiced and counterhegemonic discourse, linking fan practices to the mythopoetic practices and theory developed in second-wave feminism in two interrelated contexts.

[3.4] Mythopoesis appeared in second-wave feminism firstly via the return to the theory of originary matriarchy. This theory was developed in the mid-19th century by the Swiss anthropologist Johann Jakob Bachofen, was fleshed out at the turn of the 20th century by the pioneering feminist classicist and myth scholar Jane Ellen Harrison, and served as a potent source of inspiration to second-wave matriarchalists like Mary Daly: according to this theory, the earliest human societies were matriarchal. Patriarchy arrived later and violently, seeking to erase all traces of originary matriarchy; this historical event is registered in Greek myth through stories about the rise to dominance of the Olympian pantheon—particularly Zeus, who became King and Father of Gods by destroying his mother.

[3.5] Secondly, myth emerged in second-wave feminist discourse in the theory of women's writing as revisionist mythmaking associated with poets like Adrienne Rich, Anne Sexton, and alca, and developed theoretically by second-wave poet-critics including Adrienne Rich (again), Hélène Cixous, and Alicia Ostriker. This theory sought to resolve debates about the nature of women's writing by arguing that differences between men's and women's writing arise not from essential differences between men and women but from the ways in which men and women are positioned differently with respect to culture and language.

[3.6] Tina Passman brings both strands of feminist mythmaking together in an essay in a very early collection of feminist classical scholarship, writing:

[3.7] In this particular cultural moment when many of us cry for a revolution in human thought and action, some feminisms have anchored their visionary work firmly to the past, linking the notions 'ancient' and 'future'...The unearthing of evidence for early matriculture in the West—Europe, Asia Minor, and Africa—furnishes the seed for this feminist re-visioning and re-construction of a matristic past and carries with it a web of ethics, aesthetics, history, and spirituality. (1993, 182)

[3.8] Passman's careful positioning of this matristic past as something that can only be accessed through feminist re-visioning and reconstruction—not through the

disciplinary norms of history—echoes the attitude of most second-wave feminists, including Adrienne Rich. They are simultaneously doubtful about the reliability of historical accounts of ancient matriarchies, on the one hand, and, on the other, suspicious of the intensity with which such societies are declared impossible by mainstream scholars. Both Passman and Rich, tellingly, turn to the term *myth* to resolve (or dissolve?) this contradiction between history and ideology: Passman writes of a "feminist myth of a matricultural origin for the West" that "proposes a view of cultural history that challenges the basic values and assumptions of Western patriarchy" (1993, 182).

[3.9] This powerful feminist myth of myth—the idea of a feminine origin for culture and history, erased by a late-coming patriarchy—is given equally powerful form in Lisztful's 2009 fan fic *The First Place* (2009). In the fic, the goddess Hera travels through a contemporary world, gathering several of her children and stepchildren—Dionysus, Apollo, Ares, Hephaestus, Artemis, Heracles, and Aphrodite—for a birthday party. At the party, she announces to her children: "I fear I'd been made to believe that your father came first. That he made all of us, all of this. In that, I was incorrect... I am the first...I am the beginning. Life springs from me, and always shall." When Zeus arrives, she says to him:

[3.10] Hera is not my only name. I have been many names. Ma Gu, Gaia, Ninhursag, Hathor, Isis, Spider Grandmother. I am Tiamat, Inanna, Ninsun, Asherah, Ashtart, Cybele, Danu. I am Frekka, Holda, Frau Holle, Potria Theron, Erda, and Umai, Mahimata, Shakti. I am all of these and more. I am the beginning, the first, the place from which all the rest is born. I am the mother of it all, and I love all of it...From this point forward...I intend to be all of these names, and all of these ideas. All of it. It is I, and you shall no longer wear it as your own. I know you can't, for in the naming, I've found all of the power I didn't before know was mine.

[3.11] This moment draws on a number of important second-wave feminist revisionings of myth and history. Firstly, the myth of an originary matriarchy, lost and erased with the advent of Zeus but still at least in principle retrievable. Hera's account of the loss of her originary status—"I was made to believe that your father came first... In that, I was incorrect"—closely echoes Harrison's account of the patriarchal-Olympian revisionist account of the birth of Pandora, who, Harrison argues, was an important goddess prior to the advent of Olympian religion:

[3.12] Zeus the Father will have no great Earth-goddess, Mother and Maid in one, in his man-fashioned Olympus, but her figure is from the beginning, so he remakes it; woman...who made all things, gods and mortals alike, is become their plaything, their slave...To Zeus, the archpatriarchal bourgeois,

the birth of the first woman is but a huge Olympian jest. (quoted in Passman 1993, 193)

[3.13] Secondly, Lisztful's title, *The First Place*, invokes a tradition of second-wave (and later) feminist appropriations of the concept of *chora*. Plato introduces *chora* in the dialogue *Timaeus*, where he associates it with the terms *womb* and *nurse* and says that it "provides a position for everything that comes to be." *Chora*, which is closely associated with motherhood, is the originary space in which spatiality, signification, and life become possible—it is, literally, the first place. As has been traced, for example, by Alex Wardrop (2013), *chora* was taken up by a series of feminist philosophers, beginning with Julia Kristeva in *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Kristeva theorizes an originary maternity, which Lisztful's story superimposes on Bachofen's/Harrison's myth of originary matriarchy: Hera speaks from and as *chora* when she says "I am the beginning, the first, the place from which all the rest is born."

[3.14] Finally, Hera's words "in the naming, I've found all of the power I didn't before know was mine" allude, appropriately enough, to Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father*, the founding text of matriarchalist feminism, which sets out from the premise that "Women have had the power of *naming* stolen from us" and attempts to take that power back (Daly 1978, 8).

[3.15] Lisztful's story thus also thematizes the stealing or reclaiming of language that Alicia Ostriker identifies as the fundamental characteristic of feminist mythmaking in her essay "The Thieves of Language," writing:

[3.16] Whenever a poet employs a figure or story previously accepted or defined by a culture, the poet is using myth, and the potential is always present that the use will be revisionist: that is, the figure or tale will be appropriated for altered ends, the old vessel filled with new wine, initially satisfying the thirst of the individual poet but ultimately making cultural change possible. Historic and quasi-historic figures like Napoleon and Sappho are in this sense mythic, as are folktales, legends, and Scripture. (1985, 317)

[3.17] Lisztful's story, I would argue, is genuinely mythic according to almost any of the criteria or models referred to in this paper. However, this is not because it includes subject matter, characters, or narrative structures drawn from classical mythology, but because it is embedded in a web of culturally meaningful and ideologically contested stories. That is, its mythic characters are not so much Hera, Zeus, and Aphrodite as they are Jane Harrison, Mary Daly, Julia Kristeva, and Hélène Cixous: it is from these characters and their stories that *The First Place* gains its narrative and social power. It is mythic not because of its content but because of its narrative form and its

effectiveness as a social practice—two factors that, as we will see in the final section, are interrelated.

4. The myth of myth as a universal story world

[4.1] Lisztful's use of feminist myths of myth is an example of fan fiction's capacity to elaborate a more sophisticated version of syncretism than does Vogler's reading of Campbell or Jenkins/Montano/Durack's version of Herder. *The First Place* practices a mode of fannish mythmaking which does not simply assert an equivalence between all storytelling, all people, and all cultures, or between Greek myth, Native American myth, and *Star Wars*. Instead, it draws on both equivalence and difference to bring two mythic systems together and use them to interrogate one another.

[4.2] In this final section of the paper, I want to examine some other ways in which fan fiction can do this, looking at a very few particularly interesting examples from the Greek and Roman Mythology fandom on AO3.

[4.3] Of the 1,520 fics on AO3, between 40 and 50 percent remain entirely within the Greek mythic-historical story world: these include fics set within the Homeric universe, most often the *Iliad* rather than the *Odyssey*, as well as fics about the Olympian gods, ranging from the well known (Persephone/Hades is a particularly popular pairing) to the obscure (Helenus/Neoptolemus, in orphan_account's *Rarely Pure and Never Simple* [2010]). The most common kind of story here is a retelling of a myth in a style that fleshes out the characterization of the classical gods and heroes according to contemporary fictional and psychological norms, as encapsulated in the author's note in onehoureternity's *Darling, if you please (Don't go without me)* (2012): "The history is mostly canon-compliant, I just filled in Thetis' thoughts and emotions." The use of modernizing psychology sometimes shades into the use of a contemporary-colloquial style and setting, as in chellerrific's *Tea Time* (2011) (where Hestia drinks tea and reads *Harry Potter*), saturninepen's *Happiness* (2012) (where a teenage Hades is bullied by a jock Zeus and comforted with the gift of puppy Cerberus), or skypirateb's *No Girls Allowed* (2012) (in which little Zeus, Poseidon, and Demeter won't let little Hades into their tree house). This category in turn shades into one of the other most popular types of story: the retelling of a myth in a contemporary setting.

[4.4] There are two main kinds of modernizing retellings on AO3: first, stories about the ancient gods and heroes having survived into the contemporary world (more on these below), and second, crossover fics. In some crossovers, characters from contemporary popular-culture texts encounter classical gods and heroes, as in Wynkat's *I See You* (2012), where Adam Lambert has sex with Dionysus; liliaeth's *The Pet Whisperer* (2012), where Despoine, the daughter of Demeter and Poseidon, trains

Dean Winchester as a pet for Castiel; and Winter of our Discontent's *The Mind Has Mazes* (2012), in which Bruce Banner and Tony Stark find themselves in Minos's Labyrinth. Other fics marked as crossovers retell myths with contemporary pop culture characters in the starring roles, and they do so to a number of different effects. Meretricula's *Ibra in the Underworld* (2011) is a soccer RPF fic which sees the Swedish footballer Zlatan Ibrahimovic enter "the underworld where players go where they retire" to bring back Alessandro Nesta, who is not playing because of a dislocated shoulder:

[4.5] At the entrance of the underworld is a mighty three-headed creature...Zlatan approached the beast and said,

[4.6] "I am Zlatan, and I am a god to the people of Sweden, and I have come to the underworld to find Alessandro Nesta and bring him back with me. Let me pass."

[4.7] The creature shook its middle head, which said, "Zlatan Ibrahimovic, we guard the country of retired souls. None who yet plays may enter here. Return when you are too old and crippled to hobble off the bench, even in Italy, even for Milan, and then we shall let you pass."

[4.8] "I am Zlatan," said Zlatan, "and you will let me pass now." And then he kicked the creature in each of its three heads.

[4.9] The creature did not fall down dead or even unconscious as Zlatan had expected, since he had a great deal of experience in kicking people in the head. However, it is a little known fact that to the three-headed beast that guards the underworld, a kick in the head is truest gesture of friendship that exists. It did not fall, but all three heads began to weep tears of a shared love of manly violence, and it did embrace Zlatan with all six of its arms.

[4.10] The phrase "I am Zlatan, and I am a god to the people of Sweden" references a fan vid (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9m7m8_2t4Y), and this passage also refers to Ibrahimovic's well-documented habit of kicking his teammates. Meretricula uses the mythic framework to present information and references in comically decontextualized ways (for example, the unexpected dissing of Milan's soccer team by the guardian of the Underworld) and also to produce humor through her use of irony and her pitch-perfect control of register. A large part of the point is the lack of fit between the mythic tale and the characters and events narrated, underscored in the moment where Orpheus-Zlatan looks back at Eurydice-Nesta:

[4.11] And as was thus inevitable, having passed again through the gates and across the river and up to the entrance where his three-headed friend awaited, as he passed the threshold into the world above, Zlatan glanced back to make certain that Nesta was behind him and broke his compact with the Dread Lord and his Queen.

[4.12] "You stupid fucking fuck!" said Nesta. "Why the fuck did you do that? Now I have to go back and be retired forever! Fuck you!"

[4.13] "Fuck me?" said Zlatan. "Fuck you, you fucking pussy! What, do you want to be retired forever?...Why don't you fight to stay, you stupid useless piece of shit!"

[4.14] ..."For the love of Paolo Maldini," said Dread Lord Guardiola. "Just take him and go, so long as you never come back."

[4.15] Meretricula acknowledges the inevitability of the (usually poignant) moment for which this myth is best known—the moment at which Orpheus looks back and loses Eurydice—but also resists that inevitability and gives the story a happy ending by allowing the characters to talk back to the myth in irreverent terms. Finally, then, this story does address two of the key interpretative problems that the Orpheus-Eurydice story continues to pose: Why did Orpheus look back, and why does Eurydice have no agency? Through sheer force of will and size of personality, Meretricula's Zlatan and Nesta are able to override the cruel inevitability of the mythic narrative.

[4.16] Silverpard's *Lament* (2011), a *Sherlock* (2010–) fic, makes very different use of the same myth, casting Sherlock Holmes as Orpheus and John Watson as Eurydice. The fic opens with a programmatic passage showcasing its syncretic use of myth:

[4.17] Say it: John is dead...

[4.18] Not possible. *Not possible.*

[4.19] (Whatever remains, however improbable)

[4.20] Then. Since it is not possible that John is dead (though he is, perhaps you should amend that—it is not possible that John can *remain* dead, permanently parted from you) what can you do to correct this state of affairs?

[4.21] Here Sherlock's famous dictum "once you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth" is economically used to create a shared story world where this hyperrational character can plausibly enter the mythic realm of the Underworld. Sherlock finds it impossible to accept the reality of

John's death and so, by his own logic (which, as the BBC series showed, is consistently undermined by his inability to deal with emotions), an alternative reality must be found. In the Underworld, we are told that "yours [Sherlock's] is not a mind made to know the path between the worlds of life and death" (a line used as the summary of the story), and that "even as you walk, it twists before your eyes, your logical mind rebelling, interpreting it all as something you can understand." We are therefore prepared for the denouement of the story, in which Sherlock is sabotaged by both his rationality and his emotions:

[4.22] You can hear your heart beating, blood rushing in your ears, the sound of your feet against earth, against stone, the echo of Hades' laughter.

[4.23] You cannot hear John.

[4.24] The path is steep, and John's leg still trouble(d)s him now and then; he would not be able to keep from making small noises of discomfort, not at the unrelenting pace you are setting...

[4.25] The silence has never been so terrible since the morning you woke and didn't have to realise John was not there, woke and didn't have to remind yourself he was gone...

[4.26] You are alone, and the sunlight is cold and weak on your face—you *are alone* and you cannot bear it, must *know* and so you

turn

and

look.

[4.27] Silverpard's story elegantly fuses the world of *Sherlock* with the world of Greek myth, both emotionally and narratively. It uses the well-known myth to explore Sherlock's characterization, and it uses our familiarity with Sherlock's emotional life to flesh out the myth and make it legible within the conventions of contemporary realist fiction.

[4.28] Crossover fics explicitly juxtapose different story worlds, but modernizing retellings of myth can be used in a similar way, to probe similarities and differences between narrative and characterological conventions rather than simply insisting on equivalences. They can even be used, as in Daygloparker's *songs inside the fog inside the world* (2009), to reflect on myth itself and, ultimately, to put forward an alternative myth of myth, one attentive to variant traditions and to the political aspects of narration, along the lines proposed by Bruce Lincoln.

[4.29] *Songs inside the fog inside the world*, a 1,500-word story written for Yuletide 2009, is a short, fragmented narrative telling the story of a journalist writing a profile of the chain-smoking, texting heroine/constellation Andromeda. Andromeda is consistently figured as a celebrity, and the story's dizzying power comes in great part from the ways in which it both conflates and distinguishes between Greek myth and contemporary celebrity culture.

[4.30] "You know," Andromeda says, "when you spend time as a constellation, you get to read a lot. I know, right? Stars, reading." "Stars, reading" is an impossible phenomenon and also a pun. The phrase refers simultaneously to Andromeda's form as a constellation and to a contemporary stereotype of the unintelligent celebrity (the story opens with Andromeda quoting Tolstoy and asking "You think...I'm too dim to actually read?" in an allusion to a well-known anecdote about Marilyn Monroe reading Dostoevsky). Throughout the story, Andromeda is consistently shown performing physical actions surely only possible in a human body (smoking, texting, drying dishes), but we are just as consistently told that she is a constellation. Thus, in an oblique reference to her mythic past when she was chained to a rock as a sacrifice to a sea monster and rescued by Perseus, we are told that "she still has the scars on her wrists," but moments later the journalist says "at least as a constellation you can't be chained to a rock any more, right?"

[4.31] We are thus never quite able to settle into either a realist or a mythic reading practice of the story or to visualize Andromeda consistently. The story denies us a stable version of Andromeda, insisting even in its physical detail on the incommensurability of the multiple versions of her story.

[4.32] Daygloparker's story draws an equivalence between mythical characters and celebrities—both are stars—but uses this for an oblique interrogation of the whole notion of variant traditions and versions and of the equivalences drawn between myth and popular culture. The story repeatedly refers to the dominance of Ovid's (or "that Latin bastard," as Andromeda calls him) version of the story and casts Andromeda as an aberrant or resistant reader of her own and other stories. Like many fans, Andromeda has a tendency to identify with villains and to question the political and ideological motives behind casting certain characters as good or evil: "The first time I read *Cinderella*—I don't know, am I broken? Scared? Demented? I felt bad for the stepsisters." In telling her own story to the Interviewer, she centers the narrative on Medusa, the woman whose death made her rescue possible ("She *died*, and my husband gave her head to a fucking important goddess on a fucking important plate, and I'm supposed to feel great about that—and I *do*, really, but—she died.")

[4.33] Near the end of the story is the following brief unfocalized passage:

[4.34] Once upon a time, a guy saved a girl, and then they got married.

[4.35] (Once upon a time, a father feared his son, and locked him and his mother in a chest. The son lived, and eventually killed a Gorgon—an evil creature, we have all decided—and then that saved a girl, so then they got married.)

[4.36] The timeline is a little fuzzy on the actual sequence of events.

[4.37] To most people, it doesn't matter.

[4.38] This passage implicitly juxtaposes the Campbellian version of myth—the one where the "actual sequence of events...doesn't matter" because the core of the myth is invariant across all its variant retellings—to a version which is attentive to the politics of narration and to the importance of differences across retellings. To Andromeda, the sequence of events, the precise ways in which she is related to the other characters in the story—Perseus, Cetus, Medusa—does matter. The story thus insists both on Andromeda's translatability and transmissibility across historical and cultural contexts and, simultaneously, on her embedment in a complex, specific, and noninterchangeable web of human (and divine, and monstrous) relationships.

[4.39] In other words, *songs inside the fog inside the world* does draw implicitly on the idea of equivalence between story worlds, as in its pun on "stars, reading," which fuses the figure of the stellified Greek heroine with that of the movie star. But instead of using this equivalence, like Vogler, to collapse all story worlds into the same world and all versions of (even one) myth into the same story, daygloparker uses it to generate a story that is embedded narratively in its original mythic story world and socially in our contemporary context. As with Lizstful's story, daygloparker's is mythic not because it is about Andromeda, in whom we do not believe, but because it is about characters and entities who are important in our contemporary context: Marilyn Monroe, Ovid—and storytelling itself.

[4.40] Although daygloparker's story, like the others I have read here, demonstrates and embodies the potential interconnectedness of all stories, it does not do so by claiming that all stories are the same, as in Vogler's version of Campbell: quite the opposite, in fact. Rather than defining the mythic dimension of story as a story's invariant structure, infinitely transferrable/translatable into new periods and contexts but never itself changing, daygloparker defines myth by its infinite variation and by the way in which it can weave characters and stories and ideas together into a single story world. The way in which she uses myth is strikingly resonant with Sarah Iles Johnston's recent work on Greek myth, which sees "an essential element" of the social power of myth as being "the tightly woven story world that was cumulatively being

created on a continuous basis by the myths that were narrated. The closely intertwined nature of this story world validated not only each individual myth that comprised it but all the stories about what had happened in the mythic past, the characters who inhabited them, and the entire worldview upon which they rested" (2015, 284).

[4.41] For Johnston, the Greek mythic story world is characterized by crossover and hyperseriality—a term that she uses for Greek myth as well as "soap operas" and "other extended narratives" (she cites a variety of 20th- and 21st-century fiction in comparison, including *The Forsyte Chronicles* [*sic*] and Stephen King's *Dark Tower* series) (2015, 298). She highlights "the dense *intertwining* of characters and their stories in these sorts of narratives and the difficulty of completely disengaging any one of them from the much larger network of which they are a part," arguing that "such intertwining lends credibility to the stories in which these characters participate simply because they all are understood to inhabit the same expanding and yet bounded story world; each guarantees and is guaranteed by the others" (2015, 300). In an exemplary reading drawing on the rituals of the cult of Persephone and Demeter, the myths of Theseus, *Torchwood* (2006–11), and *The Magician's Nephew* (1955), Johnston shows that a "thickly crisscrossing network" of interwoven characters and stories implies a universe where "everything can be made to fit together; everything can be understood as part of a single, bigger picture and thus ratified, if only you know where to look for the missing pieces—or how to fashion them yourself" (2015, 306).

[4.42] Johnston argues that despite their similarities of form, there is a significant difference between classical myth and contemporary pop culture hyperserials in that we are not encouraged to believe in the secondary worlds that these hyperserials construct as a part of our own social worlds. But, as I have argued above (and elsewhere), fan-fictional hyperseriality is motivated by a desire to intervene not only in the narrative worlds of its source materials but also in the social world of its telling. The hyperserial narrative form of fan fiction is part of the way in which fan fiction is able to create persuasive mythic narratives—not about Andromeda or Sherlock Holmes but about storytelling itself. When fan fiction is most theoretically engaged, it is also most mythically potent.

5. Conclusion

[5.1] The distinction between scholarly and popular models of myth with which I started has, I hope, been dissolved in the course of this paper: some popular models of myth can be traced back to scholarly sources (Herder, Campbell), but, simultaneously, the mythmaking practice of amateurs—fans and other writers,

including second-wave feminist writers—converges with critical scholarly work on hyperseriality, producing fictocritical discourse on the crisscrossing story worlds of myth that itself crosses the border between academic and fannish work.

[5.2] Lincoln argues that as myths get appropriated and renarrated in the service of different interests, they can potentially "recalibrate categories and redistribute privilege" (1999, 261). In the reinvigorated discourse on myth today, I see opportunities for fans, pop culture scholars, and classicists to work together in order to recalibrate categories and redistribute privilege, including the categories and privileges that are used to divide the makers and readers of myth into scholarly and amateur communities, with little or no genuine dialogue going on between us.

6. Notes

1. Thus in 1988, in Classics, Claude Calame published *Métamorphoses du mythe en Grèce antique*, while in popular culture, PBS screened *The Power of Myth*, a documentary on the work of Joseph Campbell, author of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), filmed at George Lucas's ranch and seeded with references to *Star Wars*.
2. I use the term *amateur* not in a pejorative sense but rather in the sense of an affective knowledge community existing in an ambivalent relation to public institutions of knowledge such as the university.
3. See, for example, Terri Janke's *Our Culture: Our Future: Report on Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights*, published in 1999, and Alexandria Wilson's article "How Our Stories Are Told" published in 1998 in *Canadian Journal of Native Education*.

7. Works cited

Barthes, Roland. (1957) 1972. "Myth Today." In *Mythologies*, translated by Annette Lavers, 107–64. London: Jonathan Cape.

Brooker, Will. 2012. *Hunting the Dark Knight: Twenty-First Century Batman*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Buxton, Richard. 1994. *Imaginary Greece: The Contexts of Mythology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

chellerrific. 2011. *Tea Time*. Fan fiction. *Archive of Our Own*, August 24.
<http://archiveofourown.org/works/316652>.

Csapo, Eric. 2005. *Theories of Mythology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Daly, Mary. 1978. *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Boston: Beacon Press.

daygloparker. 2009. *songs inside the fog inside the world*. Fan fiction. *Archive of Our Own*, December 21. <http://archiveofourown.org/works/34740>.

Durack, Elizabeth. 2000. "fans.starwars.con." *Echo Station*, March 3. <http://www.echostation.com/editorials/confans.htm>.

Harmon, Amy. 1997. "In TV's Dull Summer Days, Plots Take Wing on the Net." *New York Times*, August 18. <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/08/18/business/in-tv-s-dull-summer-days-plots-take-wing-on-the-net.html?pagewanted=all>.

Hellekson, Karen, and Kristina Busse, eds. 2014. *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Ghita, Cristian, and Georgios Andrikopoulos. 2009. "Total War and Total Realism: A Battle for Antiquity in Computer Game History." In *Classics for All: Reworking Antiquity in Mass Culture*, edited by Dunstan Lowe and Kim Shahabudin, 109–26. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press.

Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Johnston, Sarah Iles. 2015. "The Greek Mythic Story World." *Arethusa* 48 (3): 283–311.

Kovacs, George. 2011. "Comics and Classics: Establishing a Critical Frame." In *Classics and Comics*, edited by George Kovacs and C. W. Marshall, 3–24. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/are.2015.0008>.

liliaeth. 2012. *The Pet Whisperer*. Fan fiction. *Archive of Our Own*, July 21. <http://archiveofourown.org/works/464947/chapters/802658>.

Lincoln, Bruce. 1999. *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lizstful. 2009. *The First Place*. Fan fiction. *Archive of Our Own*, December 20. <http://archiveofourown.org/works/32474>.

meretricula. 2011. *Ibra in the Underworld*. Fan fiction. *Archive of Our Own*, May 27. <http://archiveofourown.org/works/204965>.

Montano, Natalie. 2013. "Hero with a Thousand Copyright Violations: Modern Myth and an Argument for Universally Transformative Fan Fiction." *Northwestern Journal of Technology and Intellectual Property* 11 (7): 689–705.

onehoureternity. 2012. *Darling, if you please (Don't go without me)*. Fan fiction. *Archive of Our Own*, June 8. <http://archiveofourown.org/works/428157>.

orphan_account. 2010. *Rarely Pure and Never Simple*. Fan fiction. *Archive of Our Own*, December 20. <http://archiveofourown.org/works/141225>.

Ostriker, Alicia. 1985. "The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking." In *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory*, edited by Elaine Showalter, 314–38. New York: Pantheon Books.

Passman, Tina. 1993. "Out of the Closet and into the Field: Matriculture, The Lesbian Perspective, and Feminist Classics." In *Feminist Theory and the Classics*, edited by Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and Amy Richlin, 181–209. London: Routledge.

Potter, Amanda. 2009. "Hell Hath No Fury Like a Dissatisfied Viewer: Audience Responses to the Presentation of the Furies in *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Charmed*." In *Classics for All: Reworking Antiquity in Mass Culture*, edited by Dunstan Lowe and Kim Shahabudin, 217–36. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press.

saturninepen. 2012. *Happiness*. Fan fiction. *Archive of Our Own*, August 25. <http://archiveofourown.org/works/495149>.

silverpard. 2011. *Lament*. Fan fiction. *Archive of Our Own*, August 21. <http://archiveofourown.org/works/243118>.

skypirateb. 2012. *No Girls Allowed*. Fan fiction. *Archive of Our Own*, February 9. <http://archiveofourown.org/works/335725>.

Storey, John. 2012. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. 6th ed. London: Routledge.

Vogler, Christopher. n.d. *Hero's Journey*. http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero%27s_journey.htm.

Vogler, Christopher. 1992. *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions.

Wardrop, Alexandra. 2013. "Feminist Criticism and Plato's Timaeus-Critias: Rethinking Chora." PhD diss.: University of Bristol.

Winter of our Discontent. 2012. *The Mind Has Mazes*. Fan fiction. *Archive of Our Own*, July 25. <http://archiveofourown.org/works/468427/chapters/809503>.

Wynkat. 2012. *I See You*. Fan fiction. *Archive of Our Own*, March 27. <http://archiveofourown.org/works/369893/chapters/671551>.

Theory

Versions of Homer: Translation, fan fiction, and other transformative rewriting

Shannon K. Farley

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—This article posits a paradigm of transformative work that includes translation, adaptation, and fan fiction using the Homeric epics as a case study. A chronological discussion of translations, other literary rewritings, and fan fiction distinguishes each as belonging to its respective cultural system while participating in a common form of transformative rewriting. Such a close look at the distinctive ways that Homer has been rewritten throughout history helps us to make a scholarly distinction between the work of fan writers and the work of rewriters like Vergil and Alexander Pope. At the same time, discussing the ways in which the forms of their rewritings are similar gives a scholarly basis for arguing that fan fiction participates in the discourse of serious interpretive literature.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Systems theory, Vergil, Pope, Lattimore, Fagles

Farley, Shannon K. 2016. "Versions of Homer: Translation, Fan Fiction, and Other Transformative Rewriting." In "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work," edited by Ika Willis, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 21.

[doi:10.3983/twc.2016.0673](https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2016.0673).

1. Introduction

[1.1] The year 1992 saw two major pieces of scholarship published in two very different fields. André Lefevere's *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* suggested to the field of translation studies a wider scope for analyzing the impact of interpretive rewriting on reception. That same year, Henry Jenkins published *Textual Poachers*, that seminal work of ethnographic fan studies that demonstrates the impact of fan culture on the reception of texts in popular media. My larger scholarly project (from which this article has been excerpted) brings these points of view together, utilizing translation theory in an analysis of fan texts and utilizing fan studies in an analysis of literary rewritings.

[1.2] As I have argued elsewhere (Farley 2013), within the field of translation studies many scholars have been expanding the definition of "translation" as a theoretical construct. In *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (2007), for example, Maria Tymoczko highlights some non-Western conceptions of what we term

"translation" in English, such as *rupantar* ("to change in form") and *anuvad* ("speaking after") in India, *tarjama* ("definition") in Arabic, and *tapia* and *kowa* in Igbo, both of which mean a variation of "break apart and tell again" (Tymoczko 2007, 68–71). As far back as 1959, Roman Jakobson defined three different kinds of translation: interlingual, which is the traditional definition, the transfer of meaning from one language to another; intralingual, which is the transfer of meaning between two sign systems within the same language, such as a modern English translation of Chaucer; and intersemiotic, which Jakobson rather weakly described as the transfer of verbal signs into a nonverbal sign system, giving the example of translating "verbal art into music, dance, cinema, or painting" (Jakobson 1959, 238). In the decades since, and especially with the advent of the Internet, intersemiotic translation has become much richer than Jakobson could have imagined. It can be argued that every piece of online fan fiction is an intersemiotic translation—from cinema, television, or animation to text, but also from static text to hypertext and from the sign system of traditional literary work to the particular sign system of fan work, with its codes for genre, tagging norms, and assumption of audience familiarity with fan culture at large.

[1.3] In this article, it is my intention to demonstrate the commonalities that translation and contemporary transformative fan work share by doing a close reading of the history of rewritings of the Homeric epics. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are among the most transformatively rewritten texts in Western culture. Except in their original context of ancient Greece, access to their original forms has always been limited to those who had learned the language—a small number, even at the height of classical education. In discussing the rewriting and retelling of Homer, I refer to the first chapter of Lefevere's *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, in which he argues that nonprofessional readers (by which he means the bulk of readers—those who are not students or professors of literature) generally do not "read literature as written by its writers, but as rewritten by its rewriters" (Lefevere 1992, 4). Lefevere includes translations, abridgments, editions, anthologies, and so forth among forms of rewritings, and since such rewritings are not only the means by which the majority of "nonprofessional" readers are exposed to literature, but also "can be shown to have had a not negligible impact on the evolution of literatures in the past" (7), he calls for studies of them. "Those engaged in that study will have to ask themselves who rewrites, why, under what circumstances, for which audience" (7). I go one step further than Lefevere by adding fan fiction to his list and categorizing all of the rewriting in my study as "transformative." Just as fan fiction transforms the source text in order to express a particular interpretation of it, the translations and pastiches on which this study focuses make the same transformative moves, informed by the system in which the rewriter is writing. In fact, the field of fan studies has a great deal to offer the fields of classical studies and literary studies in general with respect to fan

studies' paradigmatic acceptance of a multitude of readings of a multitude of source texts.

2. On the usefulness of systems theory

[2.1] As Lefevere does, I define my project using a systems heuristic. The use of the word *system* goes beyond merely describing a cultural context and indicates that each literary system is to a certain extent closed and self-regulating. A system is made up of many moving parts—literature is not a monolithic block of anything but rather a tapestry with many threads, woven in different directions, making up a whole piece of cloth that can, in turn, become a piece of something else. Literature is a "contrived" system, because it is a system of both the texts and the humans who read, write, rewrite, edit, and publish those texts. The system works on the human agents as a series of normative constraints, which they often do not realize. To them, the system is simply "what is done." Lefevere gives the example of Shakespeare writing in Elizabethan England: Shakespeare had to refrain from displeasing the queen, avoid the displeasure of Puritan authorities, stay in his patron's favor, and hold the interest of the public, all at the same time (Lefevere 1992, 13–14). When a text is rewritten, it is rewritten to satisfy the requirements of a particular system, in form or in ideology—and often these two things are intertwined. Whether in the heroic couplets of Pope's *Iliad* mixed with his highlighting of imperial power and disparagement of activity deemed immoral by 18th-century England, or the casting of Brad Pitt as Achilles and the rewriting of Patroklos as Achilles's "cousin" in Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy*, the system both influences the choices and ensures the successful reception of the rewrite.

[2.2] Systems theory is particularly useful when tracing rewrites through different cultural systems in different time periods, because it gives us the means to untangle the influences on the rewriters' choices, to a certain extent. To answer Lefevere's questions (who is writing? under what circumstances? why? and for what audience?), we must be able to talk about the different parts of the system, and about the cultural conventions and norms that define the system's constraints. These constraints can most starkly be seen by looking at translations; and in discussing translation in terms of systems theory, both Lefevere and Itamar Even-Zohar have additional points to make. According to Even-Zohar in the foreword to his *Papers on Historical Poetics*, "Literature is herein conceived of as a stratified whole, a polysystem, whose major opposition is assumed to be that of 'high' or 'canonized' versus 'low' or 'non-canonized' systems" (1978, 7). This view is especially useful when discussing translations and other rewrites of Homer because of the high level of prestige the Homeric epics command in comparison to all other literature systems. When Homer is translated, it generally enters the system at the "high," "canonized" level, often filling a "deficiency" (to use Even-Zohar's terminology) in a system that may include much in the way of

"low" native literature, but little in the way of canon. This was the case for the Romans when Vergil rewrote the Homeric epics into his distinctly Roman *Aeneid*. Even-Zohar himself uses the example of Greece and Rome when talking about prestige: "The reasons for prestige are various, as for instance, when a [source language] is old and there is no established local literature to begin with. This was the position of Greek vs. Roman culture, and of both vs. all European literatures" (Even-Zohar 1978, 49). Even-Zohar overstates both the dearth of local Latin literature and the unity of Greek and Roman literature and culture, but it is unmistakably true that the Renaissance humanists who first translated Homer into European vernaculars were deliberately attempting to remedy what they saw as a deficiency in their own local literatures.

[2.3] Jorge Luis Borges also references the issue of prestige, in part, in his 1932 article "Some Versions of Homer," at the same time that he acknowledges the importance of rewriting. "Our first reading of famous books is really the second, since we already know them," he claims (Borges and Levine 1992, 1136). According to Borges's translator, Suzanne Jill Levine, the role of this article, like that of "Pierre Menard" and "The Translators of the 1001 Nights," is to "question translation's marginal status and resituate the translator's activity at the center of literary discussion" (1134). Borges's article is also an early expression of his model of translation as a form of reading as well as writing, and of both as interpretive acts. As a reader of the *Odyssey* who does not read Greek, Borges has only the language of the translations by which to judge Homer, and after looking at a few lines in their translations by Chapman, Pope, Cowper, Butler, Buckley, and Butcher and Lang, he makes it clear that each has its pleasures for a non-Greek reader. "Which of these translations is faithful? the reader may ask. I repeat: none or all of them" (1138). "Faithful" has become almost meaningless in the face of so many successful translations of one text.

[2.4] "Faithfulness" is largely beside the point when talking about fan fiction as well. The marginal status of the translator and of translations can be easily compared to the marginal status of fan fiction and its writers. Borges's suggestion that one read a translation not as an exact transfer of the source text but as a creative work in its own right is one that echoes forward in time to the work of fan writers and artists.

3. "Vergil wrote Homer fan fiction"

[3.1] The *Aeneid* is one of the pieces of literature held by fandom to be most like modern fan fiction. Fanlore's entry on "fan fiction" names it as the earliest example of fan fiction's origins in "prehistory," though it is generally agreed that modern fan fiction begins with the advent of copyright and the distinction between professional and amateur writing. This distinction is admittedly more economic and cultural than

narrative. Vergil elevates a minor character from Homer's *Iliad* to the level of protagonist in his own epic, and then puts him through all the trials of Odysseus only to have him breeze through them in less than half the time. In fandom terms, Aeneas resembles a "Mary Sue": a self-insert character who outdoes the protagonist of the original source text, and with more style and grace. Mary Sue characters are usually thought of as female, on account of the demographics of fandom, but Aeneas's narrative-warping power and Vergil's need for him to surpass both Achilles and Odysseus can be argued to make him one. However, Aeneas's extraordinary qualities are due more to nationalism than to Vergil's self-insert fantasies, whatever they may have been. This underlines the differences between Vergil's system and a fan writer's.

