NEVERENDING STORIES: UNAUTHORIZED CONTINUATIONS, FICTIONAL REALITIES, AND THE LONG-FORM NARRATIVE FROM 1590-2011

by

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Abstract

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In reader-response theory, the open text demands that its readers collaborate in its construction. Such participation requires that these readers invest in the text's narrative universe, an investment made more possible when a fiction exhibits the properties of *selvage*: a firm, detailed, and consistent framework shot through with unfinished edges (termed *fractures*) that invite and support the reader's response in the form of continuation. These unauthorized extensions literally transform active reading into writing, while their presence recursively solidifies the fictional universe's imaginary space, further buttressing its autonomous existence. Such narrative reinforcement troubles many critics because an independent fictional reality not owned solely by a primary creator has disruptive implications for textual properties and copyrights. Nevertheless, these unauthorized continuations are the tangible artifacts of invested, pleasurable, and embodied reading, a type of reading and pleasure that is itself a revelatory form of literary criticism. Classifying texts in terms of their readers' desire to enter into and extend the narrative world encourages an understanding of these texts as evolving objects that must be categorized and described not just statically, but also dynamically, in terms of their capacity to generate. Three distinct (though occasionally intersecting) kinds of source-texts are identified here; the first locates the source's imaginary space as a narrative of place, the second as a narrative of society, character, and people, and the third as a narrative of interstices. Narratives of place such as Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* evoke fantasies of exploration and colonization; narratives of society

like Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* call forth fantasies of unveiling; and narratives of interstices such as J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, as well as various long-running television programs, endorse fantasies of dimensionality and dialogue. An examination of these fantasies of continuation from 1590 to 2011 reveals a cyclical pattern in the reception of derivations and continuations. After the Romantic privileging of originality in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the postmodern conception of creativity once more begins to resemble the more collaborative vision of the early modern period, a perspective which produces a queer, non-normative, multiplicitous, and *post-canonical* understanding of literature and fiction.

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If "all novels are sequels," then certainly all dissertations are collaborations, and mine perhaps more than most. I am indebted to the Graduate Center of the City University of New York for providing an atmosphere in which the necessary instruments, essential to the study of literature, are allowed to thrive and flourish: intellect, sense of humor, critical and linguistic aptitude, aesthetic appreciation, civic engagement, and serendipity. If any of these are reflected in my work, I am grateful. I thank all the authors—too numerous to mention here—who have pleased, provoked, enchanted, and infuriated me; in their various ways, they have all compelled me to read and write into their fictional worlds and without them, I would not be here to write this. More tangibly, I thank the Graduate Center for their generous support of my dissertation with the Helaine Newstead Fellowship in the Humanities and the Ph.D. Program in English for their award of the Morton Cohen Travel Grant. I also thank the English Department at Queens College for their award of a Graduate Assistant Fellowship over the past three years; apart from the financial benefit that this fellowship provided, I was pleased to have the opportunity to teach courses in which I could rehearse and sharpen many of the ideas in this thesis.

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Introduction

All novels are sequels; influence is bliss.
-Michael Chabon, *Maps and Legends: Reading and Writing Along the Borderlands*

When they had heaped up the barrow they went back again into the city,
and being well assembled they held high feast in the house of Priam their king.
Thus, then, did they celebrate the funeral of Hector, breaker of horses…
-Homer, *The Iliad*

The first great epic of Western literature ends with a cliffhanger: the death of one hero in an ongoing war and the city still under siege. Despite the best efforts of scholars to strip legends of their enchantment, in our collective imagination a blind bard named Homer persistently lingers, singing his poem on some long ago Aeolian hilltop. And what is a poem without someone to hear it? Surely in this dream his audience must be there as well. Perhaps among these auditors there could have been, once or twice, someone to whom the story itself was entirely new—a child, possibly—who might conceivably have asked a very simple, very obvious question: who won the war in the end, Trojans or Greeks? This question of "what happened next?" is the storyteller's spur without which there is no forward motion. If there *was* a Homer—and if he didn't exist, he ought to have—perhaps it was only after many such demands that he gazed into his wine-dark sea and, amidst the thunder of the waves crashing against the beach, told finally his greatest work: the first sequel in the Western canon.

I am not concerned with the Homeric question,[1] or even really these particular texts and their companions in the epic cycle. It is their massive imprint on popular culture that I wish to touch upon here, and the immensely seductive construction of their grand meta-narrative, which begins with the *Iliad* describing only one year out of a twenty year war; though a complete story,

[1] The Homeric question is the debate about the authorship of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and whether the two texts were in fact composed by a single author. See Robert Fowler, "The Homeric question," *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, ed. Robert Fowler (Cambridge University Press, 2004) in *Cambridge Collections Online*, Cambridge University Press, 10 July 2012.

it still begs for continuation. The next entry in the series, the *Odyssey* (or *Troy II: the Voyage Home*), is a work that many claim surpasses its antecedent. Centuries later, Virgil composed his *Aeneid* and today this source, sequel, and series 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.[2] And when a businessman named Heinrich Schliemann, fascinated by the tale from childhood, received permission to dig near a town called Hissarlik in 1868, it became not just a story, but almost universally accepted "truth": demonstrating how the fictions to which we return over and over again construct our reality.

Of course, the claim that the fictional essentially manufactures the real is not axiomatic, especially since fiction is often thought to be diametrically opposed to reality—as lies are to truth. Indeed, it is fiction's counterfactual nature that historically gives rise to much of the opposition against it, requiring its proponents to spend time justifying its very existence. Salman Rushdie succinctly gives voice to this very concern in his excellent children's novel, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1991) when he asks a question that has troubled authors from Plato[3] to Sir

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[2] This classical storyworld prefigures "The Verse," a postmodern conception of a fictional universe. Usually referred to with a show or franchise identifier (such as "Buffyverse", "Whoniverse", "Potterverse," etc.), a "verse" is defined as "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." See "The Verse," *Television Tropes and Idioms*, http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/TheVerse.

[3] Plato suggests that the ideal republic ought to banish all poets, who do not make *real* things, but only the *appearance* of things, and thus perpetuate falsehood without inculcating virtue. See Plato, *Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1992), 264-292.

Philip Sidney:[4] "*What's the use of stories that aren't even true?*"[5] In his *Ars Poetica*, Horace answers that fiction's purpose is to amuse and edify and indeed, *dulce et utile* is the ideal that continues to animate our relationship with literature today.[6] Such a reply—which suggests that "entertainment" must be coupled with "lessons" in order to make the lessons at all palatable and the entertainment at all useful, as well as its implied corollary: that the medicine of didacticism is necessarily and fundamentally distinct from the sugar of pleasure—is somewhat problematic. It would be foolish to think that fiction does *not* have the capacity to entertain and inform, since of course it often does both. However, it is important to note that these functions of delight and education cast the reader and the story as passive: the reader is a receptacle into which the story is deposited and the only one with true agency in the whole equation is the originating author. Alternatively, if the reader as well as the story is imagined to be active, then the text may be measured on a different scale, that is, what it can make the reader *do*.

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[4] Sidney responds directly to Plato's conflation of the liar and the poet by saying that "the Poet, he nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth: for as I take it, to lie, is to affirme that to bee true, which is false […] But the Poet as I said before, never affirmeth, […] to conjure you to beleeve for true, what he writeth […] In troth, not laboring to tel you what is, or is not, but what should, or should not be. And therefore though he recount things not true, yet because he telleth them not for true, he lieth not." See Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie*, ed. Risa S. Bear (University of Oregon/Renascence Editions, 1992), http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/defence.html#%28text%29.

[5] Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (London: Penguin, 1993), 20.

[6] See Horace's *Epistle to the Pisos: The Art of Poetry*, lines 333-334 and lines 343-345: *Aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare poetae /Aut simul et jucunda et idonea dicere vitae. […] Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci,/ Lectorem delectando, pariterque monendo*. Translation: Poets aim either to confer benefit or to give pleasure, or to say things which are at once both pleasing and helpful to life […] the writer who blends the profitable with the agreeable wins every vote, by charming and instructing the reader at the same time. See Horace, *Satires and Epistles*, trans. John Davie (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011), 114-115.

Delineating the possibilities of literature in the *Defence of Poesie*, Sidney writes that "so in poesy looking but for fiction," readers may "use the narration but as an imaginative ground-plot of a profitable invention."[7] Reading this passage, Katrin Ettenhuber argues that

> Sidney's […] idealized worlds have specific practical designs on the audience: they want to fire the moral imagination and encourage us to reinvent ourselves in their image […in] the embodied form of a golden universe that operates according to the patterns of hyperbolic rhetoric: [… breaking] the boundaries of the plausible, thereby encouraging us to transcend our own limitations […]. The idea of an active reader, who is capable of seeing beyond the literal and willing to till the ground-plot of virtuous self-improvement forms a crucial part of this endeavor.[8]

Active readers, then, are those who use the fertile ground of the text in order to produce more "profitable inventions." Such a metaphorical understanding of the text as physical object (land, body, and the various intersections between them) is particularly useful to my project because it

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[7] Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie*, ed. Risa S. Bear (University of Oregon/Renascence Editions, 1992), http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/defence.html#%28text%29

[8] Katrin Ettenhuber, "Hyperbole: exceeding similitude," in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, eds. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 212.

revolves around the ways in which the text may impinge on the reader in the real world and the reader may be brought into the textual one.[9]

Often, active reading, which conflates the text's fictional universe with the reader's real one, is not held in high regard. The distinction between barely acceptable "erotic realism," and utterly disreputable "pornography," for instance, is in the text's ability to make the reader literally act; if it does so, provoking the physical response of arousal, or even worse, the act of masturbation, then it crosses the fiction-reality divide, and is classified as pornography, with all the attendant denigration that accompanies such a classification.[10] It's no accident that objections to fiction often highlight its sexual, potentially pornographic implications as so many critiques of the chivalric romance[11] and the novel[12] have done, locating their discomfort in the

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[9] See Paul Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling," *Critical Inquiry* 5.1 Special Issue on Metaphor (Autumn 1978): 156. Ricoeur persuasively claims that just as metaphor bridges the gap between the two objects that are likened, so, too, it bridges the gap between the embodied reader and the text's intellectual space, through an emotional or *feeling* response. He argues that "By saying that [the process of imaginative congruence] is felt, we underscore the fact that we are included in the process as knowing subjects. If the process can be called, as I called it, predicative *assimilation*, it is true that *we* are assimilated, that is, made similar, to what is seen as similar. This self-assimilation is a part of the commitment proper to the "illocutionary" force of the metaphor as speech act. We *feel* like what we *see* like. If we are somewhat reluctant to acknowledge this contribution of feeling to the illocutionary act of metaphorical statements, it is because we keep applying to feeling our usual interpretation of emotion as both inner and bodily states. […] To *feel*, in the emotional sense of the word, is to make ours what has been put at a distance by thought in its objectifying phase. Feelings, therefore, have a very complex kind of intentionality. They are not merely inner states but interiorized thoughts. It is as such that they accompany and complete the work of imagination as schematizing a synthetic operation: they make the schematized thought ours. […P]oetic feeling['s …] function is to abolish the distance between knower and known without canceling the cognitive structure of thought and the intentional distance which it implies. Feeling is not contrary to thought. It is thought made ours. This felt participation is a part of its complete meaning as poem [italics original]."

[10] David Allyn, *Make Love, Not War: The Sexual Revolution: An Unfettered History*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 58. Quoting the major study *Pornography and the Law* (1959), Allyn points to the Kronhausens' distinction between pornography and erotic realism, where "the only real difference between the two was that pornography aroused while erotic realism did not."

[11] In *The Schoolmaster* (1570), for example, Roger Ascham scornfully ascribes the "whole pleasure" of the *Morte D'Arthur* to its "open manslaughter and bold bawdry."

text's capacity to arouse and seduce. Although this may seem like a solely puritanical response, I don't think this discomfort is entirely about policing sexual activity. Rather, it is to do with the way textual arousal bridges the gap between the fictional and the real.

Indeed, as we shall see in the following chapters, critics register similar responses to continuations as they do to pornography, seemingly viewing continuation itself, irrespective of content, as a deviant and erotic act. I feel this similarity of response occurs because readers continue texts only when they believe in them and, much like arousal, belief crosses the boundary between the fictional world and the real, embodied one. In other words, continuation, like pornography, is transgressive and discomfiting because it renders the supposedly impassable boundary between fiction and reality permeable. This incursion from one category into another makes the unauthorized act of continuation seem perverse and illegitimate.

Queer theory suggests that "queerness" is to be found in the confounding of fixed categories and normative hierarchies, not only in terms of sexuality, gender identity, and the body, but beyond these, in all structures of pleasure, desire, and power.[13] As destabilizing forces, perversity, fluidity, and difference, then, are all inherently queer, as is illegitimacy. Since continuations are the tangible artifacts of invested, embodied, and pleasurable reading, created outside the bounds of official sanction and unsettling to the linear hierarchies of textual ownership, it is possible to read unauthorized continuation as essentially and fundamentally queer. The understanding of continuation as a queer act is even more apt because the belief required to sustain and evoke continuation inspires a carnal and emotional relationship with the

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[12] See Allyn, *Make Love, Not War*, 57 for the censorship of texts like *Ulysses* (1922) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928).
[13] See William Turner, *Genealogy of Queer Theory* (Philadephia: Temple University Press, 2000), 9.

text, making continuation a form of affective reading/writing,[14] and in an essentialist conception, read as feminine, like all affective (rather than objective or logical) responses.

While individual literary worth obviously varies widely from one continuation to another, this kind of response is exciting in more ways than one, providing a new critical framework within which to analyze texts. In my examination of various kinds of continuations of Sidney's *Arcadia*, Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Rowling's Harry Potter series, and several popular television narratives—texts which overwhelmingly encourage and provoke revisitation—I argue that narratives which are generative of continuations are the ultimate "open texts" and that the secondary creations which arise from these sources ought to be appreciated as pieces of creative scholarship; thus, I see the writing of continuations literally as a form of active reading, the product and profit of Sidney's ideal reader.

Theorists such as Roland Barthes have suggested that genre texts such as romances or fantasies are the most closed to a reader due to their strict adherence to narrative conventions within the genre; I instead argue that since genre texts rely upon the reader's instinctive understanding of plot and character parameters within the fictional universe, they best construct the solid belief necessary to support and sustain audience extensions and completions. These extensions are not only post-scripts to the plot, but exist as jazz improvisations upon an established melodic theme, where the key is set and the time, but the notes and the flourishes are re-imagined by every performer, creating an endlessly collaborative, mutable, and dynamic work. Within this defined playspace, the multiplicity of these various narrative threads, which may be mutually contradictory, introduce error into such a fictional universe's otherwise solid

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[14] For the relationship between affect theory and queer theory, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes," in *After Sex: Writing After Queer Theory*, eds. Andrew Parker and Janet Halley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 283-302.

reality. The gaps between these threads, which I call fractures, serve as doorways into the textual universe for subsequent authors whose own extensions may recursively continue this process.

My dissertation begins by establishing my theoretical lens, an extension of reader response theory in which I argue that the reader's "completion" of the text does not end with the act of reading but develops through the composition and publication of derivative creative works that extend the original narrative. In looking at reader completions of these texts, I create a taxonomy that classifies texts according to how conducive they are to continuations as well as what kinds of continuations a text may inspire, and what types of readerly desires these continuations seek to satisfy. Chapter two will examine Sidney's *Arcadia* and its continuations as fantasies of exploration that imagine the text as a landscape which may be newly settled and colonized. Chapter three will take an in-depth look at Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, examining how its many sequels are fantasies of unveiling where readers, who have conflated the novel with its characters, seek to know these characters completely and reveal all their secrets. In chapter four, I'll examine the way in which J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, its interaction with its digital fan community, and its fanfictional continuations represent fantasies of dimensionality, where readers see themselves as the narrative's corrective co-architects, adding new heights to its already extant structure. Chapter five will demonstrate how the critical model I have constructed can be applied to television narratives, and the fantasies of dialogue such narratives can endorse, where readers may literally interact with and affect the narrative universe in real time as it is happening. In a coda, I suggest that we are returning to an understanding of fictive creation that has much in common with the early modern period, a historical perspective that will hopefully offer some new possibilities for better legislating and appreciating the

relationship between readers and fictional universes and the political, cultural, and aesthetic ramifications of this relationship.

Chapter I: Return and Reality
a theory of fictions and their continuations

...the house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million...
Henry James, from the preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*

An initial hurdle to overcome in advancing a theory of continuations and derivative texts is that the very term "derivative" has come to carry a negative valence; it implies "lack of originality" which often becomes synonymous with "theft," although it is true that some borrowings are more critically sanctioned and socially acceptable than others. Jean Rhys' *The Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), a post-colonial re-framing of *Jane Eyre* (1847) from the perspective of Mr. Rochester's first wife, is considered by many to be a major work, important enough to be regularly included in the academic curriculum. Forty years after Rhys' novel, Geraldine Brooks' *March* (2006), in which an idealistic Union army chaplain is forced to confront the racism and brutality of both the Confederacy as well as his own side in the Civil War, won the Pulitzer Prize despite being an explicit derivative of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868). Conversely, the many addenda to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) that are currently to be found on book-store shelves are dismissed entirely from literary significance while the numerous rewritings and continuations of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series (1997-2007) that exist on the internet in the form of fan fiction[1] are not merely less significant than professionally published works, but also appear to be actively offensive to many.[2]

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[1] Fan fiction is broadly defined as the amateur, monetarily uncompensated writing of a text's fans (as opposed to the professional writing of the source text's author) that takes this source text as a point of departure.
[2] For such a critically hostile look at fan fiction, see Robin Hobb, "The Fan-Fiction Rant," http://web.archive.org/web/20050630015105/http://www.robinhobb.com/rant.html. Hobb writes that in fan-fiction "Romances are invented, gender identities changed, fetishes indulged and endings are altered. It's not flattery […] At the extreme low end of the spectrum, fan fiction becomes personal masturbation fantasy […]. Fan-fiction is unworthy of you. Don't do it." See also Cathy Young, "Lee Goldberg's war on fanfic," *Cathy Young: The Y-Files*, February 7, 2007, http://cathyyoung.blogspot.com/2007/02/lee-goldbergs-war-on-fanfic_07.html.

From this sampling, it appears that if the source text is generally well regarded and its author is dead, then perhaps derivation can also be considered permissible and even in some cases respectable, an homage rather than an affront. Meanwhile, writing that revisits already extant worlds—especially worlds that are popular rather than elite and whose original creators are living—is thought of as, at best, immature and uninspired, and at worst, immoral and unethical. I suggest this devaluation takes place not because of some lack of quality intrinsic to continuations or popular texts with mass-market appeal, but rather because the reading of fiction is, on its face, already seen as a deeply suspicious and dangerous act. The writing of continuations is viewed with correspondingly great discomfort simply because such writing represents the literal evidence and marker of something we apparently find both transgressive and troubling: the practice of reading fiction for pleasure and, what's more, taking the pursuit of this pleasure seriously.

The Erotics of Fictional Credibility

In the days when the novel was more "novel," it was a matter of course for authors to attempt to assert the "reality" of their fictions. What is sometimes described as the first English novel, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719),[3] has a full title that practically pounds its fist on the reader's desk, insisting that it is a really-true personal narrative, complete with a litany of corroborating details to prove it: *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner; who lived eight and twenty years all alone, on an uninhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the mouth of the great river of Oroonoque; having been cast on shore by shipwreck, wherein all the men perished but himself. With an account how he was at*

[3] See Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 17-18. Watt locates the novel's particularity of form in its realism saying that, "the novel is surely distinguished from other genres and from previous forms of fiction by the amount of attention it habitually accords both to the individualization of its characters and to the detailed presentation of their environment."

last strangely delivered by pirates. Written by Himself. It is clearly the author's conviction that the inclusion of each unnecessary detail works to build further an incontrovertible case for the story's verisimilitude. Perpetuating this illusory authenticity was naturally of paramount importance for Defoe, given the common contemporary view that fiction-making was either frivolous or simply lies.

Centuries later, the intersection of reality and fiction remains a similarly vexed point. For example, when the Harry Potter series first became popular, right wing watchdog groups accused the novels of teaching children spells and witchcraft.[4] This begs the question: did these groups believe the magic portrayed in the books to be real? Did they think that if the spells described in the novels were performed, children would be able to levitate feathers, ride broomsticks, and summon various items with a stick and a butchered Latin phrase? If they were so afraid of these texts, then on some level—however absurd it might seem—they must have thought that readers would believe in them, and that this belief was dangerous, a threat and a rival to the Christian belief they felt was far more vital to instill.[5] It is the ability of a story to engender belief that makes fiction so compelling and so terrifying: the possibility that the reader may not be able to successfully distinguish between the real and the imaginary. If it is real—a true story—then it

[4] See Jack Chick, "The Nervous Witch," *Chick Tracts*, 2002, http://www.chick.com/reading/tracts/5012/5012_01.asp and Holly Kurtz, "Harry Potter Expelled From School," *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, November 6, 1999, http://www.cesnur.org/recens/potter_06.htm.

[5] See Amanda Cockrell, "Harry Potter and the Witch Hunters: A Social Context for the Attacks on Harry Potter," *The Journal of American Culture* 29.1 (March 2006): 27-8. Cockrell writes, "Given the Christian fundamentalist assumption that the monsters and miracles of the Bible are literally true, in all their ferocious splendor, then the unseen world must indeed exist, and the separation of fact from fiction that deals with that world becomes shaky. With this in mind, a feeling of vulnerability to the supernatural is not surprising. Fiction must conform to perceived fact, and when it does not, strange contortions arise […] If art may make the unreal real, it may also disguise the real as fiction, and teach witchcraft in the guise of fantasy. Whose truth is the one truth? The idea that there may be more than one truth is disturbing to those whose religious faith rests on an unchanging world, where fact stays still."

may pass as acceptable. If a text is merely imaginary, then it may be dismissed as trivial. If, however, it is imaginary but somehow convinces readers to discard reality in its favor—or if we fear that it may so convince others—then it is potentially dangerous.

The lure of fiction is both irresistible and suspect because of the potential of stories to be believed, and for this belief to act as a dissociative force that transports a reader or viewer from reality and their physical self. Validating the playworld and taking its counterfactual narrative universe seriously—an investment that becomes tangible and embodied through the presence of continuations—suggests to some critics that to be absorbed in a fictional world is to forget the mundane one, to casually exchange it for the one that belongs to the characters who readers may become. However, it's not only readers and viewers who travel to fictional worlds. Writers also experience this phenomenon, often characterizing it in terms of a weightless self-forgetfulness followed by a disconcerting reentry into the prison of the real. Novelist Roald Dahl, for instance, describes such fictional travel, by saying:

> For those two hours [the writer] has been miles away, he has been somewhere else, in a different place with totally different people, and the effort of swimming back into normal surroundings is pretty great. It is almost a shock. The writer walks out of his workroom in a daze. He wants a drink. He needs it.[6]

The drink, then, is the lubricant that eases the bewildering transition between two states of being, one of which is imaginary and the other, real and physical.

Yet despite this sharp distinction between the meat-world and the mind-world, to be lost inside a text's imaginary universe is a deeply erotic act, often inseparable from the flesh. Roland Barthes, for example, describes the pleasure of reading as that in which "all the body's emotions are present, mingled, coiled up: fascination, emptiness, pain, voluptuousness" and it is

[6] Roald Dahl, *Boy: Tales of Childhood* (New York: Puffin, 1984), 172.

"overwhelmed."[7] Similarly, in the eighteenth century, when the perils of novel reading (particularly for women) were animadverted upon with what Katherine Binhammer describes as "obsessive frequency," critics of the practice repeatedly located the dangers of reading in the sexual, corporeal arena.[8] In the rhetoric of such critics, novels were not merely held to corrupt and contaminate their readers' minds, they were actually thought to seduce their readers' bodies; a novel reader was, it seems, one small step away from being a prostitute.[9] Binhammer believes that this model of the female reader describes a "passive receptacle," one who

> equates the self with the text (you are what you read); thus, the world of the text becomes her world. She reads transparently, incapable of doing anything but mimicking novels; therefore, she collapses reality with imaginative fiction, herself with the heroine, and her valet with her lover. The consuming reader enters a dangerously delusive state, one that ensures her sexual vulnerability; for she is also an embodied reader, and the words simultaneously become sensations she feels. The moralists' metaphor of novels as poison is apt for this model of reader. The active female reader, however, distinguishes between real and fictive worlds and by reading with her mind creates a critical distance that allows interpretive thinking.[10]

Interestingly, while such a passive reader "delusively" forgets her own reality and self, she remains physically attached to it, "embodied." We can see an example of this in Figure 1

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[7] Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 39.

[8] Katherine Binhammer, "The Persistence of Reading: Governing Female Novel Reading in *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* and *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers*," *Eighteenth Century Life*, 27:2 (Spring 2003): 5

[9] See Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain 1750 -1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 111-112.

[10] Binhammer, "The Persistence of Reading," 5

(below), an early nineteenth century caricature entitled "*Comfort*" that is a portrait of this type of reader.

Forgetful of her surroundings and "proper" societal mores, the mind of *Comfort*'s reader is enflamed by the novel, as her naked posterior is likewise heated by the fire. She is reading with one hand free; it is no very distant stretch to imagine this hand performing a more titillating activity as she reads. Such sexual abandonment is perceived as threatening, and indeed, is often equated with insanity in the nineteenth century, and insanity's younger sister, irrationality, even today. A "rational" person is one who is not carried away by emotion or sensation, but exists in some pure realm of the mind; a "rational" person is also Binhammer's active, critical reader, in other words, someone who can distinguish between real and fictive worlds, and will never cast off the first in favor of the second, however intoxicating a temptation it might be to do so. The reader depicted in this engraving is, by these standards, clearly irrational. On the other hand, she is clearly enjoying herself. Fiction asks us to immerse ourselves in it, to experience its pleasures. Isn't it precisely for this kind of reader that the text can be said to be truly successful? And yet, we persist in describing belief/pleasure in pejorative terms; its bodily nature at odds with the mental effort of "interpretive thinking."

Figure 1: Unknown artist [possibly Isaac Robert Cruikshank (1789–1856)]. *Comfort*. Engraving, hand-colored. London?, n.d. [watermark 1815]. NYPL, The Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle.

From an academic mindset, then, to truly believe in fiction is often seen as irrational; it is also to be condemned as indiscriminately gullible, unintellectual, and grossly concerned with the

material nature of the body and its desires.[11] To believe so thoroughly in the reality of a text that a reader forgets that they are reading is to be seduced by the perfection of the text's *mimesis*, or its representation/imitation of reality and such a seduction must be inherently false, because this *mimesis* does not exist; a text may asymptotically approach the axis of perfect imitation, but will necessarily never arrive. No matter how realistic it attempts to be, critics argue, a narrative is not reality nor even an imitation of reality; it is intended to be a fictional act of language arising from a narrative instance. Gérard Genette writes, for instance, that "narrative does not 'represent' a (real or fictive) story, it recounts it—that is, it signifies it by means of language [...]. There is no place for imitation in narrative."[12] Thus, in place of the two main traditional narrative moods, *diegesis* (telling) and *mimesis* (showing), Genette contends that there is only *diegesis* in varying degrees, depending on whether the narrator is more involved or less involved in the narrative, and whether this narrator has allowed less room or more room for the narrative act. The degree of involvement never becomes zero, however, and thus the narrator or the fact of narration can never disappear entirely. Therefore, the complete act of forgetting that *mimesis* demands is impossible. It *is* insane to expect a reader to wholly forget that they exist as an external audience to a text, especially when the delight of fiction is so physically visceral. But if the erotic and embodied character of believability is not inextricably attached to this forgetting, then it need not necessarily preclude a critical engagement with the text. In fact one of the central claims of this

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[11] See Harry Berger, *Making Trifles of Terrors: Redistributing Complicities in Shakespeare* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 221. Berger unequivocally argues against the life and embodiment of characters beyond the borders of the text and as such against the belief in textual reality: "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."

[12] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 43.

project is that pleasure—immersive, participatory, and embodied—can offer revelatory forms of criticism.

Sequel as Scholarship

To continue a narrative is to suggest that its "reality" extends beyond the borders originally set for it and that readers-turned-writers may have access to this paratextual and yet somehow authentic inner life. A continuation text gives substance to the believability and fictional reality of its source. However, while continuation is supported and made possible by the credibility of the source text, its pleasures, and the affection these pleasures inspire, it does not follow that such continuation is antithetical to interpretive thinking. Textual critic Jerome McGann's IVANHOE project, for example, is evidence of the scholarly possibilities of fictional continuation. IVANHOE, an open source digital role-playing game, where two or more people collaborate to reimagine and reshape a given text—such as Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1820)—within a strict set of parameters so that it may be understood in a new way, offers a ludic yet critical approach to reading and scholarship. McGann writes:

> *Ivanhoe* marrying Rowena rather than Rebecca was not the sense of an ending that many Victorian readers appreciated, and their protests clearly reflect certain undeveloped possibilities in Scott's book. There are many such, as there are in all imaginative works. In our own day readers often react to other unresolved tensions in *Ivanhoe*—for example, to its bizarre historicalities, or to the complex ways it handles, or perhaps mishandles, the subject of anti-Semitism. "Everyone knows that an anti-Semitic strain runs through the novel," I said to Johanna—or perhaps I opined, or intoned, or harangued. "The question is: What are we prepared to DO about it? Victorians rewrote and reimagined the book. It's a useful

> and interesting form of critical method." The concept of criticism as doing, as action and intervention, is a founding principle of the *Ivanhoe* Project. Traditional interpretation is itself best understood as an act of reflection, and hence as something that lays itself open to responsive acts. That idea led to the second of *Ivanhoe*'s founding convictions: that dialogue is fundamental to critical insight. The aporias of critical practice, the blind spots that we create by our arguments and our rhetoric, can be usefully countered by recognition of a need for collaborative critical exchanges.[13]

In other words, as scholars and readers, we ought to treat readers' affective investments in the outcome of the plot, as well as the texts that reward such overwhelming interest, with utmost seriousness, instead of dismissing them as anti-intellectual, over-emotional frivolity: accusations that troublingly mirror antiquated criticisms aimed at predominantly female readers in the eighteenth century.

To be continued?

Having decided that continuation may be a form of critical reading, we must determine which texts produce continuations enough to lend themselves to this particular kind of examination. For McGann, "unresolved tensions, undeveloped possibilities, bizarre historicalities" and other various mishandlings provide would-be continuers with entry points into the text: moments of what I term "fracture" in the otherwise coherent and consistent credibility of a source text. In other words, texts offering richly detailed worlds that nevertheless also possess lacunae and errors are those which best support and provoke continuation. Such

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[13] Jerome McGann, "Scholarship and Interpretation in a New Key: The IVANHOE Project," (paper presented at *The Future of Literary Studies* at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, April 5-6, 2002), edited by John Unsworth, http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/collections/journals/futures/content.html.

textual extensions may in fact surpass the quality of the original text, while simultaneously encouraging fresh readers to grapple with the source. Unauthorized continuations of contemporary texts can even function as a form of advertising, as they propel interest in the original work and keep it viable, even as they may critique the source text. When the process of collaborative creation is self-sustaining and each text continues to spawn its own literary offspring, the accumulation of texts continues to accrue, providing more and richer data through which to understand the textual archive and its penumbra.

However, the motives for producing continuation texts are myriad. Continuation writers may respect the text so much that they feel impelled to attach their text to it; they may appreciate the original text so much that they desire to explore what happened after, before, or during the events depicted; they may wish to discover what they think would happen if events in the canonical text had gone a different way, as in an alternate universe; they may wish to place universe, setting and character in a different genre or stylistic form; they may feel that there are errors in the text which they wish to fix; they may want to explore aspects of the text that remain unexamined in the original; they may wish to come up with "in-universe"[14] explanations for logistical errors made by the author; and finally, they may use their fiction to critique the author's choices. All of these numerous and varied responses, however, can be interpreted as

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[14] See "Watsonian versus Doylist," *Television Tropes and Idioms*, http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/WatsonianVersusDoylist. This entry reads as follows:
"**Watsonian** or **in-universe** commentary takes the reality of a work as given, and thus restricts itself to making statements that are sensible within that reality. Watsonian explanations are things like 'Character X was lying,' 'He had plastic surgery over the summer,' and 'The main character fell off a cliff.' A more precise technical term for this is *intradiegetic* […]
Doylist or **out-of-universe** commentary considers the work as a created object, and prefers explanations based on the real-world motivations or circumstances of the creators. Doylist explanations are things like 'The author had a Better Idea,' 'The actor died, so they had to hire a new one,' and 'The author got sick of writing those books, so he killed off the main character.' A technical term for this is *extradiegetic*."

readers engaging in a form of literary criticism, albeit in fictional form, while at the same time taking the "reality" of the narrative seriously, or in other words, approaching it *as if it were* real. To examine this point further, it will be necessary to fully understand what is meant by "reality" as I am using the term.

The text that induces the feeling of reality for readers is engendering in them a sense of belief, the conviction the fiction they are experiencing could have happened, or that it *did* in fact happen—if not here, then somewhere. This is not just Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith"[15] or Shakespeare's "imaginary puissance" (*Henry V* prologue.25), but something more long-lasting. As I've described, according to Genette, this "reality" of a text, however carefully fostered and sustained, is always an illusion;[16] since the narrator and the means of production can never be wholly absent, the narrative may approach mimesis, but will never arrive there.