[3.2] In order to fully comprehend the dynamic at the intersection of Greek and Roman culture in the centuries between Rome's physical conquest of Greece and the colonization of Greek literature by the Roman perspective, a systems view is crucial. The Roman system was "deficient," to use Even-Zohar's terminology, in the "high," or "canonized" system of literature and needed the prestige that filling that deficient slot would bring. Enter the Greeks, who by the Hellenistic era, as Tim Whitmarsh explains in *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation*, "presented themselves as educators, but now as 'the educators of all the world, of both Greeks and barbarians'" (2001, 8). This was the century in which the library at Alexandria, "containing 'all the books in the world,'" was built, in "an attempt to construct prestigious cultural links back to the old Greek world...It was in Hellenistic Egypt that *paideia* [Greek education] first began to assume the task of creating cultural continuity (especially in situations where that continuity could not be taken for granted) that we see so visibly marked in Roman Greece" (8–9). In the Roman system, "procedures from the inventory of certain polysystems [were] 'transplanted' into another one, where they [would] become 'weapons' in the struggle for the canonized position" (Lefevere 1979, 72). This struggle eventually left Greek literature with little identity but one that was yoked to the Roman Empire. In the later encounters, as Even-Zohar puts it, of "both vs. all European literatures" (1978, 49), Greek narratives would be told in Roman frameworks, with every Greek god given a Roman name and the Roman values at the forefront.

[3.3] In the years before and after Vergil wrote the *Aeneid*, one can trace the attitude of the Romans toward the Greeks as parallel to the stereotypical European view of the East that Edward Said describes in *Orientalism* (1979). In fact, the idea that the ancient Greeks had a system worth appropriating whereas the modern Greeks are merely shells of their race's former greatness is also a common theme of the Orientalist. Although Said situated Greece on the Western side of the East-West cultural divide, this can be seen as an enduring effect of the Roman absorption of the Greek system; clearly, for the Romans, the Greeks were part of the exotic, effete, and

corrupt East. In the *Aeneid*, this can be most clearly seen in the characterization of Odysseus.

[3.4] The poem begins with the arrival of Aeneas at Dido's Carthage, where the wanderer tells the host monarch his story, much as Odysseus tells his own to Alkinoos in the *Odyssey*. In order to take a closer look at Vergil's reception of Odysseus and the values that adhere to his version, I have highlighted below a few of the times Odysseus is mentioned by name (that is, by "Ulixes," which is what Vergil calls him) in the *Aeneid*. The first is in Book II, as Aeneas is recounting the fall of Troy to Dido and her court. Odysseus is present throughout this story, as both the device of the horse and the idea of leaving a man behind to trick the Trojans into allowing it beyond the gate originated with him.

[3.5] O miseri, quae tanta insania, cives?
Creditis avectos hostis? Aut ulla putatis
dona carere dolis Danaum? Sic notus Ulixes?
aut hoc inclusi ligno occultantur Achivi,
aut haec in nostros fabricata est machina muros
inspectura domos venturaque desuper urbi,
aut aliquis latet error; equo ne credite, Teucri.
Quicquid id est, timeo Danaos et dona ferentis. (Virgil and Mynors, II, 42–9)

[3.6] "Sic notus Ulixes" is a bit idiomatic; literally, it means "Thus Ulixes is known?" and translated more freely it becomes something like "Does that sound like Ulixes to you?" There is emphasis on the *dolus* of the Greeks: a device, artifice, contrivance. This is what Odysseus is known for, but it is the *dolus* of the Danaans, not just of Odysseus. Odysseus's characteristic trickery becomes the Greeks' characteristic trickery. In this, we can see the structural orientalism of the Roman cultural system that I discussed above. The Greeks are not to be trusted. This has become an aphorism: Beware Greeks bearing gifts. (The last line above literally means "I fear the Greeks, and/even bearing gifts.") The next passage to use Ulixes's name emphasizes this theme:

[3.7] Invidia postquam pellacis Ulixi—
haud ignota loquor—superis concessit ab oris,
adflictus vitam in tenebris luctuque trahebam,
et casum insontis mecum indignabar amici.
Nec tacui demens, et me, fors si qua tulisset,
si patrios umquam remeassem victor ad Argos,
promisi ultorem, et verbis odia aspera movi.
Hinc mihi prima mali labes, hinc semper Ulixes
criminibus terrere novis, hinc spargere voces

in volgum ambiguas, et quaerere conscius arma. (Virgil and Mynors 1972, II 90–9)

[3.8] Here Sinon is telling the Trojans that it was "by the deceitful grudge of Ulixes" that he came to be left behind on the shore. The word *pellacis*, from *pellax*, is related to ποικιλομήτης, according to Lewis and Short's Latin dictionary. Ποικιλομήτης is one of Odysseus's many Homeric epithets that derive from μήτις, Odysseus's defining virtue. In a Greek context, μήτις is cleverness, tricky wisdom. μήτις is the mother of Athena; she is the goddess whom Zeus consumed before giving birth to Athena from his forehead. μήτις is the word for the wiliness of the god-king who disguises himself to take lovers and discover the unpious, of the goddess of wisdom and diplomacy, and of the hero who survives through the strength of his wits. It is the defining virtue of all three. But in a Latin context it is "seductive, deceitful." With these words Sinon maligns his general in order to convince the Trojans to trust him: *haud ignota loquor*, "in no way an unknown speech," or, idiomatically, "as everyone knows." Everyone knows that Odysseus is both grudging and deceitful—at least, all Trojans and Vergil's Roman audience appear to know this. But neither of those adjectives accurately describe the Odysseus of the *Odyssey*. They are Vergil's Ulixes, not Homer's Odysseus. Vergil's Ulixes is full of malice; Sinon tells of being harassed by him in the second half of this excerpt, and though Sinon is lying about being Ulixes's enemy and outcast from the Greek camp, the reason he is so believable is that the Trojans and the Roman audience both recognize his description of Ulixes as the truth.

[3.9] Vergil not only rewrote the *Odyssey*, he rewrote Odysseus. By painting Odysseus in as negative a light as possible and by making Aeneas that much more pious, respectful, and lucky—and therefore even more beloved of the gods—Vergil makes Rome all of these things as well, in contrast with Greece. The actual structural changes he makes to the Homeric epics in his rewrites—elevating a minor background character from the *Iliad* to the level of protagonist and reusing plots and settings from the original to demonstrate the superiority of his chosen protagonist—are not unheard of in fan fiction contexts. However, some of the aspects of the fandom system that make it unique, most especially the sense of community and the affective responses of fans, make it difficult to argue that the *Aeneid* is entirely equivalent to fan fiction. Vergil was writing within the constraints of his system with a specific intent: to elevate Roman culture until it equaled Greek in prestige, while demonstrating Roman individual superiority. What the *Aeneid*'s relationship with Homer does make clear, however, is that it is not the invention of entirely original characters, plots, and settings that makes great literature.

4. Pope's Homer

[4.1] The preeminent Homeric translation of the 18th century, Alexander Pope's, is marked by its own era's beliefs about leadership, order, and war. Pope makes it clear in "An Essay on Criticism" that great poetry must consist of deliberate and artful choices. Vergil, he claims, had discovered in his study of Homer that Nature and Homer were the same: "Convinc'd, amaz'd, he checks the bold Design, / And Rules as strict his labour'd Work confine, / As if the Stagyrte o'er looked each Line. / Learn hence for Ancient Rules a just Esteem; / To copy Nature is to copy Them" (Pope 1970, 136–39). By "Nature" he means poetics that are "naturally" pleasing to the ear, in both meter and the phonemes used: "True Ease in Writing comes from Art, not Chance, / As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance, / 'Tis not enough no Harshness gives Offence, / The Sound must seem an Eccho to the Sense" (Pope 1970, 362–65).

[4.2] In her "'The Sound must seem an Echo to the Sense': Pope's Use of Sound to Convey Meaning in His Translation of Homer's *Iliad*" (2004), Cynthia Whissell argues that not only does Pope use heroic couplets to give the sense of orderly marching warriors, but he also makes deliberate decisions about the words he uses to describe different events according to the phonemes themselves in the words. Whissell's study starts with the premise that certain sounds are perceived as more "active" (/g/, /t/, /r/, and /ər/) and others as more "passive" (/l/, /m/, /ə/, and /ě/). Analyzing the over 52,000 phonemes in the first two books of Pope's *Iliad*, she found that they appear with different frequencies in different contexts. The episode in those books with the highest frequency of active phonemes is the one in which Achilles withdraws from the Greek camp in protest over the appropriation of Briseis. The episode with the highest frequency of passive phonemes is the one in which the Argives are marshaled before re-engaging—the first marshaling since Achilles left the cause. It is not difficult to see here what these amassings of "active" and "passive" phonemes signify. Whether the assignments of "active" and "passive" to the various phonemes is universal or culturally specific, it is likely that the phonemes' distribution reflects the ideology of Pope's poetics.

[4.3] Pope's particular rhyme scheme was more than just aesthetic, it was a political position. The appeal of the heroic couplet derived from the fact that that it was a traditional form of English poetry, dating back to Chaucer. The heroic couplet is highly ordered, and marks the poet who uses it as one who is not lured by Miltonic blank verse and, by metonymy, Milton's politics. Read aloud, it gives the feeling of soldiers on the march. Creating order out of chaos is a major theme in Pope's era, not just in form but also in content. Let us look at the first few lines of the *Iliad*, to get a sense of Pope's priorities. Here are the original Greek, my rough translation of it, and Pope's:

[4.4] μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος
ούλομένην, ἣ μυρὶ Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,
πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν
ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν
οἴωνοιςί τε πᾶσι, Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή,
ἔξ οὔ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε
Ἄτρεϊδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.
τίς τ' ἄρ σφωε θεῶν ἑριδι ξυνέηκε μάχεσθαι;
Λητοῦς καὶ Διὸς υἱός: ὃ γὰρ βασιλῆϊ χολωθεὶς
νοῦσον ἀνὰ στρατὸν ὄρσε κακὴν, ὀλέκοντο δὲ λαοί,
οὔνεκα τὸν Χρῦσιν ἠτίμασεν ἀρητῆρα
Ἄτρεϊδης: ὃ γὰρ ἦλθε θοὰς ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν
λυσόμενός τε θύγατρα φέρων τ' ἀπερείσι' ἄποινα,
στέμματ' ἔχων ἐν χερσὶν ἐκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος
χρυσέῳ ἀνὰ σκήπτρῳ, καὶ λίσσετο πάντας Ἀχαιοὺς,
Ἄτρεϊδα δὲ μάλιστα δύω, κοσμήτορε λαῶν:

[4.5] [The anger sing, goddess, of Peleidian Achilles,
Cursed [anger], which gave the Achaians countless pains,
Sending many mighty souls of heroes to Hades,
Making their selves spoils for dogs
And all birds, bringing about the will of Zeus,
From when the two separated and struggled:
Atreides, lord of men, and divine Achilles.
Who then of the gods set them to fight in discord?
The son of Leto and Zeus: for he in anger at the king
Called forth the evil sickness on the army, people were dying
Because Atreides had dishonored the priest Chryses:
For he had come to the Achaians' swift ships
To free his daughter and bearing gifts to ransom her,
Wreathed, holding up in his hand the golden staff
Of far-shooting Apollo, and he beseeched the Achaians,
But especially the two Atreides, those marshalers of the troops.]
(*Iliad* I 1–16)

[4.6] Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
Of woes unnumber'd, heavenly goddess, sing!
That wrath which hurl'd to Pluto's gloomy reign
The souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain;
Whose limbs unburied on the naked shore,
Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore.

Since great Achilles and Atrides strove,
Such was the sovereign doom, and such the will of Jove!

[4.7] Declare, O Muse, in what ill-fated hour
Sprung the fierce strife, from what offended Pow'r!
Latona's son a dire contagion spread,
And heap'd the camp with mountains of the dead;
The King of Men his rev'rend priest defy'd,
And for the King's offence the people dy'd.

[4.8] For Chryses sought with costly gifts to gain
His captive daughter from the victor's chain;
Suppliant the venerable father stands,
Apollo's awful ensigns grace his hands,
By these he begs, and, lowly bending down,
Extends the sceptre and the laurel crown.
He sued to all, but chief implored for grace
The brother-kings, of Atreus' royal race.
(Homer, Pope, and Mack 1967, I 1–22)

[4.9] Here we can see that as Pope tells the story of Agamemnon's refusal to ransom Chryseis, he flavors the translation with value judgments not as keenly felt in the Greek. "The King of Men his rev'rend priest defy'd" asserts a moral outrage much more heavy-handedly than does οὐνεκα τὸν Χρύσην ἡτίμαζεν ἀρηγῆρα Ἀτρεΐδης, "because Atreides had dishonored the priest Chryses." The priest is given the additional epithet "venerable," and the signs of his priesthood for Apollo are described as "awful," where they have no such modifier in the original. That is not to say that there is no judgment in Homer: "People were dying because he had dishonored the priest" is a fair enough indictment on its face, but Pope wants to emphasize the role of Chryses's priesthood. This is not surprising; Pope is no stranger to moralizing and prescriptive poetry, and his good friend Samuel Johnson had established that it is the only appropriate tack for literature to take. It may be a foregone conclusion that there is virtue in Homer, for does not Homer "bear a greater resemblance to the sacred books than...any other writer" (Homer, Pope, and Mack 1967, xv)? Is Homer not the foundation for Roman and European virtue? These presumptions are never questioned by Pope or Johnson, and thus it is clearly not problematic to add to the holiness of Chryses and his accoutrements: Pope has him holding a scepter, rather than a mere staff.

[4.10] Pope sounds another interesting moral note in Book VI, when Hector returns to the palace of Troy and is offered refreshment by his mother:

[4.11] Far hence be Bacchus' gifts (the chief rejoin'd);
Inflaming wine, pernicious to mankind,
Unnerves the limbs, and dulls the noble mind.
(VI 329–331)

[4.12] By contrast, the original reads:

[4.13] Τὴν δ' ἡμείβετ' ἔπειτα μέγας κορυθαίολος Ἴεκτωρ·
μή μοι οἶνον ἄειρε μελίφρονα, πότνια μήτερ,
μή μ' ἀπογυιώσης, μένεος δ' ἀλκῆς τε λάθωμαι·

[4.14] [Then answered great Hector of the flashing helmet:
Do not lift the honey-minded wine to me, lady mother,
Do not deprive me of my courage, or run off my strength.]
(VI 263–265)

[4.15] In his rendition, Pope clearly gives the wine much more evil intent than it is ever given by Homer. The invocation of Bacchus (not present in the Greek, even in the form of his Greek counterpart, Dionysos) can be seen as a signifier of the chaos and danger that follows that god, especially for the Romans and their cultural heirs in Western Europe. The Greek is straightforward, arguing that now is not the time for Hector to drink any wine, but not making any claims about wine's inherent virtue or lack of it, which Pope does quite overtly. Wine is "pernicious to mankind," and not a gift to men from the gods, to ease their cares, as the Greeks believed. This is clearly a moral judgment made by Pope from his position in space and time, and not at all a translation of the Greek intent. Whether Pope himself agreed with this judgment or felt it was opportune is difficult to know—in any case, it conformed to the norms of his age and of his immediate audience.

[4.16] Pope, writing as he was in the midst of the printing revolution, saw his version of Homer as even more of an original than the original. This belief is much more in evidence in his reaction to criticism of it, and his attitude toward criticism in general, than it is in his preface to the *Iliad*. For though he states in the preface that "it is certain no literal translation can be just to an excellent original in a superior language," and "there is often a light in antiquity which nothing better preserves than a version almost literal. I know no liberties one ought to take, but those which are necessary for transfusing the spirit of the original" (Homer, Pope, and Mack 1967, xv), it is clear from a close reading of the Greek of Homer that there is nothing about Pope's translation that is literal. Even among his contemporaries, there were those who firmly believed that he completely lost sight of the original. But for Pope, the project of translating Homer was also an issue of status and economics, and his translation of the *Iliad* is an example of the way in which the elevated status of ancient

Greek literature has been utilized to give translators authority and power. Pope's project of rewriting the works of classical authors, from his translations of Homer to his epic "The Rape of the Lock" and his "Imitations of Horace," demonstrates his deep understanding of the power of rewritings. This understanding led to an accomplishment that no other English translation of Homer has achieved: centuries of relevance. In the introduction to Robert Fagles's 1996 translation of the *Odyssey*, Bernard Knox calls Pope's translation "the finest ever made" (Homer, Fagles, and Knox 1996), and searching Amazon.com for "the *Iliad*" and "Pope" gives four pages of results. That the translation itself is much less than literal isn't as interesting for the purposes of this study as the fact that the choices he made—both poetic and ideological—spoke not only to his own system, but to later eras, down to today. Whenever classicists or other translators want to evoke the tradition of British literary prestige, they reference the translation by Pope. And yet, although Pope's work is generally accepted as a translation, it is also, undoubtedly, a transformative rewrite. Creative interpretation pervades his version in ways that are reminiscent of some modern fan fiction, but because his work belongs to an entirely different literary system, we do not refer to it as such.

5. 20th-century translations of Homer and fan fiction

[5.1] Translations are a form of rewriting, and I would argue that all forms of rewriting can be theorized in terms of translation, but conventionally in Anglophone cultures we have made a distinction between translation qua translation and other kinds of rewritings. We call the latter "adaptations," or "reimaginings," or "versions." In his article "The Values of Translation: Contestation and Creativity in Homer's English *Iliads*," Robert Shorrock makes the point that "translations are not inherently less creative than adaptations (or any text, for that matter), and that they are equally deserving of critical attention" (2003, 440). Translations of Homer in the 20th century, such as those by Richmond Lattimore and Robert Fagles, may appear at first glance to be more "literal" than Pope's—and in many ways they are. However, critical attention to them reveals the particular subjective readings that are present in all rewriting. Again, the interpretation of the text is heavily influenced by the system whence it comes.

[5.2] It wasn't until after World War II that American translations of Homer into English outnumbered British ones ([note 1](#)). Richmond Lattimore, an American professor of Greek at Bryn Mawr and a World War II Navy veteran, published his translation of the *Iliad* in 1951, and it is still in heavy use in college classrooms to this day. Lattimore's translation eschews poetic meter for a closer literal translation, but adheres to some traditional interpretive moves that date back to the first English translations.

[5.3] When Chapman published his translation of Homer in 1598, Elizabethan England was an England in transition, growing in influence both politically and culturally. France had been engaged in the renaissance of classical culture for longer, having been under the influence of the Medicis and the Italian Renaissance, but was declining in political power in the late 16th century as the French monarchy struggled with the rise of the Huguenots and issues of succession. French translations of Homer existed before English translations did, and the English system was in need of the prestige that came with having its own Homer.

[5.4] The key interpretive move that Hall and Chapman both make and that Pope and Lattimore retain is the reading of Agamemnon as an absolute high king. Agamemnon's role and the extent to which he has the authority to order about other kings, such as Achilles, is indeed a major theme of the epic. What the English translations do, however, is erase some of the instability of Agamemnon's position by translating Greek terms of authority into more absolute terms. For example, in the 16th line of the first book, Agamemnon and Menelaus together are referred to as κοσμήτορε λαῶν, which is a direct reference to their responsibility in ordering the men (λαός) or just "the people." They are the "marshalers of the troops," or the "orderers of the people," but in Chapman's hands they become the ones "who most ruled" (Homer and Chapman 1956, I 15). Further, whereas ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν (leader of men) is one of Agamemnon's common epithets ([note 2](#)), it is not used for him exclusively. Anchises, the father of Aeneas, is referred to as ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν in Book V, as is Aeneas himself, and a few other Greek and Trojan generals are also referred to with that epithet. Achilles's common epithets include δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς [divine Achilles] and θεοεικελός Ἀχιλλεύς [godlike Achilles], which in an ancient Greek worldview make him superior to a leader of mere mortals. In the cultural system of the English Renaissance, however, the divinity of Achilles was at best uninteresting and at worst blasphemous, so it went either unremarked or effaced.

[5.5] Pope's translation continues this tradition of reading Agamemnon as "king of men," implying "king of *all* men" in an English context. One might think that Richmond Lattimore, as a modern translator, would set to right the rank of Agamemnon with respect to the other Achaian leaders. In fact, Lattimore's interpretation follows the tradition of Chapman and Pope in regard to Agamemnon's kingship. In the introduction to his *Iliad* he gives a section to what he considers "The People of the Iliad": Hektor, Achilleus, Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Aias. That these are his choices is interesting in the first place—there is no Menelaos nor Paris in this collection, which may betray Lattimore's conception of the story more than anything. This is not a story of a war over a woman—in the decade following World War II, it is a story of the heroes who fight the war. Lattimore describes each of the men with epithets of his own: Hektor is "the defender," Achilleus the "tragic hero," Odysseus the "prudent counsellor and

complete man," Aias the "soldier," and Agamemnon "the king" (Homer and Lattimore 1967, 45–51). In discussing the kingship of Agamemnon, however, Lattimore admittedly cannot explain exactly why Agamemnon is "the greatest king among them."

[5.6] Whether he is emperor of the Achaians, or general of the army, or the king with the most subjects, whose friends stand by him in his brother's quarrel (unless he insults them), is a question apparently as obscure to the heroes of the *Iliad* as it is to us. But essentially a king is what he is; not the biggest Achaian, says Priam to Helen, but the kingliest; a bull in a herd of cattle; a lord who must be busy while others rest, marshaling his men for ordered assault. In the quarrel with Achilles, he demands recognition of his kingly stature, as if afraid of losing his position if he lacks what others have, in this case a captive mistress. So he comes off badly, yet even here, while he reviles Kalchas and beats down Achilles, his first thought is for the army. (Homer and Lattimore 1967, 48–49)

[5.7] Lattimore's argument here is unconvincing. Priam's words to Helen with regard to Agamemnon are

[5.8] ...ἐξονομήνης
ὅς τις ὅδ' ἐστὶν Ἀχαιοὺς ἀνὴρ ἡϋς τε μέγας τε.
ἦτοι μὲν κεφαλῇ καὶ μείζονες ἄλλοι ἕασι,
καλὸν δ' οὕτω ἐγὼν οὐ πῶ ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσιν,
οὐδ' οὕτω γεραρόν: βασιλῆϊ γὰρ ἀνδρὶ ἔοικε.

[5.9] [...tell me
Who this Achaian man is, both brave and great,
Surely there are others whose heads are taller,
But never have my eyes seen such a noble one
Nor more venerable; for he seems a kingly man.]
(*Iliad* III 167–170)

[5.10] Again, not the "most kingly" but very "noble" (καλὸν can also mean merely "good" or "beautiful"). These descriptors can be and are used of the other Achaian heroes, as well as the Trojan ones. That Priam uses them here marks Agamemnon as the marshaler of the men, but not as a high king. In addition, his description of Odysseus is

[5.11] ἀρνειῷ μιν ἔγωγε εἶσκω πηγεσιμάλλῳ,
ὅς τ' οἶῶν μέγα πῶϋ διέρχεται ἀργεννάων.

[5.12] [He seems to me like a thick-fleeced ram,
who passes through a large flock of white sheep.]
(*Iliad* III 197–98)

[5.13] So it is in fact Odysseus who is characterized as a "bull in a herd of cattle," not Agamemnon. Considering the discussion above of Agamemnon's relative rank and the weakness of Lattimore's characterization here, it is reasonable to conclude that Lattimore is relying largely on the literary tradition of Agamemnon as high king, rather than actual textual analysis.

[5.14] Robert Fagles's translations have an explicit connection to those of Alexander Pope. Fagles served as one of the associate editors of the Twickenham edition of Pope's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and in his 60-page introduction to Fagles's *Odyssey*, Bernard Knox states as a fact that Pope's translation is "the finest ever made" (Homer, Fagles, and Knox 1996, 5). In the "Translator's Preface" to his *Iliad*, Fagles begins with a quote from Pope—"Homer makes us Hearers, and Virgil leaves us Readers"—which he credits to "the great translator of Homer" (Homer, Fagles, and Knox 1990, ix). Pope's influence is, of course, mediated by the context in which Fagles is translating—no self-respecting classicist of the late 20th century would disregard all the work that has been done in Homeric studies to limit himself to Pope's understanding of the Greeks. But Fagles (and Knox, as his collaborator) indicates his stand clearly in the section of the introduction to each epic titled "The Spelling and Pronunciation of Homeric Names."

[5.15] Though the English spelling of ancient Greek names faces modern poet-translators with some difficult problems, it was not a problem at all for Shakespeare, Milton, Pope and Tennyson. Except in the case of names that had through constant use been fully Anglicized—Helen, Priam, Hector, Troy, Trojans—the poets used the Latin equivalents of the Greek names that they found in the texts of Virgil and Ovid, whose poems they read in school. These are the forms we too are familiar with, from our reading of English poets through the centuries: Hecuba, Achilles, Ajax, Achaeans, Patroclus... Rigid adherence to this rule would of course make unacceptable demands: it would impose, for example, Minerva instead of Athena, Ulysses for Odysseus, and Jupiter or Jove for Zeus. We have preferred the Greek names, but transliterated them on Latin principles: *Hêrê*, for example, is Hera in this translation; *Athênê* is Athena. Elsewhere we have replaced the letter *k* with *c* and substituted the ending *us* for the Greek *os* in the names of persons...The conventional Latinate spelling of the names has a traditional pronunciation system, one that corresponds with neither the Greek nor the Latin sounds. Perhaps "system" is not the best word for it, since it is full of

inconsistencies. But it is the pronunciation English poets have used for centuries, the sounds they heard mentally as they composed and that they confidently expected their readers to hear in their turn. (Homer, Fagles, and Knox 1996, 65–66) (note 3)

[5.16] With this introductory note, Fagles and Knox mark this translation as one that prioritizes domesticating rather than foreignizing the text. Fagles's priority is "to find a middle ground (and not a no-man's-land, if I can help it) between the features of [Homer's] performance and the expectations of a contemporary reader" (Homer, Fagles, and Knox 1990, x). This focus on "the features of Homer's performance" prioritizes form and meter, not the particularities of archaic Greek culture in the text—particularities that have been smoothed over by translations such as Pope's and all the translations that look to his.

[5.17] Fagles walks the middle road with the traditional influence in interpretation, as well. His translation of the scene in which Hector declines the wine offered by his mother is stripped of the judgmental language we saw in Pope, above.

[5.18] But Hector shook his head, his helmet flashing:
"Don't offer me mellow wine, mother, not now—
you'd sap my limbs, I'd lose my nerve for war."
(Homer, Fagles, and Knox 1990, 312–14)

[5.19] But his translation of ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν is the traditional "lord of men," and he occasionally refers to Agamemnon as "King Agamemnon," which again implies he is king over all the other Achaeans and not first among equals, which is a point of contention within the text itself. Choosing language that treats Agamemnon's kingship as established fact narrows the field of interpretation. Fagles's emphasis on what is "conventional," "traditional," and familiar to the English reader goes beyond the spelling and pronunciation of Greek names and places. His project in rewriting is not to challenge the traditional understanding of the relationship between these men, but to update Pope's rendition for modern readers, with modern aesthetics and a deeper understanding of the Greek context, but not too much deeper. As he says in the translator's preface, the more "literal" approach would be too little English, and the more "literary" too little Greek (Homer, Fagles, and Knox 1990, x).

[5.20] Fagles's choices go beyond the level of language to the level of cultural structures. Writing his translations in the 1980s and 1990s, looking back to the 1960s and 1970s for the most recent influential American translation, he chose a more conservative route than Robert Fitzgerald, who thoroughly foreignizes the Greek character names—using Akhilleus instead of Achilles, for example—and uses what appears to be arbitrary accentuation. Fitzgerald's foreignizing choices may reflect the

rise of postcolonial thought in literary studies and translation, with its foreignizing spellings, whereas Fagles's choices walk these spellings back to an extent—not all the way back to Pope, but enough to hold Pope up as ideal. By referencing Pope and choosing Romanized spellings, Fagles is, in a sense, borrowing prestige from Pope's system just as Pope borrowed it from Homer's. At the same time, Fagles has a good sense for how far it is acceptable to move away from both the Greek source text and the traditional presentation of a very familiar set of characters and events. His translations are well received among contemporary college students and their instructors.

[5.21] When fan fiction is written using Homer as the source text, it is often done for Yuletide, the rare fandoms gift exchange run at Christmastime. Out of 229 Homeric stories archived at the Archive of Our Own as of this writing, 47, or 20 percent of them, were written for Yuletide. Yuletide in particular and fandom in general are their own subcultures, their own systems, and they have their own norms for both the writing and the reception of their literature. When a story is written for Yuletide, it is written as a gift, with a specific recipient in mind. Commercial rewriters such as Madeleine Miller and Zachary Mason had to write to please their publishers and their markets, just as the early translators of Homer had to work within their cultural norms. Yuletide authors write to please their recipients and also the Yuletide readership at large. The expectations of the audiences differ, as do the relationships between authors and readers in the different systems. Fan fiction is often written with the expectation that the audience is already intimately familiar with the source text in question, for example, and so little time is spent on introducing characters, setting, or background plot events. Fandom is a unique subculture, as much of the scholarship of fan studies, including the work of this journal, makes clear. Because of this, I argue that while fan fiction is transformative rewriting, not all transformative rewriting is properly called "fan fiction."

[5.22] In the case of Homer fan fiction, it is clear that the prestige of the source texts is less important than the affection that the writers and readers have for them. The Homeric poems are not under copyright; anyone who wants to publish a transformative rewrite is at least not legally prevented from doing so. The fans who write Homeric fan fiction do so because they enjoy the text, they enjoy playing with the text, and they enjoy sharing their play with their community. This is a different incentive than Vergil's, Alexander Pope's, or Robert Fagles's—and the difference is significant enough within the context of fandom's literary system that to call the work of these latter authors "fan fiction" would be reductive. However, the bulk of mainstream criticism of fan fiction—that it is "unoriginal" and "stealing"—could be, but never is, leveled at Vergil, Pope, or Fagles.

6. Conclusion

[6.1] When André Lefevere wrote *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* in 1992, he cited Homer in general, and the *Iliad* in particular, as the strongest example of his thesis (87–98). The level of prestige Homer's epics reached in his own system was sought by all subsequent systems that aspired to the level of hegemony that classical Greece achieved. Vergil's allusions to both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* deserve much more attention than one section of this article can give them, but his explicit use of those allusions to mark his own cultural system as not only equal, but superior, to that of the Greeks is significant. Aeneas speeds through the obstacles that kept Odysseus from his home, and his adventures before reaching Italy make up less than half of the *Aeneid*. The political message of Vergil's epic—that the Romans are everything the Greeks were and more—is unsurprising, given the state of the nascent Roman Empire and his relationship with Augustus.

[6.2] Pope's translation, in that nationalistic Augustan age of the burgeoning British Empire, rewrote Homer to advance the nationalistic cause until such time as the English system could remove the scaffolding and rewrite him further. Like the poet of the first Augustan age, Pope makes the poem his own, and writes to the heart of his own people and the politics of his own king.

[6.3] In the 20th century and beyond, translations still take a certain amount of freedom with their source texts, as is inevitable. In addition, the traditional interpretations set by earlier eras of translation continue to inform the overall reception of a text. Thus, upon closer inspection, we can see the ways in which academic translators such as Richmond Lattimore and Robert Fagles are still taking liberties with the texts and doing work that is transformative.

[6.4] Each retelling of the stories breathes new life into them and strengthens their place in the canonized systems to which they belong, as well as the ones into which they were borrowed. It is those stories that are borrowed and retold; from early translations to Yuletide gifts, those stories are the ones that last forever. Fan fiction is but one of the myriad ways that stories are told and retold; but the system in which fan fiction participates, and the subsystems of each fandom, are unique in their specificities. In the introduction to *Textual Poachers*, Henry Jenkins outlines at least five distinct dimensions of fan culture: "its relationship to a particular mode of reception; its role in encouraging viewer activism; its function as an interpretive community; its particular traditions of cultural production; its status as an alternative social community" (Jenkins 1992, 1–2). What Jenkins describes are the unique characteristics of fandom as a literary system, and while fandom at large perhaps is less interested in rewriting Homer to borrow prestige, it cannot be denied that

fandom's desire to claim the *Aeneid* and other canonical works as fan fiction *is* an attempt to borrow prestige at a meta level. If we adjust our framework concerning translation, adaptation, and fan fiction into a larger category of transformative rewriting and mark the differences between the kinds of rewriting in terms of systems theory, a new discourse has the potential to emerge in which fan studies, translation studies, and classical studies speak the same language.

7. Notes

1. Wikipedia contains a very thorough chart of the chronology of the translations of Homer into English, which can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_translations_of_Homer.
2. Most likely it is so common for metrical reasons. The phrase ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων has a meter of ˘ /— ˘ ˘ /- -, which provides a full foot in the middle and an emphatic spondee on the end of Agamemnon's name.
3. The introductions to Fagles's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are not completely identical. The last three sentences quoted here, beginning with "The conventional Latinate spelling," appear in the latter but not the former.

8. Works cited

Borges, Jorge Luis, and Suzanne Jill Levine. 1992. "Some Versions of Homer." *PMLA* 107 (5): 1134–38. doi:10.2307/462868.

Even-Zohar, Itamar. 1978. *Papers in Historical Poetics*. Tel Aviv: Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics.

Farley, Shannon K. 2013. "Translation, Interpretation, Fan Fiction: A Continuum of Meaning Production." *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 14. doi:10.3983/twc.2013.0517.

Homer, and George Chapman. 1956. *Chapman's Homer: The Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Lesser Homerica*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Homer, Robert Fagles, and Bernard Knox. 1990. *The Iliad*. New York: Viking.

Homer, Robert Fagles, and Bernard Knox. 1996. *The Odyssey*. New York: Penguin Books.

Homer, and Richmond Lattimore. 1951. *The Iliad*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Homer, A. T. Murray, and William F. Wyatt. 1999. *Iliad*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Homer, Alexander Pope, and Maynard Mack. 1967. *The Iliad of Homer*. London: Methuen.

Jakobson, Roman. 1959. "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation." In *On Translation*, edited by Reuben A. Brower, 232–39. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Lefevere, André. 1979. "Slauerhoff and 'Po Tsju I': Three Paradigms for the Study of Influence." *Tamkang Review: A Quarterly of Comparative Studies between Chinese and Foreign Literatures* 10:67–77.

Lefevere, André. 1992. *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. London: Routledge.

Pope, Alexander. 1970. *An Essay on Criticism, 1711*. Menston: Scolar.

Shorrock, Robert. 2003. "The Values of Translation: Contestation and Creativity in Homer's English *Iliads*." *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 10 (3–4): 438–53.

Tymoczko, Maria. 2007. *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*. Manchester: St. Jerome.

Virgil, and R. A. B. Mynors. 1972. *P. Vergili Maronis Opera*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Whissell, Cynthia. 2004. "'The sound must seem an echo to the sense': Pope's Use of Sound to Convey Meaning in His Translation of Homer's *Iliad*." *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 98 (3): 859–64. doi:10.2466/pms.98.3.859-864.

Whitmarsh, Tim. 2001. *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Theory

Abusing text in the Roman and contemporary worlds

Francesca Middleton

University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom

[0.1] *Abstract*—In this comparison of portraits of authorial anxiety, I focus on contemporary attitudes to fan fiction and on discussions of authors in Imperial Rome (notably Galen and Martial) to consider the assumptions of textuality that frame imagined textual abuse. Revealed are parallel discourses for different concerns—for the reader as a potentially ill-educated consumer and the text as an object in the ancient world; in the contemporary world, for the author's personal violation and the text as an agent within readerly experience. I discuss how fan fiction's lack of commercial publication is used to distinguish it from other contemporary literature within this framework. Fan fiction's noncommercial publication can thus be appreciated as a marginalizing act in itself.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Commerciality; Fan fiction; Galen; Harry Potter; Martial; Material text

Middleton, Francesca. 2016. "Abusing Text in the Roman and Contemporary Worlds." In "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work," edited by Ika Willis, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2016.0672>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] Literature from the ancient world has had more impact on the way that we live today than any other, and yet it comes to us through surprisingly little evidence. This can be frustrating: for many types of analysis, we lack a great deal of the information we need to reach concrete conclusions, and not least we lack a precise date or context for many works. However, there are advantages to such methodological constraints. They encourage us to look at the classical world from a broader perspective, taking account of the material we have in its full variety and forging comparisons wherever they can be made. One area of Classics that benefits from these necessities is the study of literary culture. With only a limited number of texts available from any particular time period, and not one that reaches us through an edition that dates to the time of its composition, it often becomes more responsible to try to uncover expected norms rather than precisely qualified visions of historical reality. The difficulties following from such analysis further reveal larger and centrally important questions: How did classical culture work (for example, do we gain a better sense of this world from literature, a predominantly elite activity, or from the more egalitarian material record?), or else how does literary culture change over time?

[1.2] Such is my interest here, writing as a classicist. In the spirit of these driving questions, my subject is relatively abstract. My intention is to discuss the discourse of text: the shared understanding of what it means to be a literary work written, read, and circulated within literary culture—textuality, after one definition. Specifically, I am concerned with the anxieties that different models of textuality allow for between the high Roman Empire and the contemporary world, and thus with the way in which fan fiction today is able to operate as an abuse of text distinct in social position and assumed value from other literary practice.

[1.3] Textuality is a constant shared by any work of literature within a literary culture, and as a result it does not require a great breadth of evidence to examine in detail. Indeed, when taken on its own, it is not always clear what value lies in establishing the norms of textuality within a particular time and place. However, when it comes to the study of the contemporary landscape, an understanding of ancient textuality is remarkably useful. For we are all by necessity complicit in our own categorizations of what we read, which leaves the inner workings and expectations of the concept of literature opaque. Comparing contemporary ideas with those of the ancient world throws certain particularities of our textual discourse into sharp relief.

[1.4] This is particularly fruitful for the discussion of fan fiction. Fan fiction, after all, is a category of literary practice that is universally understood to be something different from other types of literary composition. But why? And how? In terms of form, one might say that fan fiction is recognizable as the transformative extension of literary work already in existence—yet this idea, of transforming and extending what has come before, is a habit that is recognizable across the entirety of ancient literary culture, with no specific term to denote it. To take one example, we might examine the reuse and manipulation of the Homeric epics across all areas of society: in scholarly practices of edition and interpretation; in literary practices of allusion to both Homeric language and Homeric ideas; in parody, biography, and cento; in visual uses of Homer's image and epic narratives; even in the ritual uses made of the Homeric epics by so-called magic and medicine (note 1). We might therefore question how contemporary culture comes to find a distinct label for the transformative practice of fan fiction. Indeed, any formal definition of fan fiction is unstable even in the modern world, since the reuse of classical motifs and ideas has been a staple of Western cultural production as far back as it is possible to trace, as scholars of classical reception know well.

[1.5] To discuss fan fiction in a more cross-cultural context, therefore, another definition is required. Beyond formal or aesthetic criteria, it is possible to distinguish fan fiction from literature as work whose producers and primary consumers are fans working through fan networks. The result of this is that textuality becomes embroiled in personal identity politics, and this has been the working assumption of many fan fiction studies to date, which analyze fan literature through the lens of fan culture in order to understand that culture. In *Textual Poachers* ([1992] 2013, 277–78), Henry Jenkins famously defines fandom as something that "involves a particular mode of reception," "involves a particular set of critical and interpretive practices," "constitutes a base for consumer activism," "possesses particular forms of cultural production, aesthetic traditions and practices," and "functions as an alternative social community," wherein fan fiction serves to construct fannish identity. This political appreciation of fan fiction has persisted in volumes such as Matt Hills's *Fan Cultures* (2002); Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington's edited volume *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (2007); and Lynne Zubernis and Katherine Larsen's *Fandom at the Crossroads* (2012). Focusing their attention on fan fiction specifically, Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson (2014, 8–10) further suggest that the "central directions in fan fiction research" define this practice politically, as "interpretation of the source text," "a communal gesture," "a sociopolitical argument," "individual engagement and identificatory practice," "one element of audience response," or else "a pedagogical tool," echoing many threads of Anne Jamison (2013) and indeed reducing the scope of fan fiction studies as earlier put forward by Hellekson and Busse in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (2006).

[1.6] Yet the social identity of fan and the literary quantity of fan fiction do not fully predicate one another. One may be a fan without writing fan fiction, as the myriad other forms of fannish engagement reveal. Similarly, one may be a fan and yet write other types of literature, which may

yet be circulated within fannish networks. As the actor Amber Benson (2013, 388) argues, it is even possible to imagine fan fiction produced by an author who does not identify as a fan, such that she finds herself asking, "Also, am I somehow creating fan fiction when I interact with people on the internet—adding to my real-life, personal continuing storyline *and* to the now-defunct storyline of the character I played on television?" This problem means that the textuality of fan fiction—the way in which something written may be recognized as fan fiction—cannot be accounted for by the identity of its author or readership alone.

[1.7] Therefore, I suggest here that it is necessary to set fan fiction into the broader context of contemporary literary culture. To understand fan fiction, not least how it is able to exist as its own category of literature, I argue that it is necessary to appreciate certain quirks of contemporary textuality, which a comparison of the anxieties felt by imperial and contemporary authors throws into relief. This comparison reveals two key issues. The first is the relationship between a text and an individual literary work, as it becomes clear that the contemporary text is something imagined to be much bigger and more generalized than the individual compositions and circulated material objects that are used to read it. This allows works of fan fiction to access and (in certain authors' eyes) abuse a text, even if the work is very different from its source. In the imperial world, on the other hand, each text is recognized to exist within the discrete material form of the written work, which changes the nature of authorial concern. Second, one must appreciate the role of commercial exchange in contemporary reading practice. When the purchase of a work may be seen to mark the beginning of a valid reading experience, fan fiction finds itself marked by its noncommercial status as something that cannot be read in the same way.

[1.8] To establish this argument, I have structured this article into three parts. First, I trace the anxieties felt by both ancient and modern authors around readers' access to an authentic text and what this means for the author's relationship with the reader. Next I consider how this vision for the text informs anxieties of reproduction and circulation in the ancient world. This allows me to finally consider the way in which the different circulation practices of fan fiction from contemporary commercial literature inform the value of fan fiction as a reading experience.

2. Galen and other anxious authors

[2.1] Galen's discussion *De libris propriis* (*On his own books*) presents a rare insight into the book trade of the second century AD. As the prologue announces those reasons why this medical scholar has chosen to compile a discussion of the topics addressed in his oeuvre, the text further offers a portrait of imperial authorship and its anxieties, as a number of scholars have recognized (including Gurd 2014). In this portrait, we find deep concern for the transformations that might be practiced on the work by book traders, following from the author's desire to be represented accurately. This desire is familiar from contemporary authors' attitudes to transformative practice, specifically fan fiction. When we look at the details of this desire, however, we find that Galen envisions the corruption of his work in a very different way from contemporary authors and that he considers the written style of his work to be more important for its identification than the content to be found within, as contemporary writers value. This reveals two different models of textuality at work between this ancient author and those who are contemporary: a different discourse of authorship, certainly, but also a different discourse of text.

[2.2] Writing to his friend Bassus, Galen opens *De libris propriis* with an anecdote. He was recently walking in Rome's book quarter, the Sandalarium, when he encountered two men engaged in an

argument over whether a book on sale was or was not by him. So Galen writes:

[2.3] The book had been attributed to "Galen the doctor." It was being purchased by one of them as if it were one of mine, though it had been written by someone else, when another man—a man of letters—was driven by the inscription to take a look at the book's contents. Immediately on reading the first two lines he tore off the tag, and said plainly how "this language is not Galen's: this book has been falsely attributed." Of course, the man saying this had been given a basic education, which children brought up Greek used to be afforded at an early age by grammarians and rhetoricians. Many of those who now begin working in medicine or philosophy cannot read so well, even as they attend lectures on the greatest and finest mysteries of human endeavor, which philosophy and medicine teach us.

[2.4] This manner of shortsightedness began many years ago, when I was still but a lad, yet at that time it had not reached the height it has now escalated to. On account of this, therefore, and because many of my books have been mutilated in all sorts of ways—because people in other countries present the work as their own at the same time as they take parts out, add parts in, or change things around—I think it better to first discuss the reason for these mutilations, and then explain in turn the content of the works I have actually written. (note 2)

[2.5] The second half of the passage makes clear Galen's inspiration for putting together *De libris propriis*, namely the great number of distortions that his work has undergone. So he asserts that in various guises there have been parts taken out (*aphairein*), parts added in (*prostithenai*), and parts rearranged (*hypallattein*), vividly emphasizing the push and pull in different directions by transforming hands. What is striking, however, is that Galen makes no move to prevent these transformations. Instead, he is responding to the increase in such transformative practice, empowering the reader to better navigate this varied material by restating what has been in fact written by him.

[2.6] This qualifies the relationship between author and reader suggested by the opening scene. Beyond the books themselves, it is clear that the reader should not expect any contact with the human person whose words they are searching after. Whether we are meant to assume that this incident in the Sandalarium is a real or imagined scenario, it is clearly not expected at all that Galen the man, as the author of the work placed under debate by the shoppers, should (or indeed could) intervene to provide the correct answer. Galen's physical engagement with the scene is not the solution to the problem, but instead it is the reader's education that reveals the fraud. Galen the embodied author, represented by his imagined physical presence in the anecdote, is therefore revealed to be far less important than the literary representation of his name and writing style, and *De libris propriis* becomes an aid toward the reader's acquisition of such knowledge rather than a work that might be valued as the product of Galen's labor.

[2.7] It is possible to trace this model of authorship further through imperial antiquity, as authorial identity is even more emphatically located in written style rather than in the human personage. In her work on Latin pseudepigraphy, Irene Peirano (2012) discusses the numerous texts that were transmitted for centuries under the names of authors who cannot have written them, such as those poems collected in the Virgilian appendix. Grounding her discussion in the context of declamatory rhetoric, whereby students were trained to take on a number of different personae and subject positions, Peirano suggests that these texts can be seen to provide "creative supplements" to their

chosen author's corpus of work (10). Again, this depends on a model of authorship that is not dependent on the author's physical agency but on the persona, style, and subject matter to be found in their body of literature. Elsewhere, Pliny records an anecdote in which Tacitus introduced himself to a new acquaintance by suggesting that the man would already have known him through his reading (Pliny, *Epistles* 9.23.2). Scholars such as Simon Swain (1996) have also emphasized the specific importance of language and style to Greeks under the Roman Empire as a means to assert Greek identity, and the effect of this can also be felt in ancient biography, which as a genre responds to works of literature and literary personae in order to present an image of the author (note 3).

[2.8] Of course, it is uncertain how canny ancient readers were to the games of authorial personae. However, to look now at contemporary literary culture, some key differences in our model of authorship become apparent. First of all, to think of an author today is to immediately imagine a persona that depends on a far greater amount of paratextual information, including not only written biographies and images but also videos and live events, all of which present the author as an embodied human being. So, to take my next example, in an article which compiles contemporary authors' attitudes to fan fiction, Emily Temple (2012) presents those opinions underneath images of the authors in question, reflecting the authors' imagined relationship to their texts (note 4).

[2.9] Temple (2012) collates various quotations from George R. R. Martin, J. K. Rowling, Anne Rice, Stephenie Meyer, Ursula K. Le Guin, Orson Scott Card, Diana Gabaldon, J. D. Salinger, and Charlie Stross, who are all predominantly writers of fantasy and science fiction, notionally the most popular genres to inspire fannish activity. These reported opinions depend on a view of authorship that is very different from that depicted by Galen, expressing views that are heavily influenced by 19th-century Romantic rhetoric. So Temple summarizes the complaints as follows: "Monetary issues as well as feelings of personal violation and another sentiment that roughly translates to 'if you were *really* creative, you'd make up your own characters.'" The purpose of literature is seen as being to express the self, and to that extent literature is seen to embody the self (note 5).

[2.10] I will discuss the financial concerns of these authors, especially Scott Card, below. For the moment, however, it is worth focusing on the ethical complaints that color the other authors' discussions of fan fiction. These anxieties, after all, suggest that it is no longer the reader's responsibility to look after their own reading experience, but that this is instead the author's direct concern.

[2.11] In the words of these writers, it is clear that the circulation of imitative work is not perceived as an attack on the reader, as it is for Galen, who is primarily concerned that ignorant readers might be manipulated. Instead, imitative work becomes an attack on the authors themselves. So Le Guin writes, "It's not sharing but an invasion, literally—strangers coming in and taking over the country I live in, my heartland"; Rice, "It upsets me terribly to even think about fan-fiction with my characters"; Martin, "My characters are my children...I don't want people making off with them, thank you. Even people who say they love my children." Readers who do not produce fan fiction are not discussed or focalized apart from by Gabaldon, who comments, "I'm very flattered that some of you enjoy the books so much that you feel inspired to engage with the writing in a more personal way than most readers do." Yet even these consuming readers are only discussed in order to define the deviant, overly "personal" minority who present an affront to the author's activity and highly physicalized sense of security (so Gabaldon also comments that "it makes me want to barf whenever I've inadvertently encountered [fan fiction] involving my characters").

[2.12] The author's physical self is the main target of fan fiction's threat. It is certainly possible for those who write fan fiction to threaten readers in turn, but this only happens when those fans assume the author's authority. As a result, Rowling suggests that it would become a problem if a situation occurred in which "young children were to stumble on Harry Potter in...an X-rated story." Merely characterized as young, it appears to make no difference whether these children are already familiar with Harry Potter's character from one context or another; what is at stake is not the children's prior or ongoing reading experience but the scope for their experience of this character, the potential for Rowling as author to provide them with Harry Potter in a certain way, and the fan fiction author's irresponsible abuse of the character.

[2.13] Taken together, these opinions account for a model of authorship that values the text as a representation of the self to be managed by an author rather than a model in which the text becomes something that readers might use to construct an authorial persona. This transforms the way in which the text is imagined. In Galen's anecdote above, stylistic and formal qualities are so significant to the text that a poorly written *Galen the Doctor* simply cannot be a Galen. Under the same principle, it would be possible to suggest that an X-rated Harry Potter book presents no version of Harry Potter to which Rowling might lay claim. For these contemporary writers, however, the emphasis is not on style but on setting—Le Guin's heartland—and characters—Martin's children. These are extensible quantities that go beyond a single written work and may thus be abused by fan fiction.

[2.14] The nuances of this model are brought out in Meyer's comments: "In the beginning I hadn't heard of [fan fiction] and there were some that were...I couldn't read the ones that had the characters IN character. It freaked me out...but there was one about Harry Potter and Twilight that was hilarious. And then there was one that was about a girl who was starring as Bella in the movie and that was funny." The abuse of the Twilight series here takes place precisely when the characters in a piece of Twilight fan fiction appear to be the same as those in Meyer's books and appear in character. Conversely, the danger is reduced when a distinction between Meyer's work and a work of fan fiction may be found—but this must be in terms of character or setting. It is Harry Potter the character who represents Rowling's text, not each individual title in the Harry Potter series, and thus Harry Potter's X-rated adventures do indeed become Rowling's concern, as that quantity of Harry Potter the character is shared by all works that make reference to him.

[2.15] Individual works play a different role in contemporary textuality than in the ancient world, whether that work is a particular book in a series or a piece of fan fiction. As expressions of the author's self, these works are seen to act as agents within an abstractly realized space, either avatars of the author's creative control or else tools of invasion and abduction, manipulating character and setting. We may recognize this in contemporary theorizations of fan fiction, for example when Francesca Coppa argues that "fan fiction develops in response to dramatic rather than literary modes of storytelling" (2006, 226). The idea that fan fiction redirects "bodies in space," to use Coppa's term, suggests precisely a model in which characters and settings are organized by a collection of individual works, and, as I discuss below, elements of this model persist even among contemporary authors who approve of fan fiction. This is an aspect of contemporary textuality, however, that is specifically modern.

3. Circulation and the text as commodity

[3.1] The image of authors and their children has been used to decry fan fiction, as I discussed above, but it has also been used to defend it. Famously, the image has been used by Joss Whedon (2012) in an April Ask Me Anything (AMA) discussion on the news-sharing Web site Reddit, where the writer and director comments that "Art isn't your pet—it's your kid. It grows up and talks back to you." From the understanding of contemporary textuality that I have just outlined, it is easy to slip between discussions of text and character as an author's children, as both may be identified as products of the author and are mutually constitutive. Indeed, it seems natural to imagine anthropomorphic characters as the ones with the voice to talk back on behalf of the text. As a result, it is no surprise when one commentator on Whedon's Reddit AMA gains several marks of support by agreeing with this comment in terms of Martin's views on characters as his children: "Very good point. So many artists want to be 'helicopter' parents. I am looking at you George!" However, in a different model of textuality, in which character and other abstract entities are less significant to the text's constitution, this discussion of character and/as text is less straightforward and less pertinent to the anxieties of textual abuse. Under the Roman Empire it was the formal qualities of text that were the most important and thus the text as physical object that was at stake—not only at the point of initial production but most of all in circulation. This distinction reveals fan fiction to be operating within very particular literary cultural constraints.

[3.2] The moment that we imagine ancient literature in transmission beyond the author's imagination and conceivable autograph draft, we encounter the imperfect practice of copy work by scribes. The capacity for human error means that it is necessary to imagine a greater range of acceptable variation between individual copies of texts than is acceptable today, even before we consider the impact of the empire's vast size and the relative lack of interconnection between its literate communities. One of the more interesting consequences of this fact is that while we might imagine a great deal of variation between copies of the same work, we might also suspect a much greater similarity between the various works owned by a single reader. The provincial *litteratus* or *pepaideumenos* could not expect to own a book that would be of the same appearance or precise standardized contents as their counterpart in Rome—yet among their own collection they would have found texts generally produced in Egyptian papyrus, written in one of relatively few book hands used by professionalized scribes and, most significantly, amended extensively by themselves (note 6).

[3.3] For readers, this meant that there was great concern for the appearance and scope of the text that they read, and anxiety was located in what textual objects might be taken to signify. As Michael Squire (2011) points out, many authors of the first century AD describe fantasy versions of the great and lengthy Homeric epics, most often the *Iliad*, written in letters so small that their entirety was able to be contained, for example, within a single nutshell. As the object in hand stood for what the text could mean, the reader's relationship with Homer was able to be modeled by their relationship to that object, and many desired the chance to possess the work of Homer in something so small. Through typical means of production, a papyrus roll in the first century AD might be imagined to contain around 1,200 lines of verse, meaning that a reader's typical *Iliad* would run to a box of 10 to 15 rolls, something that could not be held all at once. To have an *Iliad* in miniature, therefore, was to imagine an unprecedented level of power over that text and over Homer as an author.

[3.4] This particular desire for a controlled Homer is thematized in an epigram by the poet Martial (15.184):

[3.5] *Homer in a fistful of papers*
Ilium and Ulysses, enemy of King Priam,
equally lurk in many folds closed by skin.

[3.6] Not only the *Iliad* but also the *Odyssey* are imagined here in an edition of Homer that is tiny enough to be held in a grasping boxer's fist, *in pugillaribus* (in a fistful of papers). This occurs when its warring subject matter (the city of Ilium and the invader Ulysses) have been brought under control by the text's physical constraints, leaving them *condita pelle* ("closed by skin"). However, the state of the text is also precarious: these epics appear barely contained, their contents threatening to reveal themselves as the verb *latent* (lurk) implies. The desire to contain, control, and possess the Homeric epics informs this poem, which sits among a collection of over 200 epigrams, all describing gifts for the Saturnalia: such desire is what makes this gift valuable. And yet as Squire (2011) would highlight, the threat remains that such containment cannot be achieved, that the extensive scope of the Homeric epics cannot be realized in this minute form, and that they will break free to reassume their great size.

[3.7] Such paradoxes of containment can be seen to drive many projects of literary culture throughout the early empire, including not only Galen's own attempt to collect, categorize, and order the information present in his widely circulated books but also the numerous encyclopedias and reference works produced at this time (note 7). In the context of imperial textuality, it becomes possible to map a relationship between reader and author mediated precisely by the physical object in which the author's work is produced, the content singular and inextensible but the form a point of contention.

[3.8] When a text's object form controls the way in which that text is recognized, it is doing the work of a contemporary text's characters and setting. As a result, the means of transmission for ancient literature becomes a crucial locus of anxiety. A contemporary text is anthropomorphized to discuss authors' relationships with their characters, but the ancient text is anthropomorphized by means of its copies precisely in order to discuss the problems of circulation. Over the course of the first century AD, we thus find several Latin writers utilizing the idea of the text as slave, an anthropomorphic commodity, which through publication might be manumitted into freedom but can never escape its bonds of social dependence and control (note 8). As one of the most common Latin words for "slave" is *puer* ("boy" or "child"), this produces a parallel but significantly different discourse of text from the contemporary world.

[3.9] One of the most famous discussions of the text as slave is the first (and only surviving ancient source) to refer to textual abuse as abduction by pirate, *plagarius*. This is Martial's epigram 1.52:

[3.10] I send my works to you, Quintianus—
my works, I'm able to say, scattered notes
though they are, which your poet recites:
if they complain about this heavy service,
please intervene and act as a judge with the right authority—
and when that man calls himself their master,
please say that they are mine and freed by my hand.
When you've said this three or four times,
you might be able to shame the pirate.

[3.11] Here the poet addresses his patron, Quintianus, in regard to the use of his poems by another poet-client. If the poems (*libelli*, 1.2) suffer under their new poet, the patron is to defend them, and *cum se dominum uocabit ille, | dicas esse meos manuque missos* (ll. 6–7): "When that man [the new poet] calls himself their master, you [Quintianus] are to say that they are mine [Martial's] and freed by my hand." The emphasis here is on control and the bonds of patronage that would bind freed slaves to their old master, Martial, and ultimately to Quintianus as Martial's patron. As their patron, Quintianus could exert strong social influence over both Martial and the performing poet, who in turn should not be allowed to reenslave freedmen. (On this particular connotation of *plagarius*, see McGill [2012]). It is worth noting that Martial does not attempt to prevent the poems' performance by Quintianus's other poet but instead to ensure that this text remains under Quintianus's protection as Martial commends it to him. It is not any and all textual reuse that becomes a violation, therefore, but the abusive textual enslavement that characterizes the other poet as *plagarius* rather than as a legitimate recipient of the poems' service. As the *libelli* have been freed, so follows from this epigram, they may work in service of any number of different personages, but all parties must continue to observe the poems' affiliation to Martial, their original master.

[3.12] There is again an emphasis here on the ethics of textual use, familiar from Rowling's assertion that Harry Potter should not be able to star in an X-rated fan fiction. However, Martial's concern is not for the equivalent of Harry Potter the freedman but for Harry Potter the text, the delimited artifact. As J. Mira Seo (2009) argues, Martial's discussion of plagiarism forces an understanding of the text as material, a physical commodity like the slave. It is the circulation of physical copies and otherwise embodied transmission of the poetry in performance, therefore, that provides the means for textual violation. This in turn is not a crime against the author as an individual but a contravention of social mores more widely, to be managed by those already in possession of the power to intervene.

[3.13] Galen's anecdote about the booksellers of Rome's Sandalarium has already illustrated the problem of unregulated circulation. Under the empire, and in general in the ancient world, authors could not expect to know where, when, or how their work was being sold. Two centuries earlier than Galen, this becomes a point of contention in the writings of Cicero, as Sarah Culpepper Stroup (2010) discusses. Comparing the use of the words *munus* (gift) and *libellus* (booklet), Stroup argues that *libellus* in particular evokes connotations of uncertain distribution. In what we might appreciate as a fore-echo of Martial's own anthropomorphic commodities, Stroup notes, "The semi-personified *libelli* of rhetoricians and philosophers are texts that have escaped from their owners' control and that now circulate, virtually autonomously, with only nominal connection to their creators" (108). In Cicero's work, *libellus* gradually loses its negative connotations to the extent that "the term continues to connote anxiety over authorship and 'out of group' publication, but by the late 40s [BC] at least it seems to function as an ameliorative idiom for a sort of literary practice that had become increasingly common." And so on, we might imagine, to Martial ([note 9](#)).

[3.14] The issue of textual material is deemphasized by contemporary authors except as it might be related to the idea of commercial product ([note 10](#)). Indeed, many contemporary critics ignore the material form of text entirely. This deemphasis has implications of its own, as I will discuss below, but circulation norms do still matter for the idea of textual violation. In the statements collected by Temple (2012), Rowling's concern is said to be "to make sure that [fan fiction] remains a noncommercial activity to ensure fans are not exploited and it is not being published in the strict sense of traditional print publishing." Echoed by many contemporary authors, this idea that fan fiction is only permissible as a noncommercial activity rests on a crafted dichotomy between different

circulation practices: commercial enterprise and noncommercial fan activity. In 2004 this dichotomy might certainly have been realized in the difference between print and digital publication, but over the last 10 years these associations have become increasingly less viable, leaving the presence or absence of financial transaction between reader and writer as the only clear category difference (note 11).

[3.15] While the gift economy of ancient literary culture provides an immediate counterpoint to commercial practices of circulation, it cannot be dichotomized in the same way as fan fiction is from contemporary commercial distribution. Innumerable ancient works begin with the pretense of a private exchange between individuals: thus Galen's address to Bassus and Martial's address to Quintianus. Yet we must imagine that such works only survive through their flow into public, commercial circulation, no matter the author's proclaimed attitude toward such activity. Indeed, the necessities of such a fall into commercial transmission and resultant material instability provide the dynamic for both textual violation and transformative textual practice. Unlike the contemporary world, this transformation is an expected and normal part of an imperial text's life cycle and cannot be prevented.

[3.16] How, then, is fan fiction able to be marginalized today?

4. Commercial distribution and fan fiction

[4.1] The contemporary world provides much less scope than the ancient for the physical manipulation of books. A published printed work might be cut up, reused, and annotated in any number of ways, but as we live in a world where texts are standardized by publishing houses before circulation, these transformed objects cannot be deemed the same as all others produced in their original print run. Moreover, this sort of manipulation is not a point of concern. The contemporary text, as I noted above, is not a thing defined by its material form but by its ideas of character and setting. Because the distribution of fan fiction remains an area of deep anxiety for authors, it is therefore necessary to rethink what different practices of circulation mean for a text. We must ask: How do commercial and noncommercial distribution affect these textual worlds differently?

[4.2] On July 21, 2007, at 12:01 AM, the final installment in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, was made available for purchase. It was reportedly the biggest entertainment launch to that date, with security costing upwards of £10 million (Hastings and Jones 2007) and midnight launch parties occurring across the Anglophone world (Rich 2007). In the United Kingdom, the launch was also met by controversy around the book's marketing, as the major supermarket chain Asda initially listed *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* at half of Bloomsbury's recommended retail price and was to sell the book on release for £5, less than a third of the recommended £17.99 (note 12). This price provoked complaints from independent retailers across the country, and Asda found itself in an argument with Bloomsbury because of a press release claiming that the publishing house was "attempting to hold children to ransom" by setting their RRP at "twice the average child's pocket money and £5 more than the average kids' hardback bestseller" (Asda 2007). Bloomsbury pursued legal action and further claimed that Asda was in arrears for its book purchases, threatening to ban supply of the new Harry Potter book. The dispute was settled out of court.

[4.3] Rather than a matter of business that might be separated from textual space and the experience of reading, the complaints raised by distributors during this episode were repeatedly

framed as ethical problems affecting readers and the book as a textual entity. So Asda argued in terms of children's access to the text; so Philip Wicks, representing the Booksellers Association, complained of the book's apparently devalued function: "We think it's a crying shame that the supermarkets have decided to treat [the novel] as a loss-leader, like a can of baked beans." Michael Norris, of Simba Information, made the point explicit: "You are not only lowering the price of the book. At this point, you are lowering the value of reading" (both quoted in Associated Press, 2007). Unlike the abuses of transmission in the ancient world, found in commercial and noncommercial exchange alike, this discussion of the material circulation of texts asserts that the commercial value placed on the object affects the quality of that object: it becomes inaccessible to children (with no question that they might save up or else share the book); it becomes something consumable and quotidian (a can of baked beans); it ultimately has less to offer.

[4.4] The significance of such discussion follows when reading is understood precisely as an experience within the space governed by authors through their work. In this phenomenon, what matters most is not what the text looks or feels like but what readers feel like as they engage with the textual object. This allows for current debates over whether electronic reading devices might adequately stand in for the generic book they are modeled to resemble: whether they physically resemble a paper book is less important than whether that physical object can evoke the same emotions and sense of experience that the reader has come to expect from the paper book (note 13). How much readers pay is absolutely part of the readers' experience: paying very little allows a literary work to feel like a can of baked beans. More than this, the time and place in which readers pay are made significant, as midnight launches toy with the idea that the first minute after publication may be the only time when unspoiled access to the textual world is available (note 14). Within this model, reading begins at the moment of purchase.

[4.5] What does this mean for fan fiction? As most authors suggest that they are content with fan fiction under the rubric that it cannot and should not become commercial activity, they appear to address the same legal anxieties as does Orson Scott Card, who comments, "If I do NOT act vigorously to protect my copyright, I will lose that copyright" (quoted in Temple 2012). However, as Temple's source of the comment, Lev Grossman (2011), remarks, "The scenario Card describes, in which an author's rights are diminished because he or she doesn't actively defend them, is associated more with trademark than with copyright." Even without money changing hands, fan fiction's position in relation to intellectual property laws is complicated and untested. It is therefore difficult to make sense of these anxieties. What we may appreciate nonetheless is the model of text that is being propagated by such complaints, in which commercial circulation activates textual violation. No matter how incoherent, there is resistance of fan fiction as a commercial enterprise that marks monetary exchange as something that might allow fan fiction to abuse the text (for surely not the author's bank balance), and it becomes a boundary line between literature and fan fiction that most authors are content to see in place. This reinforces a model through which purchase is a key moment within the reading experience. Indeed, we can say that payment legitimizes a work as literary endeavor: payment is a liminal point after which a work gains the capacity to manipulate the characters and settings that make up its text. Freely distributed fan fiction, on the other hand, becomes something that cannot manipulate text in the same way because there has been no financial transaction involved or even envisaged in the reading experience.

[4.6] In studies of fan culture, as in literary studies more widely, the text is seen increasingly as a transmedial entity, established between the boundaries of its constitutive objects (note 15). As Lars Elleström (2010) explores, this leaves the frontiers between different components of text as

particularly fruitful sites for the discussion of textual meaning. It is possible to think of a textual object not as something that represents text but as something that interacts with text, as I have discussed. However, as transmedial enterprises become an increasingly significant mode of textual production in the contemporary world, and as the key texts we think with become not books but franchises, the possibilities for authorial control are diminished and the anxieties surrounding such control are increased.

[4.7] In the ancient world, textual transformation was inevitable, but authors still worried about its effect. Today it is manifestly not the case that authors of works that are part of transmedial texts can claim full control over what is envisaged as their expression of self. Despite this, as both Suzanne Scott (2012) and Matt Hills (2002, 133–43) explore, images of single author figures are proliferated to meet reader, or else consumer, expectations. A work's value is measured by its imagined relationship to this central figure—the show runner or show creator, for example—who provides the creative direction behind the commercial enterprise that the text becomes. As this author figure may not produce the entirety or even the majority of a franchise's literary and/or visual output, it cannot be the labors of production or the unique habits of style that define his or her authorial relationship to the text. Instead, authorship is the bond between textual product and this author figure's imagined creative oversight, which is mediated through commercial operation and enterprise. It is this particular dynamic that therefore becomes the locus for anxieties that position fan fiction as a threat to the text. The concern remains that fan fiction might manipulate character and setting, but that concern is qualified most often by the understanding that it is only when a reader pays to experience such manipulation that the larger transmedial text is affected.

[4.8] A reader living in the Roman Empire bought books in order to understand, inform, or control the works contained within—to possess the text as a physical entity. A contemporary reader, on the other hand, buys books in order to understand the text: they buy works that offer them insight into the characters and settings that (abstractly) make up what they read. In recent years, inspired not least by the publication of E. L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey* (as discussed further by Jamison [2013]), arguments around the commerciality of fan fiction have rested on questions of legality or else their implications for the fan community, and it has been a continuing claim of scholarship that gift culture is a central component of fan practice (note 16). However, it should be clear that the noncommercial distribution of fan fiction is not only a concern for fan culture but also informs fan fiction's position within today's literary culture as irrelevant and invaluable. Rather than the expression of a marginalized community and nothing more, fan fiction must be seen as literature that has been expressly marginalized—not only by its opponents but also by its writers and proponents—by the virtue, if not vice, of being read gratis.

5. Notes

1. For recent discussion of ancient Homeric scholarship, see Montanari (2011). Lamberton and Keaney (1992) provide extensive discussion of ancient exegesis of Homer; see Lamberton (1986) on allegorical reading specifically. On ancient scholarship more broadly, see Too (1998); on just one of the games that was played with practices of Homeric scholarship, see Middleton (2014). Knauer's (1964) is the classic study of Homer's reuse in Virgil. Kim (2010) has focused on the use of Homer and the Homeric epics in imperial Greek literature. It is an impossible task to summarize the allusions to Homer in antiquity. For recent discussion of Homeric parody, see the volume edited by Acosta-Hughes et al. (2011); on the *Batrachomyomachia* as an explicit case of Homeric parody, see Most (1993). Graziosi (2002) provides a convincing account of Homer's invention in archaic and

classical Greece. Ascheri (2011) discusses some of the curiosities in Homer's later imagined bibliography. On the Christian transformation of Homeric epic into Eudocia Augusta's *Homerocentones*, see Usher (1998), Sandnes (2011), and Karanika (2014). On the *Tabulae Iliacae*, small and puzzling images from the story of the *Iliad* inscribed on stone, see Squire (2011) and Petrain (2014). On the famous Archelaos relief, see Zeitlin (2001). On the role of Homer within Greek magic generally, see Collins (2008); on the prophetic text of the *Homeromanteion*, see Gregg Schwendner (2002) and Karanika (2011).

2. This and all subsequent translations are my own.

3. See also Whitmarsh (2006) specifically on the use of prose in the imperial Greek East to assert Greek identity. On the varying uses of ancient bibliography, see McGing and Mossman (2006).

4. It is notable that these images remained as a significant part of the article even when it was recirculated, in particular to the LiveJournal community *ohnotheydidnt*, which aggregates celebrity gossip and entertainment news (Goofusgallant 2012).

5. For a discussion of the role played by biography in the 19th century, see McCarthy (2009), who discusses the developing importance of a work's vitality and discernible connection between a work's author and the surrounding world in German critical circles. See also North (2009) on the relationship between biography and English Romantic poetry.

6. As Seo (2009, 574) comments, "We know that authors were not paid a royalty per copy sold, but rather a lump sum by the primary bookseller; therefore, the modern notion of copyright seems irrelevant to the Roman context": texts were expected to vary in form. On the growth and trade of papyrus, see Diringier (1982). On the place of the reader in the production of legible books, see Kenney (1982). The nature of the ancient material text is an increasingly popular topic in classical scholarship and is difficult to quantify here.

7. On the imperial world's encyclopedic tendency as the project of dominion, see the editors' introduction to König and Whitmarsh (2007).

8. For discussion of this with particular respect to Martial, see Seo (2009), *pace* McGill (2012, 74–112). On this image in particular, cf. Citroni (1986). On Roman slavery as a topos in literature and wider Roman discourse, see Fitzgerald (2000) and Lavan (2013), respectively.

9. For a further echo of this usage, a generation later than Cicero and around a century before Martial, see Propertius 3.3, in which Apollo describes the poet's work such that *tuus in scamno iactetur saepe libellus | quem legat exspectans sola puella virum* (ll. 19–20): "Your booklet is the sort often tossed onto a bench, that a lonely girl might read while waiting for a man." Again there is an emphasis on the casual and uncertain nature of the circulation, over which the author cannot have control.

10. A notable exception to this is Anne McCaffrey, who famously in the 1990s attempted to restrict the publication of fan fiction online; see Writers University (2002). However, in recent years her policy has shifted to emphasize noncommercial distribution instead, as she explains on her own Web site (McCaffrey n.d.).

11. In the report "Internet Access—Households and Individuals," the UK Office of National Statistics (2013, table 3) shows how in recent years there has been an increase from 20 percent to 55 percent

of adults in Great Britain who would report "reading or downloading online news, newspapers, or magazines," typically print publications; see also Rainie and Duggan (2012) on the exponentially growing preference for electronic over print books in the United States.

12. On this price war in general, see BBC (2007) and Collett-White (2007). Clee (2008) notes that the disagreement did not change Asda's ongoing policy of retailing *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* at a high discount.

13. Amazon Kindle's marketing strategy can be seen to focus on this issue repeatedly—for example, as it encourages its audience to imagine using the e-reader in their living room (Wong Doody 2013) or while relaxing on holiday (Wasserman 2013). This follows a longer-running strategy of defining reading as an act of imagination, on which see Miller (2009).

14. There is little space here to talk about the phenomenon and anxiety surrounding spoilers within this model of textuality. However, the importance of finding out what happens as a key element of the reading experience was emphasized by the debates surrounding prerelease reviews for *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*—for example in Clark Hoyt's (2007) *New York Times* editorial, in which he responds to accusations leveled at the newspaper for reviewing the book before release.

15. For theoretical approaches to transmediality, see Rajewsky (2007), Elleström (2010), and Wolf (2008). On transmediality's importance to popular culture, see Mittell (2005) on televisual genres, Jenkins (2006) on its use within *The Matrix* (1999), and Parody (2011) on the construction of character in the new *Doctor Who* (2005–). In relation to fan studies, Hills (2002) argues convincingly that critical resistance to transmedial analysis has inhibited coherent approaches to fans' strategies of reading.

16. For recent discussion of this, see Jenkins ([1992] 2013) but also Hellekson (2009). De Kosnik (2009) argues that fan fiction should be commercialized but on the grounds that (typically women) fans should not allow their work to be undervalued—a similarly political point.

6. Works cited

Acosta-Hughes, Benjamin, Christophe Cusset, Yannick Durbec, and Didier Pralon, eds. 2011. *Homère revisité: Parodie et humour dans les réécritures homériques*. Besançon: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté.

Ascheri, Paola. 2011. "The Greek Origins of the Romans and the Roman Origins of Homer in the Homeric Scholia and in POxy. 3710." In *From Scholars to Scholia: Chapters in the History of Ancient Greek Scholarship*, edited by Franco Montanari and Lara Pagani, 65–86. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Asda. 2007. "Potty Potter Price Hike." *Asda Press Center*, July 16. <http://your.asda.com/press-centre/potty-potter-price-hike>.

Associated Press. 2007. "British Retailer Sells Final Potter Book for \$10, Setting Dangerous Precedent for US Market." *International Herald Tribune*, July 20. <http://web.archive.org/web/20070822145746/http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/07/20/arts/0721potter-asda.php>.

BBC. 2007. "Asda Apologises for Potter Jibes." *BBC News*, July 17. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/6902031.stm>.