If the texts that come close to mimesis were the ones which successfully seduced readers into forgetting themselves, then it would follow that diegeses or metatexts, which draw attention to the fact of narration (such as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* [1475], or Brontë's *Jane Eyre*) by addressing the audience directly (Chaucer's "you," Brontë's "Reader") ought to fundamentally disturb the illusion of reality by insisting upon the reader's recollection of his or her own presence. But such is not the case. Instead, such texts literally incorporate the reader into the textual world. Like the recipients of letters, who become part of the letter simply by having it addressed to them, texts that within their own imaginary space draw attention to the fact of reading, make their addressed readers an integral part of the metanarrative, even as their readers, while reading, are never permitted to forget their own existence or that the narrative is a

[15] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Biographia Literaria," in *The Major Works*, ed. H.J. Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 314.
[16] Genette, 43.

narrative. It is my contention, then, that the metatext's reflection of itself and its audience, is a point of fracture which does not destroy but instead actively supports and enhances the "fictional reality." Readers know themselves to be real; readers see themselves embodied within the text; the desired belief in the text's "reality" is now tethered to the reader's "reality," creating passageways through the "fourth wall" which divides performance from audience and fiction from fact.[17] The "reality" of the fiction must therefore become infinitely flexible, and thus infinitely more accessible and "true" than an attempt at a closed and perfect mimesis. There is no better way to offer openness than to literally pull the reader and the act of reading into the world.

It's only when this sense of reality is present that the reader is curious to know what happened next or before or alongside because only then can they imagine the universe of the fiction continuing independent from and outside of the author's words on the page. For a story to be real in this sense, it must feel inevitable, but not predetermined. In *The Poetics* (c. 335 BCE), Aristotle states that

> As in the structure of the plot, so too in the portraiture of character, the poet should always aim either at the necessary or the probable. Thus a person of a given character should speak or act in a given way, by the rule either of necessity or of probability; just as this event should follow that by necessary or probable sequence. It is therefore evident that the unravelling of the plot, no less than the complication, must arise out of the plot itself.[18]

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[17] See Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1984), 19 and Mark Currie, "Introduction," *Metafiction* (New York: Longman,1995), 2. Waugh and Currie both contend that the reality and significance of fiction is enhanced, ironically, by presenting texts as fiction, rather than by trying to approach verisimilitude.

[18] *The Poetics of Aristotle*, trans. S.H. Butcher (Hazleton, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2000), 20-21, http://www2.hn.psu.edu/faculty/jmanis/aristotl/poetics.pdf. The passage goes on to describe the opposite of this ideal as the "deus ex machina" or the god from the machine—which seems congruous with "authorial plan."

But it is the seeming absence of *authorial* plan that creates realism, as if the action is impelled by some internal nature, not some externally imposed force. In other words, the story must topple its gods.

Creatio and _Inventio_: a historical perspective on artistic production and ownership

While it doesn't always seem so, the place of the author or creator in the ownership of ideas is in fact a historically and culturally contingent one. In *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth Century Literature*, Robert Macfarlane describes how our understanding of authorship has always existed in the space within the tension exerted by two poles—*creatio* and *inventio*—where the first is a matter of divine spark, making something out of nothing, and the second is a matter of discovery and transmutation, making something out of other already extant things. Where the first ideal holds preeminence, we tend to think of art as an act of solitary genius, which can be owned and isolated; where the second exercises more influence, art is seen as the product of a collaborative community.[19] Though neither pole ever really vanishes, it's in the eighteenth century, with the rise of copyright and the developing conception of the author as an independent legal and financial entity that the pull of the first begins to really overwhelm the second. In the nineteenth century, corresponding with the rise of Romanticism, the impression of creativity as an explosive and individual act of organic brilliance (occurring naturally, absent tutelage) becomes almost unavoidable.

The Romantic privileging of spontaneous creativity over the mechanistic, learned cleverness of elaboration upon a pre-existing theme is exemplified in many critical responses to derivative works. It's when the thread of derivation is seen to be thinnest that a continuation or derivation is best regarded. In the *New York Times Book Review*'s favorable review of Jane

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[19] Robert Macfarlane, *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6.

Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* (1991), a modern re-telling of *King Lear* (and also, like Brooks' *March*, a winner of the Pulitzer Prize), the reviewer begins by saying, "this powerful and poignant book doesn't lean against *Lear* for support" and closes by informing us that he "was reluctant, in writing about the novel, to invoke *King Lear*… because [he] didn't want this story to sound like an exercise, like some clever, layered construct."[20] Likewise, in a review of a re-envisioning of *Hamlet*—John Updike's *Gertrude and Claudius* (2000)—Richard Eder writes that "by pastiche standards, [the last section, where the novel and play intersect] should be the high point; in fact, though cleverly done, it is the least remarkable part of the book" and goes on to assure us that despite the novel's "use" of Shakespeare, it's a "free-standing" book.[21] An earlier look at *Hamlet*, Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967) had a brilliant theatrical debut at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1967, but critics—though impressed—had serious reservations about the play's artistic weight; among those, Robert Brustein said, in an oft-quoted line from a review for *The New Republic,* that Stoppard was "a theatrical parasite, feeding off *Hamlet, Waiting for Godot* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*—Shakespeare provided the characters, Pirandello the technique, and Beckett the tone with which [his] play proceeds"[22] and John Simon, writing for *The Hudson Review*, was concerned that the play's derivative qualities reduced it to "only cleverness and charm."[23] It's evident from these two sets of receptions, that critics draw a distinction between the "cleverness" of *bricolage*, a mechanical exercise, and the "creativity" of fiction making, an organic, inexplicable force. In the eyes of these critics, since *creatio* so thoroughly trumps *inventio*, the original author has established a

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[20] Ron Carlson, "King Lear in Zebulon County," *New York Times*, November 3, 1991, http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/04/05/specials/smiley-acres.html

[21] Richard Eder, "Spoiled Rotten in Denmark," *New York Times*, February 27, 2000, http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/02/27/reviews/000227.27ederlt.html

[22] Robert Brustein, "Waiting for Hamlet," *New Republic* 57.19, November 4, 1967: 25.

[23] John Simon, Review of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* in *Hudson Review* 20.4 (Winter 1967-1968): 664-65.

right of possession over not only the source text, but also its literary offspring: continuations, readings, and re-interpretations.

For a long time, this movement—the privileging of originality over re-envisioning—was thought to have sprung from Romanticism in order to reach us now in an unbroken tide; however, Macfarlane debunks this overly simplified view, pointing out moments where the Victorians and early twentieth century critics like Edward Wright (*The Art of Plagiarism*, 1904) are able to see creative borrowing and re-appropriation as a transcendental commingling of spirit where, as T.S. Eliot claims, "dead voices" ought to "speak through the living voice" and together present a poem which is necessarily an amalgam and transformation of what has come before. Still, it's interesting that Eliot speaks specifically of "dead" voices. Wright, too, when discussing his vision of plagiarism as an act of love, refers to the debts owed by living authors to those who have predeceased them: Virgil to Homer, Shakespeare to Marlowe, Wordsworth to Milton. On the subject of communion with authors who still possess voices of their own, Eliot and Wright are silent.[24] This literary empathy can, apparently, only exist when one of the authors is dead.

Textual Inheritance, Copyright, and Intellectual Property

If we think of the text as a single, discrete object, it's not hard to imagine it being owned by a single person. Such an owner could, after death, will the object to a legatee, who would then possess all the same rights over it: they could polish it up and put it in a museum; they could keep it in a private collection and charge admission; they could smash the object; they could use it as a kitchen utility—the possibilities are endless. In any event, the original owner would certainly have no further direct use for it. It's this form of literary bequest that Eliot and Wright are referring to, when they advocate an elegiac, textual union with dead voices. Such a linear relationship between source and derivative hangs their connection on a single thread. A good

[24]*Ibid* 208-9

analogy might be a monarchic line of descent where there's a definite connection between one sovereign and the next, it's always known who the owner is, and there's never more than one ruler at a time. A more intimate (and necessarily less clear cut) commingling of ownership is exactly what critics of derivative texts seem to fear; as they praise works like those of Smiley and Stoppard, which they seem to find genuinely worthy of respect in many ways and do, in fact, combine only dead voices with their own living ones, these critics must, apparently without exception, scramble to reassure us that the new work eschews repetition, that there is something "new" going on here, that the sanctity of creation as a unique and isolated force is more or less still inviolate. However, this linear model of inheritance, though easier to understand and less unsettling than other more complex models, is at best a vast oversimplification of how a text can or ought to be owned.[25]

Today there's a legal distinction between licensed and unlicensed material. Some argue that the devaluing of continuations is related to their sometimes precarious legal status.[26] *Jane Eyre*, much like *Little Women,* is in the public domain while *Harry Potter* emphatically belongs to J.K. Rowling, Warner Brothers, and Scholastic/Bloomsbury. However, this legal distinction does not entirely account for the contempt in which texts that are derivative of contemporary or popular material are frequently held. Though the Austen industry, for example, is thriving quite well in the market, churning out dozens of sequels and continuations a year, and Austen's works are both out of copyright and considered "classics," these unauthorized sequels are rarely if ever met with high esteem from critics. It's possible that this disparaging view can be accounted for by reference to the status of the source material. Austen's six novels, despite their membership in

[25] See Lawrence Lessig, "Who Owns Culture?" http://lessig.org/blog/2006/04/who_owns_culture_at_one.html.

[26] See Kevin A. Thompson, "The Legality of Fan Fiction on the Internet," *Cyberlaw Central: The digital world, its impact and legal framework*, June 23, 2005, http://www.cyberlawcentral.com/2005/06/23/the-legality-of-fan-fiction-on-the-net/.

the "canon" are also thought of as "popular romances," so the dismissal of their numerous sequels may be to some degree a reflection of Austen's status,[27] as well as that an estimation of the continuation itself. Perhaps Austen is less well regarded than Brontë, or it might simply be that no one has yet put forth a derivation of her work which has the same objective quality as the continuations and transformations of Alcott or Brontë. If we accept this premise, hypothetically, in a time and place where copyright laws were not applicable to the Harry Potter series, fiction that transformed and derived from Rowling's work would be considered wholly acceptable in a legal sense, if not an aesthetic one; if the seven novels were considered "high culture," its derivations might even be judged on their own merits.

But can we accept this premise? First of all, it is not immediately obvious that legality necessarily has so great an effect on the community's perception and assessment of a text. Many forms of writing have been illegal within certain communities without completely jettisoning all claim to significance—seditious writing, for example, or writing banned as obscene, as for instance Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), or even Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (1884). The literary community has been willing, in the past, to agree that legality and artistic import do not always go hand in hand. Furthermore, derivations that *are* legally authorized—for instance, when a media franchise authorizes a tie-in—are still generally regarded as an inferior, less creative form of writing. This might, again, be accounted for by the comparatively low quality of the source text(s) and the even greater shortcomings of their derivatives. One might easily claim that no digitally disseminated, amateur re-envisioning of a children's story or written-to-

[27] Rachel Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 41. Brownstein catalogues multiple affectionate yet somehow disparaging assessments of *Pride and Prejudice* that tend to damn with faint praise; examples include a categorical determination of Austen's text as "the best romance novel ever written," providing the "template for the Regency romances featuring pert virtuous heroines who marry up that Georgette Heyer started writing in the 1920s," a reading of the novel as the ignominious "erotic romance," and feminist scholar Claudia Johnson's estimation of the novel as "almost shamelessly wish-fulfilling."

specifications television tie-in could measure up to Rhys' work; one might with equal ease argue that neither J.K. Rowling nor a cadre of television writers could measure up to Charlotte Brontë. Certainly, it's unlikely that the average internet fan fiction writer is going to turn out works of staggering genius. Although surely this could be said with equal truth about *any* large group of writers; fan fiction authors are no *less* likely to do so. We ought not to ignore the possibility that someone might build a piece of meaningful art upon a framework which in itself might be unremarkable. In fact, I think our contempt is also rooted elsewhere: not in questions of legality, nor even in assessments of the work's objective qualities, but in a kind of collective discomfort with the idea of the fiction's space being multiply owned.

In *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation*, Peter J. Rabinowitz advances a model that may be extended into an alternate understanding of textual inheritance and ownership. Though he advocates an initial reading of the text from the perspective of the "authorial audience" (i.e. the hypothetical audience for which the author writes) rather than the actual audience (i.e. the *current* flesh and blood reader), he states clearly that "texts are incomplete when we get them and must be put together according to the principles of the reader's interpretative community." Even if readers are successful at becoming the imagined authorial audience, they will still "engage in an act of production," though in this case, they will "make what the author intended to be found." Interestingly, it is only if they are *less* successful at Rabinowitz's suggested project that they will "make something the author never expected."[28] Meanwhile, in *S/Z*, Roland Barthes suggests that this "making" on the part of the reader ought to be the "goal of literary work (of literature as work)" where "the reader [is] no

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[28] Peter J. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 27-8.

longer a consumer, but a producer of the text."[29] Barthes terms the texts that allow this transformation *scriptible* texts. A *scriptible* text is an ongoing process of production rather than a complete product; polysemic, it encourages a plurality of interpretation. Implicit in such a Barthesian understanding of narrative theory is that the text is already a collaboration between reader and author, and thus both multiple (each reader helps to create their own version) and multiply owned. This "text" can no longer be thought of as a discrete object; its edges are no longer stable, but constantly in flux.

This concept of multiple ownership challenges the traditional capitalist ideas of private intellectual property in which the fruits of production belong to the owner of the means of production. Much as in the eighteenth century, the tension between *creatio* and *inventio* can't be separated from the economic ramifications of intellectual property. In *The Afterlife of Character 1726-1825*, for example, David Brewer identifies an analogous relationship between the proprietary enclosure of common land and copyright's attempt at an intellectual form of textual enclosure. From an examination of "an array of reading practices in eighteenth century Britain," Brewer concludes that

> 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 world on the subject, the originary representation of these characters was, for readers engaged in these practices, merely a starting point—a common reference,

[29] Roland Barthes, *S/Z,* trans. Richard Miller (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974), 4.

> but one perpetually inviting supplementation through the invention of additional details and often entirely new adventures.[30]

Brewer discovers that while, "in an economy of scarcity, literary property was conceived as a zero-sum game: a reader's gain must mean an author's loss," conversely

> In an economy of abundance, […] 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 more readily available metaphor was that of the traditional village commons.[31]

In the Tudor period, then, when the government sought to oppose enclosure through a series of acts designed to preserve commonly held land,[32] authors similarly felt justified in using previous texts—held in common—for fodder and did so without fear. Meanwhile, in the eighteenth century, just as copyright laws began to be established, seeking to reserve ownership of texts for originating authors and publishers, the English parliament began to enact the Inclosure Acts,

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[30] David Brewer, *The Afterlife of Character 1726-1825* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 2-3. Brewer calls this process "imaginative expansion." It's important to note that though Brewer explicitly makes the full-throated attempt to defend readers who have engaged in the fantasy of belief in characters, he must qualify his defense with the following: "Whatever else [such readers and critics] may have been, they were hardly idiots running around in an ontological fog unable to distinguish fiction from reality."

[31] *Ibid*, 11.

[32] See Paul A. Fideler, "Poverty, Policy, and Providence: The Tudors and the Poor," in *Political Thought and the Tudor Commonwealth: Deep Structure, Discourse and Disguise*, eds. Paul A. Fideler and T.F. Mayer (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), 210-211. Discussing Kett's Rebellion of 1549, for instance, Fideler argues "Its 'discourse of confrontation' suggests that the initiative for change on the social question was shifting from the government to the grass roots (although not without the government's encouragement in this instance) […] Somerset's measures from June 1548 to June 1549 against enclosure and pardoning those who had thrown enclosure open seemed to signal that the […] aspirations of the poor commons had been whetted by central government policy."

which ended in enclosing for individual owners near to 9,000 square miles of arable land, removing it from common use.[33]

One of the main justifications behind intellectual property law is to induce and stimulate creativity for the greatest net social good; if authors own the exclusive rights to their work, then theoretically, they will have the incentive to produce more of it, thus benefiting the society within which and for whom they write. William Fisher explains that the most popular approach to understanding intellectual property law employs this utilitarian principle of maximizing social well-being, and that

> Pursuit of that end in the context of intellectual property, it is generally thought, requires lawmakers to strike an optimal balance between, on one hand, the power of exclusive rights to stimulate the creation of inventions and works of art and, on the other, the partially offsetting tendency of such rights to curtail widespread public enjoyment of those creations.[34]

Implicit in his statement is the idea that more creative works are a net social gain. However, the free market argues that competition is the best way to stimulate productivity, and the truth of this axiom can be demonstrated with an examination of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela; Or Virtue Rewarded* (1740). When other contemporary authors responded to the enormous success of *Pamela* by creating their own continuation texts, such as John Kelly's *Pamela's Conduct in High Life* (1741), Richardson was infuriated by the trespass onto what he perceived to be his personal

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[33] See Michael Turner, *Enclosures in Britain 1750-1830* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 21.
[34] See William W. Fisher, "Theories of Intellectual Property" in *New Essays in the Legal and Political Theory of Property* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/people/tfisher/iptheory.pdf.

property.[35] This forced him to write a "real" sequel to *Pamela*, commonly referred to as *Pamela in her Exalted Condition* (1742), ironically demonstrating that the presence of competition functions as a spur, goading the author to produce more novels, a clearly utilitarian good.

Multiple Ownership of Fictive Space

Describing the process of novel writing, Henry James writes, in the preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, that

> the house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million—a number of possible windows […]. These apertures, of dissimilar shape and size, […] are but windows at the best, mere holes in a dead wall, disconnected, perched aloft; they are not hinged doors opening straight upon life. But they have this mark of their own that at each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes […] which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other. He and his neighbours are watching the same show, but one seeing more where the other sees less, one seeing black where the other sees white, one seeing big where the other sees small, one seeing coarse where the other sees fine. And so on, and so on; there is fortunately no saying on what, for the particular pair of eyes, the window may NOT open; 'fortunately' by reason, precisely, of this incalculability of range.[36]

James imagines the "show" as singular and all encompassing; variations are produced by the author's eyes and choice of focus. It's the author's perspective, the view from the particular aperture which they have carved, that is singular. In this framework, a novel inhabits a specific

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[35] Austin Dobson, *Samuel Richardson* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 38-39. See also Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor, *The Pamela Controversy: Criticisms and Adaptations of Samuel Richardson's* Pamela, *1740-1750* Vol. 4 & 5 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2001).
[36] Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (London: Penguin, 2003), 45-46.

imaginary space which is its fictional world. An author makes a window in James' "dead wall" through which it's possible to look, though within the frame of said window, each reader's choice of focus will differ at least slightly, resulting in a multiplicity of interpretations. I suggest that if this imaginary space can only maintain its reality when viewed from a single vantage point and this reality disintegrates into illusion when viewed from multiple angles—like a *trompe l'oeil* mural—then such a text will never be continued or transformed. Its fictive space will be, in fact, a barren land, a literary dead end.

Consider, alternatively, a fictive space which encourages return from multiple perspectives. One could wonder what happens just out of frame forward in time and carve a new window onto it farther down the same wall to produce a sequel or a prequel. One could choose to examine the same space from an entirely different position, using a different point of view to imagine the same novel from the perspective of its villain or a secondary character. If these various points of ingress are possible, then the fictional world isn't flat, but exists in multiple dimensions. It has solidity because it still exists when we look at it from another side. This quality, which I call that of "fictional reality," provokes continuation; these continuations, in turn, further reinforce the solidity of the imaginary space.

In "The Reality Effect," for instance, Barthes speaks of the extraneous detail that endorses reality, saying

> Flaubert's barometer, Michelet's little door finally say nothing but this: we are the real. […T]he very absence of the signified […] becomes the very signifier of realism: the reality effect is produced, the basis of that unavowed verisimilitude which forms the aesthetic of all the standard works of modernity.[37]

[37] Barthes, *Rustle of Language*, 148

In speaking of the absence of the signified, we are left to understand that we are also speaking of the absence of purpose. The axe to grind, the allegory, the grinding wheels of plot, and the intelligent design are, in a sense, the anti-real. It is difficult to imagine life as teleological, especially in a post-theological universe. Description, consistent rules and laws, these are the tools of realism. But within these boundaries and structures, however, there must be absolute freedom, or the text will never feel "realistic" or, in any way, independent of its author. I ought to point out here that this understanding of realism has the benefit of not wholly dispensing with the model of *creatio* that we are currently so fond of as a culture. While acknowledging that nothing can really be made *ex nihilo*, it too idealizes the notion of creation bestowed by grace and spontaneous inspiration; in this case, though, the muses sing with human voices.

Examining the relationship between author and text from a political perspective, freeing the text from authorial "tyranny" and democratizing it shows reader-response as a populist revolutionary act. Tolkien describes the literature of fantasy as that of escape, saying

> Escape is one of the main functions of fairy-stories, and since I do not disapprove of them, it is plain that I do not accept the tone of scorn or pity with which 'Escape' is now so often used. Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls?[38]

But perhaps these prison walls are not simply those of mundane life. They may in fact be the chains that the author hangs on the narrative, the structure that does not allow for growth and movement. Not only in the source texts themselves must we find this sense of motion, but also within their sequels.

[38] J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories" in *The Tolkien Reader* (New York: Ballantine, 1966), 79.

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 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.[39]

The idea that a text’s *instability* can actually reinforce the stability of its imaginary space might seem counter-intuitive at first. But if we look closer, the logic begins to emerge and can be illustrated with the example of a comic book series, such as DC Comics’ *Superman*. The character of Superman/Clark Kent has existed in numerous iterations and forms; like most comic book superheroes, his history is unstable, changing to greater and lesser degree with each new author, each new age of comics, each translation into another form of media, and of course with each new chronological reboot of the franchise. Details both small and large alter throughout, both intentionally to suit each version’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” is often poor; the interesting part is how this dissatisfaction is expressed. When readers and fans point out that something about the particular entry into the *Superman* archive is *wrong*—for instance, the scope of his powers, or the characterization of his nemesis, Lex Luthor—they are implicitly insisting that there is a version which is *right*. While two readers might never agree on every aspect of this theoretically correct and intangible

[39] Abigail Derecho, “Archontic Literature: A Definition, a History, and Several Theories of Fan Fiction” in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, eds. Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2006), 75.

version, the accusation of falseness indicates by its very statement, the possibility of autonomous, objective authenticity.

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 be understood as the wandering of knights through the landscape of romance. In *Inescapable Romance,* Patricia Parker states that

> 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.’[40]

Romance, then, is a form whose errant nature necessitates that it never ends, even as it concludes. What better way to understand how continuations and derivations—and their denial of ending and closure—are both produced by and themselves produce error?

If a story is too fractured, the imaginary space doesn’t hold up.[41] The connections between iterations must have sufficient strength to support the existence of fractures without shredding away completely; the consistency between the new entry and the rest of its archive must outweigh its errors. Still, we must understand that while the entry’s errors must not be greater than its consistencies, their presence is still indispensable for the construction of the “fictional reality.” I also want to point out that the relationship between convention—as in that of a genre or mode such as romance—and continuation that Parker indicates is not trivial. This is

[40] Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 5.

[41] It would be unusual, for instance, to find a continuation of a text like *Finnegan’s Wake* (1939) and in fact, I have been unable to locate any.

especially significant if we are to consider contemporary rather than early modern texts; today, texts which follow conventions are often considered less significant than others which purport not to. The following of convention, in and of itself, much like the process of derivation, is often regarded as the enemy of creativity.

Conventional Texts, *Scriptible* Texts, and the *selvage* effect: extending Barthes

Barthes is one of the chief proponents of this attitude that devalues the conventional text. He sets up his *scriptible* text in opposition to a *lisible* text, one that is closed, conventional, and according to Barthes, realistic. The novel that does not call attention to its own artifice, the novel that is unconscious of its own fiction, that does not experiment with itself, but merely purports to proffer a window onto "reality"—this text, then, is for Barthes, a form whose utility is spent—closed, done, and dead. Though I am at one with him in believing that the open text is superior to the closed, I disagree with his assessment of which kinds of texts are *scriptible* and which *lisible*. Barthes is so clearly in favor of unseating the author's tyranny over the text that his dismissal of the conventional, realistic text as *lisible* is actually quite surprising.

Some of those who do agree with his assessment have suggested that hypertexts are the fullest realization of the *scriptible*, open text which "is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds [that] has no beginning, [...] is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one."[42] As they permit the reader to experience the text in a non-sequential, intertextual manner, these hypertexts theoretically free the reader from an externally imposed logical hierarchy. Readers are free, even encouraged, to

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[42] Barthes, *S/Z*, 6

make their own associations in whatever order they see fit.[43] But though they are released from a predefined order, hypertext readers are unable to actually make new material. I contend that a truly "writerly" text would make people *write.* A text that, rather than granting readers a choice of order as hypertexts do (thus producing a limited participation), simply allows them to add onto the world itself is inherently more generative. Such reader-writers would be constrained by the pre-defined conventions of the universe, but by nothing else. The fictions thus produced would be the artifacts of participation rather than participation itself, but this participation would also be of a more meaningful form. Some might suggest that such extensions would not possess an equivalently intimate relationship with the source as hypertexts—which are after all editions of the texts, not continuations of them—would, but I think this is a faulty analysis. It makes sense only if we strain—as so many critics unnaturally do—to make the connections between source and derivative as thin as possible. If on the other hand, we privilege connectivity, and choose to view derivative fictions as those fictions *which make explicit what is implicit within the source text*, then derivative fiction's relationship to its source is just as intimate as a hypertext edition, if not even more so.

In her article, "Copyright Law, Fan Practices, and the Rights of the Author," legal scholar Rebecca Tushnet writes that "the legal defense of […] literary transformations protects critics as creators in their own right only when they draw deeply from a preexisting well."[44]

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[43] For one of the primary advocates of this view, see George P. Landow, *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 3. Landow claims that "Roland Barthes describes an ideal textuality that precisely matches that which has come to be called computer hypertext—text composed of blocks of words (or images) linked electronically by multiple paths, chains, or trails in an open-ended, perpetually unfinished textuality."

[44] Rebecca Tushnet, "Copyright Law, Fan Practices, and the Rights of the Author," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, eds. Jon Grey et al (New York: New York University Press, 2007), http://www.tushnet.com/law/Fandombook.pdf.

As we've already discussed, the status of secondary creators is a precarious one; the more distant their texts are seen to be from their sources, the more highly they are regarded. And yet, a secondary fiction cannot and ought not to exist independently of its source; if it could, why attach it in the first place? In the event, it would never occur to anyone to write a retelling of one of Shakespeare's plays rather than write a new novel. It is the connective tissue—that critics ironically try so hard to dismiss—that endows such a derivation with interest.

One can clearly see why the attachment is important to a derivative of one of Shakespeare's texts: in this case, the source can help to legitimize the status of the offshoot, effectively lending the new text Shakespeare's reputation and significance. Likewise, an "Austen sequel" obviously benefits a great deal in the market from such an association. Without that instant name recognition, the attractiveness of these sequels would clearly diminish rapidly. As I said earlier, however, it's my contention that not only the derivation benefits from the strength of the attachment, but that the existence of these sequels and transformations reciprocally invests their source texts with a greater sense of fictional reality—that is, these texts are now better able to give readers, a deep, unshakable conviction in the consistency, coherence, and structural soundness of the narrative universe. Barthes clearly implies that realism is the adversary of scriptibility; I reject this notion. In fact, I think it's the fiction's solidified imaginary space that is both the offspring and progenitor of scriptibility; the degree to which the fiction is solidified in this manner ought, in my opinion, also to be a measure of the source text's viability and significance.

The truly open text, the most *scriptible*, in my estimation is the text that does not shut the door to other voices, either living or dead. Sometimes this opening is provided mainly by the form of the text; in other cases, the originating author can provide these entrances. If purposeful,

it endows the originating author with effectual humility and self-deprecation, which cannot but enhance their charm. Sidney's old *Arcadia* (c. 1580), for instance, ends with an invitation to the reader to pick up where he has left off; yet in releasing the text, it is not less his.

Sometimes, however, the doorways are unintentional. If we look at the new *Arcadia* (1590), we see that it ends literally in the middle of a sentence, permanently interrupted by Sidney's death and breaking off into empty space, producing what I call a *selvage* effect. In knitted 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 and their incompletion ironically allow the foundation of the previous material to remain firmly established; thus, they illustrate how, in novels, as well as in fabric, openness within solid structure endorses continuation.

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series offers this *selvage* effect as well. First of all, by their very nature, novels in a series are more likely to produce this effect. Each entry to the series carves a new window onto the imaginary space, enhancing its solidity as much as a single perspective can. Furthermore, with its inevitable lacunae and pauses between installments, a series provides opportunities for readers to offer their own perspectives; these gaps and silences in the narrative are a tacit invitation for readers to make their own windows onto the imaginary space. While this is true for all series fictions, it seems especially so for Harry Potter, which, utilizing numerous, recognizable generic tropes, itself is extremely referential of other texts and thus has laid claim to an already fairly well reinforced imaginary space. Writing the thousands of continuations and derivations known as Harry Potter fan fiction, readers of the series clearly agreed, beginning early on to explore the fictional world from various moments of departure, registering both critique and appreciation of the source text in almost equal measure.

Queer Textuality and Illicit Offspring

Indeed, McGann's "new" form of criticism is well and thriving in the land of contemporary fan fiction, which of course is still dismissed in many quarters as a purely erotic, masturbatory, and illicit act, divorced from literary significance. As a result, many people—authors and readers alike—have registered a great deal of disapproval with the concept of unauthorized continuation texts. Their problems with the practice seem to be broadly divided into the following categories: unauthorized continuation is theft, because the continuation-writer is stealing material belonging to the original authors and may impinge on the author's control of their own brand; unauthorized continuation is disgusting, because it frequently involves erotic writing and sexual or romantic fantasies; and unauthorized continuation is by definition poor writing because it lacks originality. One contemporary popular fiction author, Diana Gabaldon, encapsulates these negative reactions when she analogizes fan writers who seek to continue her own novels as someone "breaking into [her] house without meaning to steal anything" and "someone trying to seduce [her] husband." She asks her reader to

> imagine opening your daily mail and finding a letter detailing an explicit sexual encounter between, say, your twenty-one-year-old daughter and your forty-eight-year-old male neighbor—written by the neighbor. At the bottom it says, "Fiction! Just my imagination. All cool, right?" This would perhaps prevent your calling the police, but I repeat…ick. I wouldn't like people writing sex fantasies for public consumption about me or members of my family—why would I be all right with them doing it to the intimate creations of my imagination and personality?[45]

[45] Diana Gabaldon, "Fan-fiction and Moral Conundrums," *Voyages of the Artemis*, May 3, 2010, originally posted at http://voyagesoftheartemis.blogspot.com/2010/05/fan-fiction-and-moral-conundrums.html, now archived at http://kate-nepveu.livejournal.com/483239.html.

The implication is that a) all fan fiction is sexual fantasy, b) that her characters and situations can be compared to her husband and/or her twenty-one year old daughter, and fan writers who write, say, erotica about these characters, or in other ways alter her narrative in their own texts, while retaining her setting or other aspects of her stories, are effectively fantasizing about or in fact actually having a sexual encounter with people who "belong" to her (i.e. her husband and her daughter).

Indeed the metaphorical equation of texts to people is often found in discussions of reading and writing. Authors often analogize their texts as their children;[46] readers often describe texts as friends.[47] One interesting implication of such language on the part of writers is to claim ownership of such textual offspring in terms that seem more readily applicable to a master/slave relationship than a parent/child one. Questions of morality also seem rather more ambiguous than such writers seem to claim. For instance, Gabaldon closes her argument on the matter by saying with regard to unauthorized continuation of her texts that: "I think it's immoral, I *know* it's illegal, and it makes me want to barf whenever I've inadvertently encountered some of it involving my characters."[48] And yet, with the analogy of text to child or romantic partner, it's difficult to imagine such a relationship between parent and child or between romantic partners becoming *more* moral through said relationship's professionalization. Conversely, consider the opinion of television and film writer, Joss Whedon, who when recently asked about his attitude regarding fan fiction, simply responded with a similar analogy but a different conclusion, saying,

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[46] Simply executing an internet search for "my books are my children" will result in thousands of hits from an extraordinarily wide range of authors.
[47] This sentiment is to be found in all manner of representative aphorisms and quotations. See for instance "For friends... do but look upon good Books: they are true friends, that will neither flatter nor dissemble" from Francis Bacon or "No man can be called friendless who has God and the companionship of good books" from Elizabeth Barrett Browning.
[48] Gabaldon, "Fan-fiction and Moral Conundrums," archived at http://kate-nepveu.livejournal.com/483239.html.

"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."[49] The text-as-person metaphor opens the possibility that declaring textual ownership may be tantamount to enslaving it.

The understanding of the text-as-body underscores the sexual component of Gabaldon and other like-minded authors' distaste, pointing back to the fears that eighteenth century critics register about the pornographic possibilities inherent in novel-reading. As well, it assigns a transgressive character to unauthorized continuation, comparing it to illicit sexual acts that disrupt socially approved familial and romantic relationships. Thus, continuation can be read as a perverse act, inherently queer, regardless of its specific content, which nevertheless often reflects a queer ideology. As queer theorist Alexander Doty notes

> 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.[50]

Queerness, then, is defined by its absence of rigidness, exclusivity, legitimacy: continuations are deviant, multiplicitous, illegitimate, and unsanctioned texts, and therefore are necessarily queer.

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[49] Joss Whedon, "Ask Me Anything," *Reddit.com,* http://www.reddit.com/r/IAmA/comments/s2uh1/i_am_joss_whedon_ama/

[50] Alexander Doty, *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 107.

The Utilities of Influence

Despite advocating a better understanding of and respect for continuations or secondary creations that return to an already extant imaginary space,[51] I don't mean to suggest that there is no difference between primary creation and secondary creation. Rather, they are different (though related) projects, both of which are valuable. Additionally, secondary creation has an enormous, positive effect on its source. In order to more fully comprehend the difference between secondary and primary creation, let us look at the fan fiction writing community. When we do so, we see that the two worst sins its members can commit are inaccurate borrowing from the source text (resulting in inauthentic presentations of characters or themes) and *too* accurate borrowing from pre-existing fanfictional work (i.e. the verbatim copying of another's text without attribution or addition). The second is considered 'theft' and is excoriated; the first, making characters behave "out of character" (i.e. theft which hasn't *worked*) is, though less reviled, equally unsuccessful, displaying the truth of the adage, "good writers borrow, great writers steal." As can easily be seen, sailing between this Scylla and Charybdis is a difficult matter; the fan creator's path is hemmed in rather closely on either side. This suggests to me that such writing can be best evaluated on the same terms with which we evaluate scholarly writing, that is, it must demonstrate an understanding of the text it studies and it must not plagiarize. Within these boundaries, it can be brilliant, creative, and artfully constructed. This kind of fictional writing is also critical reading, thus beautifully exemplifying the ever thinning border between consumer and producer that the ideal of the open text demands.

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[51] Cf. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) for the opposite view. While Bloom reads authors as generally hindered, stifled, and made anxious by their debt to their creative forebears, I see this relationship between author and precursor as essentially constructive.

One effect of secondary creation on its source is the solidification and reinforcement of the primary fiction's imaginary space. While I characterize this effect as positive, it also makes many people profoundly nervous. An independent fictional reality not owned by the primary creator has troubling implications for fictional markets and copyrights; if ownership can't easily be determined, how are producers to be appropriately recompensed? Still, it's generally acknowledged that in the Information Age, we are living in what critic Henry Jenkins calls convergence culture,

> where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways… Rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands.[52]

It's not just the fact of multiple ownership that is unsettling, but also such an ownership's consequence (i.e. the production of an autonomous "fictional reality" itself). The concept feels transgressive because it blurs the boundaries between the "real" and the "fictional," going from the "willing suspension of disbelief" with which we are relatively comfortable to an ability to believe non-linearly in mutually exclusive truths.

There is, however, something to be gained by attempting to move past this uneasiness. In looking at a fiction *qua* fiction, it can be continued in a number of ways – it can be adapted, or translated, or alluded to. Such continuations make no claim on the fiction's imaginary space and demand no such non-linear belief; they merely insist, albeit properly, that no text exists in a vacuum. It's the continuation of a fiction *qua* reality, the continuation of a fiction *as if it were*

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[52] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 3-4.

real—an entry in a series, an unauthorized sequel, or a shared universe—with which I am concerned. The presence of such continuations, as well as their type tell us something significant about the source text; they provide a map of the text's imaginary space, which directs us to the aspect of the text which is most important. Put another way, these continuations not only assure the story's immortality, but they tell us what kind of story it is.

In my examination, I've identified three distinct (though occasionally intersecting) kinds of source-texts; the first locates the source's imaginary space as a narrative of place, the second as a narrative of society, character, and people, and the third as a narrative of interstices. A narrative of place is generally a fully described world, which inspires the reader with a desire to visit it, as physically as possible. Interacting with the world's characters, for instance, is irrelevant, except as set decoration; Readers wish to be there, and it doesn't matter all that much with whom. The succeeding perspectives on such an imaginary space will continue the world, re-peopling it as necessary. A narrative of society, on the other hand, does not care very much about its location, except insofar as the location produces culture, character and mores, which, in these narratives, are delineated in detail. Readers do not wish to *be* there, so much as they wish to meet its inhabitants, and associate with them; they desire a mental colloquy, the location of which is practically immaterial. Thus, a re-visitation of this kind of imaginary space may or may not retain the physical location, but will invariably attempt to maintain the social codes and relationships indicated in the primary text. The third category—that of a narrative of interstices—is perhaps the most complicated to explain. The imaginary spaces of this category are defined by delimited absence; the blankness of these absences offers the reader, within these boundaries, infinite play. In such narratives, the lacunae and gaps are the enticement; these stories require that the reader fill in the blanks in order to proceed. These narratives can be identified by the

presence of long periods of time that are unexplored, though bounded on either side, or large portions of the world which are unexplored, or cipher-like characters who, though important to the text at defined intervals, are unexplained when not relevant to the action of the plot. The enticement of such an imaginary space is in what it doesn't say, rather than what it does; the reader doesn't want to visit it bodily, or associate with its inhabitants, rather they wish to be the co-architects of its construction, projecting their own dreams into the primary text.

Classifying and organizing texts in terms of their readers' desire to interact with and enter their fictional worlds encourages us to think of these texts as evolving objects that should not be interpreted simply in isolation, but also through readers' power to redefine and collaborate in these worlds' realization and the methods by which they do so. In each successive chapter, I select a particular originating text and examine its continuations by later authors. Each text lends itself to a different range and style of continuations: narratives of place lend themselves most to fantasies of exploration; narratives of society, to fantasies of unveiling; and narratives of interstices to fantasies of dimensionality and dialogue. I begin with Sidney's *Arcadia,* whose continuers, Lady Mary Wroth and Anna Weamys, in the spirit of the Age of Exploration, saw themselves as the new owners of this plot of literary land, which they could settle and repopulate as they saw fit. Their colonization transmutes *Arcadia* from queer and ludic space—where genders transform and narrative fractures are the rule—into a more heteronormative and sentimental demesne. But their continuations close off narrative possibilities for future readers, ironically killing desire through their own attempts at fulfillment. The next chapter examines a similar process in both historical and contemporary continuations of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, a novel so carefully designed that a letter alluded to yet never actually shown in the text has a vivid and solid existence in the reader's mind. As a result of Austen's strategic

omissions, readers are inspired by a sense of secrets untold and motivations concealed behind veils, leading to the creation of sequels that attempt to uncover the "hidden" details. Because Austen's continuers almost always develop an emotional relationship with her characters, there is a tendency among them to conflate the text with the people that inhabit it, feeling a personal relationship with, for instance, Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. In their attempt to access all inner workings of these characters' minds, they may be ruining the sense of reality that initially inspired the continuation narratives. This stands in contrast to the fantasies of dimensionality discussed in my fourth chapter, which explores how digital storytelling and fan fiction has focused on correcting and improving J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. Here, I suggest that readers are enriching a somewhat flat and two-dimensional world by exploring areas that the author did not bother with. These continuations were often created contemporaneously with the series itself and therefore exerted an influence upon the audience's reception and understanding of Rowling's further installments in the series. What in this chapter is an influence, in my final chapter becomes a dialogue between the producers and consumers of television programs such as *Doctor Who* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer.* Television is a particularly fertile ground for the creation of continuations, as the originating text is inherently fractured due to its collaborative authorship. As with Harry Potter, narrative continuations are created simultaneously with the "official" narrative extensions by the producers of the shows. The influence of these creative extensions becomes "officially" sanctioned and can give rise to spin-offs and commentary from the writers, directors, and actors in the program itself, who are themselves responding to fan narratives and sequels that rival the source texts for credibility and creativity to such an extent that in turn they become the sources for future seasons and related shows, thus recursively becoming the text itself.

The argument of this dissertation is multifold; through my examination of various case studies in the following chapters I hope to show that (a) the open text is one which endorses and encourages others to invest in its own fictional reality, (b) though the secondary creations that arise from such encouragement have a different project than the originating text (and should be read as such), they ought not be considered in isolation from their sources, but appreciated instead, regardless of legality, as pieces of creative scholarly criticism, (c) that these continuations are the evidence of pleasurable and embodied reading, a practice which is worthy of critical significance since (d) the nature of successful continuations informs us which aspects of the primary creation have been, and probably will be, most important to readers. More polemically, I want to suggest that the resistance to unauthorized continuation and derivative work relies upon an understanding of creativity and story as a finite, exhaustible resource. This dominant meta-narrative of scarcity, which argues against the wild and unrestricted (and thus unauthorized, non-normative, and queer) proliferation of texts, must be constantly fought against, because it refuses to understand how texts and readers have always—and *should* always—interact.

Chapter II: Et In Arcadia Ego
fantasies of exploration

…for mine allusion and imitation, which beareth a colour of much greater vain-glorie: mine excuse must onely bee the worthinesse of former presidents, as Virgill from Homer, Ariosto from Baiardo, famous Spencer from renowned Chaucer, and I with as good priviledge, from the onely to be admired Sir Philip Sydney, whose like, though never age hath or shall present to memorie, yet shall it be renowne to the meanest that indevour to live by the crummes of his Table: who were our age but blest with his living breath, he would himselfe confesse the honie hee drew both from Heliodorus, and Diana.

Gervase Markham, *An English Arcadia*

In defense of derivation, the talismanic names of the great are often invoked as both precedent and justification: after all, the argument goes, if great authors have engaged in the practice, surely the practice itself need not be condemned, even when performed by those who may be somewhat less great. Gervase Markham embarks upon just such an appeal to authority in the above epigraph; in building *An English Arcadia* (1607) upon an already extant foundation created by Sir Philip Sidney in *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, he claims to be merely following in the footsteps of Virgil, Ariosto, Spenser, and of course Sidney himself, whose canonical works are also continuations of pre-existing fictional worlds. While the need for rhetorical rationalizations such as Markham's might indicate a contemporary lack of universal respect for derivatives and continuations, the privileging of originality is clearly not fundamental to an early modern understanding of literary creation.

It's true that from the Romantics onward, the poetry of the Renaissance has been read by many as the unique expression of individual, solitary genius, verging upon the confessional and therefore both singular and original. "Scorn not the sonnet," Wordsworth writes, "for with this key, Shakespeare unlocked his heart"[1] and even critics such as Stephen Greenblatt seem to concede that early modern poetry is, at least to some degree, the individual expression of

[1] William Wordsworth, "Scorn not the sonnet," in *The Major Works including the Prelude*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 356.

personal emotion. Greenblatt reads Sir Thomas Wyatt's 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"[2]—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[3] 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[4] of Petrarch's Rime 190.[5]

In order to communicate a potentially dangerous sentiment safely then, Wyatt must construct his own narrative within the confines of Petrarch's 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. Think of the sonnet form, for instance, with its rigidly established rules for meter, rhyme scheme, and length; though the possibilities for the poem's content are infinite, if the poet adheres to this structure, the result could never be mistaken for anything but a sonnet.

To understand the narrative universe as a formal property, one must imagine the text's fictional world to have certain structural and metaphysical laws and guidelines, which govern the realm of narrative progression: where the plot can go and how the story must be framed. Thus,

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[2] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 139.
[3] *Ibid* 146.
[4] See Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 2003), 102. On the collaborative possibilities of translation, Eco 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 intertexuality; 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."
[5] Petrarch, "Una candida cerva sopra l'erba" in *Canzoniere*, ed. J.G. Nichols (London: Routledge, 2002), 167.

the fictional world and the narrative become a practically indistinguishable continuum, where the textual setting determines what sorts of narratives are available to an author writing into it, since any text that takes place in that universe must abide by these rules.[6] In other words, just as writers of sonnets must abide by the form's established meter and rhyme, writers of continuation narratives must abide by the framework presented by the content of the originating text. If these laws are flouted, then location in this particular narrative universe is compromised. Metaphorically speaking, the text can be considered a place, with certain inalienable laws that must be obeyed, if one is to remain within it.[7] Of course, when the narrative is as brief as Petrarch's, there is a limit to the scope of its narrative universe; long prose fiction clearly offers a far better avenue through which to pursue this inquiry.

Any examination of fiction's formal properties has traditionally led to an application of genre theory. I feel, however, that genre theory can be profitably extended to consider narrative universe, and its potential to support continuations. Certain genres—and within these genres, specific types of texts—are more generative of continuation than others; classifying texts upon this axis of productivity, then, is a natural development for genre theory, which has moved steadily away from viewing texts as static entities that are closed and finished. In 1991, Ralph Cohen responded to Jacques Derrida's "The Law of Genre" (1980) by suggesting that genre ought to be considered a historical process and that a text may move through many generic labels, contingent upon the culture reading it. Cohen explains that

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[6] See Jean Howard, "Shakespeare, Geography, and the Work of Genre on the Early Modern Stage," *Modern Language Quarterly* 64.3 (September 2003): 299-322 as well as the discussion in the following section, "**Genre and Geography**."

[7] If the narrative universe may be considered as one of the text's formal properties, it is only within this framework that Wyatt's authorial choices are possible. The differences and liminal spaces between Petrarch's Italian and Wyatt's English are necessarily slight, ambiguous and subject to interpretation by subsequent readers, and it is only in this strictly confined range where Wyatt's readerly desires (i.e. what he wants Petrarch's text to be able to *do*) are made manifest.

> In their reemergence, genre criticism and theory have moved from assumptions of genres as fixed to genre as process of textual change. Indeed, the generic emphasis on change is introduced by examination of the varied texts that compose a single genre, the drafts that lead to a published text that is a member of a genre, and by the ideological implications that result from different genres that combine, contrast, challenge, and oppose one another.[8]

However this paradigmatic shift in the understanding of genre does not allow for the possibility of dynamic change within the endpoint that is the "published text" itself, even though it may allow for a shifting generic label. Cohen does goes on to state that

> Once a new way of writing produces several examples, a basis exists for writers to identify it further by imitation and for critics by naming it and analyzing it. This is done by distinguishing this kind of writing from those from which it has drawn constituents that have combined into a distinct identity or genre. Until some agreements exist about a genre's distinctness, its identity remains in doubt and its denomination puzzling […]. Even when some agreement exists, no text is free from the possibility that it can belong to more than one genre. Members of a genre add, vary, modify, or abandon constituents so that the genre is modified by additional instances.[9]

Although he identifies the role of imitators to define generic identity, Cohen is still focused upon the dynamic possibilities of this identity, rather than of the text itself. But this *descriptive* genre model may ultimately less valuable than a *predictive* one, which is predicated on an understanding of the text as constantly in motion. If texts are active, then perhaps readers may be

[8] Ralph Cohen, "Genre Theory, Literary History, and Historical Change," in *Theoretical Issues in Literary History*, ed. David Perkins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 86-87.
[9] *Ibid*, 88

better served by classifying texts not only according to what they *are*, but also according to what they can *do* and what they can generate.

I have previously suggested that the writing of continuations can be understood as a form of scholarly reading; I want to suggest now that in our scholarly reading of texts, we can profitably adopt the perspective of a writer of continuations. This, too, is a form of scholarship, and "continuation theory," as I am terming it, can be used to better understand, define, and categorize the properties of source texts. Writers who continue a text identify a text's essential nature and continue that essential nature. Analyzing the continuations of a text thus identifies and illuminates the parts of the text's fictive space that are most important to readers.

In this chapter, I shall demonstrate how such a theory may be applied to *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. The central plot of Sidney's sprawling narrative 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, proceeding to woo them through a series of disguises and mistaken identities, characteristic to pastoral romance. Chaos—both political and personal—ensues, only to be finally resolved with a series of last-minute reversals, reconciliations, and marriages. Through my examination, I seek to determine a) how and why Sidney's text supports continuation to the great degree that it does, and b) what kind of continuations it can be expected to produce, based on the specific readerly desires and fantasies the text tends to incite in and elicit from its continuers. Viewed together with other texts that are also highly generative of continuations, *Arcadia* can be understood as a *selvage* text, that is, a text whose fictional reality endorses belief

with its solid structure, at once shot through with fractures along many different axes and bolstered by the dynamic movement between its multiple errant narrative threads. Since the particular solidity of *Arcadia*'s narrative universe is tied to its place, continuers' responses to the text can be analogized to the early modern preoccupations of exploration, colonization, and ownership of land and territory.

Genre and Geography

Above, I claim that an understanding of a text's genre must be extended to consider its narrative universe, and in particular, its geography (fictional landscape, space, and environment) and physics (laws, expectations, and narrative consequences), and that certain narrative universes (and therefore genres) are more fertile and productive than others. To understand this interlocking relationship between narrative universe and genre, it will be helpful to examine the development of genre theory a little more closely. In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare satirizes the dogmatic genre critics of his time by providing an absurd list of overlapping genres, "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral" (II.ii.396-7) that undermine the concept of a generic taxonomy. This confusion, which implies that a text can be all of these "genres" at the same time, underscores the failure of such generic differentiation to convey to the audience what can and should be expected from the narrative. While certainly tragedy and comedy can be defined in opposition to one another, and the relation between poetry, prose, and drama may be understood as a continuum, trying to mathematically define the category of a given text according to where it falls in relation to these loci is a futile task. Each category is not equal in significance to all others, nor is the significance static throughout any given category.

Alastair Fowler theorizes, therefore, a slightly different definition:

> Genres seem to differentiate, more or less systematically, a combination of features, both formal and substantive, ranging from minute to large, from specific topics to elusive moods. This repertoire may include characteristic diction, favorite rhetorical figures, peculiar meters, principal subjects, and typical themes. Each genre has more or less obligatory topics, for which material has to be found by the writer. The georgic topic of retirement, for example, may lead a poet back to Seneca's Epistola XC. Such shared sources draw exemplars of the genre together and adumbrate for a reader the broad field of associations in which the most relevant ones are to be found. One may usefully think of genres as domains of association—specialized, literary equivalents of the fields of association whereby meaning is communicated in ordinary speech. As such, the genres adjust a reader's mental set and help in selecting the optimally relevant associations that amount to a meaning of the literary work.[10]

According to Fowler, "genre" is a permeable combination of form, content, and style, which functions as an implicit membership to a certain intertextually referential club, or his "domain of association." Certainly, this rubric is more valuable than the nonsensical approach to genre to which Shakespeare refers. However, it still theorizes after the fact, or rather, examines texts only in a retrospective sense. If a text is a completed entity, then obviously it is a relatively simple matter to determine its "genre" according to the extent to which it contains characteristic tropes. The presence of socks indicates a comedy, or of buskins, a tragedy; similarly, a comedy ends with a wedding or several, and a tragedy ends with a death or several. A pastoral, such as *Arcadia* must include certain tropes that are essential to its plot; without these elements (i.e.

[10]Alastair Fowler, "The Formation of Genres in the Renaissance and After," *New Literary History* 34.2 (2003): 191.

shepherds, poesy, rural landscapes, etc.) it cannot be considered part of this genre. But though these tropes are perhaps essential, if the text is an object continually in motion, recognizing and cataloging the presence of these tropes is not enough to define the nature of the text, any more than a person's style of dress adequately conveys a complete sense of their character in all its complexity.

Contemporary classifications of genre differ from those of the Renaissance. A common distinction found in contemporary publishing is that between literary and popular fiction (the latter also confusingly referred to simply as "genre"). Popular fiction (or "genre fiction") is further subdivided into action/adventure, crime, fantasy, horror, mystery, romance, science fiction, and western. Just as with the classical and early modern generic distinctions, there is a formidable amount of overlap, and the groupings in many cases seem arbitrary. The distinction between "literary" and "popular" is particularly hard to pin down, as "literary fiction" often includes the generic tropes associated with the latter group; often, the major differentiation is the quality of the packaging. Yet even when the book falls clearly into an assigned category, it feels as if there should be more substance to the category than its inclusion of tropes. In other words, surely it ought to take more than the substitution of a sock for a buskin to change tragedy to comedy. To accomplish this differentiation, a more ontological approach to textual distinction is required.

The project of examining a genre as something more than an enumeration of its stock ingredients is relevant to establishing an understanding of genre distinctions overall. When performing a book length study of science fiction, for instance, Fredric Jameson devotes some time to establishing such an ontological distinction between science fiction and fantasy. In his analysis, he suggests that these two "genres" can be defined and distinguished from one another

by their relationship to time as well as their narrative politics—in other words, science fiction is that which looks forward and progresses, while fantasy is essentially conservative, gazing longingly at some idealized past.[11] More broadly, Northrop Frye addresses this project solely in terms of the hero, writing:

> In literary fictions the plot consists of somebody doing something. The somebody, if an individual, is the hero, and the something he does or fails to do is what he can do, or could have done, on the level of the postulates made about him by the author and the consequent expectations of the audience. Fictions, therefore, may be classified, not morally, but by the hero's power of action, which may be greater than ours, less, or roughly the same.[12]

The relationship between the protagonist and environment, and the protagonist and audience, in Frye's hierarchical construction, is what determines genre.

Using Frye's theory of the mode as determined by the hero's power of action, Paul Alpers, in *What Is Pastoral*, states that pastorals such as *Arcadia* transform from age to age and author to author because of changes in what he terms the "representative shepherd"; these changes occur historically, thus creating variations in the mode. Alpers believes that the character of the speaker (i.e. who is the shepherd? Is he cleric, or poet's self-insertion, or courtier, or rustic?) determines the nature of the piece. He writes

> The representative anecdote is conceived not as fixed formula but as a generative fiction, which can be elaborated or transformed in accordance with the needs of representation or the claims of representativeness. Our argument is not simply that

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[11] Fredric Jameson, *Archeologies of the Future: a desire called Utopia and other science fictions* (New York: Verso, 2005), 64.
[12] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 33

> pastoral has changed in certain ways but that its founding conception makes it susceptible of such change.[13]

This focus on a single protagonist is unnecessarily reductive; a plot consists not of one person doing one thing, but many people doing many things. To remove the hypothetical singular protagonist from the equation and instead look at the larger construction of the narrative universe—the environment and its society as a function of this environment—and its relationship to the plot, as well as to the audience provides a more textured understanding of the possibilities therein.

When watching a horror movie, for example, it can be an almost irresistible temptation to continually shout at the characters on the screen, "don't do X or Y, don't you know you're in a horror movie?" Whatever attempts the film might make to convince us that it is happening in our own universe, its genre informs us that it is not and that it is instead operating by different rules that result in a particular set of expected consequences. Indeed, what happens in the genre can only happen there; its range of possibilities are peculiar to it. Before embarking on her discussion of the relationship between Shakespeare's settings and the various genres of the place in "Shakespeare, Geography, and the Work of Genre on the Early Modern Stage," Jean Howard references Fredric Jameson's claim that

> The literary or aesthetic act . . . always entertains some active relationship with the Real; yet in order to do so, it cannot simply allow "reality" to persevere inertly in its own being, outside the text and at distance. It must rather draw the Real into

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[13] Paul Alpers, *What Is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 174.

> its own texture . . . to carry the Real within itself as its own intrinsic or immanent subtext.[14]

Expanding upon this idea, Howard describes how the "concept of genre" has been used to understand how literature selectively filters the real world to imprint onto the text. If the real world is comprehended as a set that includes all possible data, then each genre works as its own particular set of delimiting factors which exclude certain possibilities from the textual universe. She explains further then that genre cannot be separated from the act of response, arguing that

> we access history only through its textualizations, which, paradoxically, are at once a response to history and its necessary, otherwise unknowable, instantiation. To engage with history is, in part, to engage with the constellation of discourses, narrative paradigms, and stylistic and formal practices, including genre, through which textualization occurs and which form the ever-changing horizon of expression at a given historical juncture.[15]

According to both Jameson and Howard, then, the text is an intervention between the audience and the real; the text must manage the real, perform upon it, and transmute it; thus, it acts as an interpretation and, therefore, a filter. The narrative universe produced by this sieve is a smaller infinity that the real one that it delimits. If we can adequately and comprehensively describe the

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[14] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 66-7, qtd. in Howard, 303.
[15] Howard, 303

geography of this constructed universe, we will also have described the possibilities of the text for continuation.[16]

Selvage texts: Creating Reality

Recalling that *selvage* texts are those texts that display a fictional reality at once firmly established and also simultaneously fractured and unstable, *Arcadia*'s continually revisited narrative universe provides a perfect case-study to show the connections between the *selvage* effect and continuation. With each writerly incursion into its borders, Arcadia's place in the map of the imagination becomes more fixed, just as the gap between this fictional Arcadia and its real world counterpart grows ever wider. By now the very name "Arcadia" is simply shorthand for an idyllic, golden space—a space that is as far removed as possible from the rugged, harsh region in Greece's Peloponnese interior that a traveler would find if attempting to reach it by boat instead of by novel. This incoherence begs the question: why exactly are the imaginary Arcadia and the real one so different from one another? Wouldn't it make more sense—when setting a fiction in a recognizable "real world" space as opposed to some invented spot in an as yet unexplored locale —for the fictional world to have some similarity with the geographic region that shares its name? And yet when Virgil was writing his *Eclogues*—the first known association between the pastoral mode and an Arcadian location—it is generally thought that, for some reason, he apparently chose for his setting a climate entirely unsuitable to his project.[17]

In his famous article "Virgil and Arcadia," classicist Richard Jenkyns suggests, therefore, that the association between Arcadia and the pastoral setting may be the product of a misreading

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[16] Howard's remarks on the existence of a relationship between Shakespeare's plays and their location thus seem incredibly apt. There is a useful thread for this theorization to be found in Sidney's *Defence*, when he states "in poesy looking but for fiction, they shall use the narration but as an imaginative ground-plot of a profitable invention." The conflation of narrative plot and plot of ground is a key one here; the first is only possible because of and in terms of the second; together, they are a fertile land from which new texts can sprout.

[17] Alternatively, Theocritus, inventor of the pastoral, set his Idylls in his homeland of Sicily.

of Virgil by subsequent writers. Six of Virgil's ten Eclogues, (the first, second, third, fifth, sixth and ninth) make no mention of Arcadia at all. The fourth, in which Arcadia appears only in passing, merely says "*Pan etiam, Arcadia mecum si iudice certet / Pan etiam Arcadia dicat se iudice victum*."[18] Jenkyns persuasively argues that Arcadia here is referenced 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*, ipso facto*, that a poem's setting was Cyprus, if such a location were mentioned in connection with Venus. He makes similar work of the Arcadian allusion in Eclogue 8, which is likewise linked with Pan. Eclogue 7's Arcadian mention is simply accounted for as well; in this poem, Virgil describes the shepherds with the words "*Arcades ambo*."[19] 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.[20]

Eclogue 10 is the only poem in the series which can definitively be said to take place in Arcadia, and this poem is clearly not pastoral. The scenery of Eclogue 10 is full of cold mountains, deserted caverns, chilly rocks; its beauty is wild and strange and empty; it chills us to the bone. It is, in other words, a far cry from the Renaissance pastoral landscape with its cultured, friendly society or even the Virgilian pastoral mood of earlier poems, with its song, music, and cheer. As

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[18] Trans: Pan, too, if he were to compete with me with Arcadia as judge, Pan, even with Arcadia as judge, would say he had lost.
[19] Trans: Arcadians both
[20] Richard Jenkyns, "Virgil and Arcadia," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 79 (1989): 26.

a place, then, Arcadia is undistinguished by the Eclogues fromVirgil's vision of Northern Italy; it is not, in Virgil, necessarily symbolic of the pastoral.

Thus, Arcadia as we know it today, the fictional, golden, pastoral Arcadia, was invented by Jacopo Sannazaro and perfected by Sir Philip Sidney during the sixteenth century. As described by Sidney, it is a place where one can

> see the grass, how in colour it exceeds the emeralds, everyone striving to pass his fellow—and yet they are all kept in an equal height […] and see the rest of these beautiful flowers, […] stately trees [which] seem to maintain their flourishing old age with the only happiness of their seat being clothed with a continual spring because no beauty here should ever fade.[21]

Vibrant, bright, and colorful, it is clear that this is no accidental paradise, when the grass is apparently kept uniformly tended. It is a fully cultivated world; the wilderness is completely absent. In no way can this vision be compared to the actual province of Arcadia.

While the real Arcadia was comparatively nearby to the Italy of Virgil and Sannazaro, it's not as if it were located in a region inaccessible or completely unfamiliar to Sidney either. Greece, then situated within the Ottoman Empire, was a spot frequented by English travelers; one such traveler and documentarian even passed through Tripoli (now Arcadia's capital) on a trip during which he also broke his journey in Vlishing (now called Flushing) and was hosted by Sidney's brother Robert who was at that time stationed there.[22] It seems clear then that Sidney's depiction of Arcadia cannot be ascribed to ignorance of the area's actual nature; unlike the New

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[21] Sir Philip Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, ed. Katherine Duncan Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *OA*.

[22] This journey was made in 1595-1596, over a period of several months by a gentleman scholar and traveler named Fynes Moryson. See Fynes Moryson, *Shakespeare's Europe: Unpublished Chapters of Fynes Moryson's Itinerary: Being a Survey of the Condition of Europe at the end of the 16th century*, ed. Charles Hughes (London: Sherratt & Hughes, 1903).

World,[23] Greece's physical topography and climate ought to have been quite well established to early modern authors. By setting their pastoral romances in Arcadia, and endowing this Arcadia with the necessarily counterfactual ambience that would allow their plots to flourish, Sannazaro and Sidney clearly wanted their works to be inheritors of the Virgilian tradition, and unlike other pastoral writers who set their works on imaginary islands or within forests in areas that were actually forested, they were willing to discard what they knew to be the truth of what the region was like in favor of an mythologized Arcadia that could only exist in the imagination. Whether this was to bolster up the relationship between their works and those of Virgil (because they had misread the Eclogues and misinterpreted his intention like so many later scholars) or simply because the conflation of mythologized heritage and fictional location was an invention too aesthetically enticing to reject is impossible to determine. In either case, however, it was a matter of deliberate choice rather than thoughtless error.

Choice, in this instance, can also be described as desire; as Sannazaro read the Eclogues, and as Sidney read Sannazaro as well as the Eclogues, they wanted this particular Arcadia enough to draw it out of the ether. To mimic real life is not an expression of desire; to alter it, however, is. If we think of each continuation of a text as a reading of the text, then we see that continuations tell us something about the source. From a continuation, we can learn what the continuers felt was important about the original text: what they wanted to get out of it, what they wished had been different, what were the areas to which they wanted to prolong their exposure, and what were the pieces that they wished to excise or elide over. The Arcadias of Sannazaro and

[23] Incidentally, the New World was at that time probably a much better reflection of the fictional Arcadia. It should come as no surprise that the Atlantic coast north of Virginia, with all its bounty was, in the seventeenth century, called Arcadia by settlers. Today, the region has dropped the 'r' and is known as Acadia.

of Sidney, as well as the numerous continuations of the latter inform us that, to their authors, place is of the utmost importance, that it is the locus of these writers' readerly desire.

Even as Sidney chose to follow Sannazaro's lead, transforming the mountainous, perilous, sparsely inhabited landscape into a verdant, fragrant paradise which "among all the Provinces of Grece was ever had in singular reputation, partly for the sweetness of the air and other natural benefits" (*OA* 4) and was, it seems, also the epitome of civilization, possessing as it did a better class of citizen than the average, he also took pains to make sure that its positioning was accurate. In "Sidney's *Arcadia*: The Endings of the Three Versions," Peter Lindenbaum points out that, as William A. Ringler has shown, Sidney consulted a map of Greece and Asia Minor before beginning his revision. His more accurate knowledge of the geography of these areas is shown throughout the new *Arcadia*, especially in one of the changes in the 1593 edition definitely attributable to Sidney, the journey of Euarchus to Arcadia.[24]

As Richard Helgerson has discussed in numerous studies, early modern England was deeply concerned with matters cartographic. Sidney's revisions show that he, too, was interested in the internal coherence of his imaginary map, since he corrected his previous errors. How to reconcile this concern with the other Arcadia, still cultivated, still verdant, and most of all, still incongruous? In an essay entitled "The Land Speaks: Cartography, Chorography and Subversion in Renaissance England," Helgerson discusses the ideological encoding and combination of map and allegorical representation in works such as Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*.[7] Rather than subtracting from the notion of the "reality" of the country, the inscription of ideology simply

[24] Peter Lindenbaum, "Sidney's "Arcadia": The Endings of the Three Versions," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 34.3 (May, 1971): 213. See also Gavin Alexander, *Writing After Sidney: The Literary Response to Sir Philip Sidney 1586-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), *xxiv*.

layers on top of it, as the map becomes polysemic—almost an allegoresis of a three dimensional globe. It functions on more than one level.[25]

It seems useful here to consider briefly the historical underpinnings of "realism" itself. The term denotes two distinct sets of philosophical theories, one modern and the other medieval. The first of these, the modern, is concerned with the nature of objects in the world, and the second, the medieval, deals with the objective existence of universal concepts. A closer examination of the text through these two overlapping lenses leads us to some interesting results. The first of these lenses, as I have said, takes its genesis from the modern conception of realism, and what Roland Barthes calls "The Reality Effect." In examining the novels of Flaubert and Balzac, Barthes exposes these authors' effort to delineate reality as if through a transparent pane of glass, the consciousness of which results in a sort of grammar of portrayal that gives rise to a certain series of conventions or tropes. One of the rules of this grammar that Barthes notices is the inclusion of the "superfluous detail" that signifies nothing, which, he says is the basis of that "unavowed verisimilitude which forms the aesthetic of all the standard works of modernity." Barthes draws a distinction between this modern conception and the current of rhetoric in the Middle Ages, where, he claims, description is both luxurious and prolific and is also "constrained by no realism; its truth is unimportant (or even its verisimilitude…only the constraint of the descriptive genre counts."[26] Assuming that we allow this summation of medieval rhetoric to pass without dispute, how are we to parse the time between *Piers Plowman* (1360-87) and *Madame Bovary* (1856)? It seems to me that Renaissance thinkers were poised on the cusp of the same obsession with the transparent reproduction of reality and its

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[25] Richard Helgerson, "The Land Speaks: Cartography, Chorography and Subversion in Renaissance England," in *Representing the English Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 355.
[26] Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, 144.

illusions that Barthes ascribes to nineteenth century European authors—simply look at the developments in the visual arts and the interest in such conceits as *trompe l'oeil*.[27]

Speaking of early modern fictional worlds, and their relationship to the real, Harry Berger writes

> It may be the world of play or poem or treatise, the world inside a picture frame, the world of pastoral simplification, the controlled conditions of scientific experiment. Its essential quality is that it is an explicitly fictional, artificial, or hypothetical world. It presents itself to us as a game which, like all games, is to be taken with dead seriousness while it is going on.[28]

Within the *Arcadia* itself, this conversation between real world and play world is mirrored endlessly.[29] Consider for instance, the episode of ekphrasis where Pyrocles falls in love with Philoclea through the medium of her picture. This love, which Musidorus attempts to talk him out of, is in silent advocacy of the idea that it is possible for art to represent life realistically or at least sufficiently enough to engender love. Modeled in Sidney's text, then, is the idea that taking pleasure seriously—in an ever so slightly pornographic way—can allow affect and emotion to cross the body-fiction divide, and thereby bridge the world of the imagination and the world of the real.