- Benson, Amber. 2013. "Blurring the Lines." In *Fic: Why Fanfiction Is Taking Over the World*, edited by Anne Jamison, 384–88. Dallas, TX: BenBella.
- Busse, Kristina, and Karen Hellekson. 2006. "Introduction: Work in Progress." In Hellekson and Busse, *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities*, 5–32.
- Citroni, Mario. 1986. "Le raccomandazioni del poeta; apostrofe al libro e contatto col destinatario." *Maia* 38:111–46.
- Clee, Nicholas. 2008. "Asda £1 Sale: Is This the End for Harry Potter?" *Guardian*, July 22, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2008/jul/22/isthistheendforharrypott>.
- Collett-White, Mike. 2007. "Asda Apologises in Potter Pricing Row." *Reuters*, July 17. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2007/07/17/uk-arts-potter-supermarket-idUKL1778893520070717>.
- Collins, Derek. 2008. *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Coppa, Francesca. 2006. "Writing Bodies in Space: Media Fan Fiction as Theatrical Performance." In Hellekson and Busse, *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities*, 225–44.
- De Kosnik, Abigail. 2009. "Should Fan Fiction Be Free?" *Cinema Journal* 48 (4): 118–24. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/cj.0.0144>.
- Diringer, David. 1982. *The Book before Printing: Ancient, Medieval and Oriental*. New York: Dover.
- Elleström, Lars, ed. 2010. *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fitzgerald, William. 2000. *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goofusgallant. 2012. "Book Post: How Authors Feel about Fan-Fiction." ONTD (Oh No They Didn't!), April 19. <http://ohnotheydidnt.livejournal.com/68332629.html>.
- Gray, Jonathan, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington, eds. 2007. *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*. New York: NYU Press.
- Graziosi, Barbara. 2002. *Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grossman, Lev. 2011. "The Boy Who Lived Forever." *Time*, July 7. <http://content.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,2081784,00.html>.
- Gurd, Sean A. 2014. "Galen on ἔκδοσις." In *Perceptions of the Second Sophistic and Its Times, = Regards sur la Seconde Sophistique et son époque*, edited by Thomas Schmidt and Pascale Fleury, 169–84. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Hastings, Chris, and Beth Jones. 2007. "The £10m Charm to Shield Harry's Secret." *Telegraph*, July 15. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/3666570/The-10m-charm-to-shield-Harrys-secret.html>.
- Hellekson, Karen, and Kristina Busse, eds. 2014. *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Hellekson, Karen, and Kristina Busse, eds. 2006. *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Hellekson, Karen. 2009. "A Fannish Field of Value: Online Fan Gift Culture." *Cinema Journal* 48 (4): 113–18. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/cj.0.0140>.

Hills, Matt. 2002. *Fan Cultures*. London: Routledge.

Hoyt, Clark. 2007. "Did *The Times* Betray Harry Potter Fans?" *New York Times*, July 19. <http://publiceditor.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/07/19/did-the-times-betray-harry-potter-fans/>.

Jamison, Anne, ed. 2013. *Fic: Why Fanfiction Is Taking Over the World*. Dallas, TX: BenBella.

Jenkins, Henry. (1992) 2013. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. Updated 20th anniversary edition. New York: Routledge.

Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: NYU Press.

Karanika, Andromache. 2011. "Homer the Prophet: Homeric Verses and Divination in the Homeromanteion." In *Sacred Words: Orality, Literacy and Religion*, edited by A. P. M. H. Lardinois, J. H. Blok, and M. G. M. van der Poel, 255–77. Leiden: Brill.

Karanika, Andromache. 2014. "Female Voice, Authorship, and Authority in Eudocia's Homeric Centos." In *Fakes and Forgers of Classical Literature: Ergo decipiatur!*, edited by Javier Martínez, 95–107. Leiden: Brill.

Kenney, E. J. 1982. "Books and Readers in the Roman World." In *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature, Volume 2: Latin Literature*, edited by E. J. Kenney and W. V. Clausen, 1–32. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kim, Lawrence. 2010. *Homer between History and Fiction in Imperial Greek Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Knauer, Georg Nicolaus. 1964. *Die Aeneis und Homer: Studien zur poetischen Technik Vergils mit Listen der Homerzitate in der Aeneis*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

König, Jason, and Tim Whitmarsh. 2007. "Ordering Knowledge." In *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire*, edited by Jason König and Tim Whitmarsh, 3–39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lamberton, Robert. 1986. *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lamberton, Robert, and John J. Keaney. 1992. *Homer's Ancient Readers*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lavan, Myles. 2013. *Slaves to Rome: Paradigms of Empire in Roman Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCaffrey, Anne. n.d. "Fan Fiction Rules." *Worlds of Anne McCaffrey*. <http://pernhome.com/aim/anne-mccaffrey/fans/fan-fiction-rules/>.

- McCarthy, John A. 2009. "Forms and Objectives in Romantic Criticism." In *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, edited by Nicholas Saul, 101–18. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McGill, Scott. 2012. *Plagiarism in Latin Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McGing, Brian, and Judith Mossman. 2006. *The Limits of Ancient Biography: Genre and Technique*. Swansea: Classical Press of Wales.
- Middleton, Francesca. 2014. "Illusions and Vanishing Acts: Homeric Recension, Athetesis and Magic in pOxy 412 (PGM XXIII)." *Helios* 41 (2): 139–62. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hel.2014.0006>.
- Miller, Michele. 2009. "New Amazon Kindle Ad Sparks Your Imagination." *Wonder Branding*, December 3. <http://www.wonderbranding.com/2009/12/new-amazon-kindle-ad-sparks-your-imagination/>.
- Mittell, Jason. 2005. "A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory." In *Thinking Outside the Box: A Contemporary Television Genre Reader*, edited by Gary R. Edgerton and Brian G. Rose, 37–64. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.
- Montanari, Franco. 2011. "Correcting a Copy, Editing a Text: Alexandrian Ekthesis and Papyri." In *From Scholars to Scholia: Chapters in the History of Ancient Greek Scholarship*, edited by Franco Montanari and Lara Pagani, 1–15. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Most, Glenn W. 1993. "Die Batrachomyomachia als ernste Parodie." In *Literaturparodie in Antike und Mittelalter*, edited by Wolfram Ax and Reinhold Gleis, 27–40. Trier, Germany: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier.
- North, Julian. 2009. *The Domestication of Genius: Biography and the Romantic Poet*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Office of National Statistics. 2013. "Internet Access—Households and Individuals." <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rdit2/internet-access---households-and-individuals/2013/stb-ia-2013.html>.
- Parody, Clare. 2011. "Approaching Character in New Doctor Who." In *The Unsilent Library: Essays on the Russell T. Davies Era of the New Doctor Who*, edited by Simon Bradshaw, Antony Keen, and Graham Sleight, 149–62. London: Science Fiction Foundation.
- Peirano, Irene. 2012. *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Petrain, David. 2014. *Homer in Stone: The Tabulae Iliacae in Their Roman Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rainie, Lee, and Maeve Duggan. 2012. "E-book Reading Jumps; Print Book Reading Declines." *Pew Internet*, December 27. <http://libraries.pewinternet.org/2012/12/27/e-book-reading-jumps-print-book-reading-declines/>.
- Rajewsky, Irina O. 2007. "Von Erzählern, die (nichts) vermitteln: Überlegungen zu grundlegenden Annahmen der Dramentheorie im Kontext einer transmedialen Narratologie." *Zeitschrift für Französische Sprache und Literatur* 117:25–68.

- Rich, Motoko. 2007. "Muggle Soirees Herald 'Harry' Finale." *New York Times*, July 20. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/20/books/20pott.html>.
- Sandnes, Karl Olav. 2011. *The Gospel "According to Homer and Virgil": Cento and Canon*. Leiden: Brill.
- Schwendner, Gregg. 2002. "Under Homer's Spell: Bilingualism, Oracular Magic, and the Michigan Excavation at Dimê." In *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World*, edited by Leda Ciruolo and Jonathan Seidel, 107–17. Leiden: Brill.
- Scott, Suzanne. 2012. "Who's Steering the Mothership? The Role of the Fanboy Auteur in Transmedia Storytelling." In *The Participatory Cultures Handbook*, edited by Aaron Delwiche and Jennifer Henderson, 43–52. New York: Routledge.
- Seo, J. Mira. 2009. "Plagiarism and Poetic Identity in Martial." *American Journal of Philology* 130 (4): 567–93. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/ajp.0.0084>
- Squire, Michael. 2011. *The Iliad in a Nutshell: Visualizing Epic on the Tabulae Iliacae*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stroup, Sarah Culpepper. 2010. *Catullus, Cicero, and a Society of Patrons: The Generation of the Text*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swain, Simon. 1996. *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism and Power in the Greek World, AD 50–250*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Temple, Emily. 2012. "Abusing the People of Westeros: Famous Authors on Fan-Fiction." *Flavorwire*, April 19. <http://flavorwire.com/281936/abusing-the-people-of-westeros-famous-authors-on-fan-fiction/view-all>.
- Too, Yun Lee. 1998. *The Idea of Ancient Literary Criticism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Usher, M. D. 1998. *Homeric Stitchings: The Homeric Centos of the Empress Eudocia*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Wasserman, Todd. 2013. "Amazon Puts Gay Twist on Long-Running Kindle Campaign." *Mashable*, February 21. <http://mashable.com/2013/02/21/amazon-kindle-ad-gay/>.
- Whedon, Joss. 2012. "I Am Joss Whedon—AMA." *Reddit*, April 10. http://www.reddit.com/r/IAmA/comments/s2uh1/i_am_joss_whedon_ama/c4ao0m1?context=3.
- Whitmarsh, Tim. 2006. "Quickening the Classics: The Politics of Prose in Roman Greece." In *Classical Pasts: The Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome*, edited by James I. Porter, 353–74. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Wolf, Werner. 2008. "The Relevance of Mediality and Intermediality to Academic Studies of English Literature." In *Mediality/Intermediality*, edited by Martin Heusser, Andreas Fischer, and Andreas H. Jucker, 15–43. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag Tübingen.
- Wong Doody. 2013. "Amazon Kindle Paperwhite Campaign for Book Lovers Launches." September 19. <http://www.wongdoody.com/feed/wdcw-launches-new-amazon-kindle-paperwhite-campaign/>.

Writers University. 2002. "Anne McCaffrey!" *Writers University*.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20020112120551/http://writersu.s5.com/law/moremccaffrey.html>.

Zeitlin, Froma I. 2001. "Visions and Revisions of Homer." In *Being Greek Under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire*, edited by Simon Goldhill, 195–266. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zubernis, Lynne, and Katherine Larsen. 2012. *Fandom at the Crossroads: Celebration, Shame, and Fan/Producer Relationships*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Theory

Fan fiction, early Greece, and the historicity of canon

Ahuvia Kahane

Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, United Kingdom

[0.1] *Abstract*—The historicity of canon is considered with an emphasis on contemporary fan fiction and early Greek oral epic traditions. The essay explores the idea of canon by highlighting historical variance, exposing wider conceptual isomorphisms, and formulating a revised notion of canonicity. Based on an analysis of canon in early Greece, the discussion moves away from the idea of canon as a set of valued works and toward canon as a practice of containment in response to inherent states of surplus. This view of canon is applied to the practice of fan fiction, reestablishing the idea of canonicity in fluid production environments within a revised, historically specific understanding in early oral traditions on the one hand and in digital cultures and fan fiction on the other. Several examples of early epigraphic Greek texts embedded in oral environments are analyzed and assessed in terms of their implications for an understanding of fan fiction and its modern contexts.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Censorship; Epic; Greek epigraphy; Ontology of the work of art; Orality; Surplus

Kahane, Ahuvia. "Fan Fiction, Early Greece, and the Historicity of Canon." In "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work," edited by Ika Willis, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2016.0681>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] Being the products of convention rather than nature, all cultural artifacts—literary, linguistic, or otherwise—pull in and push against the ideas, values, tropes, and words embodied in and projected onto what we might call their canonical frames ([note 1](#)). This push-pull action is a diverse dialectic (incorporating varying levels of intentionality) of adherence to claimed or perceived values and forms and the transformation of such values and forms, a dialectic of affirming and rejecting continuity, repetition and homage, appropriation and transvaluation. In this general sense, we can describe many, perhaps all, literary and cultural artifacts as fan works and their producers and receivers as fans. We need only replace the word *fans* with the words *devotees*, *cognoscenti*, or *interlocutors*, or with the term "members of interpretive communities," to see that these claims are less provocative than they first appear ([note 2](#)). Virgil, Dante, and Joyce are as much fans of Homer and the epic

tradition and as much textual poachers (de Certeau [1975] 2000; Jenkins 1992) as self-professed 16-year-old fan Avaron, who posts a fan fiction response to the *Iliad*. "It was never about the war," her story's epigraph reads, with the disclaimer, "I do not own the Iliad (though I wish I wrote [*sic*] like Homer)" (<https://www.fanfiction.net/s/11201974/1/glory-gore>). An identical dialectic is in effect, whether we are dealing with ancient or modern materials or media, with classical poetry and the canonical foundations of Western literature, or with recent fan fiction.

[1.2] Such universal observations, if they are not truisms, threaten us with the bleak prospect of a uniform, ahistorical world and with little critical traction. If notions of modernity, of fan fiction as a contemporary phenomenon, or of antiquity or classical literature are to have any meaning, they must be historicized, defined historically not merely in deictic terms but conceptually, in a manner that exposes difference and that relies, at least to some degree, on exclusive distinctions. The risk here is that by successfully marking off discreet historical or conceptual domains, we will have essentialized historical moments, sealed them off from each other, or created mere historical marionettes.

[1.3] By way of a response, I want to try to walk something of a middle road that on the one hand will highlight historical difference, allowing us to regain at least some critical-historical traction, but that on the other hand will expose meaningful isomorphism. To do so, I shall have to move away from the idea of canon as object or work and toward the notion of canon as a socially embedded practice of containment of surplus, in which the object itself has more flexible attributes. After a brief methodological comment and a short section on the historicity of the term *canon*, I shall take a closer look at an important recent discussion of canonicity in relation to one of the earliest and therefore potentially most distant and different domains of production and reception in the literary tradition of the West: the early Greek oral and orally-derived epic. By borrowing but also critically (and necessarily) inverting some of this discussion's perspectives, I want to reconsider how the fundamental push-pull dialectics of canon operate in such an early, radically different context and how these dialectics relate to the production and proliferation of discourse, to acts of preservation, and to acts of deletion and censorship. I also want to explore the relation of such specific dialectics to works and practices in other environments. As we shall see, under specific conditions, the idea of textual poaching (de Certeau [1975] 2000; Jenkins 1992) and the responsive positions underlying such fan fiction terms as "alternative universe," "original story," and "original character" are not quite so far from the classical beginnings of Western literature. Yet precisely such proximity can also provide us with a useful position from which to observe other, more complex, and more specific historical variance.

2. Categories of difference and historical compounds

[2.1] First, I offer a brief methodological comment. In formal chronological, medial, geographic, linguistic, and other terms, archaic Greece, our case in point, and its cultural outputs are distant from late modern digital cultures. Such terms as *archaic*, *modern preliterate*, *digital*, *Ionian*, and *global* necessarily underpin our historical understanding, but they are rarely sufficient in and of themselves. Often the closer we inspect them, the more problematic they become. For this reason, in what follows I focus less on essential attributes and distinctions and instead on the fragile facticity of historical compounds (note 3). The differences and similarities between the domain of archaic Greek epic and 21st-century online or other narratives have less to do with medial attributes (and, for example, with the relations between an oral performance, a stone slab, a roll of papyrus, a computer monitor, a Web site, or an electronic list), less to do with formal dating, language, or geography, and more to do with situated matrices and conditions of production and reception, with contextualized constructs about how poets, stone carvers, writers, readers, observers, passers-by, and online surfers do things with a text and with its canonical frames. Such frames are themselves framed and are thus themselves fragile historical objects, but precisely for this reason, I would suggest, they are the foundation of historical comparisons.

3. The historicity of canon

[3.1] Let me begin with this last observation. Fan fiction and also acafans, for example, sometimes take a practical view of canon (note 4). It's "the story as told by the original author," as Jamison (2013, 26), suggests; or as the online Fanspeak Dictionary puts it, yet simpler language, in the entry for the term *canon*, "Megabyte's real name being Marmaduke is canon because it expressly says in Origin Story that it is" (<http://expressions.populli.net/dictionary.html>, referring to *The Tomorrow People* [1992–95]). Students of classical antiquity often take an equally practical view of the canon as a simple list of undisputed masterworks, not least the works of Homer, the "founding hero (*heros ktistes*) of Western Literature" (Curtius 1973, 16).

[3.2] Nevertheless, in a more reflective frame of mind, many scholars have long been challenging the idea that, as Herbert Marcuse (1978) puts it, "throughout the long history of art, and in spite of changes of taste, there is a standard which remains constant" (Intro p. x) (cf. Szafraniec 2010). Canons and fanons evolve as the work of fans (in the sense of *cognoscenti*, as above) gains fans or supporters and respondents of its own and is inducted or subsumed into the canon while other work may lose fans and drop out of the canon (Maybin and Mercer 1996; Thomas 2007).

[3.3] More significantly, as scholars in disciplines as different as digital media, the study of modernity, and classics have argued, not only canonical tokens but also the very idea of canon are dependent on specific, historically contingent conditions of thought. Philosopher and music historian Lydia Goehr (1992), for example, discussing canon in music history in an argument with wider implications, has stressed the specific link of canon to emergent modernity. Around 1800, she says, the very idea of music underwent an essential ontological transformation. Classical music as we know it only came to be with the rise of Romantic aesthetics and German Idealism. These contingent frameworks of consciousness conceptualized repetition, especially in relation to performance, and hence reconfigured the notion of the musical work. "Johann Sebastian Bach," says Goehr, "did not intend to write musical works" (8) (cf. Kerman 1983). It is only since this era, Goehr suggests, that music begins to coalesce around the idea of a body of musical compositions and a canon—a valued and authoritative set of works at the heart of a culture.

[3.4] Such historical positioning chimes well with statements made about the classical tradition on the one hand and digital works and cyberspace on the other. Looking to the past, John Guillory (1983), for example, argues that *canon* is a term that "displaces the expressly honorific term 'classic' precisely in order to isolate the 'classics' as the object of critique" (6) (note 5). Some years earlier, the great historian of classical scholarship Rudolf Pfeiffer (1968) pointed out that the use of the word *canon* in the sense of an exemplary list of (secular) authors and works was not ancient but "a modern catachresis that originated in the eighteenth century" (note 6) introduced by Dutch classicist David Ruhnken (1723–98). Ruhnken, Emmanuel Kant's (1724–1804) fellow student at Königsberg, anachronistically projected the idea of canon onto Hellenistic scholarship (note 7). His thought is inherently modern and is inextricable from modern (rather than ancient) notions of repetition and performance and from modern concepts of public teaching curricula (prescribing texts and subjects of study) and pedagogical cultures of internalized responsibility, rational idealism, and the modern self (Ruhnken 1768; Pfeiffer 1968; Gorak 1993; Hägg 2010).

[3.5] From a quite different perspective, a complementary argument about the historical fragility of the idea of canon emerges, for example, in comments about the digital humanities. Here fundamental notions of repetition and performance, and thus again of the ontology of the literary work of art, seem to have changed. As one traditional student of the book, Roger Chartier (1994), notes, "The library of the future is inscribed where all texts are assembled, and read on a screen...an opposition long held to be insurmountable between the closed world of any finite collection, no matter what its size, and the infinite universe of all texts ever written is thus theoretically annihilated" (89).

[3.6] Some 20-odd years after the publication of the words above, their future and its consequences for the canon and for the "closed world of any finite collection" seem to be already here. Not surprisingly, Astrid Ensslin (2007) acknowledges the need for an alternative type of canon (cf. Bolter 2001; Thomas 2007). One can productively set such terms as "displacement," "catachresis," or the "theoretical annihilation of long-held oppositions" side by side. Combined, they suggest that whether we look at the question from the perspective of the classical past, modernity, or the digital future, the idea of canon is both mobile and historically constrained. If we are to retain it as a useful comparative term, we need to strive toward an understanding that affects comparison within contingency.

4. A practice-based perspective on canon

[4.1] Glenn W. Most (1990), reflecting on the question of canon in early Greek epic, especially in relation to early Greek poetry and orally-derived poetry, offered a reformulation of the idea of canon—not as a lists of works that are sanctioned as the best but, from a functional point of view, as "the device that permits us to distinguish between the books we can admit without shame that we have not read and the books that we feel so ashamed about not having read that we usually feel obliged to pretend that we have" (37) (note 8). This idea takes the focus of the term *canon* away from any set of outside objects, which are always liable to change, and thus in part also away from ontological assumptions about what constitutes a work, which may also change. Most's formulation places the emphasis on what might be described as a phenomenology of the process, one that (though Most himself does not openly say so) underpins a sense of social belonging. This perspective helps us problematize and perhaps better understand not only ancient epic but also contemporary fan fiction. First, however, let us take a closer look at some of the details of Most's suggestion.

[4.2] Underlying Most's (1990) idea is the simple notion of a surplus of words and thus of the need for canonical regulatory apparatus. According to Most—and this is where his argument begins to gain some specific historical texture—what produces this surplus and thus the practice of canon is the medium of writing. A book, roll of papyrus, or wax tablet is a material object that holds words but is independent of the performer or the fleeting moment of performance. Writing allows words to accumulate. Thus, in literate cultures, Most argues, "canonization aims, not at the annihilation of the texts it designates as non-canonical, but only at positioning them lower on a scale of priority, at rendering their use less urgent" (44). I shall return to this idea later because it bears clear relevance for an appreciation of a wide range of canonical contexts (note 9).

[4.3] Here, however, Most (1990) makes a crucial further distinction: one between writing and orality. Oral cultures, he suggests, operate somewhat differently from ones that make use of writing: "An oral culture does indeed know some forms of relative ranking within hierarchies of canons...but within each genre the drastic consequences of relative unpopularity in an ideal oral environment lead inevitably to *the irreversible displacement of less desired texts by more desired ones*" (44, my emphasis). According to this argument, the medial/performative element of oral cultures forecloses the repetition of unpopular or less valued texts. We can sharpen this point by saying that according to Most, orality restricts the push-pull dialectic of the work of art to the synchronic moment of performance but largely curtails diachronic interaction.

[4.4] To prove his point, Most (1990) offers the example of a poem called the *Nostoi*, or *Returns of the Heroes*, from the *Epic Cycle*. The *Cycle* is a series of poems that supplement the stories of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and may well incorporate earlier traditions of oral epic song. Little of these poems survives—only some plot outlines and a handful of actual verses (note 10). Most argues that the oral process of performative annihilation in these written remains is responsible for the poems' scanty remnants: "Since they could not bear the competition with Homer, they were condemned to virtual extinction." Thus, Most concludes, "In an ideal oral society, where production and reception are indissolubly linked, canonization inevitably becomes censorship" (44). In oral cultures such as those of archaic Greece, in the presence of such medial censorship, neither canonical prescriptions nor the concept of canon as they later appear are thus necessary or indeed possible (note 11).

5. Losing the canon to history

[5.1] Defining the canon in these terms is an attractive means of gaining historical traction. We would seem to have a clear distinction between the early preliterate foundations of Western traditions on the one hand (which, strictly speaking, have no canon, or where canonization simply means censorship) and many of the canonical texts and mechanisms of later, literate Western culture, especially post-Enlightenment cultures, on the other (Guillory 1983, 1993; Goehr 1992; Gorak 1993; Kermode 2004). If Most (1990) is right, the embedded medial censorship of archaic orality is likely to have affected not simply epic poetry but also a much wider range of oral mythological, historical, ethnographic, and, in a broader sense, political, legal, and ethical discourses (note 12). Furthermore, we can perhaps also use his general method and assumptions, albeit in quite different ways, to separate the canonical practice of post-Enlightenment and print-based modern Western cultures from the practice of digital cultures in late modernity and perhaps also from the practice of fan fiction.

[5.2] Strictly speaking, fannish use applies the term *canon* to the source contents of franchised work—television series like *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001), the original *Star Trek* (1966–69), or the novels of Jackie Collins—which are heavily protected by intellectual property law and the ruthless commercial practice of corporate multinationals. Some mobility exists, of course. In a small number of cases, individual fan writers are co-opted into the legal/commercial enterprise of the franchise. But when fans are thus embraced, they become—precisely, formally—part of the canon (note 13). Fan fiction in its proper sense is not allowed into the *domain propre* of its source material. Here, it would appear—as in the case of ideal orality but for completely different, historically contingent, and specifically modern reasons that are inconceivable in antiquity—that canon draws dangerously close to the practice of censorship. From this perspective, fannish use of the term *canon* thus seems like a modern catachresis.

[5.3] Fandom's own *domain propre* is currently not television or books in print (*pace* fanzines) but the digital world online. Digital media, electronic bulletin boards, discussion lists, blogs, posts, and indeed fan fiction Web sites create what appears to be a surplus of material on a scale exponentially greater than ever before, a surplus that is increasing rapidly—arguably to such a degree that it affects not a quantitative but rather fundamental ontological or phenomenological changes to what constitutes the work. As Chartier (1994) says, "An opposition long held to be insurmountable between the closed world of any finite collection...and the infinite universe of all texts ever written is thus theoretically annihilated" (89). Inside this environment, despite frequent and explicit use of the term *canon* and despite external constraints, it is not at all clear what might constitute, for example, a general canonical character name or story line that, to use Most's (1990) words, we would "feel so ashamed about not having read" that we might "feel obliged to pretend that we have." We may know the names of Achilles and Marmaduke, but are these names more than ciphers of placeholders inside fan fiction? Would Avaron, whose work is "mostly just an aimless muse dump" (<https://www.fanfiction.net/u/4683839/avaron-x>), who posts online "after reading the Iliad," who wishes he or she "wrote like Homer" (<https://www.fanfiction.net/s/11201974/1/glory-gore>), admit or not admit that he or she has not read the *Iliad*, or has not read it fully or as closely as one might or as one should, if it is indeed canon? Amid the vast diversity of the digital world, does membership in a particular fan group, heavily mediated by aliases, depend on such acts of acknowledgment? Would Avaron feel ashamed—or indeed have any concern about never having watched—*The Tomorrow People*, or about not knowing who Marmaduke Damon or his synonym, Megabyte, is? Some judgmental views are clearly made in fandom. However, the range and quantity of the materials involved, the number of options open to readers and respondents, and, paradoxically, the number of local online communities involved are so great that the idea of an operative or indeed

consistent canonical "scale of priority" seems nostalgic, if not downright impossible—or at least so if we follow the line advocated by critics like Chartier (1994).

[5.4] Have we, then, ended up with a narrow historical definition of the term *canon*, which, precisely for this reason, excludes both the beginning of our historical timeline and its most recent and future points from the realm of canonicity?

6. Regaining the canon through history

[6.1] I suggest that we can rearrange some of the useful aspects of Most's (1990) argument in a manner that allows us to acknowledge the difference of oral epic and fan fiction and at the same time to affirm and better understand their forms of canonicity. Let me first suggest how this might be conceptualized. I will then offer one or two concrete examples.

[6.2] Already Most's (1990) own argument hints at a more complex position. Consider first the question of early orality. There is no doubt that in oral settings less popular texts may be displaced by more desired ones. Nevertheless, already in antiquity, even the few remaining fragments of the *Epic Cycle* were presented as fragments of a larger text (most of the evidence we have today comprises plot summaries). Furthermore, even such scanty fragments were ascribed (rightly or wrongly) to named individual poets—Agias of Troezen (8th century BCE?) in the case of the *Returns* (Burgess 2001). Thus, at least some practical evidence of the canonical periphery clearly did survive beyond orality.

[6.3] More significantly, the principle of displacement that is the basis of the argument for de facto censorship and thus for the absence of canon in oral cultures points to the exact opposite conclusion. This has important implications for the question of canonicity in early oral cultures and by analogy for our understanding of canon in digital cultures. If we assume that in an oral environment it is possible to displace a narrative simply by not performing it, then by the very act of nonperformance, we can just as easily displace an officially sanctioned version as any other. A sanctioned text is only safe at one single moment, dependent on its immediate performance and the preference of the local community at that moment. In and of itself, this does not provide any text, sanctioned or otherwise, with the assurance of future performance. Thus, the potential for open-ended surplus is built into the idea of orality (note 14). As Michel de Certeau says, "Orality insinuates itself, like one of those threads of which it is composed, into the network—an endless tapestry—of a scriptural economy" (1984, 132). Out of this surplus—contrary to Most's (1990) conclusion but paradoxically according to his own principles—emerges, precisely, the idea of canonicity.

[6.4] Even the most distinct (almost scriptural) result of ancient oral censorship as Most (1990) defines it—Homer's poetry—openly states this principle of surplus and its pluripotent nature. In the first book of Homer's *Odyssey*, for example, we find the Ithacan singer Phemius rising to perform his song about the "Achaians' sad return [*nostos*] from Troy" (1.326–27). Likewise, when a tearful Penelope, wife of the absent Odysseus, protests that this song distresses her and urges Phemius to stop, her son, Telemachus, censures her for begrudging the singer to entertain the audience in "whatever way his [Phemius'] mind is spurred" (1.347). "Men," says Telemachus (who represents the future of the heroic past), "always praise the song that is newest" (1.351–52). He then immediately stresses the diversity of possible fates and narratives: "Odysseus was not the only one to lose his day of return [*nostimon*, from *nostos*, "return"] in Troy; many other men also perished." Here is precisely the missing tradition of the *Nostoi*, or *Returns of the Heroes* from the *Epic Cycle*.

[6.5] Already in Homer's written but unquestionably orally-derived poetry we see the dynamic diversity of orality, which is a precondition of the need to regulate and canonize. In oral contexts, almost by definition, we can introduce new, previously unsanctioned discourse more easily than we might in contexts that preserve official records and material texts (Foley 1988, 1991, 1999; Zumthor 1990). *Pace* Most (1990), in oral contexts, at the point of performance, there is thus always a surplus of possible texts competing for the audience's ear. What rounds off the argument for surplus is the fact that in oral environments the synchronic moment of performance, the moment of composition in performance, is identical to the moment of tradition. This moment is as indiscriminately fragile as it is superabundant, both because of the generative potential of oral performance and because phenomenologically, tradition is surplus; it always contains more than is said or can be said at any one moment of performance. Under such conditions, orality's excess must be contained by the notion, real or perceived, of a canonical frame. In the case of heroic epic, this frame is the work of the poet to whom we and the ancients give the name Homer (note 15).

[6.6] The idea of oral abundance also offers us an important point of contact with the surplus of the modern digital world and the world of fan fiction canons and fanons (note 16). The open-ended variety, accessibility, and ease of dissemination in the digital world in one sense suggests a breakdown of the opposition between finite corpora and anything "ever written" and thus the collapse of canonicity. Against the background of strong legal and commercial constraints from the franchise, fan fiction nevertheless claims its freedom to invent its own original material. Yet such rebellious declarations are fundamentally embedded in the recognition, inherent and self-generated, not imposed, of canonical frames. The name *fandom* (the fannish kingdom) suggests not an unstructured, lumpy universe but rather a structured regime. Even more revealing is the term *fanon*, which is unimposed from the outside; fanon is self-

proclaimed and explicitly derived from *canon*. Fanon works in synergy with canon. It suggests a hybrid, even transformative, practice of containment. Here is one definition of the term *fanon*, also drawn from the Fanspeak Dictionary: "Things that are not strictly canon but do not contradict it and are widely accepted by most fans. For instance if most fans just accept that Megabyte's middle name is Archibald, even though it is not expressly canon, it becomes fanon" (<http://expressions.populli.net/dictionary.html>).

[6.7] In the environment of online digital texts, as in oral environments but for wholly different, historically specific reasons, in completely different medial and other contexts, we find a proliferation of options. These are numerous and diverse, and are located in an essential surplus of repositories and sites. Many such sites are self-selecting and specific to groups, subgroups, and smaller online communities (Jenkins 1992; Hellekson and Busse 2014). All this generates a surplus of material that authors can produce and publish easily and rapidly and that, in this sense, cannot be simply deleted or censored. Such diversity, because of what it is, needs some form of containment. If fan fiction were to give up the dialectic of containment and its own canonical frames, it would end up as a single, vast, nonnegotiable aleatory world and as socially meaningless free associations ([note 17](#)).

[6.8] Let me recapitulate. We should understand canon not as any particular fact, story line, or set of characters nor as an object, but, more flexibly, as the text's (sometimes self-chosen) containment practice that is invoked by the perception of superabundant potential, even as such potential can present in different ways and though different media in different historical contexts.

[6.9] Next I offer some brief examples of how this revised perspective on canon works in practice in the context of early orality. This has some useful implications for the idea of canon in fan fiction.

7. Canon and surplus in early Greece

[7.1] It is easy to observe orality from inside the narrow perspective of canonical early Greek epic, from inside what is now the written text of Homer's poetry. This, of course, is not what we are looking for. I will therefore say nothing of such canonical work except to note that it relies on the systematic repetition of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of ready-made traditional set phrases, known as formulae. These are well preserved in the written text of Homer, but their provenance is unmistakably oral. A large body of scholarship has persuasively argued that such repetition is inherently associated with the oral-traditional origins of Greek epic poetry: it makes it possible

for a singer to compose long, well-formed poems in the process of performance without the use of writing (Russo 1997). This idea underpins my analysis.

[7.2] Where, then, would we find the evidence of oral noncanonical surplus? To have survived, it must obviously be written, yet I suggest that it exists in writing whose ontology is of a special sort: the writing of the everyday. Although relatively little of such writing from early Greece actually survives, it is the very everydayness of the objects in question that affirms their abundance beyond the absence of record.

[7.3] Our first piece of evidence is a short performative inscription—most certainly not the kind of writing associated with long, canonical epic poems. It appears on one of the best-known material everyday objects from archaic Greece and is one of the earliest examples of writing using the Greek alphabet in the classical world. The object was produced at a time when levels of literacy were low. Its text, although written, can thus be safely assumed to relate to oral usage. The nature of this object and the content of the words, which directly refers to the object, further assure us of the performative character of the text.

[7.4] The object in question is a simple fired clay *kotylê*, or drinking cup, dated to the second half of the 8th century (750–700 BCE), recovered in 1954 from a burial site in the ancient Greek colony of Pithekoussai on the island of Ischia, just off the Bay of Naples on the west coast of Italy. This vessel is commonly known as Nestor's Cup (Bartoněk and Büchner 1995) (figure 1). The cup is inscribed with the text illustrated in figure 2.



Figure 1. Nestor's Cup, Ischia (late 8th century BCE). [[View larger image.](#)]



Figure 2. Nestor's Cup inscription (CEG 454), reading, "Nestor's cup <I am>, good for drinking. / Whoever drinks from this cup, him, instantly / the desire of beautifully crowned Aphrodite will seize" (translation by Faraone 1996, slightly altered). [[View larger image.](#)]

[7.5] Upon close scrutiny, the inscription reveals an extraordinary dialectic of precisely canonical and noncanonical discourse and what might be described as its acts of appropriation—its use, in fannish terms, of original characters and original plot, and its acts of poaching, which are of necessity also acts of acknowledgment.

[7.6] On the one hand, the cup is clearly not a canonical object. It is not a grand, public artifact. Its material and form suggest everyday use. The cup seems to have been placed in the grave as a funerary offering in a particular location. However, precisely for this reason, we can safely assume that it was a strictly local object, not meant in any way for general circulation or for public veneration ([note 18](#)). The cup's inscription is likewise not grand, canonical poetry. It comprises three lines, of which the first seems to describe the object itself ("Nestor's cup <I am>"). The last two lines comprise a conditional magical formula of a type well attested in other ancient epigraphic texts and that is always associated with everyday, noncanonical discourse, often directly erotic, apotropaic, or vindictive. Such magical discourse is not attested in the canonical poetry of Homer, for example, or, by and large, in other archaic poems. Nestor's Cup, in other words, is an object very close to the life and death of ordinary 8th century BCE local users in Pithekoussai.

[7.7] On the other hand, the cup's inscription declares this to be Nestor's Cup. Nestor is a great Greek hero in Homer's epic. Furthermore, the two last verses of the cup's inscription, though not epic in content, each comprise, with some lesser variation (and partly dependent on supplement) a line of hexameter—an *epos*, as this meter was technically known in ancient Greek, the metrical form of epic, of Homer's poetry, and the single most authoritative, canonical generic form in antiquity. Neither the person who inscribed these words nor his readers or anyone listening to the words spoken are likely to have been completely oblivious to the words' canonical epic context. As one commentator on epigraphic verse puts it: "It seems quite possible that the composers

of epigrams were in principle trying to compose in the local dialect, but that they attempted to give their poetry a specifically elegant touch by means of borrowings from the epic. After all, they used the epic hexameter" (Trümpy 2010, 176).

[7.8] By being marked as Nestor's Cup, this clay vessel is thus almost certain to have invoked its canonical epic namesake, known from its description in book 11 of Homer's *Iliad*:

[7.9] a beautifully wrought cup which the old hero [Nestor] brought with him from home.

It was set with golden nails, the eared handles upon it
were four, and on either side there were fashioned two doves
of gold, feeding, and there were double bases beneath it.
Another man with great effort could lift it full from the table,
but Nestor, aged as he was, lifted it without strain. (11.633–37)

[7.10] The monumental golden object of this great hero is clearly not the little clay cup of an unknown man buried at Pithekoussai. Yet as Christopher Faraone, one of the cup's important modern interpreters, notes,

[7.11] In recent years there has been a growing consensus that this inscription alludes to the epic tradition as part of a sophisticated joke that either plays on a humorous comparison between Nestor's enormous drinking vessel in the *Iliad* (11.632–37) and the humble clay cup which bears the inscription, or toys in rather subtle ways with the reader's generic expectations about proprietary inscriptions or conditional curses. (1996, 78)

[7.12] The Pithekoussai cup, though bearing a written inscription, is, as we have already suggested, early enough to exist in a largely oral environment. The canonicity of Homer's monumental epic has not silenced it. Indeed, the function of the cup depends on such canon and on some version of it. The canonical text may have been available in a more fixed, written form or, more likely, in more fluid, sung performances. The man who will have raised this cup to his lips is likely to have known the epic tradition, and if he did not, he is unlikely to have asked, "Nestor who?" and admitted his ignorance. The cup, both object and text, thus attest to an essential dialectic between canon and explicitly noncanonical local meanings and functions. The text poaches the Homeric source and character of Nestor, but it appropriates his role and transposes it onto a new context and the activities of an original character (in the fan fiction sense): the unnamed and far more humble real-life 8th-century symposiast. The cup reuses the source material for a purpose clearly neither intended nor envisioned in the canon, in "the story as told by the original author" (note 19). As de

Certeau famously says, "Everyday life invents itself by poaching in countless ways on the property of others" (1984, xi).