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[27] See Michael Kubovy, *The Psychology of Perspective and Renaissance Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 77. Kubovy argues that we are interested in *trompe l'oeil* because of its intimate epistemological flirtation with reality; he claims, "we enjoy examining an object endowed with the power to throw us into a delusory state of mind after it has divulged its secret to us […] A *trompe l'oeil* picture is an epistemological close call."

[28] Harry Berger, *Second World, Green World: Studies in Renaissance Fiction Making*, arr. John Patrick Lynch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 12.

[29] See Dennis Kay, "She Was a Queen, and Therefore Beautiful': Sidney, His Mother, and Queen Elizabeth," *The Review of English Studies* 43.169 (Feb., 1992): 30. Speaking of the *roman à clef* elements in the Arcadia, Kay writes, "the individual correspondences operate at a relatively simple level, and are part of Sidney's habitual strategy of hinting at actualities behind his fiction, of implying that his romance is rooted in the circumstances of the world."

In the rendering of reality into art, a certain metamorphosis must be expected. The reproduction of reality forces the alteration of genre, as three dimensional forms are shown in two dimensions, or conversation is spoken in blank verse. Fiction itself then operates on these multiple levels of signification, but not all fictions draw the reader's attention to these points of rupture. In a description of science fiction, for example, Elana Gomel writes:

> Science-fictional worlds embody […] the ontological "purity" of fantasy: its attempt to construct an alternative to the real. Obviously, this "purity" is a rhetorical stance rather than a genuine self-sufficiency; no literary text can escape the conditions of its production, and imagination as creation ex nihilo is a mirage. But, as opposed to allegory, sf emphasizes the literal level of the text, and allows the meaning of its fictional world to emerge through a complex process of cognitive shuttling between the text and consensus reality rather than through a one-to-one deciphering of the narrative code.[30]

While allegory points to an inner meaning, which is the only part that readers are meant to take seriously, science fictional worlds demand that the reader take this literal top-level equally as seriously as they do any message or lesson that the text may convey.

Like science fiction or the western, the pastoral demonstrates my concept of the relationship between narrative and location; for these genres, the concept of place is clearly indispensable. The possibilities inherent in the pastoral (or science fictional or western) universe

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[30] Elana Gomel, "The Poetics of Censorship: Allegory as Form and Ideology in the Novels of Arkady and Boris Strugatsky," *Science Fiction Studies* 22.1 (March 1995): 91.

are obviously a product of its setting.[31] Even if the shepherd does change, as Alpers suggests, the countryside remains the same: it is always Arcadia and the dream of Arcadia together. To be clear, I want to suggest the Arcadian universe is actually predicated on the fact that there are multiple Arcadias—the imaginary and the real—and that it is this shifting play between them that determines the range of possibilities available to the narratives that make their home there. If we allow then for a moment, a belief in the existence of both the fictional Arcadia and the real one—a moment where the text convinces us that they can occupy the same space—we can see underneath this modernist conception of realism the shadow of the medieval realists, who believed in an objective reality instead of a socially constructed one. In the Realist conception, then, the world exists independently from human creativity and remains to be discovered, not invented. This sense of discovery, the belief in the geography of a place that has somehow always-already existed is implicit. This belief is further validated by the multiple narratives that accrue about the narrative universe. Obviously these narratives cannot and do not all agree, and where they contradict one another, a contested space develops between them. This space provides yet another access point for subsequent authors to insert their own readings and variations. As these continuations accumulate, so do possibilities for further productivity, resulting in more texts, each of which helps to further endorse belief in the narrative universe itself.

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[31] Other contemporary texts that have inspired continuation by authors such as Shakespeare include Robert Greene's *Pandosto* (1588) and Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* (1590), which were retold as *The Winter's Tale* and *As You Like It* respectively. Both continuations demonstrated continuity of space with Bohemia and the Forest of Arden; in *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare even retained Greene's geographical error by giving Bohemia an impossible sea coast. See Andrew Gurr, "The Bear, the Statue, and Hysteria in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly 34* (1983): 422.

***Selvage* texts: Instability and Fractures**

Even without its continuations, Sidney's narrative universe, in and of itself, is composed of this contested, fractured, and unstable space. His *Arcadia*, existing as it does in at least three form—the old *Arcadia*, the new *Arcadia* (a revision of the previous with only three of five books completed, which ends in the middle of a sentence which was, so the story goes, interrupted by Sidney's death) and the combined Arcadia which includes the three revised and expanded books plus the two concluding books from the completed version—is a fragmented and incomplete text. As we've seen, Sidney himself was rewriting previous Arcadias; not content with this, he decided, as well, to rewrite his own. This means that continuers of Sidney were themselves beginning with a source that already possessed numerous points of access.

As if these entrances into the text were not enough, Sidney also chooses to give successive authors an engraved invitation. He closes the old *Arcadia* with the following:

> 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 (*OA* 361).

In this paragraph, Sidney lays out the bare bones of successive stories, and invites other 'spirit's to "exercise [their] pens" by adding flesh to his prefabricated skeletion. It is intriguing that, while the invitation is taken up by many, they pick and choose among his offerings and directions with extreme care and in all cases discard the greater part of it.

As I explained in the previous section, narrative multiplicity necessarily creates fractures, points of disjunction between one version and another. Though somewhat counterintuitive, it is often these very fractures which assure the continuance of the narrative universe as they allow subsequent reader-writers to construct archontic texts that, alongside the original, inhabit an archival universe containing infinite entries created by those collaborative and participative readers-turned-writers at each point of fracture. The inevitable discontinuities between those archival entries vie with the consistent fictional reality necessary for the existence of the archival universe itself and increase the pressure for even more reader-created refinements and transformations. The fractured portrayal of characters and setting that results from the collaborative authorship of these universes, especially prevalent in works that are interpreted, explored, and translated into a variety of media, allows for numerous points of access on the part of the audience—in effect, democratizing ownership of the narrative. It is this collaborative element and these very points of dissonance and ingress that invest the fictional universe with a sense of multi-dimensional "objective reality," allowing the audience to justify their own interpretations of the original text, while simultaneously imparting a feeling of solidity that grants the audience numerous vantage points on the material.

Such plurality implies an instability that is necessarily fluid, and thus necessarily queer.[32] It's no surprise, then, that queerness 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 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 in the new *Arcadia*, he transforms into Zelmane, at the end of his long recounting of her introduction and adventures to Musidorus, the narrator as wells as both Musidorus and Pyrocles himself seem to become totally invested in the disguise, as Pyrocles declares,

> 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.[33]

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

At first glance, it's tempting to see the queerness of this episode simply in the fact that we have a man dressing up as a woman, and the various explicit permutations and undercurrants of homoeroticism that transpire as a result such as the attraction between Musidorus-Pyrocles, Pyrocles-Basilius, and Zelmane-Philoclea. But there is another, more fundamental strain of

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[32] See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999). In this foundation text of queer theory, Butler argues that gender is a performative act, never fixed, but always fluid.
[33] Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (London: Penguin, 1977), 151.

queerness 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 the *Arcadia* as a whole, and not just Pyrocles alone. Arcadia too, has a character which is implicitly non-static, and thus implicitly non-normative.

Richardson, Nabokov, and Stoppard

While a full examination is beyond the scope of this chapter, I wish to touch briefly upon three texts—themselves propagative—that read Sidney's narrative universe as an evocation of erotic place. The first of these is Richardson's *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded* whose eponymous heroine is named after Sidney's. Scholars such as Jacob Leed and Gillian Beer have persuasively argued that the similarities between the two texts do not rest only in this homage. While Leed focuses on the congruence between the characters of the two Pamelas,[34] Beer shows that the resonances between Sidney and Richardson's texts are far more profound; the "panoply of discourses" that appear in the Arcadia are mirrored by the multiple linguistic and stylistic registers that Pamela's voice is able to negotiate. Beer goes on to point out that

> Both Sidney and Richardson are composing their works for a precisely imagined readership of women. Questions of cross-dressing and of voyeurism are responded to (very differently) by each of them. [… Richardson's] naming of Pamela was not an allusion only to a single character. It summoned up and made available for translation the achievement of *Arcadia*, [which] offered, for re-appraisal, a mood of endless possibility chastened by peremptory trials […] and a pleasure-giving process [that] would set a narrative tempo, and would recall for

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[34] Jacob Leed, "Richardson's Pamela and Sidney's," *Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association* 40 (November 1973): 240-45.

> the reader the reasoned leisure of the older work, a leisure which is employed at once erotically and ethically.[35]

Sidney's pastoral space, which ranges across countries, is still present in *Pamela*; in Richardson's text, however, this space is condensed to the rooms and garden that define the borders of Pamela's world. Pamela's body, too, is analogized with these landscapes, making it a geographical space as well, and one that is eroticized and contested. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Richardson's *Pamela* was immensely productive of continuations,[36] perhaps because it, too, was a *selvage* text: enormously and lusciously detailed, based on a previously extant fictional world, existing in a continual state of revision, insistent upon the credibility of its fictional reality, productive of affect and sexually charged pleasure, and dependent upon a certain fluidity of identity.

While Vladimir Nabokov's *Ada, or Ardor: A family chronicle* (1969) is not read nearly so often as either *Arcadia* or *Pamela*, it, too, shares a narrative universe with them. It's hard to avoid thinking of *Ada* as an Arcadian tale, with its Edenic summers at Ardis, but Penny McCarthy convincingly argues that Sidney and Nabokov's texts have an even more intimate relationship.[37] Like *Pamela*, *Ada* shares with the Arcadia a narrative universe based on multiple

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[35] Gillian Beer, "*Pamela* and *Arcadia*: Reading Class, Genre, Gender" in *Arguing with the Past: Essays in Narrative from Woolf to Sidney* (London: Routledge, 1989), 38, 43.

[36] See Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality, and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 6. Speaking of *Pamela*'s status as an immensely propagative multimedia cultural event and mode, Eagleton writes "If Richardson's characters are no more confined to their official texts than *Superman*, they also transcend purely textual status in a way more akin to the protagonists of such modern sagas as *The Archers* or *Coronation Street*. An English village is reported to have rung its church bells on learning that Pamela was married […]. Suspended between fact and fiction, Richardson's characters come to assume the ambiguous aura of myth, that symbolic realm so utterly paradigmatic that we never can quite decide whether it is more or less 'real' than the empirical world."

[37] See Penny McCarthy, "Nabokov's *Ada* and Sidney's *Arcadia*: The Regeneration of a Phoenix," *The Modern Language Review* 99.1 (Jan 2004): 17-31.

errant narratives; unlawful, deviant sex (here incestuous); a series of unstable places like Terra and Antiterra; metafictional components that challenge the divide between reality and fiction; and is based upon taking play very seriously. *Ada* is an extremely difficult and unconventional text, and thus is not particularly generative. Still, continuations do exist. In a cursory search, I was able to locate at least four fan-continuations online: "The Rotten Fruit of Wounded Wombs,"[38] a story that crosses *Ada* with the television show *American Horror Story*, imagining Ada and Van as ghosts in a family home; "All Bright Kids Are Depraved,"[39] a collage of lyrically poetic lines and celebrity photos that retells Nabokov's story in brief; "Crushed Violets,"[40] a fan-epic that explicitly reads *Ada* intertextually with an anime series called *Weiss Kreuze*; and a photo-novel, "Antiterra," where the artist captures landscapes, developing alternate identities for the images of people around them. The reviewer remarks that

> At this stage of the project's development the viewer isn't being told who the characters are, but the people who become them know and contribute to the personal image of whoever the person is who appears in the image. It's his own little universe, the visions of which have a literal backstory alongside a processual depth coming from his approach to form. It's also a little bit like if you woke up one day as a character in your favourite series and started writing fanfic about it?[41]

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[38] Grayglube, "The Rotten Fruit of Wounded Wombs," *Fanfiction.net*. http://m.fanfiction.net/s/7520919/1/

[39] Corleones, "All Bright Kids Are Depraved," *Livejournal.com*, http://corleones.livejournal.com/83461.html

[40] Murasakisuishou, The Queen of Blueberry Toast, "Crushed Violets," http://www.angelfire.com/vamp/hausafrog/theCVness.html

[41] Bethany Small, "Review of Vladimir Kravchenko's *Antiterra*," http://thethousands.com.au/sydney/look/vladimir-kravchenko-anti-terra/

Although these continuations do reference appropriately characteristic elements, their small number may make the phenomenon seem trivial. However, as I said, Ada's inapproachability limits the number of people who will even attempt a continuation, and if we compare it to an equally complex text like James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (1939), we'll find that it has many more responders, which I ascribe to its participation in Sidney's narrative universe as well as its own properties of *selvage.*

Despite its title and setting in "Sidley Park," the third text, Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* (1993) is not often read as a continuation of Sidney's work. And yet, like Sidney's Arcadia, Sidley Park is also a terrain that specifically and continually negotiates fictionality and artifice, for as Lady Croome says:

> But Sidley Park is already a picture, and a most amiable picture too. The slopes are green and gentle. The trees are companionably grouped at intervals that show them to advantage. The rill is a serpentine ribbon unwound from the lake peacably contained by meadows on which the right amount of sheep are tastefully arranged.[42]

This image recollects Sidney's green grass, and just like Sidney, its "familiar pastoral refinement" is competing with several other disjoint realities, fractured by its multiplicity of times and sensual, erotic narratives that refuse to be contained or stilled.[43]

Early Modern Fanfiction

Although the three texts I've mentioned so far identify the erotics of place as the most solid, supportive, and fertile aspect of Sidney's *Arcadia*, none of them explicitly claim to continue Sidney. I want to turn my attention now to two texts which actually attempt to do so. In

[42] Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), 12

[43] See Anne-Valérie Dulac, "Les Arcadies de Sir Philip Sidney et de Tom Stoppard," *Sillages critiques* 13 (Dec 2011), http://sillagescritiques.revues.org/2426.

re-inscribing Sidney's text, rather than simply allowing their attachment to it to remain as a sort of intertextual tease, Lady Mary Wroth and Anna Weamys assert their own rights to Sidney's universe, using it for their own purposes, while simultaneously mining it for the respect it had already accumulated. Thus their fantasy of and relationship with *Arcadia* becomes an almost colonial project, as they explore, conquer, and remake the text in their own images and according to their own lights.

Much like the writing of continuations today, early modern women's writing was viewed by contemporary critics as transgressive, inherently queer, and illegitimate. As such, perhaps it's unsurprising that Wroth and Weamys' continuations employ tropes that are so much a part of current internet fan fiction practices, especially since such writing is also perceived as being produced mainly by communities of writing women.[44] The two fan fiction tropes I want to focus on in this discussion are called the Mary-Sue and the Curtain(s) Fic. Pat Pflieger defines a Mary-Sue as "a character representing the author of the story, an avatar, the writer's projection into an interesting world full of interesting people."[45] Mary-Sues are generally frowned upon in elite fan writing circles because so often they are outcome of poorly written wish-fulfillment, in which the author's self-insertion is the pinnacle of perfection, whose every desire is implausibly satisfied, and who is wholly uninteresting to other readers. And yet, at a base level, Mary-Sues illustrate the fundamental desire of a continuer to literally enter into the textual universe. In contrast,

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[44] See Julie Campbell, "The *Amyes* of the English Court," and "*Querelle* Resonance and Literary Circle Ritual in English Romances" in *Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Fiction* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006):123-196 and Sharon Cumberland, "Private Uses of Cyberspace: Women, Desire, and Fan Culture," *MIT Communications Forum*, http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/papers/cumberland.html.

[45] Pat Pfliegar, "Too Good to Be True: 150 Years of Mary Sue," presented at the American Culture Association conference, March 31, 1999, San Diego, CA, http://www.merrycoz.org/papers/MARYSUE.HTM

rather than inserting an authorial avatar into the narrative universe, Curtain Fics[46] alter the narrative universe to more closely reflect the universe that the fan author already inhabits or wants to inhabit. These stories are generally brief vignettes that revolve around domestic scenes and chores, allowing characters, whose romantic lives are often fraught with conflict in the story proper, to explore through fan-authored continuations the eroticization of ordinary, domestic life. Imagine, for example, a continuation of *Romeo and Juliet* in which the tragedy was somehow averted or postponed, and the young lovers end up having to "pick out curtains" for their new home in Mantua or Verona. Because fan writers are often women writing into predominantly masculine universes, both of these tropes can be perceived as feminizing the text: in the first, the female author is literally projected into a world and is free to explore it; in the other, the world of the male characters is conquered and "civilized" by a domesticity that often reads as feminine.

The Mary Sue: Lady Mary Wroth and the *Countess of Montgomery's Urania*

As Sidney's niece, Lady Mary Wroth certainly wished to believe herself the inheritor of his literary tradition as well as a continuation of his bloodline. However, though often considered a continuation of the *Arcadia*, Lady Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621) is a *roman à clef*, connected only extremely tenuously to Sidney's text. Its main characters are Pamphilia—who though she clearly inherits her name from Sidney's heroines, Pamela and Philoclea, is clearly and completely a self insertion through whom Wroth can express her own sentiments and discourses—and Pamphilia's love object, Amphilanthus. The single character from the *Arcadia* whom Wroth chooses to continue explicitly is Urania, and her story is almost totally different in incident from the mentions in the *Arcadia* where Urania is

> thought a Shepherd's Daughter, but indeed of far greater birth. For her sake [Claius and Strephon] had both taken this trade of life, each knowing other's love,

[46] See "Curtainfic," *Fanlore*, http://fanlore.org/wiki/Curtainfic (accessed August 31, 2012).

> but yet of so high a quality their friendship was, that they never so much as brake company one from the other, but continued their pursuit, like two true runners, both employing their best speed, but one not hindering the other. But after many marvellous adventures Urania never yielding better then hate for their love, upon a strange occasion had left the country, giving withal straight commandment to these two by writing that they should tarry in Arcadia until they heard from her. And now some months were past that they had no news of her (*OA* 285).

Although Wroth takes the line "indeed of far greater birth" to mean that Urania is a princess, she ignores almost all the other integral elements to her story. For one thing, Claius and Strephon—explicitly mentioned by name in Sidney's invitational conclusion, whereas Urania herself is not—do not figure at all. Though Wroth's text clearly bears Sidney's imprint and thus does continue the Sidney "brand," she is far more concerned with characters like Urania, rather than places like Arcadia, and she cannot be said to continue the narrative plot and space in any real sense, with one solitary exception.

There is only one moment in Wroth's text where it, for a brief interlude, becomes Arcadian, and in the context of the *Urania* as a whole, this scene is relatively brief and unimportant. For my purposes, however, it is worth going over in detail. The episode to which I am referring is the pastoral interlude between Leonius, brother of Urania, and the object of his affection, Veralinda, who is unbeknownst to herself a princess raised as a shepherdess in Arcadia. This is, by the way, the only episode in the *Urania* which actually takes place in Arcadia, and we can see from its introduction that place is going to be an essential component. Wroth begins this portion of the narrative as follows:

> but then he came into a part of Arcadia, not taking the directest, but pleasantest way to the Sea; at the entring into this Paradice on Earth for sweetnes, delicacies springing there as plentifully as Primroses in other poorer places, he liked, and wonder'd, not sufficiently as he thought, being able to contemplate the fulnes and richnes of the bounty of that Province, riding sometimes, sometimes walking, beholding the rareness of it, yet when he has seene all the varieties increase in varying to pleasure, he was yet set upon by a more admirable sight.[47]

This "admirable sight" is of course Veralinda, and she is described by Wroth in fulsome detail as far as the details of her hair and gown. Veralinda's artful approximation of natural confusion is the very signifier of the identity confusion and tension that the pastoral exhibits; it's hard to imagine her living anywhere but Arcadia.

Naturally, Leonius falls head over heels in love at first sight, as one does when one is in Arcadia (when in Rome!), but she is afraid, and there appear to be class differences which divide the lovers. Taking a leaf out of Pyrocles and Musidorus's books, Leonius decides to transform himself into a woman of lower class, so that the barriers between the lovers can be erased. Leonius becomes Leonia, and now she and Veralinda can embrace each other without constraint, which they do:

> so they kissed againe, wishing and loving, they remained, passing many such pleasant times, till at last the wonder of such affection twixt women was discovered, and it may be, had then bin brought to light, had not the Shepherdesses arrived to his griefe, and no way to her content, who truly loved the sweete conversation and discourse of this Nimph (*U1* s435).

[47] Lady Mary Wroth, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, ed. Josephine Roberts (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995), I: s422. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *U1*.

Even though Wroth tells us that Veralinda prefers Leonia's kisses "better than any of her fellowes kisses for this was passionately kind," this burgeoning lesbian attraction is clearly feared by the narrative; its enticement is merely gestured at and then rapidly fled from, as Wroth hurries to interrupt it with the appearance of the other shepherdesses. Notably, also, she uses Leonius's masculine pronoun here, and not Leonia's.

It is Arcadia after all, so the queering is necessary, but she clearly wishes to avoid it as much as possible. Indeed, Leonia's prime attraction is not her proximity made possible by the gender switch, but her experiential understanding of femininity, all expressed in terms of compassion and kindness. Helen Hackett believes that

> on the whole, cross-dressing is not a major interest for Wroth. Her allusions to boy-actors who act the part of women are pejorative, foregrounding their falsehood. […] None of Wroth's leading female characters cross-dress. Pamphilia is a ruling queen, and is sometimes praised for having 'a brave and manlike spirit' but Wroth is ill-disposed towards women who are too masculine.[48]

There are incidental characters who cross dress, but their gender never becomes truly fluid; their original identity generally finds a way to peek through their costume. Wroth's clear discomfort with the notion may have stemmed from her vulnerable position as female author, accused among other things of being a hermaphrodite. Such an abject position appears in contrast to the privileged position of Sidney, and his heroes who invariably climb down the social ladder in matters of disguise; one never sees, for example, a shepherd disguised as a prince, or a woman disguised as a man.

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[48] Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000),167.

At any rate, Wroth's heteronormativity aligns perfectly with the fan fiction trope of the Mary-Sue. As female authorial avatars inserted into often patriarchal, masculine story-worlds, Mary-Sues tend to disrupt the homosocial environment of the story and its potential support of queer readings.[49] The isolated episode of queerness in *Urania*, juxtaposed with the lone Arcadia section tells us that in this scene, Wroth was trying to reinscribe her book with Sidney's paradigm; her discomfort tells us that it was not necessarily a pleasant choice. Wroth's book is a successor to Sidney's only because Wroth saw herself as Sidney's successor. She is not interested in the continuation of the narrative universe, but in the continuation of a literary lineage; as she inherits this "imaginary ground-plot," she repeoples it in order to explore her own emotional life within the context of fiction.

Curtains Fic: Closing Fractures in Anna Weamys' *Continuation*

Unlike Wroth's title, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* which with its parallel structure merely teases us with its mimicry of Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, the title of Anna Weamys's text, *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia* (1651) informs us from the very beginning of its relationship to its source. Very little critical attention has been paid to Weamys' text, and perhaps the title is the reason; in a society that privileges originality, unabashed sequels garner little notice. There is a tendency, perhaps, to dismiss the text as an insignificant work by an insignificant writer, to dismiss it, in other words, for being as Patrick Cullen writes, "only a continuation […], only the product of female aesthetic passivity and conservatism, or of the restricted aesthetic possibilities for women writers"[50]And yet, as we have

[49] See Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
[50] Patrick Cullen, "Introduction," *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), *xxx*.

seen, Sidney's original work is also itself a re-envisioning of other works, and his work, too, is explicit in its allusion to his predecessors.

Adrienne Rich writes that "re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival."[51] Women re-writers, are in Rich's definition, to be considered resistive readers. Though often misconstrued, their reframing of masculine narratives as narratives of romance, sentiment, and matrimony ought to be seen as empowering rather than demeaning, for it is the agent through which we can see a gesture towards female appropriation of a male world. It is interesting that, as Cullen points out

> Of all traditional genres, it is the romance that seems most to engender continuations. Its narratology is one of a continuing and seemingly inexhaustible production of event, with the characteristic romantic closure almost always potentially an opening for a new beginning, of yet more narrative "to be continued" or as Bakhtin put it, in romance there are "no necessary internal limits" on what is in effect an "infinite series" of events. Romance is a genre, as Patricia Parker has described it, of internal "detours, postponement, and suspensions.[52]

Like the pastoral, romance in this sense, cannot be divorced from place, or in other words, from geographic and spatial constrictions of narrative possibility; by definition, its space of possibles is a physical and metaphysical one through which the knights can wander, as we see in *Inescapable Romance*, when Parker discusses the etymology of "knights errant" – i.e. knights

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[51] Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision," qtd in Naomi Miller and Gary Waller, eds., *Reading Lady Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 1.
[52] Cullen, "Introduction," xxxii-xxxiii

who wander in search of adventure and romance, as they progress on these "detours." Error, too, as we've seen, plays a part in "errant;" these knights' quests lead them off of a singular path into tangled mazes of multiplicity.[53] The generative aspect of the romance means that it spawns continuations; as a metaphor for birth, its metatexuality appears to come inscribed with feminine attributes. Small wonder, perhaps, that it is thought to be the genre most prized by women. What all this tells us is that the genre itself of romance, and romantic continuations—place-oriented and a willing, convenient site for female reinscription—has its own internal momentum which is worthy of note.

In contrast to Wroth's, Weamys' narrative rarely contradicts Sidney; instead, she refines, perfects, and refocuses his gaze so that it is specifically keyed to her interests. For instance, Weamys' Urania is clearly Sidney's Urania, complete with an association with Claius and Strephon, but Weamys, as a resistive reader, is not particularly interested in Sidney's suggestion which puts Claius and Strephon front and center rather than Urania herself, whose name goes unmentioned. Clearly Weamys sees this omission as a tempting lacunae; she asserts herself by placing Urania at the center of her narrative. Unlike Sidney, she is far more interested in the desired object than the desire.

Her Arcadia, too, is basically the Arcadia of Sidney, only more so. When Clytiphon travels into Arcadia, we find that

> without the least hindrance he quickly set footing in the country of Arcadia, where he was welcomed by peals of bells and shoutings of people, with variety of sports contrived by young children: besides the pleasant shepherds blowed their pipes

[53] See Clare R. Kinney, "Sidney's Arcadia, Romance and the Responsive Woman Reader," in *A Companion to Tudor Literature*, ed. Kent Cartwright (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 399. Kinney claims that Sidney's "heroic project battles the structural and thematic entropy encouraged by the narrative wandering and "multiplicity" that Barbara Fuchs has associated with romance's resistance to teleology."

> whilst the pretty shepherdesses chanted out their praises of their great God Pan. All these harmless pastimes were ordered so conveniently that he might have a perfect view of them as he went by.[54]

The tension between nature and art (or the real and the fictional) has settled in favor of the latter: note in the descriptors how controlled everything is, how "contrived" and "ordered" and "arranged" so that his view is "perfect."

Since the tension has vanished, we can see that Weamys's Arcadia has to some extent lost its instability. Clearly she prefers the fictional Arcadia to the real one. Because her project involves arresting fluidity, the gender crossing that previously accompanied it is likewise completely absent. Though Weamys's creations is only possible because Sidney's text is a queer narrative, and the act of continuing itself is queer—as we can see from the commendatory poem which precedes it, referring to Weamys herself as Zelmane (Weamys 8)—her *narrative* has no queer content at all, at least on the surface.

However, the recasting of an adventure story as a fantasy of domesticity can be read as a strictly feminine queerness, rather than a masculine one, since it makes the story itself uniformly feminine. Clare R. Kinney notes that

> Weamys's emphatically orthodox "feminine ending," domesticates desire with its concluding triumphant quintuple marriage: Her narrative defuses and contains the socially and politically disruptive power of unbridled Eros which had so preoccupied Sidney in the last third of the revised Arcadia […,] working with Sidney's triangle of characters [Urania, Strephon, and Claius] but rendering them significantly more earthbound. […] She is punctilious about excorcizing

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[54] Anna Weamys, *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia*, ed. Patrick Cullen, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 38. Hereafter cited parenthetically in text as Weamys.

> uncontained desire from her text. Weamys's appropriation of the Sidneian narrative is shaped by a generic shift: The liminal ideal of love […] is metamorphosed into something more like romantic comedy.[55]

Such stories, which as I've said are known as "curtains fics" in internet fan circles, are narratives where the ordinary "earthbound" lives of characters are reified, in order to show masculine characters on what has been previously understood as feminine ground. Rather than inserting female voices into a predominantly male conversation, stories like these subtly alter the universe to place greater importance on values of nurturance, tenderness, and stability.[56] Rather than uplifting the reader's avatar to fit in with the heroes she admires, these fictions reshape the heroes to more closely resemble the reader in the real world.

Earlier in the narrative, when Weamys turns her attention to the love affair between Amphialus and Helena, she uses the phrase "Now I will discover some passages that passed between Amphialus (nephew to Basilius, the King of Arcadia) and Helena (Queen of Corinth)" (Weamys 27). "Discover" in this sense implies "uncover" or "reveal"—in other words, to show something which was already there. Meanwhile, her Amphialus-Helena narrative completely reimagines what was *actually* already there, reframing Sidney's ethical issue (Amphialus has committed treason) as a romantic one (Helena worries not about the ethical ramifications of his act, but only the practical, narrative ones, that is, if Basilius will use his treason as a pretext to kill him). Weamys also alters Amphialus's feelings for Helena; in Sidney's version, he actively dislikes her, whereas here, he is simply indifferent because of his feelings for Philoclea. Notwithstanding these alterations, Weamys still writes as if there is some objective authenticity

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[55] Kinney, "Sidney's Arcadia," 407-8.
[56] See Mirna Cicioni, "Male pair-bonds and female desire in fan slash writing," in *Theorizing fandom: Fans, subculture and identity,* ed. Cheryl Harris and Alison Alexander, (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton, 1998), 153–77 for a discussion of the "eroticization of nurturance."

to the universe which can be "discovered" —that there is a truth or a reality that can be obtained. It's intriguing because this concept of revelation is tied to that of the "real" Arcadia, one which exists outside of the mind of its authors. Despite her tendency towards the wholly constructed, fictional, and artificial, there are still small fractures that provide at least a tiny aperture onto this universe.

Weamys closes her narrative with the death of Philisides—the death of Sidney. This death takes place almost as if in passing in the *Arcadia*; it is a grace note, a mystery, a gap, a secret. Weamys takes the moment and brings it directly under our gaze. And yet, she does not wholly close her story; even as she ties up all the couples and all the loose ends, even as she illuminates his death, she keeps his secret love concealed and unanswered. His note reads

> when my body is so magnificently embalmed, let it be interred with Claius's: two lovers, both finishing their lives for their mistresses' sakes. His is publically known to be Urania; my breast is the cabinet where mine is fixed, and if you rip that open, you will find it, though perhaps not so perfect as I could wish it were (Weamys 104-5).

All is not revealed. Her silence on this point is the one loose thread that keeps her Arcadia necessarily unstable and "not so perfect," the one weight on the real side of the scale.

Death in Arcadia

The title of this chapter, "Et in Arcadia ego," translates to "Even in Arcadia, I." Although this phrase may literally apply for Wroth, who inserts herself into the Arcadian universe as Pamphilia, for Weamys, it is the more figurative understanding—where the "I" who speaks is Death—that is more pertinent. If it is instability and fractures which generate continuations, then ironically a comprehensive continuation will provide and preserve stability; it will answer all the

questions, it will choose a side, it will endeavor to find the locus of perfection and stay quivering there in that single, golden moment. Such a continuation erases the fractures that allow it to exist; if successful and complete, it kills desire by fulfilling it. Thus Weamys's continuation ends with its heroes necessarily leaving Arcadia behind, to retire

> severally to their flourishing kingdoms of Thassalia and Macedon, and Armenia with Corinth, where they increased in riches, and were fruitful in their renowned families. And when they had sufficiently participated of the pleasures of this world, they resigned their crowns to their lawful successors, and ended their days in peace and quietness (Weamys 105).[57]

As we can see, if Arcadia is definitively found and perfectly established, it ceases to exist. There is simply no other way for such a continuation to end, because to be perfected is to be finished, and therefore to no longer inspire further continuation.

Describing the *Arcadia*, Virginia Woolf writes that the book

> becomes one of those half-forgotten and deserted places where the grasses grow over fallen statues and the rain drips and the marble steps are green with moss and vast weeds flourish in the flower-beds. And yet it is a beautiful garden to wander in now and then; one stumbles over lovely broken faces, and here and there a flower blooms and the nightingale sings in the lilac-tree.[58]

Even in this work of criticism, centuries later, one can see how within the reader's imagination, Arcadia the place and *Arcadia* the book have been juxtaposed, and indeed conflated. Arcadia is a place, even more than it is a name, a Secret Garden—complete with shepherds and lambs, pipes

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[57] Contrast this ending to the one in Sidney's own *selvage* text, with its prompts, and fractures that invite continuation.

[58] VirginiaWoolf, "The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia," in *The Common Reader, Second Series*, http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91c2/chapter3.html

and magic, gardens simultaneously wild and cultivated—whose fantasy quivers ceaselessly on the border between fictional and real, inside and out.

Chapter III: Mr. Darcy is all politeness
fantasies of unveiling

She would, if asked, tell us many little particulars about the subsequent career of some of her people. …we learned… that Kitty Bennet was satisfactorily married to a clergyman near Pemberley, while Mary obtained nothing higher than one of her uncle Philips' clerks, and was content to be considered a star in the society of Meriton."

James Edward Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen*

It is a source of perennial unhappiness to Jane Austen's fans that she completed only six novels. As a result, their desire for more—what happened next or before or alongside or if—has created an enormous market for new novels that attempt to extend Austen's oeuvre. Though these continuation-novels may be "new," historically, innovation has not been their selling point. Austen's continuers tend to write, in fact, as if they are discoverers rather than inventors, trying to excavate from Austen's silences the completed "tell-all" narrative they are certain is there, though withheld or hidden. The sense is that the characters and society recorded by Austen possess an objective reality, of which her account is only one perspective, a reality that may be recovered by successive authors. However, their efforts to access and disseminate this reality do not replicate the amplitude or complexity of the original material so much as they delimit it. Much like some forms of criticism, the continuation novels tend to pick one aspect of the text and claim that it is the text's primary focus, ignoring or diminishing any part that does not precisely fit their interpretation. Over time, however, the text's focus, (i.e. what the text is "about") actually changes, as these new entries into the Austen archive—films, adaptations, and continuations—color the original, retroactively influencing what the source text itself is perceived to be. Just as sometimes gossip, repeated by enough people, may transform into "universally acknowledged" truth, new versions, when produced by enough successive authors treading over the same narrative ground, may contextually reinforce themselves. The reinforced

strength provided by this intertextual validation actually supports a more daring approach by later continuers, who despite their ongoing appreciation of their source material, become steadily less likely to view Austen's novels as sacred texts, and thus become more willing to depart from it in their extensions, even perhaps more willing to make alterations in the already extant material. As the continuations distance themselves from the source texts, they also ironically garner slightly more respect from the literary establishment, since they can finally be perceived to be adding that something "new."

In 1931, Warrene Piper, an early author of Austen-sequels, documented for the *American Journal of Psychology* this tension between originality and fidelity as embodied in her fiction writing process. In this article, Piper relates her belief that Darcy, after marrying Elizabeth, must have one final indignity imposed upon him—he must be forced to adopt the children of Wickham and Lydia. It is the story of their son, whom she decides must also be disabled, that is the subject of her novel. She writes that the

> bound-yet-free paradox […] has always been one of the most constant and powerful sources of emotional stimulation with me. It must be connected, therefore, with a great number of anterior assertions and reactions; these enrich [her main character] and help to stamp firmly his persistent and unbreakable spirit. The action of this phrase, as I understand it, is as follows. Given the fact of his being crippled and, through his connection with Jane Austen, the fact that as Elizabeth Bennett's [sic] nephew he must have wit and independence, these two contrasting situations, together with the swarming and indistinct intuitions resulting from tentative attempts to pose the problem of the relation between these two facts, are fused and raised to a high level emotionally by the idea resumed in

> these words: 'Captive, bound . . . inviolable freedom of heart.' This emotion presents the mind with a distinct apprehension of individuality that persists; and every time it is brought into play reacts in every situation, not in any stereotyped manner, but in every respect as a person.[1]

When Piper speaks of the "bound-yet-free paradox," she is referring to her character's position with regard to Darcy and Elizabeth: her character's very personhood is created by the constraints imposed on her free creation by a strict adherence to Austen's text. She is also, however, speaking of the position of her narrative with regard to Austen's. *Pride and Prejudice* establishes the form, but within these pre-determined boundaries, a host of possibilities arise.

Like any strict poetic form, the scheme may be rigid, but the subject is free, and perhaps more powerful due to the constraints under which it is produced. With a continuation, we are given a form that is neither generic nor poetic, but that instead determines content and emplotment. The "stimulation" provided by the "bound-yet-free paradox" further demonstrates that a *selvage* text, where the text's freedom and open play-spaces (fractures) are bounded by the supportive, rigid structures and constraints of a fully realized fictional universe, is most conducive to the proliferation of continuation. Furthermore, such a text is only possible in a collaborative shared-world. The continuations of Austen are all created within the formal tension of the paradox Piper describes: their desire to be bound closely to the novels they continue, and their simultaneous efforts to be "original." Early in the history of Austen continuation, as we shall see, the desire to cleave as closely as possible to the original text dominates, while more recently, the privileging of novelty has begun to do so.

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[1] Warrene Piper, "Sources and Processes in the Writing of Fiction," *The American Journal of Psychology* 43.2 (Apr., 1931): 198.

In my investigation of the Austen-continuations, I will focus solely on those texts which continue *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen's most popular and most beloved novel, in hopes that it will provide the best and most representative sample upon which to draw my conclusions, in large part because popularity and love are at the center of this discussion. It is precisely because of her popularity that Austen's own status with the literary establishment has always been somewhat tenuous. No one seems quite certain where or to whom she belongs; is it with the indiscriminating masses (generally marked feminine), who are supposedly attracted by the "frilly bonnets" and fluffy romances or is it with the scholarly and critical communities who respect her as an incomparable prose stylist? As Deidre Lynch points out in *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*, "the cultural Jane Austen has been a crossover phenomenon… and… Austenmania straddles the divides between high and low culture, and between canon and cineplex."[2]

Lynch goes on to detail the critical establishment's resulting discomfort with Austen's popularity, citing D.W. Harding's famous 1940 essay, "Regulated Hatred," in which he gleefully states his belief that Austen's fans—presumably unlike himself—were precisely "the sort of people whom she disliked" and Lionel Trilling, who in a 1957 essay wrote the following:

> If Jane Austen is carried outside the proper confines of literature, if she has been loved in a fashion that some temperaments must find objectionable and that a strict criticism must call illicit, the reason is perhaps to be found not only in the human weakness of her admirers, in their impulse to self-flattery, or in whatever other fault produces their deplorable tone. Perhaps a reason is also to be found in

[2] Deidre Lynch, *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 5.

> the work itself, in some unusual promise that it seems to make, in some hope that it holds out.[3]

As Lynch points out, this reading of Austen's fans paints them as outside the "proper confines of literature" (whatever these might be) and describes their uncontrolled love of her novels as somehow lacking in virtue if not plainly immoral. It is clearly with a great sense of generosity that Trilling mentions that there might be some explanation for their overwhelming devotion, not *only* (emphasis mine) in their weakness of character, but also perhaps "in some unusual promise" made by the work. Trilling naturally does not address the continuations, which I am fairly certain he would not have read, and if he *had*, would no doubt have utterly disregarded as both "extravagantly personal" and thoroughly lacking in critical acuity. Nevertheless, the continuations of Austen's novels are perhaps the most visible markers of the illicit love he addresses in his essay: unsanctioned by Austen herself, the continuations can be seen as the illegitimate offspring of a love affair between the text and its fans. I want to argue, therefore, that the "unusual promise" of Austen's novels lies in their ability to provoke continuation.

Beyond Austen's Text

What is the nature of this promise? Why do Austen's texts support and elicit continuation to such an extraordinary degree? Why are we so desperately concerned with what happens next to Mr. and Mrs. Darcy, when we don't particularly care, for example, about the future adventures of Fanny Burney's Lord and Lady Orville?[4] Some might suggest an answer in the fact that Burney's novels, though still widely read in the Victorian period, are not so familiar today as they were to the readers of Austen's own time; after all, who would care about continuing a text

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[3] Lionel Trilling,"Emma and the Legend of Jane Austen," in *Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1965), 34.

[4] Interestingly, while they have no book of their own, Lord and Lady Orville do appear in at least one Austen sequel.

that they had not previously read? Obscurity probably protects many texts from continuation, but novels such as *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* (1847) possess an enduring popularity easily comparable to that of Austen's oeuvre. Nevertheless readers do not speculate with equal frequency upon Jane Rochester's married happiness, nor that of Catherine Linton Heathcliff Earnshaw.[5] While continuations and addenda to the Brontës' most famous works certainly can be found (their less famous texts are generally left severely alone), in total, there are less than twenty-five continuations of the Brontë sisters' works[6], and they are thus vastly outnumbered by those texts which continue *Pride and Prejudice* alone. Neither *Shirley* (1849), *Villette* (1853), *The Professor* (1857) nor any of Anne Brontë's works have ever been touched by continuer's hand; compare this neglect to the disproportionately healthy number of sequels to *Emma* (1815) as well as *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), which are readily available. There are fewer continuations of *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Persuasion* (1818) and even less of *Northanger Abbey* (1818), but it is not impossible to find several sequels to even that last text. Nor have Austen's unfinished works been ignored: "The Watsons" (1804) and "Sanditon" (1817) have each been "completed" more than once. What can account for this overwhelming interest? Why continue Austen rather than another author?

Perhaps the answer lies in the epigraph to this chapter, which demonstrates that Austen envisioned her characters as possessing a life that spread well beyond the scope of her narrative;

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[5] Admittedly, Brontë left no room for wanderers here; by her narrative's end, her two heroines manage to have some form of romantic relationship with every surname in the book—there is not much else a sequelist can do besides pair Nellie off with Mr. Lockhart!

[6] Continuations of *Jane Eyre* as of 2011: *The Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966); *Mrs. Rochester* (1997); *Jane Rochester* (2000); *Mrs. Rochester* (2000); *Adele* (2000), *The Eyre Affair* (2001); *An English Education/Disciplining Jane* (2003); *Jenna Starborn* (2006); *The French Dancer's Bastard* (2006); *Thornfield Hall* (2007); *Jane Eyre's Daughter* (2008); *Jane Slayre* (2010). Continuations of *Wuthering Heights* as of 2011: *Return to Wuthering Heights* (1978); *Catherine* (1983); *Heathcliff* (1987); *H* (1992);*Windward Heights* (1998); *Return to Wuthering Heights* (1998); *Wuthering Bites* (2010); *Heathcliff: Vampire of Wuthering Heights* (2010); *Wuthering Heights: The Wild and Wanton Edition* (2011)

however little we may believe in Miss Mary Bennet's ability to snare even so mean a husband as an attorney's clerk, we are told that in the author's mind, she did so; it requires no such great suspension of disbelief to be convinced as well that Mr. and Mrs. Darcy continued to enjoy a degree of married felicity so great that Mr. Darcy subsequently wished to keep portraits of his wife entirely to himself, and would not permit her image to be displayed to the public. We learn these pieces of information from Austen's letters to her sister Cassandra, which inform us, famously, that she had at least once perused picture galleries in hopes of finding her portraits of her people. She writes:

> Henry and I went to the exhibition in Spring Gardens. It is not thought a good collection, but I was very well pleased, particularly (pray tell Fanny) with a small portrait of Mrs. Bingley, excessively like her. I went in hopes of seeing one of her sister, but there was no Mrs. Darcy. Perhaps, however, I may find her in the great exhibition, which we shall go to if we have time . . . Mrs. Bingley's is exactly herself—size, shaped face, features, and sweetness; there never was greater likeness. She is dressed in a white gown, with green ornaments, which convinces me of what I had always supposed, that green was a favourite colour with her. I dare say Mrs. D. will be in yellow.[7]

Unfortunately, Austen was daunted in her hopes of finding Elizabeth's picture in any gallery. Later in the same letter, she adds

> We have been both to the exhibition and to Sir Joshua Reynolds's, and I am disappointed, for there was nothing like Mrs. D. at either. I can only imagine that Mr. D. prizes any picture of her too much to like it should be exposed to the

[7] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 24 May 1813, in *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 272. Hereafter cited as *Letters*.

> public eye. I can imagine he would have that sort of feeling—that mixture of love, pride and delicacy.[8]

This excerpt is intriguing on several counts. Firstly it makes explicit the connection between Austen's textual portrait painting and the visual art itself. Perhaps it is no accident that Austen often described her novels as "the little bit (two inches wide) of ivory on which I work with so fine a brush" or that her critics likewise compared her books to pictures, as when Charlotte Brontë dismissively remarked that an Austen novel was "an accurate daguerrotyped portrait of a commonplace face."[9]

Austen's books attempt, as Elizabeth says to Mr. Darcy, to "take [the] likeness"[10] of characters, and though, as in any picture, an appropriate and aesthetically pleasing frame is of the utmost importance, such a frame cannot hope to completely confine the illustration's subject, any more than an artist's rendering of a landscape ever adequately conveys every feeling of nature. In any representation, the artist's focus and translation of dimension demand that something be left out. However, the knowledge that there are bits in the author's awareness that do not make it onto the page, whether fully revealed or not, may be at least a partial motivation for continuation. As Jan Fergus writes, Austen "gives the impression of knowing everything about her characters though telling us at best only half" and "makes us feel as though we know her characters intimately, more so than some of our acquaintances."[11] This feeling, a regular byproduct of Austen's novels, encourages readers to believe that there is more to the story than has been

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[8] *Ibid,* 213.

[9] Charlotte Brontë to George Lewes, 12 January 1848, in Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* Vol. 2, http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext99/2locb10.txt .

[10] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London: Penguin, 2003), 92. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *PP*.

[11] Jan Fergus, "The Whinnying of Harpies?: Humor in Jane Austen's Letters," *Persuasions* 27 (2005): 13.

delivered: narratives have structure and an arc, and thus have endings; people, on the other hand, don't—and until death, there always seems to be more to say, if one is a completist.

Austen's own letters, as well as the anecdotes from people who knew her, bear this notion out. They indicate that she spoke of her characters as if they existed almost independently of her own narrative, and critics, as well as more casual readers, tend to follow her line. This is not singular to Austen's texts, of course: John Sutherland, for instance, has written several "companion texts" to the Oxford World Classics series that seek to unravel such literary puzzles as "*Is Heathcliff a Murderer?*" (1996), "*Can Jane Eyre Be Happy?*" (1997), and "*Henry V, War Criminal?*" (2000). But Austen, as Sutherland himself suggests, lends herself to this sort of analysis, which treats literary figures as real and attempts to create psychological solutions to infelicities in the text that exonerate their authors from error, because she seems less prone to careless mistakes than many other authors: in short, her portraiture seems as if it ought to be exact and accurate.[12] Hence, we have Sutherland's *Who Betrays Elizabeth Bennet?* (1999) in which he tackles puzzles pertaining to *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Mansfield Park*. In the chapter on *Pride and Prejudice*, he suggests that it must have been Charlotte who became Lady Catherine's informant in the matter of Elizabeth and Darcy's supposed engagement, acting out of malice and taking a species of revenge for the slights she has received at Elizabeth's hand.

In these books, however, Sutherland's tongue is planted rather firmly in his cheek. But the same cannot be said of critic Ivor Morris, whose scholarly work, *Mr. Collins Considered*, is practically a work of fan fiction, albeit in critical form. Austen's narrative skewers Mr. Collins; from the perspective presented in the novel, he is an obsequious, affected, pompous clergyman, who is both ill-bred and even, perhaps, irreligious. Neither the narrator nor Elizabeth spare him, and for the purposes of the novel, this works well. However, are "real" people ever so uniformly

[12] John Sutherland, *Who Betrays Elizabeth Bennet*? (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 19.

despicable? Acting on the belief that they are not, Morris treats Mr. Collins as if he and all the other characters with whom he interacts are entirely real. He writes

> Even at their best, the men of the novels fall short of the sentient humanity of the heroines; and at their least inspired, they are as flat as pancakes—though a pancake, especially at the right season, is an acceptable dish. If Mr. Collins is less than three dimensional, therefore, he is amidst good company; he has the added virtue among his peers of being amusing. But if the principle laid down by Lionel Trilling holds good, he enjoys validity, and the right to literary appraisal. The reality of existence which fictional characters may claim, Trilling maintains, 'does not depend only on what they do, but also upon what others do to or about them, upon the way they are regarded and responded to.'[13]

In his analysis, Morris suggests that if Charlotte—clever, sensible Charlotte, beloved friend of Lizzy—married Mr. Collins, must there not have been something in the man to respect, aside from his prospects? He also inquires if we ought to trust Elizabeth's perspective on her cousin, which does not alter throughout the novel, considering that her first impressions of people are not necessarily reliable. In his effort to recuperate this character, Morris sets himself up in opposition to the character's creator, of whom, he must believe, Mr. Collins can be independent. Clearly, the form of criticism that both Trilling and Morris partake in, derives its interest from endowing Mr. Collins and co., with "reality of existence;" such criticism is precisely what continuers are enacting, in fictional form.

Indeed, one of Austen's early continuers, Mrs. E. Barrington (aka E. L. Beck; Lily Adams Beck), included the novella "The Darcys of Rosings" in a collection entitled *The Ladies!:*

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[13] Ivor Morris, *Mr. Collins Considered: Approaches to Jane Austen*, (London: Routledge, 1987), 5.

A Shining Constellation of Wit and Beauty (1922). All of the collection's eponymous ladies, except one, are real people, who appear to have been silenced in one manner or another by history; Barrington uses the medium of fiction to give them voices, so that certain mysteries of both character and event can finally be solved. Thus, we have the journal of Mrs. Elizabeth Pepys "had she read her husband's diary;" the solution to the mystery of "Stella" (Esther Johnson), "Vanessa" (Esther Vanhomrigh), and their ambiguous relationships with Dr. Jonathan Swift; an explanation of Lady Mary Wortley Montague's departure from her husband; how the Gunning sisters, who despite poverty and lack of respectability, managed to marry into the nobility; the story of Sir Horace Walpole's illegitimate niece who succeeded, against the odds, in becoming a duchess herself; and the reason why Fanny Burney left court. The inclusion of a lone fictional character, Elizabeth Bennet, among these real life women appears rather oddly out of place, but in her preface, Barrington writes

> Perhaps of all these women we know best that Elizabeth who never lived—Elizabeth Bennet. She is the most real because her inner being is laid open to us by her great creator. I have not dared to touch her save as a shadow picture in the background of the quiet English country-life which now is gone forever. But her fragrance—stimulating rather than sweet, like lavender and rosemary—could not be forgotten in any picture of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century and among the women whom all the world remembers. They, one and all, can only move in dreamland now. Their lives are but stories in a printed book, and a

> heroine of Jane Austen's is as real as Stella or the fair Walpole. So I apologize for nothing. I have dreamed. I may hope that others will dream with me.[14]

She suggests that Elizabeth is in fact *more* real than the other non-fictional women, because we have access to her "inner being" in a way that real life often prohibits. Interestingly, this excess of verisimilitude causes Barrington to be more cautious rather than less, in the addition of her own details to the extant narrative.

By placing Elizabeth next to these other "real" women, Barrington harnesses her 'reality' to theirs. Many of the sequels likewise seek to establish and endorse their "reality" by including an assortment of familiar historical figures as well; we are reminded constantly that this is the world of Byron and Napoleon; we also are frequently reminded that the world is large—travel to foreign climes is frequently a feature, as if the select society of Derbyshire is too "confined and unvarying" (*PP* 42) to provide interest. Witness how, in "The Darcys of Rosings," we have a half Portuguese young man masquerading as an Indian; too, when Elizabeth comments on an Italianate a church, with which Sir Lewis de Bourgh apparently replaced an old Plantagenet one, we are told

> Had he also presented us with Naples, where the original stands, the gift would have been complete; but to my mind it stands as ill in little Hunsdon [sic] as would the dress of an Italian Signora on good Mrs. Collins (Barrington 246-7).

Despite this apparent broadening of scope, in many of these sequels, characters are forced again and again to be paired off in a relentless association with only a few familiar and

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[14] E. Barrington, *The Ladies!: A Shining Constellation of Wit and Beauty* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922), np. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as Barrington. It is also interesting to note that she invites "others to dream with" her: creating a community that centers around the creation of these continuations. Much like the community of women writers that spring up around *Arcadia,* this underscores the writing of continuations as a communal, female activity.

incestuous possibilities. Sybil Brinton's *Old Friends and New Fancies* (1913) is probably the worst offender in this regard: here, Mr. Edward Ferrars must become the Darcy's vicar; the proper husband for Georgiana turns out to *Mansfield Park*'s William Price, protégé of Capt. Wentworth and Emma Knightley, while Col. Fitzwilliam's wife is Miss Crawford from the same book, after an improbable dalliance with Anne Eliot's father, Sir Walter; meanwhile a side plot features the engagement between Miss Kitty Bennet and *Northanger Abbey*'s James Morland. Thus we see that Austen's five other novels are generally thought to be part of the same narrative universe, contextually enlarging the foundation upon which a continuation can be built.[15] As we have discussed in the previous chapter, the writing and rewriting of narratives provides exactly the framework necessary to support continuation, and the combination and juxtaposition of Austen's multiple novels produce a narrative universe that invites subsequent authors to tie it firmly together.

In fact, even when considered in isolation, *Pride and Prejudice* acts as a composite text. Naturally all works, especially ones as polished as those by Austen, must undergo a large amount of revision. But some works, like both *Arcadia*, and *Pride and Prejudice*, rejoice in the company of a multiplicity of sibling texts which lurk behind and beside them.[16] The first three novels—*First Impressions*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Pride and Prejudice*—overlap one another to create

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[15] See Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 68. Brownstein remarks that "Although someone has called *Pride and Prejudice* the first Austen sequel—like *Sense and Sensibility*, a courtship narrative about contrasting sisters—and although the six novels get blurred and deliberately mashed together now, they are not of course a series." Still, she argues that the novels taken together present an "accessible, alternate world" whose immersive potential is endorsed by their "serial quality."

[16] Kathryn Sutherland's *Jane Austen Fiction Manuscripts Digital Editions* project (2010) has lately demonstrated to the public that Austen, renowned for her finished prose, actually underwent a good deal of editing, and that her voice was thus already fractured and multiple. See the project at http://www.janeausten.ac.uk/index.html.

the fissured and apparently realistic whole that is *Pride and Prejudice* as we have received it. Added to this, as William Galperin notes in *The Historical Austen*, her

> first three novelistic compositions were revised for a decade and a half in the course of which their 'real' was sufficiently temporalized that it literally shifts from what might initially have been a matter of fact to a matter of retrospective and […] increasingly nostalgic appreciation. The uncanny dimension of this enhancement was not lost on Austen's contemporary readers,

making one of her novels the "most probable fiction" Annabella Milbanke at least had ever read.[17]

Scholars such as Frank Mackinnon and R.W. Chapman have done extensive work on creating a calendar for *Pride and Prejudice*, and their painstaking efforts have led most critics to believe that at the very least the novel's calendar must have been revised so as to place its time in 1811-12, but this revised calendar creates errors, certain imperfections in the smooth fabric of the novel, where the time transposition does not quite work. Pat Rogers argues, for example, that the sensibility of the novel remains located very much in the late 1790s, citing the mention of *Fordyce's Sermon*s—by 1811 fully outmoded as instructional to young ladies—and allusions to texts like William Gilpin's *Three Essays: on Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape: to which is added a Poem on Landscape Painting* (1792), which occur when Elizabeth remarks that the "picturesque would be spoilt by admitting a fourth" (*PP* 52) and rhapsodizes over the projected visit to the Lakes with her aunt and uncle Gardiner. Rogers states that by 1811, Gilpin too would have been little more than an object of satire, for "picturesque

[17] William Galperin, *The Historical Austen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 24.

theory and practice had moved on"[18] as can be seen by the allusion to Humphry Repton in *Mansfield Park*. The later novels, like *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* show ample evidence of intercourse with *au courant* literature and culture: Burns, Byron, and Scott, whereas *Pride and Prejudice* seems to linger firmly in the world of Burney and Cowper, much like *Sense and Sensibility*, and its own predecessor, *Elinor and Marianne*. This slippage of time—is it 1797? or 1811? or 1802? or all three?—between the two versions creates an entryway into the text, where readers can declare and advocate for their own opinions.

The first shadow text which hides behind that of *Pride and Prejudice* is the epistolary novel, *First Impressions*. Although not much is known about this manuscript, from a note written in her sister Cassandra's writing, we learn that this text was begun by Austen in Oct 1796 and finished in August 1797. James Edward Austen-Leigh's *Memoir* (1871) corroborates this information, saying that "*Pride and Prejudice*, which some consider the most brilliant of her novels, was the first finished, if not the first begun. She began it in October 1796, before she was twenty-one years old, and completed it in about ten months, in August 1797."[19] A few months after this, with a letter dated 1 November 1797, her father, George Austen sent an unidentified novel to the publishers Cadell & Davies in London. He writes:

> I have in my possession a Manuscript Novel, comprised in three Vols about the length of Miss Burney's *Evelina*. As I am well aware of what consequence it is that a work of this sort should make its appearance under a respectable name . . . .

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[18] Pat Rogers, "Introduction," *Pride and Prejudice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), *lix*

[19] James Edward Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (Bentley, 1871), 47.

> where you chuse to be concerned . . . what will be the expence of publishing at the Author's risk; & what will you advance for the Property of it.[20]

This unnamed manuscript, which was immediately rejected by return of post, is believed to be the first version of the novel now called *Pride and Prejudice*, though much longer (the length of *Evelina*!). How closely *Pride and Prejudice* and *First Impressions* resemble each other is a question of some debate, especially since so many years separate the two texts, and no manuscript of the first survives, but Austen herself, in a letter, remarked on the great degree to which she had "lopt & cropt" the text.[21]

The traces of *First Impressions* are quite easily found in *Pride and Prejudice*, but other texts make their mark upon it as well. In many ways, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* mirror each other, especially in the matter of character doubling. Elinor and Marianne Dashwood seem very much like alternate universe iterations of Jane and Elizabeth Bennet; only the focus is slightly altered. Like Jane, who can "make allowance enough for difference of situation and temper" (*PP* 133), Elinor is equable in her judgment of others; like Elinor, Jane is restrained and does not allow her feelings to be read on her face, as we are told by no less an authority than Mr. Darcy. Similarly, Marianne, much like Elizabeth, dotes on the picturesque and puts too much faith in first impressions of an attractive and personable young man; Elizabeth, like Marianne, is a creature of passion compared to her sister, who "only smiles" where Elizabeth "laughs" (*PP* 361). If, as I have stated, there are to be considered at least three distinct textual layers which overlap one another, *First Impressions*, *Sense & Sensibility/Elinor & Marianne*, and the published *Pride and Prejudice,* then we can see that this overlap ensures that the boundaries of each text are more permeable and fluid. When so many versions of characters

[20] Rev. George Austen to Cadell & Davies, 1 November 1797 in Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen: A Family Record* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 104.
[21] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 29 January, 1813 in *Letters*, 202.

exist, where is the platonic ideal to be found? Readers are encouraged by these slippages and fractures to search for its authentic truth themselves. Beth Patillo's *Mr Darcy Broke My Heart* (2010), for instance, is a perfect example of the effect of a shadow text like *First Impressions* on the reception of *Pride and Prejudice*. In this novel, the heroine, Claire Prescott, actually comes into possession of a partial manuscript of *First Impressions*, which according to Patillo has a completely different narrative than the one with which we are familiar; because of her knowledge of the manuscript's existence, Patillo is able to recreate her version of the text and insert it "back" into the narrative.

Thus, the fractures permit entry into the archive for continuations, some of which continue not just the narrative, but also carry on its fractured nature. For example, Jane Dawkins' *Letters from Pemberley* (2003) is an epistolary novel (shades of *First Impressions*!) that covers the first year of Elizabeth's marriage to Mr. Darcy through the medium of letters to Jane. The continuance of epistolarity in this novel continues not just the narrative, but what Galperin identifies as the lacunae that compose Austen's partial realism. He writes that

> the silence inherited from epistolarity complicated the dominant specularity on which the totalizing reach of a still-partial real depends… the contradictions in Austenian omniscience and the opacity in the real they corporately foster depend in large measure on a residual and recuperated silence… Antithetical to the workings of plot, which are subordinated in Austen's fiction to the quotidian and its details, Austen's silence and the various complications to which her real is consequently rendered permeable have the effect of transforming her […] into an historian of a dense and inscrutable present.[22]

[22] Galperin, *The Historical Austen*, 23

Dawkins' narrative exemplifies this trait, as does her habit of including meetings with the characters from other Austen novels to crowd the narrative universe of her novel. In this, she resembles many sequelists who as I have said are addicted to such meetings; unlike her compatriots however, she alters the names of all such characters, playing upon names and places from the novels and Austen's own life: Mr. Knightley becomes Mr. Daley, the Misses Dashwood are transformed into the Misses Norland, the Elliots are the Steventons, and so on. Why not simply use the characters as they stand? Why transform them? Dawkins describes her text as

> an old-fashioned patchwork quilt, where in place of the scraps of fabric reminding one of the favorite frocks or shirts whence they came, there is a line or a phrase or a sentence from one of Jane Austen's books or letters stitched alongside the lesser scraps of my own manufacture.[23]

This image of sewn together patches is precisely the image of *selvage*, the edge which is unfinished though structurally sound enough for it to be easily added on to. Austen's texts are both complete in their reproduction of reality and incomplete in that they have fractures and gaps; it is this paradoxical quality of simultaneous completion and incompletion which I think produces the "unusual promise" that Trilling identifies and which provokes continuation.

We may divide these continuations into several broad categories. Going from the earliest category to the most recent, we have those which attempt to continue Austen's style, setting or format; those which translate the novel into another medium, such as film or drama; those which actually continue the narrative; those which tell the narrative from a parallel perspective or insert new material into it; those which transpose the narrative into another setting; those which ask what would happen if at a particular point, characters made a different choice; and finally those which blend Austen's narrative with another narrative to create a "mash-up." In our discussion of

[23] Jane Dawkins, *Letters from Pemberley* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2007), *vii*.

each separate type, we will examine what desires lie at the heart of these sequels, and how these desires have developed over time.

As Rachel Brownstein suggests, there is a peculiarly "Austenian pleasure" to be found in

> returning to what Raymond Williams called a knowable community […] Immersing oneself in the world she creates and getting to feel like an insider there, we imagine we share the values of personal integrity and loyalty—as we do while reading. Jane Austen remains on the collective mind partly because her novels have shaped our culture, and our ideals, and our feelings.[24]

The world created by Austen, which inspires belief, and thus also affectionate, emotional investment, is rooted in this idea of community, creating a slippage between the reader and the characters she loves. Readers seek to know the characters they love completely, to become them in imagination, an effort which is, apparently, just as impossible with fictional people as it is with real ones. Though the desire is natural, it is unfortunately doomed to failure, which may explain why, by and large, none of these sequels are truly satisfactory.

Escapism: continuations of style, setting, and format

Novels which attempt to continue Austen's style and setting have been around almost since they were first read. As Edward Copeland points out in "Jane Austen and the Silver Fork Novel," as early as 1820, novelists were using her oeuvre as a "source for wholesale plunder" and "literary booty."[25] Copeland goes on to detail how bits and pieces of Austen's phrases and themes are presented, almost without alteration, to live a "ghost life" amidst the narratives in these little known novels of the 1820s and 1830s, written for sale to a middle class audience who aspired to and fantasized about the fashionable and aristocratic decadence depicted therein.

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[24] Brownstein, *Why Jane Austen?*, 68.

[25] Edward Copeland, "Jane Austen and the Silver Fork Novel" in *A Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite (Chicester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 434.

Austen's effect on the silver fork novels has not been much studied, in large part because of her recuperation by the Victorians as a novelist of substance and respectability instead of the writer of frothy and frivolous romances-*cum*-conduct manuals that the silver fork novelists represented for them.