[7.13] My second ancient example is again an unassuming early Greek everyday object, though it is somewhat less well known (except to fans of ancient epigraphy). This object too is far removed from monumental canonical texts, yet clearly it is has not been obliterated by the canon, and it is clearly dependent on essential textual poaching and a dialectical relation to canon. And again, although not many objects of its type are preserved from so early in Greek history, its everyday nature is proof that it represents a superabundance of similar, common objects.

[7.14] The object in question is a small (approximately 42 centimeters in height and width), plain funerary monument from the ancient Greek city of Kamiros on the island of Rhodes, dated to about 600–575 BCE (figure 3) ([note 20](#)).



Figure 3. Kamiros monument (IG XII 1.737). [[View larger image.](#)]

[7.15] The monument bears a short text inscribed in boustrophedon (bidirectional writing) on both sides of the stone. The words produce, in somewhat free metrical terms (as often elsewhere in epigraphic verse), an elegiac couplet, a common form made up of one hexameter line and a second verse comprising two half-lines of

hexameter: "This tomb I, Idameneus, made, in order that I might have fame. / May Zeus make whoever harms <it> utterly accursed" (translation following Faraone 1996, 81, with minor alterations).

[7.16] Again we find a complex dialectic of allusion and transvaluation that at this period of Greek history is still on the oral cusp of literacy. This text, like our earlier example, comprises what we might describe as a fannish act of textual poaching that is directly comparable to contemporary fan responses, even as its historical, medial, linguistic, and material attributes are quite different.

[7.17] We have no idea who the Rhodian Idameneus was. His monument was found by the roadside with no indication of context. His name is poorly attested elsewhere in the epigraphic record (although, curiously, there is another early Rhodian cup inscribed with this name!). The monument is a modest, undecorated object—clearly not a canonical memorial. As in the first example, the magical curse in the second line of the text attests to common, everyday practice. Yet the metrics of the verse and especially the first line, a hexameter, again strongly mark its generic alignment with canonical heroic poetry. This is most clearly attested in the words "in order that I might have fame," which conclude the first verse ([note 21](#)).

[7.18] Fame (*kleos*) is a rather important Greek word—crucially so in canonical archaic heroic tradition. Fame is the very *raison d'être* for the canonical hero. In Homer, the hero's response to the transience of life and to ineluctable mortality depends on the defiant performance of great martial deeds, often, paradoxically, with lethal consequence. The hero's excellence is rewarded with prizes (tripods, captive women, and so on), honor, and fame. This fame is then augmented, disseminated, preserved, and made imperishable (*aphthiton*) in song, which allows the hero to get as close to the gods as a mortal man can (Schein 1984; Nagy 1999). In Homer, a prominent example of this idea can be found, for example, in Achilles' words as he lays out his choice of fate between the prospect of a safe return from Troy and the glory of heroic exploits (*Iliad* 9.413). If he chooses the latter, says Achilles, "My return home is gone, but my fame shall be imperishable." In another instance, in book 10 of the *Iliad*, as the Greek warriors are suffering, Nestor (the same man whose great cup we have just discussed) contemplates the possibility of a great deed of reconnaissance and the godly fame it may bring: "Could a man learn this, and then return again to us / unhurt, why huge and heaven-high his fame would be" (12.211–12).

[7.19] In archaic epic poetry, thought is never separate from material form and metrical structure. The most important ideas are always embedded and repeated in traditional elements of diction. These are the elements described above as formulae. They are the most distinct mark of the orality of early epic traditions. The point—and here I must apologize for the technical nature of my comment—is that in Homer the

idea of fame is most prominently articulated in distinct formulae that (in the original Greek) comprise a collocation of the noun *fame* and the verb *to be* anchored at the end of the metrical line. Such metrical-grammatical patterns function as the formal material marker of the idea, in this case of heroic fame, in the same way that in a Wagnerian opera a leitmotif marks a particular character or theme. These Homeric metrical-grammatical markers of the epic idea of fame are also exactly, formally articulated in the words and usage of the Kamyros inscription: "in order that I might have fame" (cf. variants: *Iliad* 7.451, 458; 10.212; 22.514; *Odyssey* 1.298; 4.584; 9.264; 18.255; 19.128). Our Rhodian Idameneus may be a private ancient epigraphic blogger but, by the very structure of his words, he invokes canonical heroic fame, which he applies to his own purpose.

[7.20] Idameneus' monument invokes not merely the abstract idea of canonical epic fame but also his specific canonical mythological namesake, one of the epic tradition's well-known characters, the great hero Idomeneus. The name of this famous warrior prominently appears in a long list, known as the Catalogue of Ships, of the members of the Greek armies who fought at Troy (*Iliad* 2.645–47): "Idomeneus the spear-famed was leader of the Cretans, / those who held Knosos and Gortyna of the great walls, / Lyctos and Miletos and silver-shining Lykastos."

[7.21] Although not a Rhodian, Homer's Idomeneus is geographically and poetically a south Aegean Doric neighbor from the island of Crete. Oral abundance often leads to multiple versions of facts. It is telling that in the Catalogue of Ships, immediately after listing Idomeneus' Cretans, Homer does indeed describe the Rhodian contingent and names their most important city, Kamyros, in highly similar formal terms (2.653–56) (note 22).

[7.22] We have here another example of a local anonymous figure, an original character (in the fannish sense), Idameneus, who has poached and appropriated the discourse and values of canonical epic poetry as well as the name of Homer's Idomeneus, making use of these to suit his own ends and agendas. Without Homer and canonical epic hexameter, it is almost impossible to explain the inscription's diction or indeed its force. Idameneus' inscription is written, but it is deeply embedded in traditions of oral discourse; at this early period in Greek history, we are still dealing with predominantly oral societies. Whether there will have been written texts of Homer or not, canonical heroic poetry will have been disseminated largely by oral performance. It is unlikely that there will have been many written texts, let alone full texts of the canonical *Iliad*, in circulation (Janko, forthcoming). What is important for our purposes here is not the literal medium, be it writing or voice, but the wider historical contexts of production and reception. We are dealing with poetry that on the one hand embodies the canon but that on the other hand attests to prolific, subversive

local practice. Anyone who read or heard Idameneus' short funerary epigram will have also heard the resonance of its canonical traditional epic echoes or else will probably have been too ashamed to admit that he had not.

[7.23] Greek hexameter verse inscriptions from the 6th century BCE and earlier are not numerous, but the few that have survived can, I suggest, be analyzed in the same way as my two examples (note 23). Furthermore, it is easy to demonstrate that most, if not all, are themselves largely local and everyday, and in this sense noncanonical, while they simultaneously resonate with the canonical language and thought of monumental heroic epic. As everyday objects, they attest to a much more prolific discourse. Indeed, what accounts for their scarcity is not the transience of orality or an annihilating effect of writing. Rather, it is the fragility of the material substance of their writing—clay and stone, which can be broken or taken away.

8. Early Greek canon and fan fiction

[8.1] I have not discussed, nor, in what little remains of this essay, do I propose to discuss, examples of the canonical dialectics of fan fiction. Many other scholars have done so recently, in detail and to good effect (Aardse 2014; Hellekson and Busse 2014; Siuda 2014; Hellekson 2015; Lindgren 2015). What I do hope to have shown by my comments on the canonicity of early Greek epic and by brief accompanying reference to key aspects of fan fiction is how similarly these two distant ancient and modern domains operate in relation to canon. I also hope to have hinted at how similar the determinant contexts of canonicity and general conditions of cultural reception and production in both these cultures are, despite vast formal differences. I would not be so foolhardy as to try to argue any of this in full in this short essay. However, it seems to me safe to suggest that paradoxically, despite obvious material, medial, economic, political, technological, and other differences, in archaic Greece we can find a directly comparable kind of small-community localism and fluidity of association that is characteristic of contemporary digital cultures and of fan fiction. It likewise seems to me safe to suggest that such fluid localism is significantly different from the highly literate, structured, and centralized social formations of, say, Virgil's Augustan Rome or the highly literate, bureaucratized national communities of emergent European nation-states, capitalism, and modernity in the 18th century, or the high modernist literary cultures of Paris and London in the early part of the 20th century. If such broad observations have any truth to them, and if there is any substance to the pointed arguments I have made here, then perhaps we will indeed have walked, if only for a short distance, the middle road I hoped for, learning something about both the historical uniqueness of canonical dialectics and about their pervasive universal necessity.

9. Notes

1. See Hartman (2004) and other responses in Kermode (2004). For bibliography on canon, see the 1983 *Critical Inquiry* issue on "Canons" (vol. 10, no. 1); von Hallberg (1984); Bourdieu and Passeron (1990); Gorak (1993); Kermode (2004); Wyrick (2004); Ensslin (2007); and Thomassen (2010).
2. I borrow this idea and its terms from Rosen (2006, 32); cf. Jamison (2013, 15), "playing with someone else's toys."
3. For facticity, see Heidegger ([1923] 1999) and critique by, among others, Gadamer (1994). I use the term here to indicate a general underlying position. Facticity is not an applied concept, of course.
4. For acafans, see Jenkins's blog (<http://henryjenkins.org/>), though Jenkins's own position is certainly more reflective rather than practical.
5. The ecclesiastical usage has its own unique framework in book-based Adamic theology and religious practice.
6. Catachresis is an ancient rhetorical term meaning the displacement of a word's proper sense—for example, as one ancient source explains it, using the word *pyxis*, a specific type of wooden box, to describe a box made of bronze.
7. Alexandrian scholars in the third to first centuries BCE produced lists, known as *Pinakes*, of orators and poets (Zetzel 1983).
8. I will not discuss here the wider issue of canon in later periods of antiquity, for which see Gorak (1993).
9. We can better understand the precarious dialectic of coercive violence and social restraint underlying canonization if we consider, for example, the burning of books in 1933 by the German Students' Union or in François Truffaut's film *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), based on Ray Bradbury's 1953 book of the same name.
10. For sources, text, and translation see West (2003). Of the *Returns*, only four or five scattered lines of verse remain, preserved haphazardly, as, for example, in Clement of Alexandria's *Miscellanies* (6.12.7): "For gifts delude people's minds and (corrupt) their actions."
11. Hägg (2011, 11) accepts this view reductively: "Oral literature is hardly compatible with the concept of canonicity."

12. Such censorship will only have only begun to fragment in the classical era with the rise of the *polis* (the Greek city-state) and the emergence of literacy, Greek philosophy, and written law. Havelock (1982) provides a classic but now much disputed view of such matters.

13. I am grateful to the referees of this article for help on this point. As one of them notes, "Where individual fan writers have become canonical writers, this involves a change of status—particularly employment status—and an agreement to conform to a different set of rules of production and dissemination of work."

14. The idea is germane to many studies of orality. See Bakker and Kahane (1997); Foley (1999); Zumthor (1990). Contemporary work has greatly affected the study of fan fiction; see de Certeau ([1975] 2000) and Jenkins (1992), who relies heavily on de Certeau.

15. Although the name "Homer" was always the name of a single person, already the ancients acknowledged the multiplicity associated with his figure. See Antipater of Sidon (2nd century) in the *Greek Anthology* (16.295): "Not the field of Smyrna gave birth to divine Homer, / Not Colophon, the star of Luxurious Ionia, / Not Chios, not rich Egypt, not Holy Cyprus, / Not the rocky homeland of the son of Laertes [Odysseus], / Not the Argos of Danaeus and Cyclopean Mycenae / Not [Athens] the city of the ancient sons of Kekrops. / For he was not born as a work of the earth. No, the Muses / Sent him from heaven, so that he may bring desired gifts to men who live but a day." See Porter (2002).

16. Some affinities between states of orality, digital texts, and digitally mediated communication are by now long acknowledged (Mason 1998).

17. See discussions of canon and fanon in Thomas (2007) and more generally in hypertext (Ensslin 2007).

18. Compare, for example, highly prized ecclesiastical cups and the idea of the Holy Grail.

19. The ambivalence of fannish use of the term *original*, as in OC, "original (noncanon, author-created) character," on the one hand but "original (canonical) author" on the other, is significant. It points to the complex dialectic of allusion and transvaluation embedded in any act of poaching.

20. In the main standard collection of Greek inscriptions, *Inscriptiones Graecae* (IG) XII 1.737; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (SEG) 26.865. For the magical element, see Faraone (1996).

21. The metrics are, however, not fully canonical. The line breaks a rule known as Hermann's Bridge. This is a technical matter that requires an extended separate discussion that is outside my purview here.
22. "Herakles' son Tleptolemos the huge and mighty / led from Rhodes nine ships with the proud men of Rhodes aboard them, / those who dwelt about Rhodes and were ordered in triple division, / Ialysos and Lindos and silver-shining Kameiros" (*Iliad* 2.653–56). But for the change of names, the catalogic presentation of Idomeneus, leader of the Cretan Dorians, and of Tleptolemos, leader of the Rhodian Dorians, are almost identical.
23. Many other types of private documents, such as magical texts, do exist and can be analyzed in this manner.

10. Works cited

- Aardse, Kent. 2014. "Alternative Reality Games, Narrative Disbursement and Canon: The Lost Experience." In *Fan Culture: Essays on Participatory Fandom in the 21st Century*, edited by Kristin M. Barton, Jonathan Malcolm Lampley, and Stephen J. Sansweet, 106–17. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Bakker, Egbert J., and Ahuvia Kahane, eds. 1997. *Written Voices, Spoken Signs: Tradition, Performance and the Epic Text*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bartoněk, Antonín, and Georg Büchner. 1995. "Die ältesten griechischen Inschriften von Pithekoussai." *Die Sprache* 37:129–231.
- Bolter, Jay David. 2001. *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext and the Remediation of Print*. 2nd ed. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean Claude Passeron. 1990. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. 2nd ed. Translated by Richard Nice. New York: Sage.
- Bradbury, Ray. (1953) 1976. *Fahrenheit 451*. London: Grafton.
- Burgess, Jonathan S. 2001. *The Tradition of the Trojan War in Homer and the Epic Cycle*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Chartier, Roger. 1994. *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Curtius, Ernst Robert. 1973. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Translated by Willard R. Trask. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- De Certeau, Michel. (1975) 2000. "The Word of the Vowel." Translated by Jeremy Ahearne. In *The Certeau Reader*, edited by Graham Ward, 177–87. Oxford: Blackwell.
- De Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Stephen Randall. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ensslin, Astrid. 2007. *Canonizing Hypertext: Explorations and Constructions*. London: Continuum.
- Faraone, Christopher A. 1996. "Taking 'Nestor's Cup Inscription' Seriously: Erotic Magic and Conditional Curses in the Earliest Inscribed Hexameters." *Classical Antiquity* 15:77–112. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/25011032>.
- Foley, John M. 1988. *The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Foley, John M. 1991. *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Foley, John M. 1999. *Homer's Traditional Art*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1994. *Heidegger's Ways*. Translated by John Stanley. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Goehr, Lydia. 1992. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gorak, Jan. 1993. *The Making of the Modern Canon: Genesis and Crisis of a Modern Idea*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Guillory, John. 1983. "The Ideology of Canon-Formation: T. S. Eliot and Cleanth Brooks." *Critical Inquiry* 10:173–98. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/448242>.
- Guillory, John. 1993. *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. New ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hägg, Thomas. 2010. "Canon Formation in Greek Literary Culture." In *Canon and Canonicity: The Formation and Use of Scripture*, edited by Einar Thomassen, 109–28. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculaneum Press.
- Hartman, Geoffrey. 2004. "The Passing of the Canon." Comment in *Pleasure and Change: The Aesthetics of Canon*, by Frank Kermode, edited by Robert Alter, 53–64. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Havelock, Eric A. 1982. *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. (1923) 1999. *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*. Translated by John van Buren. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.
- Hellekson, Karen. 2015. "Fandom and Fan Culture." In *The Cambridge Companion to American Science Fiction*, edited by Eric Carl and Gerry Canavan, 153–63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hellekson, Karen, and Kristina Busse, eds. 2014. *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- Jamison, Anne. 2013. *FIC: Why Fanfiction Is Taking Over the World*. Dallas, TX: Smart Pop.
- Janko, Richard. Forthcoming. "The Textual Tradition of Homer's *Iliad*." In *The Oxford Companion to Textual Criticism*, edited by W. de Melo and S. Scullion. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Kerman, Joseph. 1983. "A Few Canonic Variations." *Critical Inquiry* 10:107–25.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/448239>.
- Kermode, Frank. 2004. *Pleasure and Change: The Aesthetics of Canon*. Edited by Robert Alter. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lindgren Leavenworth, Maria. 2015. "The Paratext of Fan Fiction." *Narrative* 23:40–60.
- Marcuse, Herbert. 1979. *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Mason, Bruce L. 1998. "E-Texts: The Orality and Literacy Issue Revisited." *Oral Tradition* 13:306–29. http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/13ii/4_mason.pdf.
- Maybin, Janet, and Neil Mercer. 1996. *Using English: From Conversation to Canon*. London: Routledge.
- Most, Glenn W. 1990. "Canon Fathers: Literacy, Mortality, Power." *Arion*, 3rd ser., 1:33–60.
- Nagy, Gregory. 1999. *The Best of the Achaeans*. 2nd ed. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. <http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/nagy/BofA.html>.

Pfeiffer, Rudolph. 1968. *History of Classical Scholarship: From the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Porter, James. 2002. "Homer: The Very Idea." *Arion* 10:57–86.

Rosen, Ralph. 2006. "Aristophanes, Fandom and the Classicizing of Greek Tragedy." In *Playing Around Aristophanes: Essays in Celebration of the Completion of the Edition of the Comedies of Aristophanes by Alan Sommerstein*, edited by L. Kozak and John Rich, 27–47. Oxford: Aris & Phillips. http://repository.upenn.edu/classics_papers/28.

Ruhnken, David. 1768. "Historia Critica Oratorum Graecorum" [Critical history of the Greek orators]. In *Rutili Lupi Opera*. Leiden: Luchtmans.

Russo, Joseph. 1997. "The Formula." In *The New Companion to Homer*, edited by Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell, 238–60. Leiden: Brill.

Schein, Seth L. 1984. *The Mortal Hero: An Introduction to Homer's "Iliad"*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Siuda, Piotr. 2014. "Fan Cultures: On the Impossible Formation of Global and Transnational Fandoms." In *Is It 'Cause It's Cool? Affective Encounters with American Culture*, edited by Astrid M. Fellner, Susanne Hamscha, Klaus Heissenberger, and Jennifer J. Moos, 295–318. Vienna, Austria: LIT.

Szafraniech, Asja. 2010. "Between Pedagogy and Democracy: On Canons and Aversion to Conformity in Ordinary Language Philosophy." In *How the West Was Won: Essays on Literary Imagination, the Canon, and the Christian Middle Ages for Burcht Pranger*, edited by Willemien Otten, Arie Vanderjagt, Hent de Vries, and Arjo Vanderjagt, 225–38. Leiden: Brill.

Thomas, Bronwen. 2007. "Canons and Fanons: Literary Fanfiction Online." *Digital Dichtung*. <http://www.dichtung-digital.org/2007/Thomas/thomas.htm>.

Thomassen, Einar, ed. 2010. *Canon and Canonicity: The Formation and Use of Scripture*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculaneum Press.

Trümper, Catherine. 2010. "Observations on the Dedicatory and Sepulchral Epigrams and Their Early History." In *Archaic and Classical Greek Epigram*, edited by Miguel Baumbach, Andrej Petrovic, and Ivana Petrovic, 167–80. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Von Hallberg, Robert, ed. 1984. *Canons*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

West, Martin L. 2003. *Greek Epic Fragments: From the Seventh Century to the Fifth Century BC*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wyrick, Jed D. 2004. *The Ascension of Authorship: Attribution and Canon Formation in Jewish, Hellenistic, and Christian traditions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Zetzel, James E. G. 1983. "Re-creating the Canon: Augustan Poetry and the Alexandrian Past." *Critical Inquiry* 10:83–105. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/448238>.

Zumthor, Paul. 1990. *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Theory

Virgilian fandom in the Renaissance

Balaka Basu

University of North Carolina, Charlotte, North Carolina, United States

[0.1] *Abstract*—Considered as fan works, early modern homages to, derivations from, and continuations of classical texts can help contemporary readers better understand the past and potential future of fan fiction as a queer, emotional, and affectionate investment in the universe of a text. Demonstrating that Sir Philip Sidney's queer, fractured *Arcadia* can be understood as fan fiction of Virgil's *Eclogues* shows how readers have always responded to the notion of beloved texts held in the creative commons with traditional fan practices such as subversive slash subtexts, inserted selves, feminine communities of reader-writers, and carefully orchestrated gift economies, whether in ancient Rome, Tudor England, or our own digital era.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Affect theory; *Arcadia*; Creative commons; Early modern fan fiction; Queer theory; Sir Philip Sidney; Slash; Virgil

Basu, Balaka. 2016. "Virgilian Fandom in the Renaissance." In "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work," edited by Ika Willis, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2016.0683>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] We are living in an age when fan fiction has come out of the closet: it is discussed openly on prime-time television, in movies, in print media, and even in children's cartoons. One hallmark of this zeitgeist is the periodic recurrence of a particular conversation about the valuation of such "derivative" texts: some media producer becomes alarmed at the challenge posed by fan fiction to his or her ownership of the text and writes an impassioned screed condemning the incursion. Fan authors respond, vehemently arguing for readers' co-ownership of beloved texts and the right of creative response. More often than not, they look to the Renaissance for support. Shakespeare, they claim, was not original, and yet he is the most famous author ever to write in English; if his "fan works" are worthy of respect, why not others? What is Milton's *Paradise Lost*, they ask, except biblical fan fiction, filling a gap in Genesis? If these authors were writing today, might they not be posting their masterworks on the Internet? (bookshop, LiveJournal post, May 3, 2010; Jordan West, "None of This Is New: An Oral History of Fanfiction," November 2, 2014, *The Mary Sue*, <http://www.themarysue.com/none-of-this-is-new-an-oral-history-of-fanfiction>;

Lucy Gillam, "Shakespeare, Fanfic, and Creativity," [August 21, 1999,] *The Fanfic Symposium*, <http://www.trickster.org/symposium/symp9.htm>; Jamison 2013, 28). In rebuttal, we often hear that early modern textual practices were so different from our own that the comparison is unfair; after all, the Renaissance predates copyright and intellectual property law as we know them today.

[1.2] While this may be true, it remains fascinating that early modern writers themselves prefigured fan practices explicitly, as they explored the texts that made up their classical canon: Virgil and Homer, Horace and Theocritus, to name just a few. It seems useful, then, to embark on a reading of the derivations they produced in order to better understand their response to the classics. Sir Philip Sidney, immersed in the classics since childhood and an ardent supporter of their imitation by early modern authors, offers the perfect opportunity to examine classical transformations through a fannish lens, thus offering new and intriguing possibilities for understanding the history as well as the future of affective relationships with texts.

2. Fan fiction and its textual/sexual perversities

[2.1] What makes these 16th-century derivations, continuations, and homages fan works? Fan fiction requires its readers and writers to imagine the text as existing beyond the borders set by its original creator. I suggest, therefore, that to explore a text fannishly is to treat it as if it were "real"—with all the carnal reactions and affective investment that such a reality implies. From an academic perspective, however, to truly believe in the "reality" of fiction is irrational; to do so is often to be condemned as indiscriminately gullible, unintellectual, and grossly concerned with the material nature of the body and its desires. For instance, in a book on Shakespeare, Harry Berger unequivocally argues against the life and embodiment of characters beyond the borders of the text and thus against the belief in textual reality:

[2.2] Speakers don't have bodies, age, insomnia, corpulence, or illness unless and until they mention them, and when they do, it is usually in the service of some discourse...Speakers don't have childhoods unless and until they mention them. If, for example, John of Gaunt never mentions his youth, then he has and had no youth, no childhood whose critical events the analytical dialogue may recuperate and revise. (Berger 1997, 221)

[2.3] Berger, here, describes the act of fic writing—the ability to imagine past what the author has set down. Notwithstanding Berger's reading of Shakespeare, early modern writers often displayed just such an engagement with the texts they loved, as we will explore further in section 4.

[2.4] Belief in a beloved text's "reality" is aligned with the metaphorical equation of texts to people often found in discussions of reading and writing. Authors often analogize their texts as their children; readers often describe texts as friends. In using this language, authors sometimes claim ownership of their textual offspring in terms that seem more applicable to a master/slave relationship than a parent/child one (as if they were asking, "How dare someone else form a relationship with my child?"). Conversely, consider the opinion of television and film writer Joss Whedon, who, when asked about his attitude toward fan fiction, responded with a similar analogy but a different conclusion, saying, "All worthy work is open to interpretations the author did not intend. Art isn't your pet—it's your kid. It grows up and talks back to you" (posting at *Reddit*, April 10, 2012, http://www.reddit.com/r/IAmA/comments/s2uh1/i_am_joss_whedon_ama/). The text-as-person metaphor suggests that declaring ownership of a text may be tantamount to enslaving it. Even more importantly, however, understanding the text-as-person or text-as-body metaphor and the ensuing affective relationships between text and readers-turned-writers suggests that the fiction not only exists in story-space but also reaches out into the embodied spaces of "reality."

[2.5] Furthermore, understanding the text-as-person or text-as-body metaphor illuminates the sexual component of the critical distaste for fan fiction: such transgressive transformations are often compared to illicit sexual acts that disrupt socially approved familial and romantic relationships. Thus, fan writing can be read as a perverse act, regardless of its specific content, which nevertheless often reflects a queer ideology. As queer theorist Alexander Doty notes,

[2.6] Although the ideas that comprise "straightness" and "heterosexuality" are actually flexible and changeable over time and across cultures, these concepts have been—and still are—generally understood within Western public discourses as rather clearly defined around rigid gender roles, exclusive opposite sex desires, and such social and ideological institutions as patriarchy, marriage, "legitimate" child-bearing and rearing, and the nuclear, patrilineal family. And all of this has been/is placed in binary opposition to "homosexuality" or queerness. (Doty 1993, 107)

[2.7] Queerness, then, is defined by its lack of rigidness, exclusivity, and legitimacy. Not only are fan fictions deviant, multiplicitous, illegitimate, and unsanctioned texts, they are also the result of an erotic engagement between fan author and source text, and therefore fit into this ideology of sexual perversity and deviance.

3. The classics as canon

[3.1] A text that incites fan work generally demands that its readers collaborate in its construction. Such participation requires that these readers care about and invest in the text's narrative universe, an investment made more possible when a fiction exhibits the properties of what I call selvage: a coherent, firm, detailed, and consistent framework with unfinished edges that invite, provoke, and support the reader's response in the form of fan-made extensions, which make explicit what is only implicit within the source text. In fabrics, selvages are the unfinished yet structurally sound edges that were neither cast on nor bound off; they beg for continuation. Their very lack of neatness, as well as their incompleteness, ironically allows the foundation of the previous material to remain firmly established; thus they illustrate how, in narratives as well as in fabric, openness within solid structure endorses continuation.

[3.2] The epic cycle presents some of the best examples of these kinds of texts, offering an immensely grand and seductive metanarrative. For instance, Homer's *Iliad* describes only one year of a 20-year war; though a complete story, it still begs for continuation. The next entry in the series, Homer's *Odyssey* (or *Troy II: The Voyage Home*), is a work that many claim surpasses its antecedent. Centuries later, Virgil composes his *Aeneid*; and both in the early modern period and today these three works are inevitably thought of together: one continuous tale that takes readers through the fall of Troy and the birth of Rome. However disparate in time and space its creators may have been, this unified story exists in readers' minds as a single, common fictional universe. In 1986, the classicist Charles Segal developed the term "megatext" to refer to such an overarching narrative, suggesting that it was only when the Greek myths were all thought to have taken place in a single world that they made sense. Now usually used to consider the common literary properties of science fiction, Segal's concept of a megatext prefigures that of the "verse" (or "'verse," with an apostrophe)—a postmodern conception of a fictional universe. A "verse" "is usually referred to with a show or franchise identifier (such as 'Buffyverse,' 'Whoniverse,' 'Potterverse,' etc.). It is a crafted combination of setting-elements that define the rules for how the world works and sometimes provides for sharing of characters and continuity across more than one series" ("The Verse," *TVTropes*, <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/TheVerse>). Within the "epicverse," then, multiple versions of characters and sequences of events appear, as different authors offer varying interpretations.

[3.3] For instance, the character of Aeneas has existed in numerous iterations and forms; like that of most megatextual heroes, his history is unstable, changing to greater or lesser degree with each new author, each translation into another medium, and of course with each new chronological reboot of the franchise. Aeneas of the *Iliad* is a minor character; Aeneas of the *Aeneid* is the last Trojan hero, the founding father of New Troy; Aeneas in the medieval *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* only escaped

the Greeks because he was a traitor to his homeland; and Aeneas in Christopher Marlowe's play *Dido, Queen of Carthage* is dishonorable in love. Details both small and large are altered throughout by the different authors, both intentionally, to suit each author's cultural zeitgeist, and also unintentionally, as the result of mistakes in continuity. While such mistakes are understandable, given the length of the narrative, reception of the new "canon" can be poor; the interesting part is how this dissatisfaction is expressed. When readers and fans point out that something about a particular narrative installment is wrong—for instance, the quality of Aeneas's character, or the personality of his lover, Dido—they are implicitly insisting that there exists a version that is right, in which they believe. While two readers might never agree on every aspect of this theoretically correct and intangible version, the accusation of falseness indicates, by its very existence, the possibility of autonomous, objective authenticity.

[3.4] These numerous, mutually contradictory versions, in fact, promote belief in this authentic ur-text. In her article "Archontic Literature," Abigail Derecho suggests that derivative—or, as she terms it, "archontic" (i.e., of the same Derridean archive)—writing can be positioned in the liminal space between Deleuze's actualized virtualities or potentialities and Glissant's concept of relation. She argues that to write or read or study these multiplicitous archontic texts "is to admit that the text is never stable, that virtualities inside source texts are perpetually in the process of being actualized, that between texts within a given archive, there is repetition with a difference, and that the interplay between texts can never be solidified or stilled" (Derecho 2006, 75). The idea that a text's instability—its wavering among its various iterations and reimaginings—can actually reinforce the stability of its imaginary space might seem counterintuitive at first. Yet it is the space between these deviant texts that provides fractures, which may act as doorways for fan writers to enter into the text, armed with their own deviant and perverse interventions.

4. Virgil's perverse entrances

[4.1] Turning away from Virgil's epic to examine his *Eclogues*, we find many opportunities for early modern fan writers to cut their own unauthorized entrances. The *Eclogues*, a series of ten connected poems, plays off the pastoral form earlier presented in the bucolic *Idylls* of Theocritus. However, while retaining the eroticism and sensuality of Theocritus's Sicilian poetry, Virgil adds notes of politics and prophecy to the Amoebaean singing of the shepherds, offering a sharply contemporary vision of the Augustan period as well as a foreshadowing of his epic plans for the *Aeneid*. He also offers a new setting for the pastoral: Arcadia, a term that has now become synonymous with the genre.

[4.2] In his famous article "Virgil and Arcadia," Richard Jenkyns suggests that the assumption, by subsequent writers, that all the Eclogues are set in Arcadia may be the product of a misreading. Six of the 10 poems (the first, second, third, fifth, sixth, and ninth) make no mention of Arcadia at all. The fourth, in which it appears only in passing, merely says, "Pan etiam, Arcadia mecum si iudice certet / Pan etiam Arcadia dicat se iudice victum" [Pan, too, if he were to compete with me with Arcadia as judge, / Pan, even with Arcadia as judge, would say he had lost]. Jenkyns persuasively argues that Arcadia is referenced here simply because it is the traditional home of the god Pan and should not be assumed to be the poem's setting—just as no one would assume that a poem was set in Cyprus if the island were mentioned in connection with Venus. He makes similar work of the Arcadian allusion in Eclogue VIII, which is likewise linked with Pan. Eclogue VII's mention of Arcadia is easily accounted for as well; in this poem, Virgil describes the shepherds with the words "Arcades ambo" [Arcadians both]. Jenkyns argues that "if some character in a book says 'I have just met two Englishmen,' we can be virtually certain that the scene is not laid in England. I would not say this in Surrey; I might well say it in Paris. When Meliboeus tells us that his friends are both Arcadians, the poet has indicated to us that we are somewhere other than Arcadia" (Jenkyns 1989, 26).

[4.3] Thus, it is only the final poem of the series, Eclogue X, in which Virgil imagines his friend Gallus singing his death song, that can definitively be said to take place in Arcadia. Here, the scenery begins to darken, as befits the subject matter: it is full of cold mountains, deserted caverns, chilly rocks; its beauty is wild and strange and empty; it chills us to the bone with its motifs of ice and stone. This is a darkness that Sidney develops in his own responses (Wilson-Okamura 2010, 66). While Eclogue II is unabashedly about the unrequited same-sex desire that the shepherd Corydon has for the scornful "master's pet" (i.e., a slave) Alexis—during the early modern period, this poem was thought to be a thinly veiled allusion to Virgil's own passion for the slave of his patron—Eclogue X is far more unstable and deviant. Here, in the voice of Gallus, we find a desire that shifts incessantly between the female Phyllis and the male Amyntas:

[4.4] Yet, shepherds of Arcady, you shall blazon my legend
Among your hills, for Arcady has no rival
In music. And oh! How softly my bones would nestle
If flutes of yours in the future voiced my sorrows
In love...
For surely the shape that bewitched me, whether of Phyllis,
Amyntas, or any so ever, would now be lying
Beside me among the willows, and under the vine loops.
(Virgil 1960, 58)

[4.5] To be in Arcadia, then, is to have love and longing that wander from object to object, regardless of gender, and it is this uncertainty that creates a space for later passionate poets to walk through and more fully inhabit.

5. Sir Philip Sidney as fan writer

[5.1] Philip Sidney's first contemporary biographer was his oldest friend: Fulke Greville. They attended the same school at Shrewsbury, and Greville writes, "I lived with him, and knew him from a child...His talk ever of knowledge, and his very play tending to enrich his mind" (Greville 1907, 6). Accounts of his school expenditures for February of 1565—when he was 11—show "a Virgile for Mr Philipp" (Wallace 2011, 410), and it is clear that he loved to apply himself to the literary analysis of the classics. A second contemporary biographer (and also a family friend), Thomas Moffett, goes on to detail how the young Sidney would study Latin and Greek at college until he fell ill. Both Greville and Moffett clearly paint a portrait of a person who is engulfed in the affective pleasure that reading may bestow.

[5.2] Indeed throughout his seminal piece of literary criticism, *The Defense of Poesy*, Sidney argues for the transportative, ravishing, childlike delight that can be found in fiction, saying, "So it is in men (most of which, are childish in the best things, til they be cradled in their graves) glad they will be to heare the tales of Hercules, Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas" (Sidney 1595). Throughout the piece, he continues to hold Virgil—along with the rest of the classical canon—up as a model for living, writing, and creating. Writing, for Sidney, has a preternaturally mystic power:

[5.3] Among the Romanes a Poet was called Vates, which is as much as a diviner, foreseer, or Prophet, as by his conjoynd words Vaticinium, and Vaticinari is manifest, so heavenly a title did that excellent people bestowe uppon this hart-ravishing knowledge, and so farre were they carried into the admiration thereof, that they thought in the chanceable hitting uppon any of such verses, great foretokens of their following fortunes, were placed. Whereupon grew the word of Sortes Vergilianae, when by suddaine opening Virgils Booke, they lighted uppon some verse of his making. (Sidney 1595)

[5.4] While he quickly dismisses this as pagan superstition, he still allows for the possibility for a divine force animating the work of the writer or "maker." This, to me, exemplifies the "heart-ravishing" investment of affection and belief necessary to sustain fan writing.

[5.5] When Sidney begins his great pastoral romance, he sets it in the fictional world of Arcadia, first created by Virgil and then expanded further by the Italian author Jacopo Sannazaro. He is already writing into a selvenge text. By writing in the mixed

mode of romance (which combines prose and poetry), he is also pursuing a generic tradition that is particularly suitable for fan writing. In *Inescapable Romance*, Patricia Parker states that early modern "romance is characterized primarily as a form, which simultaneously quests for and postpones a particular end, objective, or object...When the 'end' is defined typologically, as a Promised Land or Apocalypse, 'romance' is that mode or tendency which remains on the threshold before the promised end, still in the wilderness of wandering, 'error,' or 'trial'" (Parker 1975, 5). The orthographic similarity of the terms "error" and "errant"—as in "knights errant"—is not accidental; a person in error can be thought of as a person who wanders in search of truth. Hence, the term *errant* has come to refer to the wandering of knights through a Renaissance landscape. Romance, then, is a form whose errant nature necessitates that it never ends, even as it concludes. What better way to understand how fan fiction—and its denial of ending and closure—are both produced by and themselves produce deviance and error?