Though Copeland suggests our own collective amnesia regarding this period between the Romantics and the Victorians may be responsible for this overlooked aspect of Austenian inspiration as well,[26] the Victorian reluctance to read Austen as part of the history of women's popular fiction has not yet left us. Consider for instance Lillian Robinson's essay "On Reading Trash," in which she examines Austen in relation to the premier silver fork novelist of the twentieth century, Georgette Heyer. After first assuring her readers that no comparison of the two authors' literary merit need be made, since it is abundantly clear that Austen outclasses Heyer (and thereby making the comparison anyway) Robinson goes on to say that "once the absurd incongruity of any connection between the two writers is duly acknowledged and assigned its proper weight, it has much to tell us about female literary experience." Her claim seems to be that although Heyer's novels "concentrate on precisely those minutiae of dress and décor that Austen takes for granted," Austen's less obtrusively detailed writing "communicates a far more vivid sense […] of the daily reality" of the period.[27] In other words, her essay is exactly what it claims not to be: a comparison of Austen and Heyer that argues for Austen's superiority.

Leaving the question of literary merit strictly alone, what is fascinating about both the nineteenth and twentieth century silver fork novelists' attempt to continue Austen's style and setting is how they read Austen as a world-builder. From her novels, they extract a fantasy realm to which they can escape, complete with a new vocabulary of manners and grammar of behavior

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[26] *Ibid*, 436

[27] Lillian S. Robinson, "On Reading Trash" in *Sex, Class, and Culture* (Methuen, 1978), 208, 216.

that is foreign to their own lived experience, but can be learnt from immersion in the fiction. The recent television series, *Lost in Austen* (2008), literally embodies this reading, as is evident from its title alone, which identifies "Austen" as space within which one can be "lost." The heroine of the series, Amanda Price, an ardent fan of *Pride and Prejudice*, is able to travel into Austen's world through a portal in her bathroom, exchanging places with Elizabeth Bennet, and transforming the outcome of the novel as a result. As we can see, such continuations display an intriguing slippage between the novel-as-novel and the novel-as-reality. While they attempt to continue Austen's style, they often show their own characters reading Austen themselves, thus negating the characters and plots' claims to actually having taken place. The outgrowth of these silver fork continuations then is not only the contemporary regency romance, but also the myriad of novels that deal with readers of Jane Austen rather than Jane Austen's characters. These readers, oddly, duplicate Austen's narrative *à la* Bridget Jones, but at the same time, are metatextually aware of Austen, who provides them with a nostalgic refuge and fairy tale respite from their own mundane lives. These continuations are distinct, then, from those which developed alongside them to continue the novel as reality, rather than as a novel.

Erotic Climax: extension, adaptation, and parallel perspectives

The novels which continue Austen's narrative as if it were real begin by simply extending the narrative beyond the close of the novel. In these, we generally find that the events of Austen's novel repeat in endless iterations throughout the sequels, removing any progressive arc from the narrative. In the previously mentioned "The Darcys of Rosings," for example, Barrington takes as her subject another elopement/abduction. The novella's credulity straining plot is as follows: Anne de Bourgh predeceased her mother, and for reasons passing understanding, the Darcys therefore have inherited Rosings, and apparently spend more time

there than at Pemberley. Through the auspices of Marianne Brandon—who is friends with Elizabeth and retains some semblance of affection for her former swain (though why her husband should go along with this, we are never told) —we meet Willoughby's illegitimate son, masquerading as his legitimate half-brother. He is not, however, Eliza's child (for whom the Brandons might conceivably have an affection) but one of two sons that Willoughby sired with a Portuguese lady. The second of the pair who takes after his mother and is thus (un)suitably swarthy, due to his Portuguese descent, is disguised as his brother's Indian servant. Willoughby, Jr., then abducts the elder Miss Darcy. Fortunately, however, she is rescued by another erstwhile eloper, Mr. Wickham himself, who has improbably repented, and even more incredibly is found saying, "I wish to heaven that I could perform if it were the most trifling service to Darcy, to lessen this load of obligation" (Barrington 241). Naturally the rescue of Darcy's daughter qualifies, and harmony is restored.

The problem—well, *one* of the problems—is that in order for such a narrative to be possible, the characters must frequently unlearn the lessons which Austen was at such pains to teach them in the course of her novels. While it is not hard to imagine this of Mr. Collins, who remarks, as we have heard him do before that "Elegant females are very susceptible to these little attentions, as you are aware, and I never hesitate to offer them," surely Marianne and Col. Brandon, would have learned better than to have the following exchange in which she says,

> "I look forward to the most delightful *al fresco* meals in the green shades. We will make up little parties to recline on the moss—"

and receives the following reply:

> "In that case, my dear, I fear I must ask you to leave me out!" said dear Colonel Brandon, smiling mischievously. "You forget my rheumatism and flannel waistcoats!" (Barrington 244).

Clearly, we are to believe that the Brandons have been having variations on this same conversation for twenty odd years—a sad fate for our vivacious Marianne, who apparently has not been cured of her excessive romanticism and *tendre* for the picturesque, despite her adventures. Similarly, we are told that the Darcys are taken in by the imposter because "both have a generosity of disposition which will suspect no evil" (Barrington 257)—though one would think their own experiences with scoundrels would have taught them to be cautious, even if not their own canonical unwillingness to approve of things in general.

In short, the sequels tend to arrest change. Even Wickham must not have been so bad – after all, he was Mr. Darcy's playmate once, and it is inconceivable that Mr. Darcy could have ever been mistaken, or that Wickham could have truly degenerated. The first published Austen sequel, *Old Friends and New Fancies* (1913) by Sybil Brinton, behaves similarly. Like many subsequent sequels, its main plot is the finding of a husband for Miss Georgiana Darcy. In her novel, Brinton forces Emma to match-make disastrously, Tom Bertram to produce yet another amateur theatrical, and Lady Catherine to be embarrassingly and impoliticly rude to yet another one of her nephew's inamoratas.

After the release of the 1995 miniseries, the greater part of the sequels begin not to just extend the narrative, but to add parallel perspectives to it. In the preponderance of continuations which explore the action of the novel from Darcy's perspective, we learn his "true" feelings as he meets and falls in love with Elizabeth. For example, in the first volume of Pamela Aidan's *Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman* series, *An Assembly Such As This* (2003, 2006), which covers the

period from the assembly at which he is introduced to Hertfordshire society through the deception of Bingley as regards Jane's presence in town, we discover that Darcy is drawn to Elizabeth from the very beginning. Aidan writes

> What was she thinking? Intrigued [Darcy] allowed himself to examine her. At that moment, his object turned toward him, the smile still gracing her face, but now with one delicate brow arched in question at his blatant scrutiny. He hastily turned away, his discomposure with her discovery of him setting him at further odds with [Bingley].[28]

The scene then proceeds as it does in *Pride and Prejudice*, with Darcy's snub, but then goes on to add the following encounter, as they are leaving the ball:

> A low, delightful laugh escaped one of the ladies, drawing Darcy forward to seek out its source. There, beneath the crackling torch he found it and, with a tingling jolt, saw that it was the young woman of the enigmatic smile who had so discomposed him earlier. [...] Then, with a sigh of pleasure, she gracefully adjusted her wrap and lifted her face to the beauty of the night sky. The simplicity of her joy caught him [...] and Darcy found he could not take his eyes from her. With an inexplicable fascination, he watched her until a turn in the street took her from his view (Aidan 7-8).

From this account, we are to gather that Darcy insults Elizabeth mostly because he is awkward and that his irritation is with Bingley for putting him in an uncomfortable position; he doesn't really mean it. In fact, only a short space of time later, he is "tingling" for Elizabeth, thinking her delightful, graceful and inexplicably fascinating. It is not that he can learn to love and appreciate

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[28] Pamela Aidan, *An Assembly Such As This* (New York: Touchstone, 2006), 6. Hereafter cited parenthetically as Aidan.

her because of her wit and sparkle; he must have been impressed by these qualities from the very beginning. In fact, we learn that by the time Elizabeth comes to Netherfield, Mr. Darcy has realized that “she is—both mind and heart—what [he has] always desired” (Aidan 107). The reader-turned-writer seems to be putting herself in the place of Elizabeth, as one so often does with a favorite heroine, and cannot bear to think that Elizabeth did not always stand so high in Mr. Darcy’s perception as she does by the end, when he says that she is now one of “the handsomest women” (*PP* 259) in his acquaintance.

In *Mr. Darcy’s Diary,* though she is slightly more accurate about Darcy’s assessment of Elizabeth’s looks—“her face is not beautiful,” Darcy observes during his time in Kent, “but it haunts me”[29]—we can see that Amanda Grange also works to assuage any pain Mr. Darcy might have caused the reader by his dismissal of her alter-ego Elizabeth’s charms. When he and Elizabeth have their dance at Netherfield, their conversation is clearly an unpleasant one, with Elizabeth taking up arms in defense of Wickham. But Grange is quick to assure us that Darcy did not take long to forgive her. She writes

> We finished the dance as we had begun it in silence. But I could not be angry with her long. She had been told something by George Wickham, that much was clear, and as he was incapable of telling the truth, she had no doubt been subject to a host of lies. As we left the floor, I had forgiven Elizabeth, and turned my anger towards Wickham instead. What had he told her, I wondered. And how far had it damaged me in her esteem? (Grange 91).

This seems to be Miss Bingley’s Mr. Darcy—a man too perfect to tease—and such a characterization removes all hope of narrative progression from the novel. It is true that

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[29] Amanda Grange, *Mr. Darcy’s Diary* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2007), 117. Hereafter cited parenthetically as Grange.

Elizabeth says to Wickham, that although "Mr. Darcy improves on acquaintance [...] In essentials, I believe, he is very much what he ever was" (*PP* 225-6). She claims that he has not altered and she has merely learnt to understand him better; however, I don't think it follows that his behavior in the first part of the novel is error-free or that he loved Elizabeth at first sight, which is what these sequels indicate. Tony Tanner, who Eve Sedgwick describes as the most normalizing and most conventional critic ever to read Jane Austen,[30] summarizes the action of *Pride and Prejudice* by saying that it is a "novel in which the most important events are that a man changes his manners and a young lady changes her mind"—clearly identifying the novel as a progressive arc, and yet, these sequels are essentially conservative, eschewing change entirely.

In their attempt to make Darcy "always already" in love, Austen's recent continuers tacitly claim that they are revealing what is hidden, but still present in *Pride and Prejudice*; they see themselves not as inserting but instead revealing. Just as Sedgwick's "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl" shows how the language of masochistic and masturbatory passion runs through the narrative of *Sense and Sensibility* and just as Mary Crawford's line on the navy, where "Of Rears and Vices [she] saw enough"[31] can be read as a pun on homosexuality, continuers uncover the eroticism generally masked within Austen's narrative.

If we return to Austen's visit to the picture gallery, we find that she is not a proponent of revealing *per se*. Recalling her statement:

> Mr. D. prizes any picture of her too much to like it should be exposed to the public eye. I can imagine he would have that sort of feeling – that mixture of love, pride and delicacy[32]

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[30] Eve Sedgwick, "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl," *Critical Inquiry* 17.4 (Summer 1991): 833.
[31] Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 71.
[32] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 24 May 1813 in *Letters*, 213.

I find the assessment of Mr. Darcy very telling here; it is clear that "exposure" is a thing which no one of "delicacy" could desire. Indeed, this is perfectly in line with Austen's portrait of Darcy, who is a cipher not for the public sphere, "ill qualified to recommend [himself] to strangers" (*PP* 171), and quite possibly the most inexpressive and uncommunicative hero of romance imaginable. These qualities do not, apparently, interfere too much with Darcy's popularity; a 2004 poll conducted by the Orange Prize for Fiction showed that Mr Darcy was "the man they would most like to go on a date with" and was also "the fictional character women would most like to invite to a dinner party" despite the fact that "surely Mr Darcy would spend the evening either gazing at the ceiling grunting with boredom or glowering at the guests."[33] While five years later, Mills & Boon and the Cheltenham Literary festival ran a similar poll in which Darcy came in a surprisingly low third—finishing behind Brontë's Mr. Rochester and Cornwell's Richard Sharpe—still Darcy remains a perennial object of women's fantasies, despite (or because of) his guarded and veiled nature.

While contemporary culture tends to privilege openness over reserve—advocating for "sharing" and the general outpouring of feelings—discretion is a prized virtue in Austen's oeuvre. As Rebecca Dixon remarks, "Austen characters always keep their tempers; when they are irritable or out of sorts, they remain in their rooms. Austen's characters disagree in private, never with others present."[34] When Darcy, for instance, claims in his failed proposal to Elizabeth that "disguise of every sort is my abhorrence" he is behaving in an "ungentlemanlike manner" (*PP* 188) for which he is justly rebuked, and spends the rest of the novel repenting. His

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[33] Cheryl Potter, "Why Do We Still Fall For Mr. Darcy?" *The Guardian*, 29 September 2004, http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2004/sep/29/books.gender

[34] Rebecca Dixon, "Misrepresenting Jane Austen's Ladies: Revising Texts (and History) to Sell Films" in *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, eds. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2001), 47

observations, however natural, ought to have been kept to himself; any other course of action displays the same "want of propriety" (*PP* 193) he critiques in others.

This discomfort at display is not a fault in Austen's eyes; in fact, even when Darcy and Elizabeth finally come together at the end of the novel, Darcy's words are left hidden from the reader—we are told only that he "expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do" (*PP* 346). His exact phrasing is discreetly left to the reader's imagination. Yet this lack of articulation, as we have seen, in no way prevents Darcy from being lovable. In fact, it seems that the reverse is true. Somehow though, despite its obviously compelling nature, this feature of silence consistently gets lost in translation: it is invariably filled by other pens. Our affection for Austen's Darcy notwithstanding, his uncommunicative nature is never allowed to remain so, in either adaptation or continuation: he must always become fully voiced.[35] In her article on film adaptations of Austen, Cheryl Nixon points out that

> the recent film adaptations of Austen are successful because they, quite literally, 'flesh out' her male characters… it is what Austen's heroines fall in love with that we do not like: the male hero. What was good enough for her female heroines is obviously not good enough for us; the films must add scenes to add desirability to her male protagonists. [...] Darcy's body is obviously not just a body, but a medium of emotional expression. The film need not tamper with Austen's words to tamper with her hero. Indeed the BBC adaptation rewrites Austen by adding

[35] This is true, not just for Darcy, but for all of Austen's characters. Discretion and restraint in romantic protagonists are apparently troubling to many contemporary readers; they are uncomfortable with reserve of any kind. Emma Thompson's adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility*, for instance, while an excellent film, in and of itself, demonstrates this discomfort; the film's rewriting of Austen argues that Elinor ought to discard her reserve, in favor of more openness, while the novel makes no such claim.

> physical self-expression to a character notorious for his inability to express himself verbally. [...] The films prematurely resolve rather than heighten these conflicts; masculine emotional display makes the final pairing of hero and heroine obvious, removing the narrative suspense of a relationship hindered by social restraint. […] The films endow Austen's courtship romance protagonists with emotional display emphasizing our current notions of 'romance' rather than late eighteenth century understandings of 'courtship'. A brief consideration of Austen's heroes reveals that masculine emotional restraint, and not display, provides proof of the heroes' worthiness.[36]

The continuations, like the film adaptations, are relentless in their attempts to fill the voids left by Austen, to reveal and "discover… the private reality underlying all social behavior" that twentieth century critics like Nancy Armstrong read into the work.[37] Thus, such continuations ensure that nothing is left unspoken and every sub-textual moment is spelled out—even though, it is perhaps these lacunae that made the original work so appealing and so realistic to readers in the first place; as both Galperin and Robinson conclude, Austen's realism can be located in her silences and lacunae: the parts that she leaves unspoken, albeit delineated in outline, encourage our belief.

There are, however, certainly moments in *Pride and Prejudice* where revelation and unveiling occur pursuant to the plot, mainly in epistolary form. This is unsurprising; Austen noted in a letter to her sister Cassandra,

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[36] Cheryl L. Nixon. "Balancing the Courtship Hero: Masculine Emotional Display in Film Adaptations of Austen's Novels" in *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, eds. Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield.(Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2001), 23-25.

[37] Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 158.

> I have now attained the true art of letter writing, which we are always told, is to express on paper exactly what one would say to the same person by word of mouth; I have been talking to you almost as fast as I could the whole of this letter.[38]

Much like Austen's "free and indirect speech," letters, then, are the transparent medium through which thought is captured, communicated and retained, as Austen's own letters—where she permits herself far more license than she does in the comparatively elliptical text of her narrative—demonstrate quite effectively.

Intriguingly, when her niece Fanny wrote a letter to Austen, addressing her aunt as Miss Georgiana Darcy, and expecting her to reply in that character's voice, Austen, though ostensibly amused by the conceit, refused, saying

> I am very much obliged to Fanny for her Letter; -- it made me laugh heartily; but I cannot pretend to answer it. Even had I more time, I should not feel at all sure of the sort of Letter that Miss D. would write.[39]

A letter does not merely describe a character, it exposes their inner being, and Austen, however free she felt to tell the events which happened to her characters after the close of the story, was not always willing to delve into their souls.

Only when the plot dictates it, then, does Austen resort to the epistolary confessional, where all is unpacked and made explicit. (One can only imagine that the epistolary *First Impressions*, which was so much longer than *Pride and Prejudice*, explicated a good deal more, probably to its detriment.) Thus we have Mrs. Gardiner's letter to Elizabeth, explaining Darcy's role in the marriage of Wickham and Lydia as well as the one moment of free direct address that

[38] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 3 January 1801 in *Letters*, 68.
[39] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 2 May 1813 in *Letters*, 213.

Darcy is permitted in the whole of the novel: the letter in which he explains his behavior towards Jane and Wickham.

There are a few letters mentioned but not quoted in *Pride and Prejudice*. However, Darcy's case is rather special. On two occasions, Darcy is shown in the literal act of writing a letter whose text we are not privy to: the first, when he is writing a letter to Georgiana at Netherfield, and the second (which explicitly references the first) when he writes to Lady Catherine to inform her of his engagement to Elizabeth. It seems to me to be truly a pity that we don't get to see that second letter; I imagine it to be perfectly and brilliantly scathing, and can only suppose that even Austen's pen quailed at setting it down. Whatever the reason for its omission might be, its absence tells us two things: first, that Austen meant Darcy to remain somewhat inscrutable, since she does not enter into his mind and thus open it to us when she might have, and second, that this gap seems like it ought to be an open invitation to continuers. Much like Sidney's invitation at the end of his *Arcadia*, Austen's too is commonly declined, and the only continuer who dared to attempt it, contented herself with writing simply

> Lady Catherine,
>
> I am sure you will want to wish me happy. I have asked Miss Elizabeth Bennet to marry me, and she has done me the great honour of saying yes.
>
> Your nephew,
>
> Fitzwilliam Darcy (Grange 293).

This seems not at all in Darcy's style, who according to his intimate friends (and the lone sample we are given!) writes "long" and "studies too much for words of four syllables" (*PP* 47). In short, the gaps and blank spaces are part of the artwork; what is left out is as significant as what is left in. It is Darcy's impenetrability, which I think readers find so compelling, and thus wish to

unpack: the desire to uncover it is hardly ever successfully fulfilled, but it continually impels further efforts nevertheless.

While I am certain that Austen would find these insertions asinine (see for instance when she quotes Scott to say "I do not write for such dull Elves/As have not a great deal of Ingenuity themselves"[40]) I do not mean to claim that she was a prude, or that openness, or even carnality, was foreign to her writing. Far from it. For instance, there is the memorable sentence in one letter to her sister Cassandra where she makes a lovely "dead baby" joke:

> Mrs. Hall, of Sherborne, was brought to bed yesterday of a dead child, some weeks before she expected, owing to a fright. I suppose she happened unawares to look at her husband.[41]

Someone who could write such a sentence—and many others equally cruel and hilarious—is obviously not someone who was easily shocked or used to biting her tongue. But, for Austen, such sentences and such openness, belong mostly in letters, whereas Lloyd Wellesley Brown observes in *Bits of Ivory: Narrative Technique in Jane Austen*, they are "in effect, [...] an act of confession [...] By arresting its intimate subjects within its written format it makes them accessible to repeated scrutiny and emphasis."[42]

The films, with their emotional explication and visual realization, have helped to create this reading that is so "confined and unvarying." In the *London Review of Books*, Frank Kermode writes

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[40] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 29 January 1813 in *Letters*, 202.
[41] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 27 October 1798 in *Letters*, 17.
[42] Lloyd Wellesley Brown, *Bits of Ivory: Narrative Technique in Jane Austen*, (Baton Rouge: Lousiana State University Press, 1973), 137-139

> It is said that among the television audience there were some who saw Darcy's emergence from his pond—an event Austen omitted from her narrative—as the high point of the book.[43]

His point is that audiences of the miniseries have fully commingled the television program with the novel itself; they are no longer seen as separate entities, but part of the same text. The viewing experience thus taints the reception of the novel and because of the tendency to fixate on "the good bits," these parts can be taken for the whole. Helen Fielding's second Bridget Jones novel, *Bridget Jones and the Edge of Reason* (1999) illustrates just such a reading; she shows Bridget watching the scene where Darcy, dripping in a wet see-through shirt, exits the lake, and then rewinding and re-watching the scene multiple times. This repeated reviewing of selected portions, of an already edited adaptation, replaces the amplitude of the original novel, with this delimited focus on sexuality and eroticism as seen through the female gaze. The narrative is no longer seen as a progression, but is reduced to a single metonymic or synecdochic moment of pleasure, sustained as long as possible.

Examine, for example, *Pride and Prejudice: The Wild and Wanton Edition* (2010), which clearly responds to the sexual pleasure found by audiences in the film versions.[44] This continuation includes Austen's full text, but inserts additions, presumably of a salacious nature, within the interstices of her lines in bold-faced font. One assumes this font choice is to make certain the reader is aware that this is "extra" material, although it is hard for me to imagine anyone being confused as to that point, even if they had to go on content alone to make their determination. From the title, any reader would probably imagine that all of the additions are

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[43] Frank Kermode, "Too Good and Too Silly," *London Review of Books* 31.8 (April 30, 2009), http://www.lrb.co.uk/v31/n08/frank-kermode/too-good-and-too-silly

[44] This continuation owes much to sequels like *Mr. Darcy Takes a Wife* (1999, 2004) by Linda Berdoll which likewise inserts a sexualized relationship inspired by the author's affection for the 1995 miniseries.

erotic in nature, and indeed many of them are. For instance, we learn that Lydia is in the habit of sneaking off with young men at balls, to have sexual intercourse with them in dark corners. She engages in this activity at the first assembly and we are treated to paragraphs such as the following:

> **"Do not stop until I am finished this time," she ordered in breathless pants, "or else I will make you finish the job with your mouth and then your wife shall taste me on you when you kiss her goodnight** [bold original]."[45]

Naturally, our heroines Jane and Elizabeth are (slightly) more virtuous, but fortunately they have a rich and varied fantasy life, and thus can heave and pant with excitement at the mere thought of their handsome young men, who of course get to masturbate at the thought of them. So far, I found none of this material surprising, considering the title. But there is more in the bold-faced type then simple pornography.

Pride and Prejudice is notoriously short on physical description; we know that Elizabeth has dark eyes, that Lydia is the tallest, that Jane is the prettiest, but that is all: nothing about dress, hair color, size of features. About Darcy, we only know for a fact that he is tall. The *Wild and Wanton Edition*, however, finds it necessary to furnish us with physical detail: we learn that Bingley has blue eyes, that Darcy has bulging muscles of the he-man variety (*WWE* 19), and so on. This, however, makes a certain kind of sense; in order to sustain sexual fantasy, which seems to be the goal of this book, it is undoubtedly helpful to have some descriptors which can aid in the process of visualization. Where I found the book truly odd, however, was where it inserted sections that had nothing to do with physicality at all, but were instead wholly emotional.

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45 Jane Austen and Michelle Pillow, *Pride and Prejudice: The Wild and Wanton Edition* (Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2011), 25. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *WWE*.

The famous scene where Darcy slights Elizabeth, claiming that she is "tolerable but not handsome enough to tempt" him gets an addendum, but not a sexual one. To Austen's description of Elizabeth after this scene—"She told the story however with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous"—Pillow adds: "**It was easier to laugh at the nature of the slight, than admit to the true depth of the wound"** (*WWE* 22, bold original). There is no erotic purpose to such a line, which is not only ludicrously terrible, but actively insulting to our heroine, and, also, directly contradicts the line before it. It becomes clear that this novel is not content to merely undress its characters' bodies; it also wants to provide emotional exposition, and make naked every thought. It's not just the sex that needs to be exposed, but the inner workings of the mind, which, according to this author, apparently can only handle one—necessarily sexual/romantic—thought at a time.

While the *Wild and Wanton Edition* is perhaps the worst example of this "one-note" trend, nearly all of the Austen sequels share this reductive quality. Michael Kramp, in *Disciplining Love: Austen and the Modern Man,* writes that "critical emphasis on Austen's marriage plots has thus encouraged many to read her corpus as a collection of tales documenting a woman's search not for love or a lover, but for a stable and stabilizing husband."[46] This is true not only for conventional critics, but for continuers as well; they insist on a heteronormative conventionality, on repetition, on a conservative sameness which the novels, though written so much earlier, do not. In the continuations which cover the same period of time as the novel, therefore, Elizabeth and Darcy must be in love from the moment of their meeting; they cannot change their minds about each other, only discover the nature of their true feelings. They can intend nothing truly hurtful, at any time, despite textual evidence to the contrary in the source.

46 Michael Kramp, *Disciplining Love: Austen and the Modern Man*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007), 5

The economic side of marriage must be completely ignored; instead it is all sentiment, all the time.

Even the few queer texts are heteronormative and one-note in exactly this fashion. Elizabeth Ashton's *Mr. Darcy's Daughters* (2003), for instance, follows the stories of Elizabeth's daughters (naturally numbering five, exactly like the previous generation of Bennet daughters), the second of whom, like Elizabeth herself, is our heroine. Despite the fact that one of the daughters is in the habit of cross-dressing, and that the first gentleman to whom the heroine, Camilla, becomes engaged is gay, the book itself is still little more than a sensationalized retread of its predecessor's plot. The only other published queer narrative I have been able to locate[47] is Ann Hereendeen's *Pride/Prejudice* (2010) which plays upon the trope of internet slash, symbolized by the '/' in the title.[48] In this novel, we discover that Darcy and Bingley are both bisexual, and have a relationship with one another, which continues, happily, and with the full knowledge of their wives, after their marriage. It also imagines that there is a sexual component to Darcy and Wickham's relationship prior to the beginning of the novel, which is partially what motivates Wickham's infamy. I think an argument for the latter at least could certainly be made; however, I note that this reading of *Pride and Prejudice* wants to add queerness without jeopardizing in any way the pre-existing romance; nothing can be permitted to change anything about the novel's relationships, even when the additions *must* disrupt the

[47] Michelle Martin's *Pembroke Park* (1986) has been described by some as a lesbian *Pride and Prejudice*, but although the author dedicates the novel to both Jane Austen and Georgette Heyer, the debt to Austen is mostly related to the time period, and the trope of a rich potential partner moving to the neighborhood, and of course the orthographic similarity between Pembroke Park and Pemberley.

[48] 'Slash' is an internet fan term. It means the depiction of fictional characters in a romantic/sexual relationship, often homosexual and/or non-canonical . The word can be used as a verb (e.g. "I slash Darcy and Bingley", meaning "I believe that Darcy and Bingley are together in a romantic way", or "I write stories in which Darcy and Bingley are a romantic couple") or an adjective (e.g. "I thought it was really slashy when Darcy kept Jane away from Bingley), as well as a noun (e.g. "I really like slash").

novel's universe by any rational standard. In short, they must have been at the beginning, exactly as they are at the end, and thus are diminished to the stature of everybody in Meryton, who when Wickham's infamy is exposed, "began to find out that they had always distrusted the appearance of his goodness" (*PP* 280).

Branding: transposition, what-ifs and mash-ups

This is not to say that originality never occurs in these continuations. When it does, however, it is almost invariably genre-unaware—that is to say, it is melodramatic in the extreme. In her article, "What Happened Next: The Many Husbands of Georgiana Darcy," Kathleen Glancy observes

> I think the *most* unlikely part of ["The Darcys of Rosings"] is the naming of names. Darcy is presented by the author with a paternal uncle called Lorenzo. Then there is his elder daughter. In almost every case in Jane Austen's novels where the given names of mothers and daughters are known, the first daughter is named for the mother. Even if Mr. and Mrs. Darcy chose not to follow this custom, the claims of Jane for her dearest sister, Georgiana for his only sister, and Anne for his dead mother should surely all have come before Charlotte. Would you name a daughter after a friend about whom you had never felt the same since the married your idiotic cousin? This, however, pales into insignificance beside the younger daughter. She is called Caroline.[49]

I think this perfectly bears out my point: names and plots are either chosen from the pre-existing ranks of Austen's own (whether logically suitable or not) or they are ludicrously out of place. Thus, in the otherwise unexceptionable *Pemberley Shades* (1950) by D. Bonavia-Hunt, we have

[49] Kathleen Glancy, "What Happened Next: The Many Husbands of Georgiana Darcy," *Persuasions* 11 (1989), http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/printed/number11/glancy.htm.

a villain who rejoices in the name of Horace Carlini and another impersonation/mistaken identity plot. And in Julia Barrett's *Presumption* (1993), we find the Darcys and their various connections under siege from yet *another* personable young man, this one actually allied with Wickham, who orchestrates an insane plot to blackmail our heroes for money by framing Mrs. Phillips for stealing some lace. Meanwhile Georgiana's romance manages to duplicate that of her brother's: she is misled by the scoundrel, and has a combative relationship with the one who, though beneath her station, is obviously meant to be her partner.

The sequels which remove themselves slightly from the novel's text on the other hand generally increase the melodrama quotient by a hundred percent or more. Along with the repetition of the novel's plot, they generally include such sensational material as secret siblings, foreign travel, amnesia, death or other grievous injury, the pathos of illness, crime, and high ranking society. It's interesting, of course, that these are the precise elements which are generally missing from or parodied in Austen's oeuvre. Even though such devices permeated the literature of her time, as well as her own juvenilia, in her mature work, Austen eschewed them almost completely—possibly seeing them as clichés and contrary to the realism she sought to portray. And in fact, though immensely popular in their day, the novels by Austen's contemporaries which regularly include these elements—Richardson, Burney, *et al*—are no longer widely read for pleasure. Nevertheless, although their lack is part of what makes Austen appealing, continuers seem to feel the need to insert these melodramatic moments back into the text. Thus we find that Mary Bennet bears a child out of wedlock by an Italian student, that Darcy kills his half-brother, Wickham, in a duel, becomes imprisoned in a Transylvanian jail on his way to rescue his *other* illegitimate half-brother who is an Austrian monk, while Elizabeth, Charles and Caroline evade the "Oriental" assassin sent to Pemberley and head for the continent to rescue

him (Marsha Altman's *The Darcys and the Bingleys* series [2008—present]); Anne de Bourgh has an illegitimate half-sister (Joan Aiken's *Lady Catherine's Necklace* [2001]); and that Elizabeth & Darcy's first son becomes paralyzed after a fall from a horse (Diana Birchall's *Mrs. Darcy's Dilemma* [2008]).

More distant still are the narratives which remove Austen's plot from her setting and recreate it in some other fictional universe. Building, again, upon the model of Bridget Jones, we find films that reproduce Austen's plot, but set in a Mormon community (*Pride and Prejudice: A Latter Day Comedy* [2003]) or in a Bollywood version of modern day India (*Bride and Prejudice* [2004]), and novels that set the action in, for instance Civil War-era America (*Pemberley Ranch* [2010]) or among Florida widows (*Jane Austen in Boca* [2003]). As these new texts wander further and further from the original, they in turn permit new authors to stray further from the text as well.

Only recently, then, have continuations been published that actively alter not just the width and breadth of "what happened after" but also what happened during. Novels such as those in Abigail Reynolds' series, *The Pemberley Variations* (2001-present) examine "roads not traveled" by Austen's text. In her alternate universes, Reynolds explores questions such as "what if family business required Darcy to stay at Rosings after giving Elizabeth his letter?" or "what if circumstances conspired to make her accept Darcy the first time he proposes?" or "what if, instead of disappearing from Elizabeth Bennet's life after she refused his offer of marriage, Darcy had stayed and tried to change her mind?" or "What if Darcy's intentions were shockingly dishonorable and he wanted to make Elizabeth his mistress?" Many recent self-published novels follow this model of variation as well, as for instance, M.K. Baxley's *The Mistress's Black Veil*

(2011) or Mary Simonsen's *A Walk in the Meadow at Rosings Park* (2011) which likewise choose a point in the novel and branch off a different narrative to Austen's.

As well, recent years have seen the publication and growing popularity of the Jane Austen mash-up, which takes the Austen "brand" and recombines it with other genres. Possibly the first of these is S.N. Dyer's "Resolve and Resistance" a short story collected in *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror* (1995), in which Napoleon has occupied England and, in collusion with Lord Nelson, Elizabeth uses Pemberley as the base for a steampunk-esque hot-air balloon assault on Napoleon's forces. Following in this trend is Naomi Novik's Temeraire series, which feature an alternate history Napoleonic wars, where aerial combat—with dragons as the aircrafts—comes into play. Novik, herself an Austen fan, is explicitly producing a saga that is a fantasy spin on Patrick O'Brien's own Austen-esque naval adventures; at one point in the third novel in Novik's series, *Empire of Ivory* (2007), the hero, Captain Will Laurence dances with Austen's Maria Lucas. Carrie Bebris' *Pride and Prescience* (2007) is a mystery novel, where the sleuths are Elizabeth and Darcy. Like the much talked-of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), these novels insert new genre narratives into Austen's novel-of-manners. The purpose of these is two-fold; for Austen fans, these novels seek to provide the pleasure of Austen's narrative simultaneously coupled with other generic desires. At the same time, these novels bring Austen to new audiences, who might not otherwise read her work. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is obviously meant to create cross-gender appeal; written by Seth Grahame-Smith, the zombies are a way to inject a note of masculine adventure into Austen's allegedly feminine world, while still

pleasing female fans of science fiction and fantasy horror. What could be less like "frilly bonnets" than zombie-hunting?[50]

While Amanda Grange's *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* (2009) was apparently the first novel to bring vampires and Austen into explicit conjunction, Stephenie Meyer's YA sensation, *Twilight*, is supposed to have been based partially on *Pride and Prejudice*; Edward, the love interest of the novel's heroine, Bella, initially behaves towards her with Mr. Darcy-like disdain, which naturally masks his deep and undying (literally, since he is a vampire) love for her. As a result, *Twilight*'s publisher, Harper Collins reissued *Pride and Prejudice* with a new cover that referenced Twilight's immensely popular one and with a new tag line: "the love that started it all," clearly designed by the marketing team to sell Austen to an audience that may not have been previously familiar with her, but was on board for any *Twilight* related text. If Grahame-Smith's novel was trying to sell *Pride and Prejudice* to men with zombies, Harper Collins was selling it to adolescent girls with allusions to *Twilight*.

These novels do not read Austen, but explicitly write into Austen what was never there. Why, then, don't their authors write "original novels" instead of these meditations upon the Austen theme? Clearly there is an economic motive in attachment to Austen: her name on the cover and readers, who are forever lamenting that she wrote only six novels, will almost certainly buy. The slightest connection to the Darcys and co. means that a romance will be purchased, regardless of who the actual author is. However, it seems clear that there is more to continuation writing than profit. Austen's continuers are also desirous of membership in the community of her fans, seeing their literary endeavors as productive of approval from a fellow readership. As Mary Ann O'Farrell points out in "Austenian Subcultures," the novels are

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[50] It is interesting to note that Grahame-Smith's text with all its implausible departures still retains the one-note aspect, making Mr. Darcy admiring of Elizabeth from their very first meeting.

notable for their sociality—not only do they seem to offer the reader a fantasy friendship with Austen herself, but the very real society of fellow readers of her work.[51] Only lately has this amateur contingent—a society of appreciative admirers who write for love—turned professional. Many of the novels mentioned so far began life as free offerings on the internet. Subsequently self-published, many of them have now been reissued as edited publications by reputable publishing companies, who then endow the practice with respectability.

Novels which greatly differ from the source material also reflexively seem less "illicit," to use Trillings' term; T.H. White's *Darkness at Pemberley* (1932) is probably the first of these: it is a detective story set in the early 20th century, in which the detective falls in love with a Miss Elizabeth Darcy—"the Christian name," we are told, "had been in the family since the famous Elizabeth in 1813."[52] Other than this reference, there appears to be no other connection with *Pride and Prejudice*, and one rather wonders why White chose Pemberley for his country house at all. But it is the privileging of innovation, something "new," which lends continuers respectability, and makes a continuation something that an author—already known for other professional work—is willing to embark upon. It is probably no accident that 2009, a year which saw the possibility of difference in continuations established with the vampire and zombie *Pride and Prejudice*s, also saw a middlebrow author like Colleen McCullough publish *The Independence of Miss Mary Bennet*, which clearly strikes out for new ground by painting Darcy as somewhat villainous, cruel to his "delicate" son and cold to Elizabeth. More recently, P.D. James published *Death Comes to Pemberley* (2012) which is just as much a continuation of her own brand of murder mystery as it is of Austen's narrative.

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[51] Mary Ann O' Farrell, "Austenian Subcultures," in *A Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Claudia Johnson and Clara Tuite (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 480.
[52] T.H. White, *Darkness at Pemberley* (New York: Dover, 1978), 97.

Continuing Continuations

In attempting to chart the progression of continuations, we have seen how successive authors travel from initially attempting to recover the hidden parts of Austen's arc to drawing in a whole previously unimagined picture of which the arc is but one figure or pattern block. This progression illustrates the triumph of the reader who no longer views the originating text with as much respect as before and goes from suggesting possible epilogues and tying up loose ends to altering the whole fabric of the narrative. We can chart a parallel evolution in the film adaptations. The 1940 *Pride & Prejudice* offered another authorial voice in its redemption of Lady Catherine, clearly departing from Austen's conception, and laying the groundwork for a multiply authored narrative. The enormous popularity of the 1995 miniseries, heralded the influx of more and more corporeal additions (erotic and otherwise) to the continuations, as it recursively eroticized Austen's text. Successive film versions continued this process, and their variant authorial voices provided the necessary support for the types of continuation novels that differ more and more from the original novel.

It is these latter three categories of continuations, transpositions, what-ifs, and genre mash-ups, which have seem to be measured as having the most "worth," —probably due to their distance from the source text—but I want to argue, conversely, that the *true* literary worth of the continuations should be measured by their reading of Austen's text and what parts of it they make legible. In the preface to *Darkness at Pemberley*, T.H. White writes to excuse himself for having used the geography of a real college as the setting. He says, "Imaginary characters and events were grafted on to a real place because it seemed amusing to plan a fiction within the local limits of a fact."[53] This is precisely what I perceive to be the allure of tracing a story around a pre-existing one: the writer must provide original material that fits precisely into the framework

[53] White, *Darkness at Pemberley*, np.

already provided, amplifying without once contradicting it. The result ought to be as seamless as possible, but at the same time, add something which was absent from the work. But because it is extremely difficult to add onto such a perfectly constructed structure as *Pride and Prejudice* is, continuers discover that in attempting to sustain the pitch of perfection, they destroy the very thing that they love in the process.

Chapter IV: A School of Witchcraft and Wizardry
fantasies of dimensionality

"Until then, I gotta go back to the Muggle world, they're gonna try and tell me this wasn't, that none of this happened, but you know what? It was real. It did happen. We spent time here. We made friends here. That's a part of us. Cause Hogwarts is bigger than any of us, than any of its founders, and it's going to be around long after we're gone. Maybe we'll see our kids come here one day. That's the thing about Hogwarts. No matter how long you're away from it, there's always a way back."
Darren Criss, *A Very Potter Sequel*

All books may produce sequels, but some are more sequelled than others. Like *Pride and Prejudice*, J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series is particularly and peculiarly propagative, inspiring a vast quantity of fan authored continuations that can be easily accessed online. Is the preponderance of such sequels due entirely to the series' immense popularity? Admittedly, it is somewhat difficult to think of a contemporary book series that's equally popular in order to make a fair comparison. Still, it's not as if there aren't other successful and beloved book series with their own ardent fans. Probably the most famous exemplar of the fantasy genre, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55), for instance, has somewhat comparable sales figures and has been around much longer, which ought to imply *more* fan fiction and not less, considering that fans have had so much more time to populate its archive with continuations. However, a cursory search of a general multi-fandom internet archive, (archiveofourown.org) shows that Harry Potter has 26,457 stories while *The Lord of the Rings* has a mere 4,141 recorded. On yet another archive, (fanfiction.net, probably the most well-known fan fiction archive on the web), the three most popular book fandoms are: Harry Potter with 607,967 separate stories, *Twilight* at second place with 200,415 stories, and *The Lord of the Rings* at 46,658. Similarly, another multi-fandom archive, (archive.skyehawke.com, which self-selects its participants based on their nomination by current members in order to ensure a standard of writing quality) lists 10,580 stories within its Harry Potter category; meanwhile, the next largest

book fandom is again *The Lord of the Rings* with 293 stories.[1] In fact, it's nearly impossible to find a multi-fandom archive that *doesn't* list Harry Potter as its largest book fandom[2] and these numbers speak for themselves. So, the question remains: what is it about Rowling's universe that makes readers want to continue it?

At first glance, it's tempting to assume that Rowling's text has something in common with Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* that might explain their shared ability to provoke continuation. For one thing, Austen is apparently Rowling's favorite author; not only has she repeatedly claimed *Emma* as her favorite novel, but as well, she names a particularly nosy and generally unpleasant feline character "Mrs Norris," after the one in *Mansfield Park*. Furthermore, Rowling explicitly encourages the comparison with regard to continuation, as for example in an interview with the fansite mugglenet.com, where she states her belief that

> people will continue to theorize about the characters even at the end of Book 7 because some people are very interested in certain characters whose past lives are not germane to the plot—they're not central to the story—so there is big leeway there still for fan fiction, just as there is, I mean—Jane Austen, I'm a huge Jane Austen fan and you wonder about the characters' lives at the end of the story. They still exist, they still live; you're bound to wonder, aren't you? But I am as sure as I can be currently that 7 will be the final novel, even though I get a lot of really big puppy dog eyes. 'Just one more!'[3]

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[1] All statistics accurate as of August 30, 2012.

[2] Book fandoms are notoriously low on written additions, as compared to media fandoms; Harry Potter is the only contemporary book series that can really compete with any media fandom in number, though of course its own film adaptations help to reinforce the popularity of the series. Still, it's not as if *Twilight* and *The Lord of the Rings* are absent movie versions either.

[3] J.K. Rowling, "Interview," July 16, 2005, http://www.mugglenet.com/jkrinterview.shtml.

It is clear that Rowling is drawing a parallel between her world and Austen's in this statement, suggesting that readers of both texts are similarly bound to wonder about and then paratextually construct the characters' lives beyond the original material. Obviously both texts, Austen's and Rowling's, are producing a similar effect—a plethora of continuations—but I contend that this similarity masks some of the differences in the *reasons* that they provoke continuation. These differences can be best understood through a detailed examination of both Rowling's source text and the kinds of continuations it produces.

The incompletions and absences in Austen's work are perceived to be by intention, not error. As I've shown, her narrative voice is cryptic; it hides things. Continuers want to discover what's lurking underneath and within her silences, perhaps mistaking Austen's secrecy for fractures and invitations into the text. Their additions, then, almost invariably ruin the narrative and, incidentally, are not themselves propagative. Rowling's readers, on the other hand, seem to be filling in genuine gaps or fixing things that don't make sense. Unlike Austen's narrative, Rowling's universe features true fractures and errors, places where pieces of the story don't quite fit with one another and have to be *made* to fit. In earlier chapters, I have talked about how continuation is a form of literary critique, a kind of active reading, but here in the numerous "unauthorized" addenda to the Harry Potter universe, the stress is on the active, rather than on the reading. In lieu of the "unveiling" model, which I examined in the previous chapter, Rowling's continuers are building extensions and adding dimensions. It's also worthy of note that unlike some of the others we have discussed, Rowling's continuers do not as a rule close the doors into the narrative universe after them. Their continuations are themselves often *selvage* texts, with their own fractured fictional realities; thus, they have in many cases gone on to be continued by others.

Entering Hogwarts: Intertextuality, Fantasy-Reality, and Seriality

In addressing this comparison between Rowling and Austen, it's easy to fall into the trap of assigning a value-oriented difference between the two source texts: Rowling's seven book *erziehungsroman* about a young boy-wizard's magical education and the flowering of his destiny to battle evil and save his world is easily denigrated as both popular fantasy and children's literature; meanwhile Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is "universally acknowledged" as a masterpiece of prose style. In this formulation, continuations of Rowling might be thought to rival their source more successfully than continuations of Austen can, only because Rowling's continuers are perceived as striving to hit a far lower mark. And while I must admit that I personally find Austen's prose style to be "better" than Rowling's, I also believe that the presence of continuations is unrelated to such value-oriented distinctions. For one thing, not all popularly beloved texts are continued. For example, the next best-selling full series after Harry Potter is R.L. Stine's "Goosebumps" series; it has inspired a mere 322 stories on fanfiction.net; Dan Brown's mysteries, which sell almost as well as the single best-selling Harry Potter book, *Deathly Hallows*, have generated an equally unprepossessing 319 stories.[4] Assuming that texts encourage continuation to a greater degree *because* of their low quality or their appeal to the lowest common denominator is foolish; such a conclusion simply doesn't account for the fact that any continuation requires a great deal of investment on the part of the reader. In other words, no one would want to continue a text that didn't simultaneously inspire both affection and belief,

[4] Accessed on August 31, 2012

which Harry Potter does, for both fans and detractors alike.[5] Rowling's novels provoke continuation because she has created a world and characters that readers feel are real; they live, in readers' minds, *independent* of their creator.

Such autonomy is achieved in a variety of ways. First, Rowling's text is already so allusive that it is bolstered up by the reader's familiarity with its references and tropes. Since the boarding school story, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), "Cinderella," and *Star Wars* (1977) are already credible to readers, much of the work of earning their trust has already been done for a text like Rowling's, which functions as a *bricolage* of all these preceding texts and forms. This is not to disparage Rowling's work; as Karen Westman argues

> charges of literary patchwork, however, deny the alchemy of Rowling's art, and they fail to account for the complexities of character, narrative point of view, and theme threaded through her fictional world. Rowling's series does not so much show its seams […] but rather it reveals different shades in various lights. Place Rowling's novels alongside Lewis Carroll's Alice books, and the Harry Potter series shows colors of puzzles, probability, improbability, and mirrored desires; place it alongside Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days*, and we see highlights of the classic and classist boarding school tradition, the value of sport,

[5] When speaking of detractors, I mean those readers who insist that because the books feature "magic" and "witches," they are some kind of satanic propaganda for an anti-Christian agenda, and may teach children "spells" which they seem to believe might actually work. The funny thing about this brand of criticism is that, while its proponents do not appear to enjoy the books, they certainly seem to believe in them more than most fans do. While these people, just like the particularly unbalanced fans who believe they are married to Severus Snape on the "astral plane" are fairly alarming, I think they touch upon a factor that is significant here: the ability of the Harry Potter universe to engender belief. See "Snapes on an Astral Plane," http://wiki.fandomwank.com/index.php/Snapes_on_an_Astral_Plane.

and the dangers of bullying.[6]

Westman reads Rowling prismatically, suggesting the Harry Potter series ought not to be experienced in isolation, but in conjunction with the texts that inspired it, in order to make visible through this juxtaposition, the full spectrum of intertexuality that its inextricable relationship with its own grand tradition and forebears produces. However, I would argue that the intertextual quality of the Harry Potter universe may indeed be partially responsible for the success of the novels, evoking as they do, the pleasures of recognition and familiarity—whether consciously or subconsciously—with almost every line.

Added to this, the text includes a preponderance of enchanting and playful physical detail that lends a peculiarly cinematic quality to the text of the novels and which produces belief in a way that is more usually seen in films. In a movie, world building is easy because we are extremely susceptible to the visual medium: seeing in this case really *is* believing. If the evidence of our eyes contradicts the evidence of our brains, we are far more likely to go with the eyes. Therefore when a movie presents us with a cosmology that makes no sense, we are far less likely to question it: why bother, when we can see for ourselves that it is "real"? Somehow, the Harry Potter novels—even before they were adapted for film—appeared similarly convincing.

Another text that must be considered against any work of contemporary fantasy is *The Lord of the Rings*. Rowling most explicitly mimics Tolkien's seminal work in the last entry of her series, *Deathly Hallows*, the bulk of which deals with a quest narrative in which her heroes must locate and subsequently destroy a series of magical objects constructed by the villain, much like Tolkien's fellowship must destroy Sauron's "One Ring." While this similarity between the two texts is impossible to ignore, Rowling's universe, however, differs from that of epic

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[6] Karin Westman,"Perspective, Memory, and Moral Authority: The Legacy of Jane Austen in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*," *Children's Literature* 35 (2007): 145.

fantasies like Tolkien's in one very important way; rather than taking place in an entirely invented landscape, her narrative brings the fairy tale world *into* the real world.[7] Her magical universe lives alongside the mundane one, with carefully delineated passageways that lead from one into the other. Rowling's mundane world of non-wizarding folk (referred to as Muggles in the text) represents the "real world" in the text, but with its constructed, allegorical, and playful locations like that of "Little Whinging," the town where Harry's obnoxious and abusive family makes their home, the Muggle world also becomes a fairy-tale world, mythologizing contemporary England for global export.

Because the universe exists interstitially, on the border of the primary, "real" world and the secondary "fantasy" world, it's already more attached to reality than fantasy fictions which take place wholly in the secondary world, such as Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Novice readers, not well versed in British children's literature, may find even a British school story to be fantastical, even before the addition of magic, since the elite world of the British public school is, by its nature, also foreign to the vast majority of children, even those who live in the U.K. From its inception, the school story has been a genre of serialization, which itself encourages a belief in the reality of the universe. In works such as those by P.G. Wodehouse, Enid Blyton, Elinor M. Brent-Dyer, the authors revisit a single location (the school), and a single set of characters (the students) over and over again, as the narrative is punctuated and divided naturally by holiday breaks. This self-contained fictional world is repeatedly interpreted by a single author offering

[7] See Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantas*y (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 2. Mendlesohn classifies the Potter universe as beginning with "intrusion fantasies—the abrupt arrival of the owls in Privet Drive in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), causing chaos and disturbance—but very rapidly transmute into almost archetypal portal fantasies, reliant on elaborate description and continual new imaginings." Perhaps the most characteristic portal fantasy is C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950), where children enter into a magical fantasy land through a literal portal in the back of a wardrobe. Similarly, Rowling's wizarding world can be accessed from the real world through a variety of doorways, such as the platform 9 and ¾ in King's Cross railway station.

new, canonical perspectives of an increasingly realized space. Aside from which, Hogwarts provides a kind of wish-fulfillment that encourages its readers to want to believe in it; the existence of a sequestered wizarding world within "real" Muggle society opens up the realm as heretofore hidden magical possibility for its readers, who can now easily picture themselves receiving an owl and having a sorting of their own.

Like C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956), the Harry Potter series is predicated on the reader's point of ingress into the text. As fans of Narnia yearn to escape into the fantasy world through their closets, so too, fans of Rowling's universe long to receive their own Hogwarts letter, offering them the opportunity to slip into the wizarding world. [8] A group of fans at Brigham Young University, for instance, describe this phenomenon in a parody song they call "Firebolt," set to the tune of Katy Perry's "Firework."[9] The lyrics of "Firebolt" describe fans' reactions to the end of the Harry Potter series and show how the sense of waiting for their own Hogwarts letter permeates the narrative, repeating the chorus, "maybe you were wrong and you are chosen too" over and over again.

Identification is another component of this journey into the text: with all the stress on "sorting" into one of four school Houses that defines one's personality (brave Gryffindor; smart Ravenclaw; virtuous Hufflepuff; ambitious Slytherin), the narrative virtually demands that the

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[8] See Laura Miller, *The Magician's Book: A Skeptic's Adventures in Narnia* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2008), 3. Miller begins her work of criticism with a personal recollection of unmitigated childhood desire to enter Narnia, remembering: "…I'm wishing, with every bit of my self, for two things. First I want a place I've read about in a book to really exist, and second, I want to be able to go there. I want this so much I'm pretty sure the misery of not getting it will kill me. For the rest of my life, I will never want anything quite so much again."

[9] "Did you ever feel so disappointed when / You closed the book and realized that the story had to end / But maybe you were wrong and you are chosen too / So come and ride the floo." BYU Divine Comedy, "Firebolt," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySN8Q4U6wys

reader attempt to place themselves into the fictional structure.[10] This works not just with House affiliation, but also with associated character type. The reader can be a Harry (the courageous boy), or Hermione (the bookworm girl), or Ron (the clownish best friend), or Snape (the bitter, sarcastic teacher), or Ginny (the athletic girlfriend), or Neville (bumbling, but brave), or Luna (the freakish girl), even Dumbledore (the wise mentor): though as characters, they're both specific and far from bland, somehow they're still *applicable*. They are non-repetitive types, so identification with them is easy and compelling. As Nicholas Tucker claims, Rowling's

> Characters are on the whole two-dimensional, picked out by particular physical features plus one overriding personality trait, such as adventurousness, scholarship, or general timidity. Gender roles are stereotyped, with boys out for action and the one salient girl character forever urging caution.[11]

If the reader can fit themselves into the world, perhaps they're more likely to find it sufficiently supported.

Perhaps the strangest quality of the Harry Potter books is how little actually happens in them. Although they are exciting adventures filled with giant spiders, dragons, and ghouls, because they are so cyclical, their plots are static: they have no true forward motion. Writing in 2003, Nancy Flanagan Knapp describes the then-incomplete series:

> Following this pattern, each book in the series tells the story of one of the years Harry spends at Hogwarts, and in some ways they are classic English school stories. Each year, Harry struggles with the difficulties of lessons and the vagaries of teachers such as Professor Binns, a ghost who teaches the boring History of

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[10] See Chantel Lavoie, "Safe as Houses: Sorting and School Houses at Hogwarts," in *Reading Harry Potter: Critical Essays*, ed. Giselle Liza Anatol (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2003), 35-50.
[11] Nicholas Tucker, "The Rise and Rise of Harry Potter," *Children's Literature in Education* 30.4 (1999): 228-9.

> Magic, and Madame Trelawney, the Divinations teacher, who revels in disastrous foretellings and premonitions of doom. Harry makes friends, including Hermione Granger, the class brain, and Ron Weasley, youngest boy in the red—haired, impecunious Weasley family; copes with bullies, most notably the smooth but detestable Draco Malfoy; and enjoys athletic triumphs as Seeker on the school Quidditch team. In other ways, Harry's story is anything but ordinary, for in each book he must face and overcome Voldemort, who is determined to return to full life and once again dominate and terrorize the wizardly world. Each time, Harry barely defeats him, not through any great brilliance or talent or even luck, but through a sort of dogged holding to what is right.[12]

The fact that "each year" and "each time" can be fairly described as following precisely the same pattern underscores my point. Instead of a narrative arc, we get a circle that turns over and over the same ground, repeating endlessly. Somehow, though, the repetition just makes the framework more solid, perhaps because it reaffirms the basic structures of the books so many times over.

Discontinuities, Errors, and Incompletions as Points of Fracture

Fractures in an otherwise solid text generate continuations. Successive authors need the errors and inconsistencies to invite them in, but also require a solid enough framework, such that the text isn't overwhelmed by these fractures enough to fall apart. The Potterverse offers a myriad of such fractures. One intriguing aspect of the Potterverse is that it attempts to mesh "once upon a time" —complete with castles, dragons, one-on-one duels—with the modern era. We are expected to believe, for instance, that World War II may have partially hinged on a wand fight between two lone wizards. Rowling apparently sees no difference between the medieval

[12] Nancy Flanagan Knapp, "In Defense of Harry Potter: An Apologia," *School Libraries Worldwide* 9.1 (2003): 81-2.

and the machine age; civilization for her has apparently stood still, except when some form of technology needs to be deployed for the sake of the narrative.[13] Similarly, the politics and fashion of the wizarding world are extremely regressive. The result of this yearning towards the past is to create an entryway into the text for subsequent authors, who can use a historical framework to expand upon the universe in their own fictions, lending their extensions authenticity. Another entry point is also time-related, but instead of relating to the universe's internal chronology, stems rather from the serialization of the story; the large gaps between installments give the audience time and opportunity to build their own narratives, and their own completions.

Another point of fracture and discontinuity can be found along Rowling's union of the fairy tale with the more realistic modern fantasy novel, where she doesn't quite address the question of psychological realism. We can believe that Cinderella spent a lifetime as an abused stepchild, and then went to the ball, and lived happily ever after because her psychology isn't important to the story. It seems a bit more strange for Harry to live in a cupboard for the first eleven years of his life, utterly maltreated, starved and abused by his contemptible aunt, uncle, and cousin, and then go on to be relatively well adjusted and embark on normal human relationships, seemingly without trouble. Author and editor Cathrynne Valente remarks on this problem in a blog-post saying,

> But it occurred to me, whilst listening to Harry's hilariously over the top horrible treatment by the Dursleys, that this whole plan of Dumbledore's really could have gone very wrong. Because while, yes, it is true that being raised by normal people […] instead of in a nonstop fame factory MIGHT create a gentle, humble, sweet-

[13] Tucker, "The Rise and Rise of Harry Potter," 221-2. Tucker describes the books with their absence of social realism and valorization of traditional British public school values as "distinctly backward-looking" and "determinedly old-fashioned."

> natured boy, it could also, quite easily, create a sociopath.[14]

Rowling has put a lot of darkness into her stories, but since the universe is ostensibly designed for children, she does not take this darkness to a psychologically realistic conclusion, making the narrative-universe feel somewhat inconsistent and illogical to more mature readers. Lacking her constraints, fan writers have the opportunity to create stories where the implications of Rowling's darkness can be pursued, allowing, for instance, Harry's past as a victim of abuse to affect him in a tangible way.

Narrative fractures such as the ones I've just described are clearly in the text by design, for aesthetic purposes, and only incidentally provide ingress into the text for fan continuers. Rowling, in several interviews, claims that she worked extremely hard to avoid other kinds of inconsistencies and logical flaws in structuring her universe, saying, for example, to the *Sydney Morning Herald*,

> I loathe books that have inconsistencies and leave questions unanswered. Loopholes bug the hell out of me ... so I try to be meticulous and make sure that everything operates according to laws, however odd, so that everyone understands exactly how and why (October 28, 2001).

Despite her efforts, and the compellingly detailed narrative framework, if examined closely, we discover that there are significant issues in on both a narrative and a logistical level in the text.

As portal fantasies, the novels are predicated upon the fact that the wizarding world exists alongside ours, unbeknownst to us. Rowling describes the demographics of this society in a few different ways: she tells us explicitly within the text that that there is only one "entirely non-

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[14] Cathrynne Valente, "Dumbledore's Theory of Early Childhood Education," *Rules for Anchorites*, http://catvalente.livejournal.com/649516.html

Muggle settlement in Britain,"[15] called Hogsmeade and found very close to Hogwarts. She also invents certain magical enclaves and neighborhoods within London itself: Diagon Alley, Knockturn Alley, and the like, where perhaps those who work there also live. In the seventh book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, she explains that some wizards live alongside Muggles in "communities within a community;" these "half magical" villages include "Godric's Hollow [in the West Country" as well as "Tinworth in Cornwall, Upper Flagley in Yorkshire, and Ottery St. Catchpole on the south coast of England."[16] In interviews, Rowling has further stated that there are approximately only 3,000 witches and wizards living in the British Isles;[17] Despite the fact that such a large proportion of wizards must live alongside and even next door to Muggles,[18] most of them—even someone who is obsessed with Muggles like Arthur Weasley—seem completely ignorant of Muggle customs, technology, dress, or affairs. We learn from the Quidditch World Cup in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* that though they must presumably walk past Muggles in the street on a regular basis, when trying to escape detection, generally speaking, wizards have no idea of how to behave or dress in order to pass among Muggle society.[19]

Other incoherences abound. Consider, for example, the basic economy of the wizarding world. We are told that there is a dedicated monetary system, with a precious metal standard, and that wizards, like Muggles, exist in an economic hierarchy: Harry, for instance, is rich, while his

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[15] J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 1999), 76. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *PoA*.

[16] J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007), 318-9. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *DH*.

[17] J.K. Rowling, "Interview," July 16, 2005, http://www.mugglenet.com/jkrinterview2.shtml

[18] J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (New York: Scholastic Press, 2003), 59. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *OotP*.

[19] J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2000), 77-85. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *GoF*.

friend, Ron Weasley, is poor.[20] (Where this wealth comes from is another important question and one that is never answered.) Such differentiations are not those of class and status alone, which would be understandable, but are literally to do with cash and buying power; towards the beginning of the series, the Weasleys cannot afford to purchase basic items for their children, including wands,[21] proper uniform, and so on (*GoF* 156-7). Although there is no credit in the wizarding world, somehow wizarding money can be exchanged for Muggle, which in and of itself does not make too much sense (*CoS* 57). In any case, in a world where transfiguration can alter one thing into another, when objects can be spelled to be bigger on the inside, when another spell can summon whatever one likes, when transportation is instantaneous for most adults, when wizards have a vast advantage over Muggles and presumably could take what they liked from them and then enchant them to forget about it afterward, it doesn't seem as if money ought to be terribly significant. Relatedly, magic itself seems to have no cost whatsoever, requiring no extraordinary expenditure of energy, which means that wizards pay no price for their power.

Another important world building question that Rowling never answers: where do resources like the foodstuffs for the fantastic feasts that line Hogwarts' tables come from?[22] This is usually the first question a creator of a secondary world must answer, because every new fictional universe is predicated on the question of how people sustain life. Food, we are told, can't be created out of nothing, so are there wizarding farmers? Or do wizards purchase or steal these items from Muggles? The latter seems unlikely since we are told that the wizarding world

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[20] See Elizabeth Teare, "Harry Potter and the Technology of Magic" in *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter*, ed. Lana A. Whithead (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 340. Teare explains how "money is always a concern and often a worry in Rowling's world" because although "wizardly technologies may not look like the commodities we are used to, they are nonetheless marketed and consumed as ours are."

[21] J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (New York: Scholastic, 1999), 95. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *CoS*.

[22] J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (New York: Scholastic, 1997), 123. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *SS*.

lives alongside the Muggle world, but mostly has no interaction with it.

Whether there are wizarding farmers or not, there are certainly wizarding shop assistants and waiters and bus conductors (all of whom we've met within the pages of the series) and one has to wonder why. Rowling has stated that there is only one wizarding school in all of Britain,[23] and as we've seen from the curriculum, all that they teach students in this school is how to do magic. Considering this fact, why would a) anyone choose to do menial labor that could be better accomplished with a flick of a wand, and b) if they did choose to so do, how on earth did they learn to do it? Further, since we are told that wizarding society is completely isolated from the Muggles, it seems wholly unpractical that their school system prepares them solely to do magic, and not to do anything else. Young people have no other choices, however, because apparently no magic can be performed by underage individuals outside of Hogwarts (*CoS* 21), so people who chose not to attend would not be able to learn any magic whatsoever. It just doesn't add up to a very functional society, or at least one that understands that some education is necessary to negotiate the quotidian demands of adult life.

In most cases, Rowling's failures of conceptualization are due to her wanting to make a joke or an allegorical point or some such narrative constraint. Unfortunately, this seriously disrupts her world building. Sometimes, of course, she simply makes genuine mistakes; *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince* opens in the summer of 1996, for instance, when John Major was still Prime Minister; when Cornelius Fudge contacts the Prime Minister, however, it appears he is actually speaking to Tony Blair, since he refers to a male "predecessor."[24] The ghost Nearly-Headless Nick, executed in 1492 (*CoS* 133) wears a ruff—a style which wouldn't come

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[23] See "Wizarding Schools," *The Harry Potter Lexicon*, http://www.hp-lexicon.org/wizworld/places/schools.html

[24] J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince* (New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2005), 6. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *HBP*.

into fashion until at least a century after his death. And so on.

Her fondness for wordplay and allegory also causes some problems for suspension of disbelief. Consider, for instance, the case of Remus Lupin, who was born with that name, and happened to be bitten by a werewolf at the age of five. How convenient, then, that he happened to be named after one of the twin wolf founders of Rome, and that his surname comes from the Latin for wolf. It's a staggering coincidence and similarly allegorical naming conventions are scattered all through the books. It should be evident, then, that the math, history, culture and sociology of the wizarding world make no sense if thought about in the context of reality; however, there are more troubling issues at stake however than those which disrupt the series' levels of signification and reference.

The books are also incredibly conservative and resistant to change,[25] so many "progressive" readers want to fix this as well. The ethical perspective presented in the Potterverse is often deeply disturbing. Morally speaking, Rowling draws a distinction between light magic and dark magic, but fails to adequately define what makes one spell to control others, "Unforgivable" (*GoF* 217) and another spell that wipes minds, ethically unproblematic and regularly employed by the heroes of the series (*DH* 97). Other problems include the low priority placed on intellectualism in the novels, which are after all set in a school, and one would think ought to appreciate "books and cleverness" (*SS* 287). The House at Hogwarts we know the least about is Ravenclaw, which is supposedly the house of book-learning. And since the series is credited with inspiring legions of reluctant readers with a love of books, it's odd to note that not only does the wizarding world seem to lack literature—reading for pleasure is not painted in an

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[25] See Andrew Blake, *The Irresistible Rise of Harry Potter* (London: Verso, 2002), 15-17. In a chapter entitled "Harry Potter and the Reinvention of the Past," Blake argues that Harry is a "deliberately retrolutionary creation," by which he means that he is a "symbolic figure of the past-in-future England" and its conservatism masked by a merely gestural faux-progressive ideology.

attractive light (as we can see from Hermione's humorous obsession with *Hogwarts: A History*)—but that books themselves are continually painted as dangerous forces. Tom Riddle's diary is seductive and corrosive (*CoS* 309-10), as is the Half Blood Prince's potion text (*HBP* 221, 240), while the text for Care of Magical Creatures used by Hagrid is literally liable to inflict injury (*PoA* 53).