[5.6] The central plot of Sidney's sprawling romance features the Arcadian royal family: the duke, Basilius, his wife, Gynecia, and their two daughters, Pamela and Philoclea, have retreated from their governmental obligations to a pastoral hideaway in hopes of avoiding a prophetic doom; and in doing so, only ensure it. The instruments of this prophecy are two foreign heroes, Musidorus and Pyrocles, who arrive in Arcadia and rapidly fall in love with the two princesses. They woo them through a series of disguises and mistaken identities, as is characteristic of pastoral romance. Chaos—both political and personal—ensues, only to be finally resolved with a series of last-minute reversals, reconciliations, and marriages. Such plurality implies an instability that is necessarily fluid, and thus necessarily disruptive of normative identities. It's no surprise, then, that sexual fluidity is inscribed in almost every aspect of the *Arcadia*, particularly in the gender-bending cross-dressing performed by Pyrocles. In an effort to win his princess, Philoclea, Pyrocles disguises himself as a woman called Zelmane in order to get close to her. His transformation is so complete that Philoclea's father falls in love with him; it is so incomplete that Philoclea's mother, Gynecia, falls in love with him; it is so complete that his dearest friend Musidorus is attracted by his beauty; it is so incomplete that this same Musidorus recognizes him by his voice. When he transforms into Zelmane, both he and Musidorus, and even the narrator, seem to become totally invested in the disguise. Pyrocles declares,

[5.7] Now farewell dear cousin (said he) from me, no more Pyrocles nor Daiphantus now, but Zelmane: Zelmane is my name, Zelmane is my title, Zelmane is the only hope of my advancement. And with that word going out, and seeing that the coast was clear, Zelmane dismissed Musidorus, who departed as full of care to help his friend, as before he was to dissuade him. (Sidney 1977, 151)

[5.8] After this, when Zelmane appears, the narrator refers to her as "she" without any indication that she is still Pyrocles.

[5.9] At first glance, it's tempting to see the deviance of this episode simply in the fact that a man is dressing up as a woman, and in the various permutations and undercurrents of homoeroticism that transpire as a result, such as the attractions between Musidorus and Pyrocles, between Pyrocles and Basilius, and between Zelmane and Philoclea. But there is another, more fundamental strain of perversity implicit in the fact that not just gender and sexuality, but identity itself is multiplicitous. This play against identity essentialism is in itself queer, and it applies to Arcadia as a whole, not Pyrocles alone.

[5.10] Sidney was dealing with his own ambiguous identities even as he wrote. Although his sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* has many allusions to his love for Penelope Rich, the woman he had been meant to marry but hadn't, in his correspondence with figures such as his mentor Hubert Languet he responds with reserved silence when his correspondents display emotions that go beyond the borders of ordinary friendship. As Languet rebukes him for his lack of intensity, Sidney withdraws, but never completely. Likewise, Sidney's homosocial friendships—with the clearly homosexual Greville, for example—seem to far outstrip his heterosexual romances. Katherine Duncan-Jones states that "Sidney's marked lack of enthusiasm for marriage, combined with the fact that his two closest friends, Dyer and Greville, were both among that 'tiny handful' of Elizabethan aristocrats who never married, provokes the suspicion that male friendship was in some ways more congenial to him than heterosexual union." Indeed, some of his last poems, such as "Two Pastorals," "celebrate his love for Dyer and Greville...[giving] this triple friendship the preeminence normally accorded to heterosexual unions" (Duncan-Jones 1991, 240–41). It may be that the subversively slashy relationship between Pyrocles and Musidorus has its own subtext within the context of Sidney's life.

[5.11] Arcadia itself has a character that is implicitly nonstatic, and thus implicitly nonnormative. Sidney's narrative universe, in and of itself, is composed of a contested, fractured, and unstable space. His Arcadia is a fragmented and incomplete text, existing as it does in at least three forms: the "old *Arcadia*," or original version of the poem; the "new *Arcadia*," a revision and expansion of the old, unfinished at his death and comprising only the first three books; and the combined *Arcadia*, which comprises the three completed books of the newer version plus the fourth and fifth books of the older. As we've seen, Sidney was rewriting Virgil's Arcadia; not content with this, he decided to rewrite his own as well.

[5.12] As if these entrances into the text were not enough, Sidney also chooses to open it up even further for successive fan authors. He closes the old *Arcadia* with the

following:

[5.13] But the solemnities of these marriages, with the Arcadian pastorals full of many comical adventures happening to those rural lovers, the strange story of the fair queens Artaxia of Persia and Erona of Lydia, with the Prince Plangus's wonderful chances, whom the latter had sent to Pyrocles, and the extreme affection Amasis, king of Egypt, bare unto the former, the shepherdish loves of Menalcas with Kalodoulous's daughter, and the poor hopes of Philisides in the pursuit of his affections, the strange continuance of Klaius's and Strephon's desire, lastly the son of Pyrocles named Pyrophilus, and Melidora the fair daughter of Pamela by Musidorus, who even at their birth entered into admirable fortunes, may awake some other spirit to exercise his pen in that wherewith mine is already dulled. (Sidney 2008, 361)

[5.14] In this final paragraph, Sidney lays out the bare bones of successive stories and versions, explicitly admitting that his characters have lives that extend outward beyond the borders of his book, in which other writers may wish to believe. He invites "other spirits" to "exercise their pens" by adding flesh to this prefabricated skeleton, and indeed they did so; early modern women fan writers took up his invitation. The first of these was his niece, Lady Mary Wroth, who continued the *Arcadia* as a Mary Sue fan fic in *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, inserting herself into her uncle's universe as the romance-reading heroine, Pamphilia, and the last was Anna Weamys, whose *A Continuation to Sir Philip's Sidney's Arcadia* prefigures the satisfying romantic conclusions beloved of many fic writers, as in it she ties up all Sidney's loose threads in a triumphantly domestic triple marriage.

[5.15] As well as imbuing his *Arcadia* with sexual instability and perversity, affective investment, and the properties of salvage, Sidney also participates in a gift economy that mirrors that of contemporary fandom. By dedicating his text to his sister, the countess of Pembroke—the full title is, in fact, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*—and referring to it as a gift that he hopes will while away some of her tedious hours with pleasure, and by the constant direct address to a presumed audience of a coterie of ladies, Sidney gains the fame and acclaim within a community of women that many fan writers seek, as they write gifts for Yuletide or other gift-exchange events.

6. A fannish renaissance

[6.1] The early modern period is often cited as a period of artifice, when poets and playwrights elegantly performed emotions that had little or no relevance to actual feelings. Although Wordsworth tells us that the sonnet is the "key" with which

"Shakespeare unlocked his heart," we are often warned to resist such biographical readings. The "Will" of the sonnet sequence is fictional as much as real and is designed for the public sphere as much as for the private (if not more so). However, even critics such as Stephen Greenblatt have to concede that early modern poetry is, at least to some degree, the individual expression of personal emotion. Greenblatt reads Sir Thomas Wyatt's famous sonnet of renunciation, "Whoso List to Hunt," for instance, as the site of a tense negotiation between the public and the private self, through which Wyatt—with a "calculated recklessness" (Greenblatt 2005, 139)—can consign Anne Boleyn to the arms of Henry VIII, eliding with bitter poignancy the distance between poet and speaker, while still retaining plausible deniability and thus, incidentally, his head. But this deniability is only sustainable because, personal revelations notwithstanding, the poem may be read as a collaborative project, a translation of Petrarch's Rime 190, itself inspired by the reintroduction of classical texts to the Western world.

[6.2] Umberto Eco suggests the possibility of what seems to me to be a fannish approach to translation when he writes, "Perhaps there are source texts that widen out in translation, and the destination text enriches the source one, making it enter a new sea of intertextuality; and there are delta texts that branch out in many translations, each of which impoverishes their original flow, but which all together create a new territory, a labyrinth of competing interpretations" (Eco 2003, 102). Both rivers of translation—the one that widens and the one that subdivides into a delta—offer a space where fan interventions like Wyatt's can take place. In order to communicate a potentially dangerous sentiment safely, Wyatt must construct his own narrative within the confines of Petrarch's classically inspired plot: the doe that may not be caught, however tempting she may be, because Caesar has willed it so. For the translation to have sufficient fidelity, Wyatt must express himself in terms of Petrarch's narrative, using its story elements as his fictional vocabulary and grammar. Petrarch's narratives—like those of the classical canon—are simply available to him as fictional spaces that he is free to inhabit and use in order to express himself. The fictional, in the early modern period, can truly be said to blend into the real; Wyatt's reality is told in the space between his language and Petrarch's.

[6.3] In *The Afterlife of Character*, David Brewer identifies an analogous relationship between imaginative, fictional space and the real spaces of grazing land, tracing a connection between the proprietary enclosure of common land and an intellectual form of textual enclosure. He concludes that in early modern England

[6.4] characters in broadly successful texts were treated as if they were both fundamentally incomplete and the common property of all. Far from being the final word on the subject, the originary representation of these

characters was, for readers engaged in these practices, merely a starting point—a common reference, but one perpetually inviting supplementation through the invention of additional details and often entirely new adventures. (Brewer 2005, 2–3)

[6.5] He argues that "in an economy of scarcity, literary property was conceived as a zero-sum game: a reader's gain must mean an author's loss. In an economy of abundance, on the other hand, no such dispossession [in either's favor] could occur... This way of thinking about literary property proceeded more through metaphor and analogy than rigorous argument. Perhaps the single most readily available metaphor was that of the traditional village commons" (Brewer 2005, 11). In the Tudor period, then, when the government sought to oppose enclosure through a series of acts designed to preserve commonly held land, authors felt justified in using earlier texts—similarly held in common—for fodder and did so without fear. In the 18th century, just as copyright laws began to be established, seeking to reserve ownership of texts to their originating authors and publishers, the English parliament began to enact the Inclosure Acts, which ended in enclosing for individual owners nearly 9,000 square miles of arable land, removing it from common use. Physical space and fictional space again seem to overlap.

[6.6] Digital technologies and their effect on our understanding of intellectual property and ownership are creating new spaces that may have effects on the power of reading and readers as fundamental as those of the printing press in the early modern era. Copyright and intellectual property law will eventually have to be redefined because of the exponentially expanding possibilities for replication and dissemination available online. The present moment may thus be seen as a time of innovation and of a free market of competing interpretations and variations. What will a future that builds upon this understanding of narrative—not a postmodern, but a *postcanonical* understanding—think of our contemporary moment? It might see it as yet another "Renaissance" of the "professional amateur," remembering that the amateur is—like Sir Philip Sidney, who preceded her—motivated only by love, and remembering the many trajectories from fannish love to professional profit that have been traced over the last 50 years. To the future, we might look a great deal like that previous Renaissance, a rebirth of classics repeated, remixed, and retold.

7. Works cited

Berger, Harry. 1997. *Making Trifles of Terrors: Redistributing Complicities in Shakespeare*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Brewer, David. 2005. *The Afterlife of Character, 1726–1825*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.9783/9780812201437>.

Derecho, Abigail. 2006. "Archontic Literature: A Definition, a History, and Several Theories of Fan Fiction." In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 61–78. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Doty, Alexander. 1993. *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Duncan-Jones, Katherine. 1991. *Sir Philip Sidney: Courtier Poet*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Eco, Umberto. 2003. *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation*. London: Weidenfield and Nicolson.

Greenblatt, Stephen. 2005. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226027043.001.0001>.

Greville, Sir Fulke. 1907. *Life of Sir Philip Sidney*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Jamison, Anne. 2013. *Fic: Why Fanfiction Is Taking Over the World*. Dallas, TX: Smart Pop.

Jenkyns, Richard. 1989. "Virgil and Arcadia." *Journal of Roman Studies* 79:26–39. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/301178>.

Parker, Patricia. 1975. *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sidney, Sir Philip. 1595. *The Defense of Poesy*. Renaissance Editions. <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/iemls/resour/mirrors/rbear/defence.html>.

Sidney, Sir Philip. 1977. *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. Edited by Maurice Evans. London: Penguin.

Sidney, Sir Philip. 2008. *The Old Arcadia*. Edited by Katherine Duncan-Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Virgil. 1960. *The Pastorals of Vergil*. Translated by Geoffrey Johnson. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press.

Wallace, Malcolm William. 2011. *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wilson-Okamura, David Scott. 2010. *Virgil in the Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511762581>.

Symposium

Are fan fiction and mythology really the same?

Tony Keen

Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom

[0.1] *Abstract*—This short piece addresses some of the assumptions about the connections between Greek and Roman mythology and fan fiction that underlie this special issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures*, arguing that the connections are not always as simple as they are sometimes made out to be.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Greece; Rome

Keen, Tony. 2016. "Are Fan Fiction and Mythology Really the Same?" In "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work," edited by Ika Willis, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2015.0689>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] The call for papers for this issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures* says, "Fan fiction is often compared to the literature of Greco-Roman antiquity." This comparison suggests that Greek and Roman retellings of mythological stories essentially are fan fiction. In 2012, someone adopting the persona of the Roman poet Virgil (70–19 BCE) posted Edward Fairfax Taylor's posthumously published 1907 translation of book 1 of Virgil's epic *The Aeneid* on FanFiction.net, describing it as "A fanfic of my favourite story ever, the *Iliad*, written in the epic style of my favourite author ever, Homer" (<https://www.fanfiction.net/s/7734966/1/Aeneid>). In a 2010 LiveJournal post defending the concept of fan fiction from the attacks of authors who see it as "criminal, immoral, and unimaginative," Bookshop identified the lost trilogy *Achilleis* of the fifth-century BCE Athenian dramatist Aeschylus (?525/4–456/5 BCE) as "a 'missing scene' from the *Iliad*," and *Helen*, a play by Aeschylus' younger contemporary, Euripides (ca. 485–406 BCE), as "fix-it fic of Helen's entire backstory" (<http://bookshop.tumblr.com/post/37075331312>).

[1.2] It is easy to see the motivation for such claims. Fan fiction authors, often treated as if their work is a big joke, suitable only for being mocked at public readings, understandably seize the opportunity to argue that they are writing in a tradition that stretches way back to the Western tradition of storytelling—and to a significant extent, they are right. Writers such as Aeschylus, Euripides, and the Roman poet Ovid (43

BCE–17 CE) regularly used characters and situations that had already been created by other hands in much the same way fan fic authors do, and as did later writers such as William Shakespeare. Yet the privileging of the idea of creating entirely original works is something that postdates the invention of copyright. Plenty of modern professional authors still enjoy working with preexisting characters, either through the use of out-of-copyright figures such as those in Victorian literature or when licensed to do so by copyright holders—hence tie-in novels for such ongoing franchises as Star Trek (1969–), Doctor Who (1963–), and Star Wars (1977–). To attack the reuse of preexisting characters as being inherently wrong is to deny something central to the storytelling impulse.

[1.3] I want to argue here, however, that there are qualitative differences between what Greco-Roman writers did and what fan fic authors do. False equivalences risk misunderstanding texts. The implication is that the thought processes of, for instance, Virgil were similar to those of a modern fan fic writer. Entering into discussions of the connections between fan fic and mythological writings without an awareness of the differences results in less helpful discussions of both, with unpredictable effects.

2. Ground rules

[2.1] I will not be discussing here the cultural legitimacy of fan fic or of Greco-Roman mythology. This is well addressed by Ika Willis (<http://thereceptiondesk.org/2014/01/22/classics-and-as-fandom-part-1-knowing-the-past/>); I leave it to her and others to discuss this topic further. Rather, I want to argue that fan fic and the writing of mythology are different, but I have no interest in making any sort of case that the writing of mythology is better.

[2.2] Greco-Roman mythology, with all its many tales and multiple versions ([note 1](#)), is often seen as the archetypal megatext, a large, connected construct that encompasses multiple narratives (Kaveney 2005, 5). However, the question of the relationship between mythology and megatexts is a different issue from the relationship between mythology and fan fiction. There are ways that Greco-Roman mythology is more similar to the canonical megatexts of the modern world than it is to the fan fiction that surrounds those megatexts.

[2.3] I take it as axiomatic that myth has no existence beyond the texts (written, visual, or other) in which it is recorded. This seems obvious, but plenty of accounts of mythology seem to assume a Platonic ideal of a myth, of which the texts we have are reflections (Campbell 1949; see the discussion of this idea at Kastan 2001, 117–18). This oversimplifies the evolution of myth. Of course, there will have been a time when the stories of Odysseus or Oedipus were first told, but such moments are in most

cases irrecoverable. Any attempts to do so merely create new versions. (The rare exceptions are myths such as that of Atlantis, where it is possible to read the fourth century BCE texts in which Plato invented the myth, the *Timaeus* and *Critias*—unless one believes that Plato is recording an older myth that has not survived in other texts.)

[2.4] In what follows I concentrate on examples from Greco-Roman antiquity (roughly the eighth century BCE through the fifth century CE). However, the story of Greco-Roman mythology did not end with the collapse of the western provinces of the Roman empire. That story continues today, through constant retelling—for example, the 2014 movie *Hercules*. There is fan fiction about Greco-Roman mythology; its existence complicates the picture argued here, but space does not allow me to fully address this topic. It is also important to make clear that what I offer in this piece are broad generalizations. There are undoubtedly exceptions to all the statements I make, but it is the general shape to which I wish to draw attention.

3. The issue of canon

[3.1] Almost all fan fiction is constructed around a central canon of texts. Even in the case of real person fiction, fandom's perception of that person forms the canon around which the fan fiction is formed. Texts generally become canonical instantly upon their release into the public arena, and they are canonical because they are produced by whomever controls the canon. An episode of *Supernatural* (2005–) becomes canonical the moment it is broadcast. Only the owners of the canon can add to it. In this respect, the claim sometimes made that *Doctor Who* (1963–89, 1996, 2005–) has no canon is not entirely accurate, as there are certainly stories that are approved by the BBC, which owns the franchise and therefore controls the canon, and others that are not.

[3.2] Sometimes texts can be removed from the canon, such as the animated series of *Star Trek* (1973–74), which, when broadcast, was considered to be part of the original *Star Trek* series canon (1966–69) but which was removed from it by Gene Roddenberry's office in 1988 (note 2). Sometimes noncanon details may be made canon, such as the first name of Hikaru Sulu, first established in Vonda N. McIntyre's noncanonical *Star Trek* novel, *The Entropy Effect* (1981), but not used in any canonical text until the movie *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (1991). But again, this can only happen if the canon owner permits it—though often this is a response to a buildup of momentum in favor of the noncanonical detail from the fan community, resulting in fanon, or fan-created canon, that is then accepted as canon by the franchise owner.

[3.3] Fan fiction operates in hierarchic relation to these texts. Fan fic stories generally state which fandom or fandoms they are in, and they are generally expected to conform with the established canon. If they do not—for instance, if they are set in an alternate universe (AU)—the writers are expected to make clear that they are deviating from canon. Further, fan fic writers know that future canon texts may contradict the fan fiction. There are some great Steve Rogers/Bucky fics out there, but they will be jossed (rendered canon divergent—a reference to Joss Whedon) once *Captain America: Civil War* (slated for 2016 release) comes out.

[3.4] Greco-Roman mythology does not have the same hierarchic relationships. The term *canon* is used of mythology (Edmunds 1990, 4–5). However, canon does not mean that there were fixed versions of myths, or that there was a collection of text whose contents was to be respected in the production of further texts. No ancient author is treated by other ancient authors in the same way that fan fic treats its canonical texts, not even Homer (though some modern commentators in the field of classics can get snooty about changes to canon made by modern creators, thus denying Wolfgang Petersen license allowed to Euripides or Ovid). Their texts were composed by emphasizing or deemphasizing details of other versions that were in circulation, or inventing new details. No one, not even Homer, had access to "original" versions in the way that fan fic authors can read Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's first Holmes story or watch the pilot episode of *Star Trek*.

[3.5] I have suggested elsewhere that it is actually better to talk about dominant versions of myths rather than canonical versions (<http://learn1.open.ac.uk/mod/oublog/viewpost.php?post=151603>). Versions of myths such as Homer's of the story of Odysseus (in the *Odyssey*) or Sophocles' of Oedipus (in *Oedipus Rex*) become the versions against which other subsequent versions are reacting. However, these versions were not automatically dominant because of the circumstances in which they were produced. When Euripides changed the myth of Medea so that she, and not the Corinthians, killed her children (as we know Euripides did from an ancient commentator on his play *Medea*), he did not declare at the beginning that his play was an AU version of the story. Nor did this become the correct version of the myth because Euripides had written it, or because it was presented at the festival of Dionysus. It became dominant because audiences over generations took to Euripides' version, and it spread through the ancient world and was continually repeated. Community reading is taking place here, unbound by any hierarchic relationship to a canon, such as that found in fan fiction. Nor was it possible to remove texts from the canon, because a controlling force that could add and remove texts from the canon did not exist.

4. Types of story

[4.1] The nature of stories told in fan fic and mythology merits discussion. Fan fiction stories tend (and I am aware that I am generalizing here) not to be the central narratives of their megatext. They are often stories that fit between the main narratives, that retell them from a different perspective, or that spin off from them into AUs.

[4.2] It is certainly true that Greco-Roman literature has texts like this, such as Ovid's *Heroides*, a selection of letters from mythological heroines, or Aeneas' encounter with the Cyclops Polyphemus in the days after Odysseus' visit, related by Virgil in book 3 of the *Aeneid*. Often, however, the stories told and retold in mythological texts are the core stories. When Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides presented their versions of the Electra myth (in *Libation Bearers* and two plays called *Electra*, respectively), they were not providing AUs or telling new episodes of the story. They were retelling the core myth. With these stories, what mythology is doing is less like fan fic and more like rebooted megatexts. Reversioning of myths is similar to the retelling of Batman's origins in Frank Miller and David Mazzucchelli's graphic novel *Batman: Year One* (1987), Tim Burton's movie *Batman* (1989), and Christopher Nolan's movie *Batman Begins* (2005). With the older megatexts, there are now multiple versions of some of the stories, each of which is correct in its own way. This is a similar situation to mythology, except that mythology had considerably longer to develop different versions before any were written down, and, as noted, we no longer have access to the first tellings.

5. Cultural penetration

[5.1] In her comparison of fan fiction and Latin literature (<http://thereceptiondesk.org/2014/01/22/classics-and-as-fandom-part-1-knowing-the-past/>), Ika Willis notes a number of similarities between the two, such as that both are produced by small communities for prestige rather than for direct financial reward. Again, there's a lot of truth in this. It is necessary to note, however, that while some mythological texts had small circulations, the cultural penetration of mythology was far greater than that of fan fiction in contemporary culture. All ancient elites were expected to be familiar with mythology (Cameron 2004, 220–24). Even those who could not read the texts would be constantly exposed to mythological images through other art forms, such as statues, temple reliefs, and public performances.

[5.2] Fan fiction does not have this sort of cultural penetration. Though more and more people are now aware of its existence, it would not be true to say that most people read it or know the stories that are told in fan fiction. In terms of cultural penetration, again, mythology resembles megatexts rather than fan fiction.

6. Conclusion

[6.1] I have set out in this article a number of ways that fan fiction and mythology differ. There are clearly links and connections, but simplistically saying that all texts retelling mythology are basically fan fiction sets up a series of false expectations in terms of how and why such texts were produced. There are respects in which mythology is a useful source of analogies for thinking about fan fiction, but sometimes it is actually a better tool for helping to explain the megatexts, and these different aspects should not be confused. (Correspondingly, there are respects in which megatexts rather than fan fic are better for explicating mythology.)

[6.2] However, although mythological texts are not fan fic, they are transformative works. This seems to me to be a better term to use, as it describes the process of creation of these works rather than implying anything about the attitudes of the writers. Euripides, Virgil, Ovid, and all the rest are taking the stories of mythology and reinventing them in new forms. Mythology and fan fiction are not the same, but they are part of the same family of derivative, transformative texts ([note 3](#)).

7. Acknowledgments

[7.1] My thanks to Ika Willis for encouraging me to submit this piece and engaging in conversations with me about the concepts embodied here, and to Kate Keen for her advice on all matters related to transformative works and fan fiction.

8. Notes

1. The best reference work for the details and variants of mythological stories is March (2014).
2. Okuda and Okuda (1999, iii) state that "the final decision as to the 'authenticity' of the animated episodes, as with all elements of the show, must clearly be the choice of each individual reader." This is true, but the canon owner nevertheless makes decisions. Individuals may accept or reject those decisions, but the individual judgment does not necessarily have any effect on others in their engagement with the canon. Reading as a community practice establishes what the community defines as canon—that is, fanon.
3. See Juliette Harrisson's discussion of the relationship between fan fiction and ancient literature (<http://popclassicsjg.blogspot.co.uk/2014/12/ancient-fandom-and-fan-fiction.html>), which covers some of same ground I do here.

9. Works cited

Cameron, Alan. 2004. *Greek Mythography and the Roman World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Campbell, Joseph. 1949. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Edmunds, Lowell. 1990. *Approaches to Greek Myth*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Kastan, David Scott. 2001. *Shakespeare and the Book*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kaveney, Roz. 2005. *From "Alien" to "The Matrix": Reading Science Fiction Film*. London: I. B. Tauris.

March, Jennifer R. 2014. *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*. Oxford: Oxbow.

Okuda, Michael, and Denise Okuda. 1999. *The "Star Trek" Encyclopedia: A Reference Guide to the Future*. Expanded edition. New York: Pocket Books.

Theory

The Role of Affect in Fan Fiction

Anna Wilson

University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

[0.1] *Abstract*—In this article, I argue for greater consideration of the role of affect in fan fiction when comparing it with literary forms from antiquity. Fan fiction uses an affective hermeneutics—knowing through feeling—and as a literary form it is inextricable from the fannish discourses that produce it. Yuletide letters—story requests in the annual fan fiction gift exchange for historical RPF—show how fan fiction readers and writers frame knowledge of history in terms of affect in order to fill the gaps in the past.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Classical literature; Classical reception; Emotion; Gender; Hermeneutics; Medieval literature

Wilson, Anna. 2016. "The Role of Affect in Fan Fiction." In "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work," edited by Ika Willis, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2016.0684>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] It has become almost a cliché of fan studies to place fan fiction in a much older tradition of transformative literatures in which the author works with a preexisting story or set of stories well known to his or her audience, such as classical epic poetry or medieval romances (Abigail Derecho's 2006 article summarizes this argument well; see also Amy Sturgis's 2004 chapter on Tolkien as well as Pugh 2005, 9–18). These comparisons often focus on the literary resemblances between these two genres, primarily the similarity of form: both fan fiction and these premodern genres use sophisticated allusion and intertextuality to create new meanings, and both assume a knowledgeable audience with a shared understanding of their source. However, such comparisons run the risk of losing sight of both the importance of fan fiction's attitude toward its source (or canon) and the significance of affect in how fan fiction functions as a literary genre. Fan fiction assumes an audience that not only knows a story but (by and large) loves it, and this loving intimacy is at the heart of fan fiction's drive to deliver "'more of' or 'more from'" (Pugh 2005, 29) a story, world, or set of characters. The first part of this article argues for a greater consideration of the role of affect in fan fiction as a literary form; the second part explores the role of affect in blog posts

on historical real person fiction (RPF) for Yuletide, the annual fan fiction gift exchange for rare fandoms. These blog posts show how fan fiction writers and readers create fandom as an affective community and reframe knowledge of history in terms of affect in order to restore lost histories.

[1.2] This issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures* seeks to both develop and problematize the idea that fan fiction is the successor—or at least distant relation—of the epic poetry of classical literature (which retells and reworks stories from ancient Greek and Roman myth) and medieval romance poetry (which retells and reworks the stories of King Arthur and his court, Alexander the Great, and other figures from history and legend). Other scholars, such as Rachel Barenblat (2014), have drawn comparisons with both the way in which Biblical exegesis draws out multiple layers of meaning and points of view in stories from the Bible and with the midrash tradition of commentary on the Torah. These premodern literary traditions are all transformative in the sense that fan studies has coined, meaning that they transform a preexisting tradition. (The word *transformative* is used in explicit opposition to more value-laden terms like *appropriative* or *derivative*.) They also fall broadly into the category of *reception*, a term more in use in classics, meaning a literary tradition shaped around receiving another literary tradition or set of texts. Classical reception refers to the huge body of postclassical works that transform, rewrite, reinterpret, or allude to classical texts, from literary works like Ted Hughes's *Tales from Ovid* (1997) or Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931) to more pop culture incarnations, such as the TV series *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Reading fan fiction in this wider context of reception, as this issue seeks to do, can help us to trace new lineages and analogies with literature from the past. Comparisons with classical literature draw attention to fan fiction's place in a larger literary history and also help to highlight the currents of power, authorship, intertextuality, and communal storytelling that exist in all these genres. However, such comparisons between fan fiction and these venerable literary traditions often go undertheorized, utilizing the cultural cachet of literary greats like the *Aeneid* in defense of fan fiction as a creative activity. These comparisons neglect one of the defining characteristics of fan fiction: its creation and circulation within communities of fans. To define fan fiction only by its transformative relationship to other texts runs the risk of missing the fan in fan fiction—the loving reader to whom fan fiction seeks to give pleasure. Fan fiction is an example of affective reception. While classical reception designates the content being received, affective reception designates the kind of reading and transformation that is taking place. It is a form of reception that is organized around feeling.

[1.3] In recent discussions of the role of emotions in literature, theorists have distinguished between affect (the physical and mental responses that comprise feelings), and emotions (the cultural and social forms into which feelings are

organized) (for example, Ruth Leys's "The Turn to Affect" [2011]; Sianne Ngai's *Ugly Feelings* [2005, 23–30]). Focusing on affect—the physical and mental manifestations of feeling such as tears or arousal—helps to avoid reducing or constricting the complex affective engagement with texts to specific and culturally-inscribed emotions such as happiness, although of course it is often difficult to draw a hard line between affect and emotion in practice. This distinction also follows usage in fandom, where feels are celebrated and indulged above specific emotions. Feels, in fact, are the shaping force behind fan fiction as a genre. Moreover, as affective reception, fan fiction is a form of literary response where literary allusions evoke not only a shared intellectual community in the audience but also a shared affective community.

[1.4] Fan fiction often demonstrates a high level of knowledge of and insight into its source texts (or canons, in fan fiction vocabulary) and, as an allusive literary form, rewards equally high levels of knowledge in its readers. This knowledge has an erotic inflection (as, famously, in early English translations of the Bible, where to know is to intimately penetrate); fans have not only understanding but intimacy with their canon, and fan fiction increases this intimacy. Theorists of fan fiction often speak of fan fiction as filling the gaps in a source text, a phrase with its own sexual undertones that also describes fan fiction's self-assumed role as interlinear glossing of a source text. Silences and absences in the source text act as barriers to intimacy, and fan fiction writers fill these silences with their imaginative activity, enabling their own deeper understanding of the world and characters of the source text. In its current context in popular media fandom, fan fiction is, among other things, a heuristic tool: a mental technology that facilitates understanding of a text by means of an affective hermeneutics—a set of ways of gaining knowledge through feeling.

2. Affective hermeneutics

[2.1] Affective reception also has parallels in premodern literature. Scholars of medieval literature have described the mechanisms of affect in certain forms of medieval Christian meditation, wherein worshippers (usually women) imagined themselves as present during the last moments of the life of Christ as described in the Gospels and, through imagining the motivations and feelings of the various Biblical characters, provoked intense affective responses in themselves (like tears or elation) that were spiritually beneficial. For example, in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, the biography of a late-14th-century English Christian mystic, Kempe visualizes herself speaking with the Virgin Mary after the death of Jesus and offering her a hot drink to comfort her. Other examples from late medieval meditation guides and the biographies of women mystics suggest that this imaginative meditation practice bears a resemblance to the Mary Sue genre of fan fiction, in which the author writes a wish fulfillment fantasy in which she literally finds intimate connection with the fictional

characters. This similarity between late medieval meditation and Mary Sue fan fiction appears in both the self-insert imaginative approach to texts and in the delicate balance that readers had to maintain between entering the text and distorting it ([note 1](#)).

[2.2] Historians of medieval education have also suggested that affective hermeneutics were important in medieval mnemonic and pedagogic theory. Classroom and educational tracts, as well as personal accounts such as St. Augustine's *Confessions*, give evidence for the continued use in the classroom through antiquity and the Middle Ages of an exercise in which students composed speeches for historical figures at important moments of their lives, often moments of high emotion or drama. Augustine writes about the emotional content of his Latin education: "I was forced to learn the wanderings of one Aeneas...and to weep for dead Dido, because she killed herself for love" ([note 2](#)). Classical and medieval pedagogy encouraged affective investment in characters from history and poetry (such as Dido) as a mnemonic device to improve Latin language learning and oratorical skills (Woods 2003).

[2.3] Like these historical literary genres, fan fiction cultivates intimacy between readers and the original source text or canon through a focus on affect. Scholars in medieval studies have formulated a number of different descriptions of the affective hermeneutics—that is, the way of knowing that uses affect—in operation in medieval genres. Karl Morrison (1988) identifies a common trope in some premodern Christian literature that encourages the reader to identify with Christ by imagining how he feels during the events of the New Testament Gospels in order to better cultivate Christlike characteristics in themselves and to gain knowledge of Christ. Morrison calls this a "hermeneutics of empathy." Meanwhile, a number of scholars have written on seeking identification with historical figures or, in Aranye Fradenburg's words, "the allure of the mirror image" (1997, 215). In *Getting Medieval*, Carolyn Dinshaw explores a similar model of understanding the past that she calls a queer historiography, wherein a reader empathizes with people from the past on the basis of a sense of shared identity—in this case, queerness—in a way that allows them to imagine their way into that historical moment (1999, 1–2). This is a mode of historical enquiry which stands in opposition to theoretical positions emphasizing objectivity, distance, and the neutral interpretation of evidence. Both positions, of course, are more hypothetical than practicable and represent theorizations of two extremes; Dinshaw's work represents a rise in the theorization of the role of emotion and affect in analysis of literature and history.

[2.4] Affective hermeneutics direct focus toward moments of high emotion in a text that stimulate equally strong feelings in the reader; these heighten a sense of empathy, connection, or intimacy between the reader and the characters in the text.

Affective hermeneutics also seek to fill the gaps in canon through attention to the emotional lives of texts themselves. For example, in order to write a character's backstory or a pastfic, a fan writer draws on her understanding of a character, gained through her knowledge of the character's actions, behaviors, and affective expressions. Her imaginative projection of a backstory increases both her and her readers' emotional understanding of the character's canonical actions and further develops empathy and intimacy with the character. Because of this value placed on emotional knowledge in fandom, comments praising a good piece of fan fiction often say that it is in character—that is, that the fan fiction gives a recognizable and believable account of a character that readers already know and love. Fan fiction thus provides an opportunity for readers and writers to mutually affirm their intimacy with a text and with its characters. This hermeneutic model provides a useful way to understand the importance of love to fan fiction and complements the understanding of fan fiction as a transformative work.

[2.5] Fan fiction's primary focus on the emotional life of texts has structured the way in which the genre has developed in almost every respect; this is particularly obvious on examining the apparatuses that structure both online fan fiction archives and the most common literary forms and subgenres within fan fiction. Online archives categorize fan fiction according to conventions that have grown up within the community over time, often originating in early zines; stories are rarely categorized according to the genres that are conventional in book publishing (such as romance, science fiction, or crime) but are instead categorized first by fandom, then by the type of emotional or romantic relationships in the story—gen, het, and slash—and then by the characters in the story. Many other genre classification conventions that have emerged within fandom also serve to classify the kind of emotional experience the story offers; PWP (porn without plot), hurt/comfort, deathfic, mpreg, and Mary Sue stories are all good examples. So too are episode tag stories, which often seek to close an emotional arc that has been unsatisfactorily dealt with in canon, and pastfic, or fan fiction which imagines a backstory for characters that contextualizes their emotional reactions in canon. These genre classifications enable fans to seek out time with the worlds and characters that they love and to seek out certain kinds of emotional experiences with texts.

[2.6] This affective hermeneutics is substantially different from the critical reading conventionally taught in the university classroom (although again, this should be taken as a theoretical reading model rather than necessarily one always followed in practice), which values a stance of critical objectivity, even suspicion, toward the text. Eve Sedgwick is a founding thinker on affect in the study of literature, particularly in her essay "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is about You," in which she identifies the paranoid impulse

(that is, a suspicious, defensive attitude toward the text) behind most forms of critical reading. Sedgwick proposes the cultivation of reparative reading that is loving, nurturing, and productive. Camp is one such mode of reading, Sedgwick suggests, and it is this mode that her followers have most prominently taken up, but her essay ends with a call to learn from the practices of "the many ways selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture" (2003, 151). Fan communities are undoubtedly among these.

[2.7] These two hermeneutics of affective and critical reading may be literally in opposition to each other. A university professor who teaches courses on 20th-century literature may include Arthur Conan Doyle and may even be a self-confessed fan of Sherlock Holmes but would rarely present him— or herself as such in the classroom or on paper, where the norms of academic discourse demand a stance of critical distance. This scholar's professional contributions to the field of detective fiction studies will hence be very different from the same person's erotic fiction, short-form essays, and poetry about the bond between Holmes and Watson, published (pseudonymously) on the internet in the Sherlock Holmes fandom. Each practice eats into the time of the other, and the existence of each persona may threaten the other (many professionals who are also amateurs—or fans—in the same field take extreme pains to keep their identities separate). And yet these two bodies of work inevitably inform each other. It is this tension between amateur and professional modes of reading in academia that has motivated increasing interest in the role of affect in the humanities in the last two decades, particularly in queer theory, influenced by Sedgwick's work.

[2.8] The role of love in reading is the subject of an emerging discourse not only among literary theorists such as Dinshaw and Fradenburg but also among pedagogical theorists such as Michael Warner and Rita Felski, at the forefront of a movement in literary theory sometimes called postcritical reading. In his essay "Uncritical Reading," Warner (2004) questions the naturalization of critical reading in the classroom and the academy and asks what kind of cultural ideals are reinforced by this form of reading. Warner cites Saba Mahmood's study of the grassroots women's piety movements in Egypt, whose members seek to read the Qu'ran in ways that do not line up to western ideals of critical reading because they seek a different model of personhood and subjectivity. This is "not just a different technique of text-processing, or a different attitude about the text object, but a different kind of subject to which the technique is oriented" (19). Critical reading in the university is geared toward the formation of an ideal subject; accordingly, critical reading is defined by the subjectivities that it rejects. Warner's description of the uncritical interactions between students and texts in his classroom could also describe a great deal of overlap with the affective, empathetic, excessive reading practices of fandom:

[2.9] They identify with characters. They fall in love with authors...they shop around among taste-publics, venturing into social worlds of fanhood and geekdom...Their attention wanders; they skim; they skip around. They mark pages with pink and yellow highlighters. They get caught up in suspense. They laugh; they cry. They get aroused (and stay quiet about it in class). They lose themselves in books, distracting themselves from everything else, especially homework like the reading I assign. (2004, 13)

[2.10] Warner's argument implicitly acknowledges fandom as an alternative hermeneutic framework available to his students, affective as opposed to critical reading. Felski describes the process by which students are required to renounce this affective style of engagement in the classroom as "moving from attachment to detachment and indeed to disenchantment, undergoing not just an intellectual but also a sentimental education" (2009, 30). As a site of alternate reading styles, fandom therefore becomes a possible site of reading subjects and subjectivities alternative to those traditionally sought or celebrated in the classroom, just as Sedgwick celebrates camp as a mode of reading that provides space for queer subjectivity. The affective quality of fan fiction—and its implications—could potentially be overlooked or erased through scholarship that identifies it too readily with classical literature, which has—correctly or not—so long been associated with western high culture and the literary canon of Great Books on which the university rests.

3. Affective discourse in Yuletide

[3.1] Focusing on Yuletide letters highlights some moments of friction between these two modes of reading, which help to illustrate the differences between them and to show how fan fiction emerges from an affective, fannish discourse. In historical RPF, fan fiction writers read classical literature and history through the fannish hermeneutics that I have described, turning a fannish reading style onto texts that they have first encountered in a more critical mode, often in the classroom. Fan fiction writers focus on the emotional life of historical characters and imagine a way into their lives, a route to knowledge not conventionally countenanced by the academy, as Felski and Warner show, but complementary to other ways of intellectually exploring texts.

[3.2] Yuletide, an annual fan fiction gift exchange that has been running since 2003, is a festival for "rare and obscure fandoms" (<http://archiveofourown.org/collections/yuletide>). Participants fill out a form indicating the rare fandoms that they are willing to write for and are assigned a recipient; they then write a story tailored to this recipient's request and upload it to a central archive (previously a dedicated archive, now the Archive of Our Own) where it is made public on December 25. They also fill out a form indicating the rare fandoms for which they

would like to receive fan fiction and can give a number of further details about the kind of story they would like; participants often supplement these brief request forms with Yuletide letters, hosted publicly on their LiveJournal, Dreamwidth, Tumblr, or other social media space, which their assigned writer can seek out in order to glean details with which to write the best possible gift for their recipient. Thus each participant usually writes a story for one person and receives a story from another.

[3.3] Media texts with large, active fandoms (such as *Supernatural*, *Sherlock*, or *Teen Wolf*) have huge followings, with fans generating thousands of stories throughout the year. Yuletide provides an organizing mechanism to generate fan fiction for fandoms too small to maintain an active community for the rest of the year. The festival has grown from a few hundred participants to nearly 2,000, and in 2013 generated stories in more than 1,600 fandoms. For organizational purposes, Yuletide moderators and participants divide historical RPF by century or by cultural movement into numerous subcategories that vary slightly every year and often overlap; for example, Ancient History RPF, Classical Greece and Rome History and Literature RPF, Roman Republic RPF, Greek and Roman Mythology, and Classical Mythology are all separate tags on the Archive of Our Own, the fan fiction archive on which Yuletide now operates. As these tags suggest, there is some overlap between legendary and historical figures in ancient history, where the two blur together in the centuries of literary tradition surrounding them. People may first encounter Mark Antony as a character in a Shakespeare play or from reading Cicero's *Philippics*, for example. Taken as a whole, however, historical RPF has been one of the mainstays of Yuletide since it began, ranging from ancient to modern, including such diverse fandoms as Swinging London RPF, Akkadian Empire RPF, American Revolution RPF, and Classical Music RPF.

[3.4] Yuletide participants who request fan fiction for historical figures or for texts from the literary canon often do so having first encountered these texts in the classroom, as will be seen from some of the letters below. Yuletide provides a space in which these readers may renegotiate their relationship with these texts, a space where the conventions and language of academic literary criticism meet those of fan fiction. This dialogue is not an inherent part of the gift exchange but has sprung up around it; Yuletide letters represent a way in which fans have, perhaps, sought to fill the gaps in Yuletide itself in order to provide the fannish discourse from which fan fiction emerges.

[3.5] The Yuletide organizers orchestrate the actual story exchange, but over the years a community structure has grown around Yuletide, creating an online space in which fans of these rare fandoms—texts that do not typically generate fan fiction—can meet, discuss, and share their fannish passion. Yuletide thus not only generates fiction for these rare fandoms but also, in a sense, generates the fandoms themselves—that

is, the discourses, friendships, and conversations that make up fandom activity. In larger fandoms, similar expressions of excitement and desire, character insights, plot speculations, and formulations of friendship with other fans happen regularly in social media spaces given over to fan activity, and fan fiction circulates in these spaces side by side with this community-building activity; no such activity (or very little) exists for the fandoms to which Yuletide caters. The affective work done by Yuletide letters to build this fannish discourse shows the intrinsic link between the affective activity of fandom and the generation of fan fiction.

[3.6] Yuletide letters, hosted on participants' blogs but collected and often archived for easy searchability by Yuletide volunteers in one of the central Yuletide discussion communities, are a major part of this community formation ([note 3](#)). The ostensible purpose of Yuletide letters (or Dear Yuletide Author letters) is to communicate story preferences and dislikes; in fact they form a much larger and wide-ranging affective discourse. For example, letters often extend potential friendship to the assigned writer as someone else who shares an unusual fandom, and some express excitement and love about the fandoms that they are requesting. Thefourthvine's 2014 Yuletide letter begins "So basically know that I am extremely fond of you already, because clearly you are a person of taste and discernment, loving one of these small fandoms as much as I do" (Dreamwidth, October 17, 2014). Digitalis's 2013 Yuletide letter begins "if you are reading this then you are my Yuletide writer! How incredible that you have picked up my incredibly small and stupid fandoms! You must be completely insane! I like that. We should be friends" (mea-mariamne, LiveJournal, October 7, 2013). The spontaneous emergence of Yuletide letters around this fan fiction gift exchange suggests that the affective discourse of fandom (that is, excited conversations and expressions of love) is inextricable from the production of fan fiction; fan fiction does not emerge in isolation only on the basis of shared knowledge of a text with a recipient but also out of a shared love, something emphasized and reiterated in the Yuletide letters.

[3.7] In the following Yuletide letter, Emilyenrose writes to an as-yet-unknown Yuletide participant about her request for fan fiction about the great ancient Roman orator and politician, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE):

[3.8] I have a thing to confess, and that thing is: I love Marcus Tullius Cicero. No, seriously, I adore him. I'm fascinated by his intelligence, his ambition, his—grandness, I suppose you could call it; he's a historical figure who is genuinely larger than life. I'm also fascinated by his weaknesses—the pomposity, the self-absorption, the obsession with what other people think of him, the compromises he makes to get what he wants. He is just interesting...Sixteen of the volumes [of Cicero's letters] are addressed to

Cicero's lifelong best friend Atticus, and they are fascinating—they're so personal and affectionate, and they show a completely different side of him from all the political works. You can really see how sincere Cicero's affection for him is. (LiveJournal, November 16, 2009)

[3.9] This Yuletide request letter shows the disjuncture between subject matter and style of discourse. Emilyenrose reveals that her request comes out of her undergraduate work on Cicero, but she uses hesitations, colloquial language, and use of font and formatting to mark her desire as both decidedly and embarrassingly unacademic: "I am, um, doing my undergrad dissertation on the letters (well, one book of the letters, there are like thirty-five volumes) and it has made me want fic." Emilyenrose's request suggests that fan fiction and the fan community allow scope for a focus on the emotional life of Cicero in a way in which her academic work does not. Her letter makes it clear that her academic interest in Cicero's character is bound up with her affective investment in him as a person and in his relationship with Titus Pomponius Atticus. The fannish space allows her to approach Cicero with an affective hermeneutics that focuses the gaze on the affective elements of Cicero's life and writings.

[3.10] On the other hand, although Emilyenrose is requesting a fictional representation of the relationship between Cicero and Atticus, her request is framed by her scholarly understanding of Cicero's biography, and she justifies her emphasis on their friendship through historical evidence. The letter does not argue or assume a romantic or sexual relationship between Cicero and Atticus but instead leaves it up to the writer: "I have a slight preference for a friendship story over a romance, I think, but I'd be interested in reading either." She gives details of his extraordinary bond with Atticus—"there are sixteen books of Atticus letters. Compare that to: ONE book of letters to Cicero's brother. ONE book of letters to his personal slave"—and other historical evidence—"the earliest letter we have dates from 68 BC, when Cicero was in his mid-30s—but Nepos' biography of Atticus says that he and Cicero met at school." Emilyenrose's letter thus suggests that her desire to see this relationship explored in fan fiction is contiguous with and complementary to her academic research. Moreover, Emilyenrose invites her audience to imagine this as a schoolboy friendship, situating Cicero's emotional life in the same educational milieu in which she herself has met Cicero but now charged with affective, even erotic potential. In the same way, Emilyenrose's relationship with her own school text—Cicero's letters to Atticus—is charged with affective potential in this fandom space.

[3.11] Rumpleshghost's 2012 Yuletide letter also brings affective hermeneutics to a classical text encountered in the classroom and points readers toward its source, an Ancient Greek legal text:

[3.12] I'm talking about the guys represented in Demosthenes's legal speech "Against Conon." (You can, incidentally, read that here [the original includes a hyperlink to the translation and original texts], should you decide to give it a chance despite not being familiar with the source. It's a pretty small source.) I spent a good part of my semester studying this text and I just—I love the characters in it so much. (LiveJournal, October 21, 2012)

[3.13] This letter also takes a character-focused approach that opens up the speech to fannish imagination but likewise balances this with historical detail: "because the only information we have about Ctesias's character is from the speech and most of that is slander, you can go totally wild in making him be whatever you want, though I would love it if you based him on details you found in the text." The request fleshes out the bare bones of the story about these two men gleaned from the legal speech, suggesting a story about "the days they first meet at the army camp on garrison duty, where Ctesias and his friends are drunk every day and Ariston is a little:|:|:-faced dude, follow flirtiness/hijinks/confrontation/sex there!" The request overall conveys deep affection for these characters and a profound affective investment in the antagonistic relationship that Rumpleghost imagines between them ("Ctesias being lazily charmed by Ariston's snarky little existence"), while there is an unspoken shift away from the aspects of the speech typically studied in the classroom (such as its legal, ethical, political, and linguistic elements) onto its affective content: Ariston, the speaker, is "prickly" and "pompous" with "incredible self-righteousness," while Ctesias is "a provocative douche," and the speech shows "what grumpy, similar little guys they could be." The Yuletide letter establishes the affective hermeneutics with which Rumpleghost herself approaches the text and in doing so establishes the fannish discourse from which fan fiction can emerge.

[3.14] Another request for fan fiction about a minor figure from Ancient Greek history, Callicratidas (a Spartan general who appears in Xenophon's *Hellenica*), begins once again by establishing a sense of affective connection with this historical figure that picks out a strong sense of his affective self amid his historical context:

[3.15] I love Callicratidas!...I love him for his straightforwardness and integrity and honour, for his vigour without rashness (well, mostly) and obedience without obsequiousness, for being a man of principle in a morally bankrupt world undergoing rapid, profound social change, and I can't help but adore his total lack of people skills. (tevildo, Dreamwidth, November 17, 2011)

[3.16] This letter also explicitly relates this fannish approach to academic discourse:

[3.17] In his paper "Xenophon and Callicratidas," Moles (1994) rolls his eyes at the academic sort of gushing: "Callicratidas seems to inspire historians to romantic heights." Not only historians, Mr Moles! Basically, I have such a fictional crush on Callicratidas that you can write anything as long as he's in it, and I will love it, and you for writing it, to bits.

[3.18] The opening of this sentence, with its correct usage of MLA citation style, has a dry, scholarly air that dissipates into a cheerful burst of unscholarly feeling which lays out Tevildo's affective priorities. The primary and secondary sources to which Tevildo links their assigned reader also stress these priorities:

[3.19] If you know your stuff and just need something to get you enthused, Xenophon's Hellenica 1.6.1–1.6.38 is the most 'romantic' account, and gives a good feel for the character and his voice. If hard information is what you're after, Donald Kagan's The Fall of the Athenian Empire is probably the best starting place.

[3.20] Digitalis's 2013 Yuletide letter requests fan fiction about the relationship between the Roman Emperor Hadrian and his young lover Antinous, who drowned mysteriously in his late teens and was then deified by the grief-stricken Hadrian who set up a cult of worship in his honor. This letter is even more explicitly geared around curating an affective experience:

[3.21] Give me *angst*. Give me myth and the inherent differences in power and the trauma of Hadrian realizing his invented otherness as the Hellenophile emperor from the provincial backwoods compares not at all to the displacement of his concubine...Give me one-sided love, or two-sided love, or boiling hatred, or mutual wariness, or all-out fear, give me suicide or human sacrifice or an accident borne out of a fight, give me interfering gods or the silent universe, give me tears and horror and Stockholm syndrome and blood and vomit, give me love too strong to be sane, I don't care, just give me BIG EMOTIONS. (mea-mariamne, LiveJournal, October 7, 2013)

[3.22] Digitalis's letter, like Emilyenrose's and Rumpleshghost's, professes affective investment in the historical figures ("I have an unhealthy amount of love for these two"). Although there is no attached bibliography, there is still a clear investment in historical detail: "Hadrian was at least twenty-five years older than Antinous, from a continent away; he spoke a stylized, aristocratic form of Greek." Digitalis also refers to the variety of historians' theories about Antinous' death ("give me suicide or human sacrifice or an accident borne out of a fight"). There is no ambiguity here about the kind of relationship Digitalis imagines and expects their reader to also imagine, since Hadrian's homosexual attachment to Antinous is generally acknowledged, if not always

openly discussed, in both the primary sources and in modern scholarship. The gap that Digitalis wishes the reader to fill is, as for Emilyenrose, an affective one, a supplement to the dry details of historical accounts and silent marble.

4. Filling the gaps in history

[4.1] Several other historical RPF requests from the last few years of Yuletide suggest even more clearly how an affective hermeneutics can fill a gap in history, doing what critical reading cannot. Ishie's 2012 Yuletide letter requests fan fiction about a group of 14th-century historical queens:

[4.2] I'm always struck by two things: how comparatively little importance is placed (by us, mostly) on the marriages that helped broker and break alliances and treaties, and on the women who were so married off and what they did once they were. And most especially in how they related to each other: Isabella of France schemed with her lover to replace her husband on the throne with her son, who she married to Philippa of Hainault. Philippa's favored daughter, Joan of England, left to marry in Spain and never made it there, dying in a camp along the way. Anne of Bohemia came to marry Richard II, against the wishes of most of his court and one of the two rival popes of the time (!!).

[4.3] Ishie is explicit about the gap in the historical record she wants her gift to redress, and unites fans and scholars in a single modern us: "We've got hundreds of years of junk about their husbands/fathers/sons/brothers. I want stories about them." After giving the historical context of her request, she asks for a story that imagines its way into the feelings and thoughts of these queens:

[4.4] How do they talk to each other? What do they know/remember/wish of each other? Do they resent their lives or are they content? Did they dream of being queens regnant, with no kings above them? How much influence do they have over their relatives? Do they think about the generations to come? *_* (Dreamwidth, October 26, 2014)

[4.5] Ishie's request presents the historical issue with a fannish slant, again focusing on the affective charge of historical situations. Her letter conceptualizes the story's scope in terms of dreams, inner thoughts, and gossip—the kind of material that a more critical hermeneutics might rule out as lost to historical record. Similarly, Angharad's 2013 request for Badass Historical Queens RPF makes a request for a story that focuses on the feelings of several medieval and early modern royal women about their politically expedient marriages:

[4.6] Elizabeth and Catherine are kinda opposites—Catherine, married for reasons of state to the man who conquered her father, then widowed immediately with an infant son, who eventually ran off with a handsome Welsh groom and had an entire (possibly illegitimate) family that would end up becoming the Tudor dynasty; Elizabeth, who would've seen the specter of such a state marriage staring her in the face, but managed to hold it off for her entire life, despite quite possibly being in love with Robert Dudley. Would Elizabeth have sympathized with Catherine's initial situation, or censured/secretly envied her for the way she relinquished control of her baby and went off to find happiness? Would Catherine have respected the way Elizabeth gave up on marriage and motherhood for the sake of a kingdom, or would she have found it hard to imagine making that sacrifice? And what would Eleanor have thought of both of them?

[4.7] Ishie and Angharad's requests both seek to restore voices lost to the historical record through a fannish hermeneutics and also to imagine affective bonds between these historical women who, in some cases, never met. "Would there be flirting going on?" Angharad asks, "I feel like Eleanor could flirt with *anyone*."

[4.8] It is clear that the affective hermeneutics used in fan fiction—the focus on intense affect, the desire to inhabit it, to imagine it, and to understand it—has particular resonance for marginal communities whose histories must be read between the lines: for, that is, the "different kind of subject" that Warner (2004) imagines. A "connection across time" like that which Dinshaw (1999) describes arising between herself and Margery Kempe out of her sense of their shared queerness also arises in Angharad's and Ishie's letters, but the source of the connection with these historical figures is more elusive; here it seems to arise from a sense of shared marginalized identity and the desire for a reparative reading of the past that restores lost voices, such as those of medieval queens. However, sometimes the connection seems based in attraction to a person, a desire for intimacy across time that aligns itself, in the Yuletide letters, with a desire for intimacy, friendship, and affective community with other fans.

[4.9] Although the connection across time in these Yuletide letters may not be based in a sense of shared queerness, as it is for Dinshaw, the connection across time is linked inextricably with what is, in a sense, a queer act: writing romantic or sexually explicit fiction for (often) another woman within a highly affective, largely homosocial community. Dinshaw describes this sense of identification or connection across time as itself a "queer historical impulse," a nonnormative form of desire (1999, 1). However, in Dinshaw's examples, this affective hermeneutics applies primarily to the sense as a queer person of sharing affective experiences with another queer person from the

past; of having felt, in some way, what they felt. In their essay on lesbian historical fiction, Laura Waters and Sarah Doan suggest that this sense of identification across time between modern lesbian readers and women from the past may offer "fantasy and wishful thinking as legitimate historiographical resources, necessary correctives, or missing links to the impoverished lesbian archive," while it also runs the risk of erasing historical forms of queer identity and community in favor of imposing a particular 21st-century form of lesbianism onto historical figures (Doan and Waters 2000, 15).

[4.10] Dinshaw also gives an example of the role of affective hermeneutics in the history of sexuality: the fan letter she finds in the correspondence of the late John Boswell, scholar of Latin literature and writer of *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (1980) (a controversial book that reinterpreted Biblical passages and historical evidence to suggest a more tolerant attitude toward homosexuality in the early church than had been previously thought). An unnamed professor wrote to Boswell: "Whereas I have often felt intellectual 'friendships' across the centuries—historical thinkers with whom I have felt such strong affinities that I feel I know them and that we speak for one another, I had never felt—until I read your book—that I had gay friends across the centuries" (quoted in Dinshaw 1999, 28). Among the historical figures who Boswell suggests as possible gay friends are Ausonius and Paulinus of Nola, two friends from the fourth century CE whose passionate correspondence occupies the same space of affective intensity and emotional ambiguity for modern readers as Cicero's letters to Atticus do for Emilyenrose, and Ctesias and Ariston's relationship does for Rumpelghost.

[4.11] Reading the affective hermeneutics of fan fiction has great potential to expand our explorations into what it is that fan fiction does; it also can help refocus attention toward the role of affect and the reader in other forms of transformative literature. Uncritically referring to any ancient literature that uses allusion or transformative formal elements as early fan fiction is to ignore the significance of the context of fan fiction's emergence from an affective discourse and, above all, the central importance of affect to both its authors and its audiences. Bringing attention to affect in comparisons between fan fiction and premodern literature, however, may help to bring out the extent to which these early transformations of other stories might have emerged from their own fan communities of invested audiences and loving readers.

5. Notes

1. See my forthcoming thesis, *Immature Pleasures: Affective Reading in Margery Kempe, Petrarch, Chaucer, and Modern Fan Communities*, PhD Diss., University of Toronto, 2015.

2. "quibus tenere cogebar Aeneae nescio cuius errors...et plorare Didonem mortuam, quia se occidit ab amore," *Confessions* 1.13.
3. The Dear Yuletide Writer tag on the yuletide.livejournal.com community links to the posts from previous years archiving links to Yuletide letters.

6. Works cited

- Barenblat, Rachel. 2014. "Fan Fiction and Midrash: Making Meaning." *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 17. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0596>.
- Derecho, Abigail. 2006. "Archontic Literature: A Definition, a History, and Several Theories of Fan Fiction." In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 61–78. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Dinshaw, Carolyn. 1999. *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/9780822382188>.
- Doan, Laura, and Sarah Waters. 2000. "Making Up Lost Time: Contemporary Lesbian Writing and the Invention of History." In *Territories of Desire in Queer Culture: Refiguring Contemporary Boundaries*, edited by David Alderson and Linda Anderson, 12–28. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.
- Felski, Rita. 2009. "After Suspicion." *Profession* 23–35.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1632/prof.2009.2009.1.28>.
- Fradenburg, Aranye. 1997. "'So That We May Speak Of Them': Enjoying the Middle Ages." *New Literary History* 28 (2): 205–30.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/nlh.1997.0021>.
- Morrison, Karl Frederick. 1988. *I Am You: The Hermeneutics of Empathy in Western Literature, Theology, and Art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/9781400859436>.
- Pugh, Sheenagh. 2005. *The Democratic Genre: Fan Fiction in a Literary Context*. Bridgend, Wales: Seren.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 2003. In *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Warner, Michael. 2004. "Uncritical Reading." In *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical*, edited by Jane Gallop, 13–38. New York and London: Routledge.

Woods, Marjorie Curry. 2003. "Weeping for Dido: Epilogue on a Premodern Rhetorical Exercise in the Postmodern Classroom." In *Latin Grammar and Rhetoric: From Classical Theory to Medieval Practice*, edited by Carol Dana Lanham, 284–94. New York: Continuum.

Symposium

Shipping in Plato's *Symposium*

Juliette Harrisson

[0.1] *Abstract*—A comparison between Achilles/Patroclus shipping in Plato's *Symposium* (ca. 427–347 BC) and Dean/Castiel shipping in *Supernatural* (2005–), asking whether slash shipping is always necessarily deliberately transgressive.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Audience analysis; Fan community; Fan fiction; Gender; TV

Harrison, Juliette. 2016. "Shipping in Plato's *Symposium*." In "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work," edited by Ika Willis, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2016.0690>.

1. Introduction

[1.1] Homer never explicitly describes the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus as sexual in the *Iliad*, yet when Phaedrus compares Homer and Aeschylus' representations of their relationship in Plato's *Symposium*, he takes it for granted that they were lovers. This has been much discussed among classicists over the years and is usually understood in terms of classical Greek cultural sexual norms. But what does that really tell us about Plato, or about fan readings of popular works? My aim here is to offer a fresh perspective on both ancient literature and modern shipping by comparing Plato's shipping of Achilles/Patroclus in the *Symposium* (ca. 427–347 BC) with Dean/Castiel shipping in *Supernatural* (2005–). We often think of fan works and reinterpretations of texts as transgressive, deliberately going against the cultural flow and reworking culturally normative texts into something subversive and different. However, I want to suggest that in these two particular cases, fan interpretations of a text—even slash interpretations—can in fact work to make the text more culturally normative, to bring it in line with a more traditional story thought to be lacking in the source text.

[1.2] Classical scholars take it for granted that ancient literature reworks and reimagines mythic material in many different ways, and when we teach, we explain how different this sort of approach is to much of modern literature. However, as Cynthia Jenkins has pointed out, fan fiction is one area where authors reimagine and rewrite the same events or relationships between the same characters in a myriad different ways, creating a multiplicity of readings on the same basic setup in the same

way as those who work with Arthurian legends or Robin Hood stories (Green, Jenkins, and Jenkins 2006). In the case of myths told in the Homeric poems the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the similarity is even stronger because Homer, the father of Greek literature, was so revered by later generations that although the myths theoretically remain malleable, in practice, nearly all later retellings, especially those in writing, are responding to, retelling, or deliberately deviating from the Homeric source text, which therefore fulfills a role analogous to the source text or canon provided by a film, book series, or TV show in modern fan communities.

[1.3] Shipping, the desire to see two particular characters in a work of fiction engage in a romantic and/or sexual relationship, manifests itself in two primary ways in modern fandom: reading and writing fan fiction, and reading and writing metacommentary—that is, analyses of the source text focused on drawing out perceived subtext relating to the desired relationship. Slash shipping, the desire to see two male characters in a romantic/sexual relationship, is a particularly popular form of shipping (Green, Jenkins, and Jenkins 2006). The Dean/Castiel pairing, also known as Destiel, like the discussion of Achilles/Patroclus shipping in Plato, is the subject of heated arguments between fans. Many who ship these couples do not just enjoy reading the source text in a subversive way, choosing to prefer a romantic interpretation where they know, canonically, that none exists; they also argue that the ship is or will be made canonical (this is related to the equally popular interpretation of Dean as bisexual), so metacommentaries as well as fan fiction are particularly lively (note 1). In Plato's case, it was of course impossible for Homer to elaborate on the nature of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus; however, because it was equally impossible for the long-dead poet to deny it categorically, metacommentaries on the subject in the ancient world remained lively, with authors firmly insisting their reading and their reading alone is correct (Clarke 1978).

[1.4] Both Achilles/Patroclus (assuming the *Iliad* as a source text) and Destiel fall into an area somewhere between canon shipping (rooting for relationships that are already romantic or sexual in the source text, or that become so at some point, such as Ron/Hermione in the Harry Potter franchise [1997–2011]) and crack shipping (mostly writing fan fiction about relationships that have little or no foundation in the source text and which may be a little bizarre, such as Ron/Giant Squid) (note 2). Many slash ships sit between the two; most of the time, they will never become canon (the characters concerned in modern source texts are often established as heterosexual), but they are far from crack ships—there is enough possible subtext in scenes or dialogue that could be interpreted as indicative of underlying romantic feelings that the relationship can be read that way if the viewer chooses to do so, even if it is never explicitly depicted as romantic in the source text. In canon shipping, viewers respond to the subtext deliberately presented to them by the authors. In crack fiction, they see

subtext that was clearly never intended to be there, or they entirely invent relationships. In much slash fiction, the subtext is either unintentional or is included as a wink to the shippers, but it is never intended to become part of the canon. However, it is not entirely the invention of the shippers either; there is something there in the source text that they are responding to.

[1.5] Homer never explicitly defines whether Achilles and Patroclus' relationship is romantic or sexual in the *Iliad*. As Aeschines puts it, he "avoids giving a name to their friendship" (1.142). Clarke (1978) has summed up the main arguments on either side, himself concluding that although no sexual relationship is made explicit, the two are intended to be in love with each other. Although scholarship on Greek sexuality has developed significantly since Clarke's article, the arguments remain much the same, bar the occasional new suggestion for the translation of a particular word (Davidson 2007). The point remains inconclusive. Homer, no doubt deliberately, leaves the relationship open to alternative readings. While modern TV show runners and writers like those on *Supernatural* have the advantage of being able to tell viewers unequivocally that any particular two characters' relationship is not intended to be read as romantic, that does not prevent viewers from reading it that way, and in some cases, including that of Dean and Castiel, a combination of humorous scenes revolving around the characters' sexuality, in-jokes aimed at the shippers, and willful alternative readings of scenes relating to different kinds of love mean that many fans have argued vehemently that the relationship can and perhaps should be read as romantic, regardless of the repeated statements to the contrary by the actors, writers, and producers (note 3).

2. Achilles/Patroclus in Plato's *Symposium*

[2.1] Plato's *Symposium* is a fascinating hybrid text; it is a philosophical dialogue with elements of tragedy, comedy, and what we might now call real person slash, providing all sorts of dramatically imagined details about romantic or sexual relationships between tragic poet Agathon and Pausanias, and between infamous Athenian statesman Alcibiades and the philosopher Socrates (note 4). Plato was also, like many Greek writers, quite the fan of Homer, and he quotes Homer in the majority of his works (Yamagata 2012). Sitting nested within an elaborate framing device, the main text of the *Symposium* reports a conversation between a group of men, including Socrates, at a drinking party, in which several different characters give speeches eulogizing Eros, the god personifying erotic, desiring love. The first speaker, Phaedrus, talks about the benefits of Love, one of which is the willingness to die for a sexual partner, and it is in this context that Plato, through Phaedrus, offers a brief metacommentary on the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus as portrayed in the *Iliad*.

[2.2] In Phaedrus' short speech, we see evidence of both fan fiction and metacommentary on Achilles/Patroclus. Phaedrus has a disagreement with a lost trilogy of Aeschylus that depicted the Achilles/Patroclus relationship as that between Achilles as an older lover and Patroclus as a youth with whom Achilles was in sexual relationship—a relationship common in Greece at the time (Aeschylus, fragment 64). Phaedrus does not doubt that Achilles and Patroclus were lovers, but he objects to Aeschylus' depiction of Patroclus as the *eromenos*, the younger object of Achilles' love, and Achilles as the *erastes*, the older man who actively loves Patroclus. Phaedrus is responding to Aeschylus' fan fiction, which wrote a particular form of homoerotic relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, with a metacommentary on how he believes the relationship should be read in the *Iliad*:

[2.3] Aeschylus talks nonsense when he says that Achilles was Patroclus' lover: he was more beautiful than Patroclus...and was still beardless, as well as much younger than Patroclus, as Homer tells us. Although the gods certainly give special honour to the courage that comes from love, they show still greater amazement and admiration, and respond more generously, when a boyfriend [*eromenos*, "beloved"] shows affectionate concern towards his lover [*erastes*] than when a lover [*erastes*] does towards his boyfriend [*paidikos*, "youth," "darling"]. (Plato, *Symposium*, 180a–b) (note 5)

[2.4] In some ways, what Phaedrus is doing here may seem quite different than modern shipping and fan fiction. Modern slash shipping, and particularly the writing of slash fan fiction, is predominantly carried out by female fans, especially in the specific case of *Supernatural*, a show with a predominantly female fan base (Green, Jenkins, and Jenkins 2006). The speakers and intended audience of Plato's *Symposium* are, as was traditional in Greek symposia, all male, with the sole female voice (Diotima) mediated through Socrates, himself written by Plato.

[2.5] More significantly, slash shipping and fan fiction, and indeed cult fandom in general, are often identified with a feeling of Otherness among the fans and a conscious desire to transgress social boundaries and norms (note 6). However, Phaedrus' aim here is to force Homer's characters into what is for him a cultural norm.

[2.6] In ancient Greece, equal relationships between adult men were far from unknown, and indeed two of the (adult) speakers in the *Symposium*, Agathon and Pausanias, are referred to as a couple (Plato, *Symposium*, 193b–c). However, the most common type of homoerotic relationship seems to have been that of an older lover and a younger protégé/beloved. Following Kenneth James Dover (1989), these are referred to as the *erastes* (older lover) and the *eromenos* (younger beloved). Dover emphasized the importance of the power differential in these relationships, which is based primarily on which lover takes the active role and which the passive in

the sexual act. Younger, beardless youths may take the passive part of the *eromenos*, but as they get older, they must stop playing this role and take on the role of the active lover (Dover 1989). The extent to which the exact sexual positions adopted were significant has been questioned in recent years by Davidson (2001), but the essential fact remains that one of the most common homoerotic relationships in classical Greece was understood as being between an older man who would tutor his younger "boyfriend" in a variety of ways, possibly but not necessarily including a sexual relationship (Skinner 2014). Both Aeschylus and Plato's Phaedrus see what they perceive to be a homoerotic relationship between Achilles and Patroclus and read Homer through these cultural norms.

[2.7] Phaedrus is not trying to demonstrate that Achilles and Patroclus were lovers; he seems to assume this assertion will be accepted largely without question by his audience. Rather, his problem with Aeschylus' fan fiction is that Aeschylus has portrayed the lovers the wrong way around, presenting Patroclus as the *eromenos*, the beloved, even though Homer clearly states that Achilles is younger than Patroclus. Phaedrus is not suggesting a transgressive or controversial reading of the relationship but rather is forcing the relationship to conform to what he sees as culturally and socially appropriate. Moreover, the gender of the characters is not particularly important to him, as his main point compares Achilles' relationship with Patroclus with the relationship of heteronormative married couple Alcestis and Admetus. It is the relative positions of the lovers in a hierarchical relationship (with Achilles as *eromenos* compared to the female partner, Alcestis) that concerns him.

3. What is a romantic norm anyway?

[3.1] Is this, then, a very different type of reaction to the source text than modern slash shipping, whether through metacommentary or fan fiction? There are certainly ships out there, especially crack ships, that are designed to be transgressive, and to some extent, any slash ship is deviating from what is usually a strongly heteronormative source text. However, in an increasingly liberal Western society in which many shippers also support gay rights, just because a ship is slash does not make it drastically transgressive. This is where the comparison with Destiel shipping becomes especially revealing, as Destiel shipping, by *Supernatural* standards, is actually conforming to more of a cultural norm than the other two main ships in the *Supernatural* fandom, Wincest and J2.

[3.2] In the early years of *Supernatural*, the two most popular ships were both, in their different ways, somewhat controversial and distinctly outside Western social norms. Assuming fans were not interested in heterosexual or canonical relationships, the choice was between Wincest or J2, with Wincest by far the most popular (Turner

2009). That is, most authors of slash fan fiction were, for the most part, choosing between stories embracing the taboo subject of incest (Wincest, or Winchester incest), or real person slash imagining sexual encounters between the actors who play the Winchester brothers, Jensen Ackles and Jared Padalecki (J2), a genre of fan fiction that makes many fans uncomfortable because it co-opts real people, rather than fictional characters, into fans' sexual fantasies (Flegal and Roth 2010; Larsen and Zubernis 2013). Opportunities for metacommentary, reading the show as a love story, were limited. No matter how great the actors' chemistry on screen or how important the brothers' relationship, it is clear that the actors are not in a sexual relationship, and it is also clear that the brothers are not going to enter into a sexual relationship on the show. Such activity is thus always beyond and slightly separated from the show itself.

[3.3] In season 4, however, with the introduction of a non-Winchester-related character, Castiel, new possibilities opened up for a much more socially acceptable, ship-based reading of the series. There were still issues, primarily concerning consent (since Castiel, an angel, is occupying the body of a human being, Jimmy Novak), but most Destiel shippers were happy to gloss over this or assume that Jimmy died on one of the two occasions when Castiel was blown to bits, and indeed this was finally confirmed in canon (for non-ship-related reasons) in 10.9 "The Things We Left Behind." With the confirmation that Castiel's body is now definitely his own, there is nothing especially controversial or unusual about the relationship, aside from the fact that it is between two men. Although this means it is unlikely to be written into the source text, because, a few teasing references aside, both characters have been established as heterosexual, this is hardly a controversial or taboo idea in modern, liberal, Western society. Far from breaking cultural norms and taboos, shipping Destiel actually provides a more culturally acceptable romantic relationship for Dean Winchester—a character whose canonical heterosexual romances have not often connected with viewers.

[3.4] One might suggest that if fans are after a traditional romantic story, they will surely turn to shipping the canonical heteronormative romances provided by the source text. However, although both the *Iliad* and *Supernatural* provide their male heroes with female love interests, in both cases, these women play a far less significant role in the story than Patroclus or Castiel, and in neither case are the female characters especially popular with fans.

[3.5] In the *Iliad*, the only significant female characters who are not goddesses are Helen and Briseis. Helen is a pawn of Aphrodite, and Briseis is a trophy who exists solely to motivate male characters and mourn them when they die (compare this with the much more three-dimensional character of Odysseus' wife, Penelope, in the

Odyssey). *Supernatural*, meanwhile, is notorious for lacking engaging female characters and killing off those it has, with only mother or daughter figures (Jody Miller, Krissy Chambers, and Claire Novak) standing much chance of survival. Although Sam Winchester is associated with a series of tragic romances often ending in the death of the female partner (starting with the pilot episode), Dean's love interests have tended to be lackluster and have met with fan disapproval (Borsellino 2009; Flegal and Roth 2010). A frequently repeated online rumor has it that one of the more promising potential love interests, Anna Milton, was killed off after her story and relationship with Dean (minus the sexual element) were given to Castiel. Although the character is known for his many one-night stands, Dean has not had a significant female love interest since his girlfriend, Lisa Braeden, was written out late in season 6. Because Castiel has apparently largely usurped any other relationship story for Dean (with the notable exception of a male character, Benny the vampire, in season 8), by making Dean and Castiel's story a romance, fans are not so much looking for an outsider alternative as writing a fairly traditional love story onto a character who has not been given a really satisfying romantic story line in 10 years of the series.

[3.6] Readers or viewers interested in the hero's love life therefore turn to other male characters in viewing the work through this lens, either in their reading of the original work or by writing fan fiction. Both Plato and modern writers of fan fiction have explained the attraction of slash in this way, albeit coming from very different views of men and women. The second speaker in *Symposium*, Pausanias, is of the opinion that the best type of love, heavenly love, is directed at boys who have grown a beard and never at women, because only mature men have gained intelligence (Plato, *Symposium*, 181d). In 1990, slash fiction fan Cat Anestopoulo suggested that the lack of depictions of intelligent women in fiction is one of the reasons some fans turn to slash fiction. It is impossible, Anestopoulo explains, to identify with the "screaming ninny" usually presented as a romantic interest in genre fiction or to root for the hero to form a romantic relationship with such a woman; he has to have a relationship with "someone who produces emotional reactions in him that you find interesting. And that person is unlikely to be the screaming ninny . . . [the 'male buddy'] is the only one who shows a sustained interest in the hero" (quoted in Green, Jenkins, and Jenkins 2006, 67–68). While I am sure Anestopoulo would not agree with Plato's Pausanias on the general intelligence of women, she has produced more or less the same explanation for the popularity of slash that Pausanias suggested for the superiority of homoerotic relationships. In Plato's case, it may be that neither he nor his audience was interested in female characters, whereas female slash authors lack interesting female characters with whom to identify. The net result is the same: a strong interest in male/male relationships that are not explicit in the text. For a relationship, romantic or otherwise, to be compelling, it has to be between two fully rounded, intelligent characters.

4. Conclusions

[4.1] What I hope to have demonstrated here is that in some cases slash shipping can be about imposing a traditional story where there is none. This is by no means a prescriptive statement about slash shipping in general, much of which remains deliberately Othered and transgressive. None of the prompts for slash shipping suggested here will apply to every text—the BBC/HBO series *Rome* (2005–7), for example, also produces a high proportion of slash shipping despite including a number of richly drawn female characters, and the popular combinations of Pullo/Vorenus and Antony/Brutus are certainly less normative than the canonical heterosexual relationships existing for three of these four (Potter 2015).

[4.2] However, in some cases, slash fiction may be about looking for a relationship that does conform to cultural norms—homoerotic but not otherwise transgressive—where no satisfying relationship of this kind is provided by the source text. Much has been written trying to understand why people write slash fan fiction or ship slash couples. There are many different reasons, but primary among them is the desire to read our own fantasies onto the fictional characters we enjoy. We want to read love into the stories we connect with. Sometimes that might be a transgressive, taboo-breaking love, but sometimes we simply crave an intimate relationship between fully realized, three-dimensional characters. If such a relationship is not provided within the source text, we go looking for it elsewhere. Gender is largely irrelevant—it is about love, wherever we find it. It was like that for Aeschylus and for Plato's *Phaedrus*, and it is the same for *Destiel* fans.

5. Acknowledgments

[5.1] Thanks to Billie Doux for alerting me to the joys of *Supernatural*, to Naoko Yamagata and Amanda Potter for kindly sharing their work with me, to Gideon Nisbet and Tony Keen for further help and suggestions, and to Ika Willis for getting me involved.

6. Notes

1. *Destiel* is a particularly popular ship, being the most frequently reblogged ship on Tumblr in 2014 (<http://www.dailydot.com/geek/supernatural-destiel-biggest-tumblr-ship/>). Further examples of *Supernatural* meta on various topics, including slash shipping and Dean's sexuality, can be found at the *Supernatural* wiki (http://www.supernaturalwiki.com/index.php?title=Meta_Essays#Meta_Communities). Further, it should be noted that Achilles/Patroclus shipping is alive and well,

accounting for (as of March 17, 2015) 94 of 173 fan fiction stories responding to the *Iliad* at the Archive of Our Own (<https://archiveofourown.org/>), and represented in the mainstream by Madeline Miller's 2011 Orange Prize for Fiction–winning novel *The Song of Achilles*. However, the aim here is to compare Plato's response to Homer with a modern response to a modern text.

2. See TV Tropes on crack pairings

(<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/CrackPairing>). On *Supernatural* crack fiction, see Turner (2009). Crack fiction in ancient literature is less in evidence, probably because when the most common versions of many stories feature gods turning into swans, men turning into women, and, in the case of Achilles in particular, the hero disguising himself as a woman and living among maidens to escape battle, crack fiction is both unnecessary and difficult to tell apart from more widely accepted retellings.

3. Humorous scenes implying that Dean has a crush on a male TV character (5.8 "Changing Channels") or suggesting he's flattered when he thinks another man is flirting with him (8.13 "Everybody Hates Hitler") are frequently read by Dean/Castiel shippers (among others) as evidence that Dean Winchester is not so fervently heterosexual as outward appearances would suggest, allowing them to read declarations of affection toward Castiel such as "I need you" and "We're family" (8.17 "Goodbye Stranger") as romantic rather than brotherly or platonic. This is a significant difference between Dean/Castiel shipping and the older Wincest ship. While Wincest fans might choose to read declarations of brotherly love in a sexual way and see subtext in their interactions (Larsen and Zubernis 2013), they are far less inclined to assume that anyone on the writing staff is writing it that way deliberately or to claim that this is the best or only way to read the scene.

4. On tragedy, comedy, and drama in the *Symposium*, see Crick and Poulakos (2008).

5. A more literal translation of the first section in Greek would be, "Aeschylus talks nonsense when he says that Achilles loved Patroclus"; however, since Phaedrus' point is that, like Alcestis, who sacrificed herself for her husband, the love of Achilles for Patroclus was especially impressive because he was willing to die for him, this should be understood as meaning that Phaedrus sees Achilles as the beloved, the *eromenos*, or, as Phaedrus puts it, the *paidikos* (young boy) rather than the *erastes* (older lover), not an assertion that the love in the relationship was one-sided.

6. On cult fandom and identification with the Other, see Felschow (2010).

7. Works cited

- Aeschines. 1919. *Aeschines*. Translated by Charles Darwin Adams. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library.
- Aeschylus. 1930. *Agamemnon, Libation Bearers, Eumenides, Fragments*. Translated by Herbert Weir Smyth. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library.
- Borsellino, Mary. 2009. "Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Jo the Monster Killer: *Supernatural's* Excluded Heroines." In *In the Hunt: Unauthorized Essays on "Supernatural,"* edited by Leah Wilson and Supernatural.tv, 107–17. Dallas: BenBella Books.
- Clarke, W. M. 1978. "Achilles and Patroclus in Love." *Hermes* 106:381–96.
- Crick, Nathan, and John Poulakos. 2008. "Go Tell Alcibiades: Tragedy, Comedy and Rhetoric in Plato's *Symposium*." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94:1–22.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00335630701790800>.
- Davidson, James. 2001. "Dover, Foucault and Greek Homosexuality: Penetration and the Truth of Sex." *Past and Present* 170:3–51.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/past/170.1.3>.
- Davidson, James. 2007. *The Greeks and Greek Love*. London: Orion.
- Dover, Kenneth James. 1989. *Greek Homosexuality*. Rev. ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Felschow, Laura E. 2010. "'Hey, check it out, there's actually fans': (Dis)empowerment and (Mis)representation of Cult Fandom in *Supernatural*." *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 4. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2010.0134>.
- Flegal, Monica, and Jenny Roth. 2010. "Annihilating Love and Heterosexuality without Women: Romance, Generic Difference, and Queer Politics in *Supernatural Fan Fiction*." *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 4. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2010.0133>.
- Green, Shoshanna, Cynthia Jenkins, and Henry Jenkins, 2006. "'Normal female interest in men bonking': Selections from the *Terra Nostra Underground and Strange Bedfellows*." In *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*, edited by Henry Jenkins, 61–88. New York: New York University Press.
- Homer. 1990. *The Iliad*. Translated by Robert Fagles. London: Penguin.
- Larsen, Katherine, and Lynn S. Zubernis. 2013. *Fangasm: "Supernatural" Fangirls*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Plato. 1999. *The Symposium*. Translated by Christopher Gill. London: Penguin.

Potter, Amanda. 2015. "Slashing Rome: Season Two Rewritten in Online Fanfiction." In *"Rome" Season Two: Trial and Triumph*, edited by Monica Cyrino, 219–30. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Skinner, Marilyn B. 2014. *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*. 2nd ed. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Turner, Emily. 2009. "Scary Just Got Sexy: Transgression in *Supernatural* and Its Fanfiction." In *In the Hunt: Unauthorized Essays on "Supernatural,"* edited by Leah Wilson and Supernatural.tv, 155–64. Dallas: BenBella Books.

Yamagata, Naoko. 2012. "Use of Homeric References in Plato and Xenophon." *Classical Quarterly* 62 (1): 130–44. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0009838811000723>.

Symposium

Oresteia as transformative work

Tisha Turk

University of Minnesota, Morris, Minnesota, United States

[0.1] *Keywords*—Adaptation; Aeschylus; Classics; Greek tragedy; *Oresteia*; Theatre

Turk, Tisha. 2016. "*Oresteia* as Transformative Work." In "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work," edited by Ika Willis, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 21. doi:10.3983/twc.2016.0706.

1. Introduction

[1.1] In June of 2015, I attended a new version of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, adapted and directed by Robert Icke, at the Almeida in London. I knew only that Icke's new version gave the play a contemporary setting and that the production was very long and, according to a number of reviewers, very good. I had refrained from reading any of the reviews myself because I didn't want to be spoiled for any details.

[1.2] Although my academic training is in literary studies, neither classics nor drama is my area of expertise, and so I came to Icke's *Oresteia*, as I do to most productions, less as a scholar than as a fan of theatre and its transformative elements. As Francesca Coppa points out in "Writing Bodies in Space: Media Fanfiction as Theatrical Performance" (2006), transformation is central to theatre, and especially to productions of canonical or well-known works: "Theatre artists think it's fine to tell the same story again, but differently: ...In theatre, we want to see *your* Hamlet and *his* Hamlet and *her* Hamlet; to embody the role is to reinvent it" (236). These reinventions can be one of the great joys of theatre. Theatre fans tend to collect—and eagerly discuss—differences in the choices of specific directors, actors, and creative teams about interpretation, setting, and staging.

[1.3] Classical drama lends itself especially well to discussions of theatre as transformative work. Simon Goldhill, the academic consultant on Icke's *Oresteia*, notes that the Greek tragedies were already transformative in their own time: Greek tragedians "rewrote the inherited myths of ancient Athens for the new democratic city" (2015, 4). In the *Oresteia*, Aeschylus stages stories that would have been familiar to

his audience from Homer's *Odyssey*, "redrafting the old and privileged stories to talk directly to new and insistent politics" (5). For Goldhill, this history of transformation demands ongoing transformation in contemporary productions: "Each new version of his masterpiece [must speak] to its own modern condition, if it is [to] be true to the spirit of Aeschylus" (6).

[1.4] In our current context, many audience members will be aware of the basic events relevant to Greek and Roman drama, such as the story of the Trojan War and its fallout, but relatively few will be familiar with specific texts, translations, or productions. For an audience that knows, generally speaking, what's going to happen but doesn't know precisely how or when, stagings of classical drama can combine inevitability and uncertainty in exciting ways. A new adaptation, such as Icke's, generates additional tension through the possibility that the events we anticipate will play out differently than we expect—as indeed, in this production, they do. That possibility of difference is signaled from *Oresteia*'s opening moments. Unlike the original trilogy, which begins with Agamemnon's return home from the sack of Troy, Icke's production begins before the war, when Agamemnon hears the prophecy that sets events in motion: "By his hand alone. The child is the price. Fair winds" (Aeschylus 2015, 14).

Oresteia | Almeida Greeks | Almeida Theatre, London

Video 1. Video trailer for Robert Icke's 2015 production of *Oresteia* at the Almeida Theatre, London.

[1.5] This *Oresteia* is an astonishing production, and one short essay can cover only a few of the elements that contribute to its energy and vitality. The performances, especially Lia Williams's superb Klytemnestra, are outstanding; the elegant design and lighting provide the ideal mood and context for those performances. But I focus here on Icke's use of domestic scenes and of particular characters—Iphigenia, Orestes, and

Electra—to update the themes of Aeschylus' story and give it a profound emotional urgency. As Susannah Clapp (2015) writes in her *Observer* review (well worth reading), "This is not destruction but revelation. You can almost see the dust flying off the old master."

2. Family

[2.1] As a number of reviewers noted, the production's domestic setting serves to "beckon us into this family's interior world" (Higgins 2015). This domesticity is not immediately apparent; the set is stark, minimalist, anything but cozy. But it includes two notable features: a long table downstage, the scene of several family dinners; and further upstage, intermittently visible behind the smartglass panels, an enormous bathtub. Dinners and baths: the very stuff of domesticity.

[2.2] The family meals, in particular, are critical to the production's emotional effects. In the first dinner scene, Agamemnon comes home, the table is set, the family sits down together, Iphigenia says grace—and the family interactions that ensue are so utterly relatable, so surprisingly funny, that all the participants immediately feel familiar rather than mythic. "What I want to know," Agamemnon says, "is—who at the table is going to tell this family the story of their day?" "*Dad*," all three children respond in chorus (Aeschylus 2015, 24–25). Electra's teenaged flippancy and boundary-pushing ("Can I have wine?"), Orestes' enthusiasm for cake, and Iphigenia's persistent questions forcefully remind us that Agamemnon's choices will have not only political but also domestic consequences.

[2.3] For this family, of course, domesticity and murder are inextricably interconnected; the bath foreshadows what's to come, and so does the family dinner. When Iphigenia asks what meat they're eating, Klytemnestra answers, "It's venison," but Orestes and Electra add, "It's deer" (24), prompting considerable upset from Iphigenia: "Like it's a real live deer?" (26). In her response, Klytemnestra unwittingly articulates the logic that underlies Iphigenia's execution:

[2.4] IPHIGENIA: You mean we *killed* it?...

KLYTEMNESTRA: Look it's perfectly normal, you've eaten it before.

IPHIGENIA: But if we eat animals, animals die.

KLYTEMNESTRA: Yes, honey, but it's—the animal died in order that we all got to live, to eat. If you could ask the animal it'd be glad that its life keeps all of us alive, by feeding us, happy that we can keep going, and we can eat...Not eating it won't bring it back to life. (26)

[2.5] Later, when she realizes what Agamemnon intends to do, Klytemnestra both rejects this logic—"The death of our child is not the greater good" (50)—and acknowledges her complicity in the link between his war-making and their family: "Violence is how you've put food on our table. And that, I have allowed" (54).

3. Iphigenia

[3.1] Iphigenia's presence transforms the play. In Aeschylus' original plays, the murders that are the trilogy's main events take place offstage: they are described, not seen. Icke's production, by contrast, refuses us the security of mythic distance. Iphigenia's death is not an abstract sacrifice; the audience must watch adults kill a young child onstage, a process that takes several agonizing minutes. It's a clinical rather than a bloody procedure, but it nevertheless forces us—and Agamemnon—to confront the full horror of his choice, and his grief and remorse render him unexpectedly sympathetic:

[3.2] AGAMEMNON: I feel like I've done something so wrong that my whole life, my family, nothing will be able to—the worst mistake. The worst mistake. I got it wrong. It was wrong. It was wrong. (57)

[3.3] Iphigenia continues to appear onstage throughout the play: she wanders through, a ghost or memory, her saffron-yellow dress distinctive amidst the black and white and red of the other costumes. Her ongoing presence suggests that not everything we see on stage is really there—an idea that becomes increasingly important as the play continues.

[3.4] She returns in another form as well: as Cassandra, who Icke specifies should be "reminiscent somehow of Iphigenia" (72). In this production, the adult playing Cassandra not only wears a dress of the same distinctive yellow but also has long dark hair similar to that of the child actor playing Iphigenia. In Aeschylus' original text, Agamemnon captures Cassandra and brings her home as his slave and concubine. Icke's adaptation retains a modern version of this motive: Klytemnestra implies that Cassandra is Agamemnon's mistress in addition to being a prisoner of war. But Cassandra's physical similarity to Iphigenia suggests the alternative possibility that Agamemnon saved her in an attempt to atone for his failure to save his daughter. The production neither confirms nor denies either possibility; both interpretations remain available and plausible.

4. Orestes

[4.1] The play is further transformed by framing much of the onstage action as Orestes' memories, including his reconstruction of events that took place in his absence. In an ongoing conversation, a woman who appears to be a doctor or therapist encourages the adult Orestes to speak: "Just try and tell the truth. Tell me where it started...Travel back along the road, all the way back to where it began" (15).

[4.2] But in the play's last act, based on *Eumenides*, that framing shifts: Orestes is on trial for the murder of his mother, and the therapist becomes a lawyer—or perhaps she was always a lawyer. Indeed, all of the characters from the earlier acts reappear; as Icke's stage direction indicates, the company "are simultaneously the characters they have already played this evening, and representatives in the court case" (104). Klytemnestra reappears as the chief prosecutor, with the doctor assisting, and the servant Cilissa, now a Fury, joins them on the bench. The lawyers for the defense are Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Talthybius. Cassandra returns as Athene, the judge. The intimacies of family and therapy overlay and inform both the arguments of the court and Orestes' responses to those arguments.

[4.3] The trial scenes change the thematic trajectory of the trilogy. Instead of representing the shift from tribal blood feuds to civil forms of justice, they focus on the unreliability of memory, especially in the wake of trauma, and the impossibility of telling a complex truth from a single perspective.

[4.4] AGAMEMNON: Orestes, as best you can, you swear to give the true version / of what you did

ORESTES: There *isn't* one true version. There isn't. There isn't one story—a line of truth that stretches start to end. That doesn't happen any more, maybe it never happened, but even as I say this now, as I say *this* now, in each of your minds you create your own versions, different lenses pointing at the same thing at the same time and *seeing that thing differently...* (108)

[4.5] As in the original, these scenes also address questions of gender: Is Orestes truly guilty of murdering his mother if he did so to avenge his father? But in place of Apollo's argument that mothers are not really parents because their wombs are only the place where the father's seed grows, we get a rather different speech:

[4.6] KLYTEMNESTRA: A sister, a father, a mother—are dead. There has to come an end. But allow me to ask the house: why does the murder of the mother count for less than that of the father? Because the woman is less important. Why is the mother's motive for revenge *lesser* than the son's? She avenged a daughter; he a father. Because the *woman* is less important.

This woman has paid the price. But this house cannot be a place where the woman is less important. (119)

[4.7] Icke's production does not change the play's ending; Orestes is still acquitted of the charge of murdering Klytemnestra. However, Icke's changes compel us to think about *why* the ending is the ending, and in particular to consider the patriarchal forces that constrain that ending.

5. Electra

[5.1] In Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Electra disappears: she and Orestes plot the deaths of Klytemnestra and Aegisthus, but Orestes alone appears to be responsible for their murders. Icke's production both rewrites and explains that disappearance by suggesting that perhaps she was never there at all.

[5.2] DOCTOR: Your hair was the same? And your footprints and hers were the same? A girl? That doesn't make sense. Listen to me, Orestes...I think we have to consider the possibility that those were *your* footprints, that that was *your* hair...You've survived a trauma. Your sister died, Orestes: your sister, Iphigenia. She died. You survived. We have no record of another sister. You had *one* sister. (100)

[5.3] The idea that Electra is a figment of Orestes' imagination is startling, yet it's an idea for which Icke prepares us throughout the adaptation. Electra appears unambiguously present in the first dinner scene, but something is off: in this and other scenes, Klytemnestra or Cilissa address Electra as Orestes (25, 31, 90). In retrospect it seems clear that the first family dinner scene was not an unmediated glimpse of the past but Orestes' own unreliable memory of events. In later scenes, Electra's presence is even more ambiguous: when Orestes mentions Electra, other characters don't react or don't recognize the name.

[5.4] Making Electra imaginary renders eerie rather than amusing the famous scene, later parodied by Euripedes, in which Electra recognizes the presence of Orestes by a lock of hair and a footprint. In Icke's adaptation, the scene shows that something is wrong with Orestes' perception of reality. Transforming this element of the story also allows Icke to comment on the story as a whole. Why is Orestes the only one on trial? Why does the trilogy bear his name? Why is the woman less important?

6. Conclusion

[6.1] As Goldhill observes, "the danger for any work when it becomes a classic is that it remains under aspic, an out-of-date dish admired out of duty. Aeschylus' *Oresteia* is

undoubtedly one of the greatest works of western culture, but it needs continual and active re-engagement with its immense potential to make it speak with its true insistence and power. All translators are traitors, but some traitors turn out to be liberators who let us recalibrate what matters, and see the world from a startlingly new perspective" (7). Icke's adaptation and production provide precisely that active re-engagement.

[6.2] As I filed into the lobby of the Almeida Theatre for the first interval—ten minutes exactly, marked by LED displays (onstage and in the lobby) counting down the time remaining—I overheard a fellow theatre-goer complaining to his companion, "Well, but a contemporary setting doesn't make any sense for the story. Human sacrifice! It's absurd, isn't it. People don't *do* that anymore."

[6.3] Even at the best productions, I suppose, someone is going to miss the point.

7. Works cited

Aeschylus. 2015. *Oresteia*. Adapted by Robert Icke. London: Oberon.

Clapp, Susannah. 2015. "A Terrifying Immediacy." Review of *Oresteia*, adapted and directed by Robert Icke, Almeida Theatre, London. *The Observer*, June 7.

<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/jun/07/oresteia-almeida-review-lia-williams-angus-wright>.

Coppa, Francesca. 2006. "Writing Bodies in Space: Media Fanfiction as Theatrical Performance." In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, 218–37. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Goldhill, Simon. 2015. Introduction to *Oresteia*, by Aeschylus, adapted by Robert Icke, 4–7. London: Oberon.

Higgins, Charlotte. 2015. "Kill and Counter-Kill: Why Does the *Oresteia* Still Slay Them?" *The Guardian*, May 22.

<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/may/22/blood-oresteia-aeschylus-tragedy-almeida-globe-home-theatre>.

Book review

Fandom at the crossroads and *Fangasm!*, by Lynn S. Zubernis and Katherine Larsen

Judith May Fathallah

Bangor University, Bangor, Wales, United Kingdom

[0.1] *Keywords*—Fan community; Fan fiction; *Supernatural*; Television

Fathallah, Judith May. 2016. *Fandom at the Crossroads* and *Fangasm!*, by Lynn S. Zubernis and Katherine Larsen [book review]. In "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work," edited by Ika Willis, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2016.0710>.

Lynn S. Zubernis and Katherine Larsen. *Fandom at the crossroads: Celebration, shame and fan/producer relationships*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, hardcover, \$67.99 (250p) ISBN 978-1443835305; paperback, \$24.99 (259p) ISBN 978-1443841405.

Lynn S. Zubernis and Katherine Larsen. *Fangasm! Supernatural fangirls*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013, paperback \$14.67 (246p) ISBN 978-1609381981; e-book \$17.48 (6732 KB) ASIN B00F5S6IIK.

[1] Out of the messy dual experience of being both fans and academics, Kathy Larsen and Lynn Zubernis hoped to produce one hybrid text that would fuse their fannish and academic identities. The hypothetical book would not compromise either on the emotional aspect of the authors' fannish investment or on the critical/analytic stance of the academic in fan studies. This task proved impossible and the authors grappled continuously with the difficulties of speaking as fans to academics and to academics as fans. *Fandom at the Crossroads* and *Fangasm* are the two books that eventually emerged from their struggle. Neither, as the authors are first to admit, is the idealized hybrid text that would destroy the false dichotomies of academic/fan, reason/emotion, and pleasure/business once and for all, yet both go a good way toward breaking down those boundaries from both the academic and fannish perspectives.

[2] *Fangasm* is primarily a book by fans speaking to fans even as Lynn and Kathy, as they refer to themselves, struggle to legitimate themselves both in fandom and with the cast and crew members that they interview. In their physical and emotional

journey through fandom, they juggle their academic credentials, work responsibilities, and home lives with a deep, irrational, and shame-inducing love for the cult television show *Supernatural* (2005–) and its cast. *Fangasm*'s chapters are organized around the authors' experiences and events that took place on their journeys from attending fan conventions to uncomfortable run-ins with security staff. After the book's prologue—in which the authors first appear in the third person as two ardent fans on their first road trip to Comic Con—Chapter 1, "Falling Down the Rabbit Hole," relates their discovery of and instant obsession with *Supernatural*, and it also introduces some basic theory on fan psychology from a nonpathologizing perspective. This contribution should be valuable to fan readers unfamiliar with the literature who seek explanations for and identification with their emotional investments that are neither shaming nor moralizing.

[3] Shame is a running theme throughout later chapters of *Fangasm*, narrating the progression of the authors' involvement in fandom from attending cons and participating online to visiting sets and interviewing cast and crew. The authors relate a brief endorsement of their research from The Powers That Be (TPTB) behind *Supernatural* and an offer from the studios to publish their work, experiences that temporarily imbue them with the sense of legitimacy that they have craved for their work. That endorsement is abruptly pulled once said TPTB realize that their interests are more in fan fic, slash, and female desire and community than in simply promoting the show. Relatedly, there is a valuable discussion of how culture instills shame in women for desire, sexuality, and pleasure, yet the authors may overgeneralize this as integral to fannish experience. While the authors experience significant personal cost in terms of lost friendships and family tensions as they pursue their fannish pleasures, they perhaps generalize a little too freely about the price we pay for fandom. Who are the we for whom the authors speak? Indeed, the central weakness of *Fangasm* may be that it speaks to and for a quite specific subset of fandom yet gives the impression that it discusses fandom as a whole.

[4] Community divisions, hierarchies, and jealousy in fandom are also explored, especially as the authors' status as academics begins to grant them coveted access to the shows' stars and production personnel. They become increasingly unhappily aware that their positions are beginning to incur jealousy, divisions, and ill feeling in a community that they had formerly perceived as harmonious and unified. Fannish community is discussed in conjunction with some psychological literature on niche seeking and identity construction through media in the contemporary world. Again, this is a valuable contribution for fans seeking an introduction to the psychology of fandom and a strong addition to the sparse literature on fandom from the perspective of normal psychology rather than pathology. The book concludes with a series of interviews with *Supernatural* cast and crew, primarily addressing their perception of

and relation to fandom. Far from the fears that some fans may harbor of being perceived as insane, excessive, or deviant by their objects of desire, cast and crew are presented as appreciative, accommodating, and unperturbed by their fans. However, it should be noted that Larsen and Zubernis take their interviewees' statements rather at face value—some appreciation and discussion of the fact that cast and crew are participants in a discursive construction on which their jobs ultimately depend, and that they were aware that they were speaking to researchers for publication, would have added a useful lens to these chapters. This omission may be a result of the authors' own position as fans or a requirement of publication for a primarily fannish audience. Yet even nonacademic fans are not generally naïve regarding contexts of production, and some exploration of the political economy in which both researchers and informants were acting would have been useful.

[5] Where *Fangasm's* chapters are structured around places, events, and experiences, *Fandom at the Crossroads'* chapters reference current topics and theories in fan studies. This book opens with a literature review and concludes with a bibliography, both structural requirements of an academic work speaking to fellow academics. Yet the personal voices of Larsen and Zubernis (still Kathy and Lynn in the text) are not lost. In Chapter 2, "Business or Pleasure," they review work on the problematic double position of researcher and fan and explore their own place within that position. Much of the material in *Fandom at the Crossroads* is quite similar to that of *Fangasm*. Both include exploration of the hierarchized spaces and places of fandom (Chapter 1, "Lost in Space: Participatory Fandom and the Negotiation of Fan Spaces"); of women's negotiation of shame and pleasure (Chapter 3, "I'm Too Sexy for My Stereotype"); and of niche seeking and community. *Fandom at the Crossroads* addresses the topics in more explicit discussion with academic work. The researchers' position as authors is slightly more formal here yet still valuably reflexive—they explicitly discuss, for instance, how assuming an academic position reduces shame through downplaying emotion and sex, devalued categories in our society and doubly so for women.

[6] Chapter 4 discusses fandom as a transformative agent of change, less socially than from a psychological intrapersonal perspective, integrating literature on writing as therapeutic self-expression and narrative therapy with discussion of fan fic and interviews with its authors. This is another important contribution to a less-discussed aspect of fan fic in academia: fan fic and its kinks and tropes as self-discovery, self-empowerment, and a working through of trauma rather than as an explicitly political agent of change in the media industries. However, the lack of a clear methodology to the selection and of analysis of interviews and statements is problematic. The authors admit that they kept their researcher-identities off LiveJournal and presented only as fans. Does this mean that the information was covertly gathered? Is this the case with

the quotations taken and anonymized from a locked community (Chapter 5, "Only Love Can Break Your Heart: Fandom Wank and Policing the Safe Space")? If not, how were the fan participants recruited and selected? Indeed, the lack of a clear methodology and justification for the selection and presentation of material is the primary weakness of *Fandom at the Crossroads*. Without this, at times it runs the risk of slipping into the impressionistic and again presenting the researchers' experience of fandom as those of fandom as a whole.

[7] The final chapters of *Fandom at the Crossroads* discuss *Supernatural's* in-text assaults on the fourth wall via metatextual episodes and the inclusion in the script of characters playing fans, and the book concludes with much of the same interview material as does *Fangasm*. Much of this material is fascinating and valuable, but again may be better taken more as a discourse to which the cast and crew contribute significant statements than as an unmediated window into their psychology. Some discussion of showrunner Eric Kripke's self-position as fanboy-auteur would have been useful here, especially as this is the more academically oriented of the two books, and readers will likely be approaching it with this framework of knowledge.

[8] The challenge that Larsen and Zubernis set themselves with *Fangasm* and *Crossroads* was a formidable one: to write as academics who are fans and fans who are academics. They sought to explore the experience of fandom from a nonpathologizing psychological perspective while questioning and crossing the artificial barriers that fans and academics set up between themselves and each other. It is hardly surprising that two books were needed under the circumstances. Despite the fact that *Crossroads* has been and will be inevitably pitched toward a more scholarly audience and *Fangasm* toward a fannish one, the books do succeed in some valuable and thought-provoking complications of that division. The discussions of shame and community seeking are an important contribution to the literature. Both books suffer a little from overgeneralization of the researchers' experience; this is more of a problematic issue in *Crossroads* than in *Fangasm*. In *Crossroads*, a more systematic and transparent methodology would amend this. It would also alleviate the concerns noted above regarding the selection of quoted material and ethics of reporting fan discussion in a scholarly context. Nonetheless, it is an important contribution to fan studies literature and would fit well in a master's or advanced undergraduate course, as much for its reflexive authorial positioning as for its topicality. *Fangasm* will certainly be of interest to many fans of *Supernatural*, especially those involved with creative communities and transformative work. It will provide a valuable introduction to some psychological and social theories of fandom, as well as insight into the responsible academic study of fandom.

Book review

Fan CULTure: Essays on participatory fandom in the 21st century, edited by Kristin M. Barton and Jonathan Malcolm Lampley

Bertha Chin

Swinburne University of Technology, Sarawak, Malaysia

[0.1] *Keywords*—Fan activism; Fan fiction; Fan films; Generational fandom; Social media

Chin, Bertha. 2016. *Fan CULTure: Essays on Participatory Fandom in the 21st Century*, edited by Kristin M. Barton and Jonathan Malcolm Lampley [book review]. *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 22.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2016.0700>.

Kristin M. Barton and Jonathan Malcolm Lampley, editors, *Fan CULTure: Essays on participatory fandom in the 21st century*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014, paperback, \$40 (212p) ISBN 978-0-7864-7418-9, e-book ISBN 978-1-4766-0459-6.

[1] While reading through this collection, I was reminded of a recurring line from the reimagined series of *Battlestar Galactica* (2004–9): "All of this has happened before and will happen again." Coeditor Jonathan Malcolm Lampley echoes this sentiment, reminding us that popular culture, and thus fans' appreciation of popular texts, is cyclical: "Everything comes around again as a matter of course" (195). Both fan studies scholars and fans are often reintroduced to popular texts from different eras as these texts are referenced in newer ones through reruns or are reimagined by revivals and remakes. At the same time, technology continues to affect the growth and development of fan culture, changing the ways in which participatory and promotional strategies are conceptualized by media producers and the industry. This edited collection, with chapters that look at fan practices from a variety of popular television, literary, and film texts, exemplifies these cycles and shifts.

[2] Available in both paperback and e-book formats, *Fan CULTure* consists of an introduction, foreword, afterword, and 13 original chapters divided into three sections titled "Fan Productions," "Social Media," and "Fan-Influenced Content." In the introduction, coeditor Kristin M. Barton declares that the book does not try to define what a fan is. Rather, it "explores what a fan *does*." Barton argues that "being a fan

means being in love" (6), and fans' engagement and production of transformative works such as fan fiction and fan films are a declaration of that love. Therefore, the sections in the book presents the different explorations of the ways in which fans engage with the text, as well as with each other and with media/content producers.

[3] The first section, "Fan Productions," contains essays on fans who produce transformative works such as fiction, films, and trailers, particularly for texts such as *Firefly* (2002–3) and the original run of *Dark Shadows* (1966–71) that were long ago canceled on television, and their importance in sustaining fan community and interest. Don Tresca's chapter on adult-oriented fan fiction in the Harry Potter franchise (1997–2011), for instance, looks at how producing these fan narratives helps young adult fans explore complex sexual emotions and desires. Section 2, "Social Media," considers the Internet more generally; chapters address how social media and Internet technologies influence the construction of fan communities, enabling fans to remain active during TV hiatuses or in periods leading up to film releases. Additionally, rather than focusing solely on media texts and fandoms, the section includes a chapter by Susan Orenstein on the controversial celebrification of NFL star Tim Tebow. In the final section, "Fan-Influenced Content," the essays explore the ever-evolving relationship between media producers and fans, looking at how the advent of Internet technologies not only makes fandom more visible but also enables fans to influence content, often to mixed results, through their practices. Anissa M. Graham's chapter on *Supernatural* (2005–) fan fiction, for instance, discusses the ways in which the show's producers have commented on the fandom through episodes that seemingly mock fans, but Graham argues that the episodes could be seen as the producers' acknowledgment, rather than censure, of fans' creative force.

[4] There is a hint of nostalgia—which speaks of the importance of historicization in fan studies—in some of the essays in the collection, with chapters looking at the fandoms of older or classic media texts such as *Dark Shadows*. Jeff Thompson provides a historical overview of *Dark Shadows* fandom from the show's debut in the 1960s to its current state, with the advent of Internet technologies such as mailing lists sustaining the fandom even while the show is no longer on the air. Thompson charts how fan interactions have shifted from being mediated through the television text and fan conventions to the utilization of social media like Facebook, which supports a greater sense of intimacy and has enabled fans to keep up to date with news of the cast and crew of the original series. Likewise, Bethan Jones's chapter on how fans of *The X-Files* (1993–2002) make use of social media to further connect with one another and to keep the fandom alive manifests a sense of nostalgia. In this case, social media is also important for fans campaigning for a third *X-Files* film, as fans rally to get their voices heard by producers, the studio, and the network. However, Jones also highlights potential tensions that arise from fans' use of social media and

the blurring of lines between media producers and fans—an overarching theme that connects the chapters of this edited volume.

[5] In the afterword, Lampley reflects that there are many other topics and fandoms that were not covered in *Fan CULTure* and that a future edition would benefit from the inclusion of fandoms that include, in addition to television, film, and literature, music and sports. Notably missing from the volume is a discussion of antifandom as well as how controversial public figures may attract hate, which Orenstein's chapter on Tim Tebow and Tresca's chapter on adult-oriented Harry Potter fan fiction only hint at. Tresca, for example, suggests that some adult-oriented fan fictions are produced by Harry Potter antifans as a form of backlash against the phenomenon caused by the franchise. Tresca's approach, which focuses on psychological perspectives, provides an interesting addition to academic work on antifandom, and this, along with further explorations of antifandom and tensions caused by the blurring of boundaries between producers and fans as well as the utilization of social media, would have expanded the field of interest to include those looking beyond fan declarations of love.

[6] Many books on fan cultures focus on popular and current fandoms, such as *Sherlock* (2010–), *Game of Thrones* (2011–), *Twilight* (2005–12), and *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011–). The strength of this collection lies in the editors' choice to include popular cult and mainstream fandoms—*Lost* (2004–10), *Firefly*, *The X-Files*—as well as rarely explored fandoms, such as LEGO, Disneyland, and sports/athletes. The chapters on adult LEGO fans by Jennifer C. Garlen and the utopian spaces of Disneyland theme parks by Meyrav Koren-Kuik remind us that fan cultures are not limited to media texts; they also exist around material objects such as LEGO and in spaces like Disneyland. They also link to, for the former, the growing body of academic work on material-related fandom (Rehak 2014) and, for the latter, fan spaces such as theme parks and fan conventions (Geraghty 2014). For example, Garlen's exploration of adult LEGO fans leads us into the negotiations performed by LEGO in recognition (and perhaps in acknowledgment) of the emotional labor performed by fans as LEGO Ambassadors—a negotiation not unlike that performed by producers of the TV series *Lost* through the official podcast and the alternate reality game, as explored by Michael Graves in another chapter in this edited volume. In line with the book's other chapters, Graves notes the tension between "fan-driven content and canonical narrative" (106)—fans and media producers—that results from the changing boundaries between these groups is often facilitated by online media technologies.

[7] This glimpse into fan cultures that are often overlooked—or, in the case of sports fandom, often classified as different from media fandom—complicates common assumptions that fandoms are more prevalent for current literary, television, or film texts rather than objects or spaces. As such, this collection provides a satisfying

overview of fan cultures that remain underdiscussed in the field of fan studies. The book's essays expand on many of the concerns raised by fan studies scholars that are often highlighted in TWC. Perhaps more importantly, however, it speaks to current attempts to bring more interdisciplinary work into the field: the chapters look broadly at issues of consumerism and historicization as well as the place of religion and sports in the greater American public consciousness.

Works cited

Geraghty, Lincoln. 2014. *Cult Collectors: Nostalgia, Fandom, and Collecting Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Rehak, Bob. 2014. "Materiality and Object-Oriented Fandom" [editorial]. In "Material Fan Culture," edited by Bob Rehak, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0622>.