The two most brilliant wizards we know are Severus Snape (a cruel teacher, loathed by Harry) and Hermione Granger (his book-obsessed female friend); these are the characters we see inventing spells and studying with great dedication. Our hero, Harry, who is good at sport and not particularly great at academics, cribs from both extensively throughout his academic career; this is never painted as particularly problematic. At no point do the books appreciate Snape's cleverness either, despite his quite extraordinary abilities; this is relatively unsurprising considering they are written from Harry's perspective (more on which later). However, Hermione—who is after all one of Harry's best friends—is equally quick to abnegate her own particular talents, even when Harry praises her. "No," she says, she isn't anything "great," just "books and cleverness"—nothing in comparison to Harry's talents of "friendship" and "bravery" (*SS* 287).

In fact, despite being written by a woman, the Potterverse is distinctly conservative when it comes to gender.[26] The wizarding world, though pretending to be gender blind, is actually nothing of the sort. There are far more important male characters than there are female, for one thing, and we know far less about the girls than we do the boys. Harry's orphanhood and longing for his dead parents inflects the whole series, and as a result, we hear all sorts of things about his father James's school life and personality. Although his mother, Lily, has given her life to save

[26] See Christine Schoefer, "Harry Potter's Girl Trouble," *Salon*, January 13, 2000, http://www.salon.com/2000/01/13/potter/

him—a sacrifice that is an enormously important plot point—we hear only one specific fact regarding her character (i.e. that she was exceptionally good at Charms) that is independent of her relationships with the people in her life, such as Severus Snape, Remus Lupin, James Potter, and of course, Harry himself. She is defined almost entirely in terms of these relationships with men, to whom she, like all the women in the novels, appears entirely adjunct.

As a result, there also seems to be a distinctly Victorian correlation between motherhood and moral alignment in the series.[27] Of the "good" significant female characters in the Potterverse, namely: Lily Potter, Hermione Granger, Molly Weasley, Minerva McGonagall, Ginny Weasley, Nymphadora Tonks and Luna Lovegood—all but one are or end up as mothers. Female characters who begin as antagonistic and are redeemed to some degree, however slight, (i.e. Narcissa Malfoy and Petunia Dursley)—are also mothers. Evil or primarily antagonistic women—Dolores Umbridge, Rita Skeeter, Bellatrix Lestrange, Alecto Carrow—are all barren. There seems to be a direct link between motherhood and one's ability to do the right thing; women on their own and childless are often evil. If they're not evil, they are impotent. Prof. McGonagall, for instance, is unable to protect the students at Hogwarts until relieved by some other force in *Deathly Hallows* and Madame Bones, the head of Magical Law Enforcement, is defeated and killed by Voldemort off camera. Consider alternatively the vast array of male characters that significantly outnumber the female characters and, as well, provide no such template for determining their moral alignment with respect to parenthood.

Aside from gender, there are other moral ambiguities in the novels. Rowling chooses to see her narrative as an allegorical rendering of Nazi Germany; the villains of the piece, the Death

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[27] Ruth Y. Jenkins, *Reclaiming Myths of Power: Women Writers and the Victorian Spiritual Crisis* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1995), 22. Jenkins explains how for the Victorians, "in the role of mothers, women became the cultural mediators for men's salvation. [… and] so, too, the patriarchally informed role of motherhood, with its appropriated, sacred association, invests women with a meaningless power."

Eaters, represent Nazis, led by a Hitler-analogue Voldemort, who like Hitler is a half-blood (with only one wizarding parent), and therefore not even a true member of the ethnically "pure" group he was attempting to brand the "master-race." Unfortunately, this analogy doesn't hold up very well. First of all, I'd argue that unlike the anti-Semitism displayed by the Nazis, there is an actual substantive difference between wizards and Muggles, with one "species" possessing the ability to do magic, and thus, intrinsically superior. Secondly, even if we don't agree on the previous point, it's easy to see that regardless of their conflict with the Death Eaters, the heroes of the series manifestly do not believe that wizards and Muggles are truly equal. If they did, then Arthur Weasley and Hermione Granger (heroes all!) could not mind-wipe Muggles with impunity, the Weasleys wouldn't be ashamed of their cousin, the Muggle accountant (*SS* 99), and so on.

The fact of the matter is that the world Rowling has created, if true, would be rather dystopic.[28] It's a society based on slave labor, where the work is done by House-Elves, who must physically self-injure to punish themselves if they disobey their wizarding masters' orders (*CS* 14); it touts segregation as an acceptable and viable form of government; it believes in its superiority and rule over the magical creatures (house-elves, goblins, centaurs, giants, and so on) who, like wizards, are also entirely sentient beings. Yet, somehow the novels still maintain an idyllic viewpoint, which seems to argue that the world is benignly fantastical, troubled only by a single evil that can be fought and overcome, after which it will return to a pre-lapsarian state. The novel fails to acknowledge that this magical Eden is quite simply fascist.

When Harry first arrives at Hogwarts, this nostalgic perspective makes a lot of sense; he's totally swept away by the wonder of magic and it would be inappropriate at that juncture to show

[28] Farah Mendlesohn, "Crowning the King: Harry Potter and the Construction of Authority," in *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter*, ed. Lana A. Whited (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 159-81. In this essay, Mendlesohn discusses how "Rowling's world of fantasy is one of hierarchy and prejudice" (177) and a "world of apartheid" (178).

the dark underbelly of the society. But as the series grows darker and darker in other ways, it still refuses to treat this matter with the nuance it deserves. Hermione's efforts on behalf of the enslaved House Elves are treated as a matter for humor and by the end of the series the issue has totally vanished as an ethical dilemma, presumably outgrown by our heroes. We're meant, the novels suggest, to accept House Elf slavery because they *like* being slaves. That seems like an extraordinarily cheap way out as well as a distressing message for young readers.[29]

There are other ways besides the political that these novels can seem horrific. Consider, as just one example, the question of wizarding portraits. Long after the portrait's subject is dead, the paintings continue on in an eternal sentience. As we progress through the series, we discover that these paintings can feel: when threatened by Sirius Black in *Prisoner of Azkaban,* the Fat Lady's portrait refuses to guard the door for fear of him; as well, we also learn that she can feel emotional pain, because when Dumbledore dies, she cries. However, although magical portraiture seems like a nice conceit, fitting in well with the video-like photographs that wizarding cameras take, the portrait-as-afterlife is the stuff of horror. Are those dead people never to rest? Are they doomed to a two dimensional existence for all eternity? As with many of the other problematic moments in her opus, Rowling chooses to address this matter epitextually. She suggests that the portrait is not actually the subject's soul, but more like a recorded message, a kind of programmed response or construct that responds to stimuli in a specified fashion.[30] There are two issues with this idea. The first is that, if one has successfully programmed a response to this degree of "feeling," isn't it by definition sentient? It would certainly have no trouble passing a Turing Test. So, her "answer" doesn't really seem to be all that satisfactory. Secondly, and more globally, how seriously are we to take her epitextual pronouncements? If it's

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[29] Mendlesohn, "Crowning the King," 179.
[30] J.K. Rowling, "At the Edinburgh Festival," August 15, 2004, http://harrypotter.bloomsbury.com/author/interviews/individual1.

not in the text itself, then are they really part of the narrative in the same way? How much can Rowling be trusted?

Because of the limited third person perspective of the novels, which are with a few brief exceptions told through Harry's eye view, there is a sense of partiality attached to the novels that acts against our trust in their author. Harry is such an "author's darling" that the world seems skewed oddly in his favor; he gets the benefit of the doubt when no one else does.[31] It's natural for Harry to think he's the center of the universe; everybody is the star of their own story in their own mind after all. The difference is that, in Rowling's text, Harry is *objectively right*. This perspective problem often makes people want to tell "the other side" of the story, because the narrative and Rowling seem unwilling to acknowledge that there *is* another side. One example is as follows: when Harry is not chosen as prefect in fifth year, he is a little shocked. It's not immediately apparent that a reader should be equally astonished though. Harry is not precisely "prefect" material: he breaks rules whenever it suits him; he is not academically extraordinary; and he has a serious problem with authority. None of these reasons, however, are behind Dumbledore's choice not to select him; instead, he chooses not to give Harry the responsibility because he is afraid Harry has more important burdens to carry (*OotP* 844). The school's concerns, then, are subordinate to a single pupil's interests and feelings, a state of affairs that appears wildly unfair to Harry's classmates.

Likewise, it becomes rapidly clear while reading that, like Dumbledore, Rowling favors

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[31] Mendlesohn, "Crowning the King," 163-4; 173-4. She writes that, "we know the punishment of [Harry's] enemies is appropriate because our protagonist is allowed to approve." Later, she remarks that "Throughout the novels, there is a tendency for Harry's friends to defer to him. Both Hermione, who is brighter, and Ron, who is better accultured, wait upon Harry's opinion to validate their actions. […] Note that [Harry's primary youthful antagonist] Malfoy's relationship with his friends mirrors that of Harry—we are allowed to see them as courtiers, but because Hermione and Ron are nicer, and Harry less inclined to bully, it is easy to ignore the fact that the relationships are essentially the same."

Harry over all the other characters in the novel. When Harry or people aligned with him do something, it's acceptable and they get the benefit of the doubt, but when someone opposed to them does something similar, it is frequently portrayed by the authorial voice as well as Harry's reflections as irredeemable. For instance, when Dumbledore shows Harry his first meeting with the young Tom Riddle, he suggests that Tom's strangling of Billy Stubbs' rabbit is "suggestive" of his dark potential for "cruelty, secrecy and domination" (*HBP* 276). Tom, at this point, is eleven; he's had what appears to be a lonely upbringing in an orphanage, bereft of any loving care. However, there is little understanding extended towards his situation by the narrator; we already know that he turns out to be evil, so everything he does is painted with that brush. Conversely, "the case of Fred and George Weasley," is merely amusing, although in *Chamber of Secrets* they are shown

> trying to find out what would happen if you fed a Filibuster firework to a salamander. Fred had "rescued" the brilliant orange, fire-dwelling lizard from a Care of Magical Creatures class and it was now smouldering gently on a table surrounded by a knot of curious people. Harry was at the point of telling Ron and Hermione about Filch and the Kwikspell course when the salamander suddenly whizzed into the air, emitting loud sparks and bangs as it whirled wildly round the room. The sight of Percy bellowing himself hoarse at Fred and George, the spectacular display of tangerine stars showering from the salamander's mouth, and its escape into the fire, with accompanying explosions (*CS* 130-1).

It's a well-known fact that many young boys torture animals in various ways (although one would think that at fourteen, Fred and George might have outgrown this) but it's interesting that whenever Gryffindors do something, it's acceptable, but when "evil" characters do it, somehow

it isn't. Fred and George are repeat offenders on this front, as a matter of fact. Consider that in *Goblet of Fire*, when the twins are in their sixth year, and Malcolm Baddock, at that point a child of eleven, is sorted into Slytherin, they actually hiss (*GoF* 178). These are sixteen-year-olds hissing at an eleven-year-old on his first day of school before they know one single thing about him aside from his House affiliation. More seriously, in *Order of the Phoenix*, the twins shove a Slytherin student who tries to take points from them, Graham Montague, into a Vanishing Cabinet (*OotP* 627), and nearly kill him; he barely recovers and is in the Infirmary for weeks, clearly traumatized (*HBP* 587). What possible excuse can "good" people have for such behavior? It's not that the Slytherins aren't bullies; it's that by any rational standard, so are the Gryffindors, but the narrative never points this out, making Rowling appear somewhat disingenuous.

Every school year at Hogwarts begins with the division of the incoming class into Houses by the Sorting Hat, who examines the student's personality, and determines which House would best suit them. In *Order of the Phoenix*, the Sorting Hat concludes its opening song with the following lines:

And now the Sorting Hat is here
and you all know the score:
I sort you into Houses
because that is what I'm for.
But this year I'll go further,
listen closely to my song:
though condemned I am to split you
still I worry that it's wrong,
though I must fulfill my duty

and must quarter every year

still I wonder whether sorting

may not bring the end I fear.

Oh, know the perils, read the signs,

the warning history shows,

for our Hogwarts is in danger

from external, deadly foes

and we must unite inside her

or we'll crumble from within (*OotP* 206-7)

The expectation from the seven book series was that the Houses would unite, as per the Sorting Hat's instruction, and presumably readers would see that a) who one is at eleven doesn't necessarily determine the rest of one's life, and b) there are good things to be said about ambition. Instead, at the climactic Battle of Hogwarts which closes the series, not one single Slytherin student stays to defend the school against the oncoming villains, although members of all the other Houses do so (*DH* 610).[32] Thus, Rowling plays against the very tropes that she uses to bolster the credibility of her narrative, creating an incoherence between the reader's expectation of the text and her own textual desires.[33]

Another example of this incoherence occurs in the reception of Draco Malfoy. Introduced in the first novels, Draco is a pivotal character, on whom the resolution of the plot eventually hinges, and yet despite his narrative significance, his characterization remains a cipher; we know

[32] Incidentally, students from Ravenclaw provide the fewest defenders of Hogwarts as well, further underscoring the disdain with which the novels regard book-learning and intelligence.
[33] Cf. Enid Blyton, *The Naughtiest Girl in the School* (London: George Newnes, 1940). A famous exemplar of the school story, Blyton's text shows how in the school story, youthful antagonists such as cheaters and bullies often redeem themselves, coming together with the protagonist in order to form bonds of friendship and do the school proud.

what actions he performs at important junctures, actions that if *not* performed would shift the entire course of the plot, but we know very little about his motivations or thoughts outside these critical moments. As a result, his reception as a character has been intensely controversial, with some supporting the Harry's eye view of him presented in the books, but with perhaps a greater number finding him attractive and/or sympathetic. Rowling herself claims not to understand this phenomenon, which seems to me to display a basic disconnect with the way readers react to stories and narrative cues.

When Rowling first invented the character, she called him Draco Spinks or Draco Spungen. Onomatopoeically speaking, these two names are not impressive; they are Dickensian sounding names for people who are evil in an unpleasant and unglamourous way. When I read them, I'm inescapably reminded of James's horrible aunts in Roald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), who were named respectively Aunt Spiker and Aunt Sponge. Much like "Longbottom," these names are not impressive straight off. "Malfoy" on the other hand is French for "bad faith" and sounds like the Spenserian surname of a gothic, dark prince. His first name means "dragon." Additionally, the words Rowling uses to describe him most often are "pale," "blond," and "pointed." The angular features, cold grey eyes, and his "fine bones" suggest a rather delicate appearance, often likely to be found attractive. Straight away, the romantic overtones in this description are apparent, perhaps especially to female readers.[34] Why, I wonder, was Rowling surprised that readers of fantasy found him appealing? He is clearly coded to be so. When Rowling informs such readers that they are misreading her text, she is failing to acknowledge the relevance and the power of the tropes that she is explicitly using, tropes that justify and lend validity to authorially unsanctioned readings of the text.

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[34] See Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 130.

Authorial Control, Queer Desire, and Illicit Romance

Fan epics typically have different romantic pairings than the canonical ones from Rowling's texts; popular pairings include, among others, Harry/Hermione, Draco/Hermione, Draco/Ginny, Harry/Draco, Remus/Sirius, Draco/Neville, Snape/Hermione, Harry/Snape, Harry/Ron, Harry/Luna, Ron/Pansy, to name but a few. This focus on romance has historically been a way to devalue fan fictional writing; romantic writing is often dismissed as a particularly female preoccupation,[35] and when it becomes overtly sexual, it's simply pornography which almost everyone feels comfortable despising. Because the novels were written for young audiences and feature children as main characters, sexual situations involving them are seen by many as contemptibly perverse. However, the net effect is to judge and restrict female reading practices as inherently less valuable and respectable.

Indeed, much of Rowling's concern regarding continuers seems situated in the sexual and romantic quadrant. Although she repeatedly claimed that she could understand the continuing impulse, she still seemed to resist alternative readings of her text. She was annoyed, for instance, when girls expressed romantic interest in characters she felt were bad for them, like Snape and Draco. At the Edinburgh Book Festival, she actually rebuked girls who felt that way, saying that they were victims of an unhealthy bad boy complex, that they should know better, and asking why they didn't they fancy the hero she had provided for them—presumably Harry, who she

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[35] *Ibid*, 130.

apparently believed to be the "nice guy" or words to that effect.[36] It's hard not to read this interaction as policing of young female sexuality, whether justified or not.

As well, after the publication of *Prisoner of Azkaban*, many assumed the then newly introduced character of Remus Lupin to be gay. His position as a werewolf was read by many to allegorically present the issue of queerness, as when he says, "I have been shunned all my adult life, unable to find paid work because of what I am" (*PoA* 356). Alfonso Cuaron, the director of the film, was one such reader, apparently directing David Thewlis to play the character as gay.[37] Furthermore, Lupin's close friendship with Sirius Black led many such readers to assume that they might be a canonically gay couple. In fact, Dumbledore's instructions to Sirius to "lie low at Lupin's" at the end of the book were frequently read as a tacit acknowledgment of this issue. When *Order of the Phoenix* was published, some fans believed that there were subtextual mentions of Sirius and Remus's status as a couple within the novel, as for example their joint Christmas present to Harry. In *Half Blood Prince*, however, we discover that Lupin is carrying on a relationship with Sirius's cousin, Nymphadora Tonks, a relationship which was unheralded previously, and seemed to come out of nowhere for many readers; as well, it seemed to have very little narrative purpose aside from perhaps signaling to readers that the character of Lupin was not actually gay as so many of them had believed or desired. While Remus Lupin and Sirius Black seemed the most likely possibility for canonical queerness, Rowling denied this textually;

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[36] See "Interview at the Edinburgh Book Festival", http://www.mugglenet.com/jkrebf.shtml**.** Rowling's reply: "You always see a lot of Snape, because he is a gift of a character. I hesitate to say that I love him. [Audience member: I do]. You do? This is a very worrying thing. Are you thinking about Alan Rickman or about Snape? [Laughter]. Isn't this life, though? I make this hero Harry, obviously and there he is on the screen, the perfect Harry, because Dan is very much as I imagine Harry, but who does every girl under the age of 15 fall in love with? Tom Felton as Draco Malfoy. Girls, stop going for the bad guy. Go for a nice man in the first place. It took me 35 years to learn that, but I am giving you that nugget free, right now, at the beginning of your love lives."

[37] "Every So Often Remus Lupin is Gay," *Tor.com*, http://www.tor.com/blogs/2011/04/every-so-often-remus-lupin-is-gay

at the same time, epitextually, she controversially claimed that Dumbledore was gay and had been in love with the Dark Wizard Grindelwald.[38] To many, it felt as if Rowling was unnecessarily adding information to the narrative in order to inorganically have the last word with fans who disagreed with her choices. Instead, they felt she could have simply never referred to the matter, and left the question of Lupin's sexual orientation up to the reader. Likewise, if a character was queer, why not explicitly say so within the text, unless the author wished to keep the narrative proper, rigidly heteronormative.

Rowling has persistently displayed uneasiness with her inability to control her fan's experience of the narrative. The epilogue to the series, "Nineteen Years After" was another sign to many of her distaste for the open text. Her tightly clenched grasp on her story meant that there was not one single non-mechanical surprise at the end of *Deathly Hallows*, the series' final installment. More than that, nothing happened. In the epilogue, which, let us remember, was conceived long before the massive series was ever completed,[39] we are told that, nineteen years after the main events of the novel, we are exactly in the same place we were in at the beginning of the series: at Platform 9 and 3/4, with a second generation of children, who are the same, even to their names (which are either repetitions of previously used names or at least repetitions of previously used naming patterns). The sense of inertia is staggering. It tells us that this is a story which has happened before, and will happen again, exactly in the same way, down to the environment, which remains idyllic, nostalgic and ultimately frozen in time in a bizarre 1950s setup characterized by ordinary, suburban life. The epilogue almost aggressively refuses to imagine the future as anything other than a recreation of the novels' present; there is no

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[38] See Catherine Tosenberger, ""Oh my God, the Fanfiction!" Dumbledore's Outing and the Online Harry Potter Fandom," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 33.2 (Summer 2008): 200-206.

[39] See "Interview," July 16, 2005, http://www.mugglenet.com/jkrinterview2.shtml. Years before the series was completed, Rowling discusses already knowing its final words.

evocation of alterity whatsoever. Technology levels appear to be precisely the same, the various magical species still seem unintegrated, and everyone is paired off in heteronormative bliss.

In 2011, four years after the end of the series, Rowling launched the website "Pottermore" which apparently was designed to fill holes in the narrative, and after *Deathly Hallows* was completed, she continued to tell fans in epitextual material "what happened after," refusing to cede control of the narrative to the reader's imagination. It seems evident that Rowling opens the door to the continuation impulse, only to slam it in readers' faces. Possibly because she sees continuation as critique, she has a very uneasy relationship with the people who want to continue her work. She went further than mere unease, however, in her interaction with the fan site and encyclopedia created by Steve Vander Ark called the Harry Potter Lexicon.

The Ethics and Legality of Multiple Ownership

The Lexicon was an exhaustive, searchable site that compiled all the statistics, demographics, rules, and information disseminated by Rowling over the years about the Potterverse; during the course of writing, Rowling actually claimed that she had made use of the site herself rather than searching through the text of her books herself, saying

> This is such a great site that I have been known to sneak into an internet café while out writing and check a fact rather than go into a bookshop and buy a copy of Harry Potter (which is embarrassing). A website for the dangerously obsessive; my natural home."[40]

This endorsement greatly increased the traffic to the already popular site. In August of 2007, Steve Vander Ark was approached by the publisher of RDR Books, who suggested the publication of the Lexicon in print form, for profit. Vander Ark agreed. In October of 2007, Rowling sued to prevent this book's publication, claiming that she herself had plans to publish a

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[40] See "The Harry Potter Lexicon," *Fanlore*, http://fanlore.org/wiki/Harry_Potter_Lexicon.

Harry Potter Encyclopedia, (whose proceeds would go to charity), and that this projected Lexicon book would injure sales of her official text. The question of whether she intended to use the web published Lexicon in order to complete this *Encyclopedia* remained unanswered. The case came to trial in January 2008, where Rowling claimed that the Lexicon

> compiles and repackages Ms. Rowling's fictional facts derived wholesale from the Harry Potter works without adding any new creativity, commentary, insight, or criticism. Defendant's attempt to cloak the Infringing Book in the mantle of scholarship is merely a ruse designed to circumvent Plaintiffs' rights in order to make a quick buck.[41]

Rowling later personally responded by saying

> I am very frustrated that a former fan has tried to co-opt my work for financial gain. The Harry Potter books are full of moral choices and ethical dilemmas, and, ironically, Mr. Vander Ark's actions tend to demonstrate that he is woefully unfit to represent himself as either a "fan of" or "expert on" books whose spirit he seems entirely to have missed.[42]

The case was eventually decided in favor of Rowling, though the judge awarded the minimum cash settlement possible ($750 for each of the nine books).

The case, unfortunately, left an unsavory taste in the mouths of many readers and fans. In response to the lawsuit, Orson Scott Card points out that

> Rowling's chief complaint seems to be that she would do a better job of

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[41] See the Plaintiff's motion in the U.S. District Court: "Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. et al. v. RDR Books et al," *Justia* 2008, http://docs.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/new-york/nysdce/1:2007cv09667/315790/46/.

[42] "Declaration of JK Rowling in Support of Plaintiff's Motion for Preliminary Injunction,"*United States District Court*, 27 February 2008, http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.org/docs/rowlingfeb27.pdf.

> annotating and encyclopedizing her own series. So what? Nothing prevents her from doing exactly that —annotating and explaining her own novels. Do you think that if there were a Harry Potter Annotated by the Author, Vander Ark's book would interfere with her sales in any way? This frivolous lawsuit puts at serious risk the entire tradition of commentary on fiction. Any student writing a paper about the Harry Potter books, any scholarly treatise about it, will certainly do everything she's complaining about. Once you publish fiction, Ms. Rowling, anybody is free to write about it, to comment on it, and to quote liberally from it, as long as the source is cited. […] She let herself be talked into being outraged over a perfectly normal publishing activity, one that she had actually made use of herself during its web incarnation. Now she is suing somebody who has devoted years to promoting her work and making no money from his efforts – which actually helped her make some of her bazillions of dollars. Talent does not excuse Rowling's ingratitude, her vanity, her greed, her bullying of the little guy, and her pathetic claims of emotional distress.[43]

The problem, as many fans saw it, was that Rowling simply could not conceive of a world where she did not have complete control over her characters, and the way they were perceived and represented. To many, this seemed part and parcel of her rebukes to readers who were not reading the text the way they were "supposed" to do so.

Fan Fiction as Corrective Text

Readers nevertheless persist in their efforts to more fully realize Rowling's world. Her less-than-satisfactory elements actually turn out to offer exciting opportunities for continuation

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[43] Orson Scott Card, "Rowling, Lexicon, and Oz," *Uncle Orson Reviews Everything*, April 20, 2008, http://www.hatrack.com/osc/reviews/everything/2008-04-20.shtml.

authors, who can interject their own perspectives to reform the narrative into a more pleasing shape. One story, for instance, entitled "Still Life" by Amalin[44] explores what it might be like to be a portrait for Harry after death. She writes

> Being is a portrait is a strange thing. For instance, everything—upon close inspection, since the magic blends it well—is painted. It is not wet or textured like paint, but it is nevertheless exactly the way it sounds; it is like living in a painting. Harry wonders if he is real, if his thoughts are his thoughts or some flawed interpretation of magic, if perhaps he has the wrong memories, if his mind is truly his mind or a magical invention. He is, after all, dead. However, usually he doesn't think those thoughts, because if he thinks too hard about it he is afraid that his brain—if one exists—will explode. The portraits at Hogwarts always seemed happy. Harry wonders if he is the only one with such an annoyance at being half there after his body has gone. He doesn't want to still be thinking. He doesn't want to be sitting in his chair, chin in hand, staring out at the crying visitors to the memorial, wishing he were dead. Except he is already dead.
>
> The other strange thing is the way the paintings end. If Harry looks to his left, he sees white. If he looks to his right, or above, or below, he sees white. When he sits in his chair and his feet go over the edge, they simply disappear, though when he pulls them back up, they're there. Harry often sits cross-legged just so he can

[44] Many fans and fan authors choose to participate in fandom and fanwriting under a pseudonym, keeping their fannish identities distinct from their legal identities. Reasons range from the legal questions regarding fan work to the desire to keep their offline identities and lives distinct from their online ones, especially since fan work is often not well respected especially if sexual in nature. Certain academics and authors are open about the fact of their online lives, while still trying to keep the two identities distinct. In this dissertation, fan writers will be cited by pseudonym.

> reassure himself that his entire body is present.[45]

Here, then, is a writer who sees the existential horror implicit in living in a painting, long after death. Harry is not sure whether or not he is real, or if he is, as Rowling would have it, simply a programmed response, and as well explores the physical constraint in being flat and two dimensional. This story is a brief exploration of a single idea, but many are novel length, and have a far greater scope.

One such text is *Snakes and Lions* by GatewayGirl. Written after *Order of the Phoenix*, but before *Half Blood Prince*, this fan-novel posits an alternate sixth year for Harry, one in which he makes friends with Draco Malfoy when Ron and Hermione are too taken up with their own relationship to have much time for him. GatewayGirl takes the incident recounted by Neville in *Sorcerer's Stone*, when his Uncle Algie "accidentally" dropped him out a window to see if he was magical, and discovered he was only when he bounced. No one seems disturbed by this story in Rowling's text, or wonders too much what would have happened to Neville if he *hadn't* bounced. In *Snakes and Lions*, however, GatewayGirl enlarges upon the episode to create a pureblood wizard custom called the Decernenti or the sifting:

> "It is the formerly common Wizarding practice of dropping babies off towers to confirm that they are magical," Hermione said succinctly.
>
> "Dropping ...?"
>
> "Like this," Harry said. "You drop the baby. If it levitates or apparates, or somehow saves itself, it's magical and you raise it. If it splats, maybe it wasn't, and you haven't wasted any time on it."
>
> "The majority of magical babies don't survive it," Hermione added.
>
> Ron goggled at them. "Draco's father did this to three of his kids?"

[45] Amalin, "Still Life," (2003), http://amalin.livejournal.com/33527.html.

"Draco's father did this to *all* of his kids," Harry corrected.[46]

In another epic, *Blood Magic*, which was written as an answer to a fandom wide challenge to write stories in an alternate universe where Snape is actually Harry's father, GatewayGirl not only manages to predict a Snape/Lily relationship years before it was confirmed in the series proper, but also manages to come up with a distinction between Dark and Light magic, a distinction never adequately explained in the novels. She is far from the only writer to explore this question however, as this is a common avenue for fan authors to pursue. What all such stories have in common is the desire to establish the ethical rules of the universe in some more equitable fashion rather than equivalent acts rendered acceptable if performed by a "good" person, and unacceptable if done by an "evil" one.

Despite the theoretically diverse student body, Rowling's novels are so steeped in Anglocentrism that they appear culturally homogenous and monolithic. Fan fiction takes Rowling's promise of multiculturalism and is able to make it into a reality. *Left My Heart* by Emma Grant and *Transfigurations* by Resonant are two examples which explore the global wizarding community, particularly the one in America. *Left My Heart* locates the United States' "Diagon Alley" equivalent in the Haight Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco, while *Transfigurations* places the U.S.'s wizarding school in Disney World's Magic Kingdom, where it easily escapes notice.[47] As well, Resonant creates a wizarding culture that is far more clearly laid out than Rowling's; she wonders how exactly does mail travel across the Atlantic, since owls would clearly not be able to make the trip, eventually positing the trans-Atlantic goose as the vehicle. She also explores the way charms, spells, and magical devices might actually work, rather than simply telling us that they do so as Rowling does. Resonant's universe is far less

[46] GatewayGirl, "Chapter 46: Defining Parameters," *Snakes and Lions* (2003-2008), http://www.the-archive.net/viewstory.php?sid=6191
[47] Emma Grant, *Left My Heart,* (2004-2007), http://archive.skyehawke.com/story.php?no=4093

stagnant than Rowling's, including as it does, Bill's daughter with a goblin woman, who has the distinction of being the first Weasley in Slytherin since the sixteenth century. Resonant's story deftly addresses the problem of "the Goblin Rebellions" we keep hearing about in History of Magic lectures, asking who these Goblins are rebelling against—human wizards? —and how problematic such a depiction might be, where other species are consistently devalued next to the wizarding "master race."[48]

Stories which feature Parvati and Padma Patil often explore the Indian wizarding world, as in "Dissipate" by Pogrebin. Visiting their aunt in India over their summer holidays, Parvati and Padma come to realize that the English magic they've been taught is only one form, and that there are other ways to think of their powers. In India, wizarding pictures move only a little, because as their aunt tells them,

> "Magic is not for such trifles," she says, bending down and continuing to sweep the floor. "Who wants to attract *rakshasein*[49] for a few photographs?"
> […] Aunty fixes her with cold black eyes, the red swipe of kum-kum at her forehead giving her the look, Padma thinks, of an ancient warrior. "Magic is not a plaything, like they teach you at that school. It is life." She drops her broom and places her right hand on Padma's chest and Padma feels it flowing between them, magic, magic, no far too weak a word for it. *Jadu*? No. *Jeevan*, slashes of Hindi burn themselves onto her eyes, *jeevan*, life, a thrumming from the depths of the jungle, deeper still until the trees are so dense that the leaves themselves become part of the darkness, rustling and palpable and reaching out with aching limbs. Hunger, India is filled with hunger which spills from these secret places into the

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[48] Resonant, *Transfigurations*, (2003), http://trickster.org/res/transfig.html
[49] Translated as "demons."

> streets of Bombay, sliding down the blue-grey slats of high-rise buildings and oozing through the bazaars, waiting, waiting, always waiting to be called.[50]

Pogrebin makes magic in this universe culturally contingent, thus rejecting the cultural absolutism of Rowling's Anglocentric universe, while simultaneously illuminating and enlivening minor characters of color, who are not major players in the text.

The gender question is also frequently addressed in many of the stories where Hermione has a starring role; these fictions generally portray her intellectualism as an entirely positive quality. Instead of pairing her with Ron, who is often read as anti-intellectual, a popular romantic pairing is between her and Snape, in a true meeting of the minds. Riley's *Pawn to Queen*[51] (as well as other fictions posted on the listserv *When I Kissed the Teacher,* a locus for Hermione/Snape fandom) made this privileging of intellectual elitism a priority. Many fan fictions disrupt the heteronormative families depicted by Rowling by creating character arcs that value women beyond their maternal qualities, showing Hermione's future as a childless Minister of Magic or Luna as a childless newspaper editor. Fan writers, themselves generally obsessive readers, also tend to make books and learning into more benign forces than Rowling generally does. Maya's *If You've A Ready Mind*[52] explores what would have happened if Draco had been sorted into Ravenclaw House, privileging intellectual life over the sport and adventure focused on in Rowling's narrative.

Fans also resist the epilogue, and its inertia, often choosing to either ignore it altogether, as in Maya's *Drop Dead Gorgeous*,[53] which features a Harry who discovers that he is a veela,

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[50] Pogrebin, "Dissipate," (2004), http://pogrebin.livejournal.com/26088.html.
[51] Riley, *Pawn to Queen* (2002-2003), http://www.witchfics.org/riley/ptq/
[52] Maya, *If You've a Ready Mind*, (2005-2006), no longer online, http://fanlore.org/wiki/If_You've_A_Ready_Mind
[53] Maya, *Drop Dead Gorgeous* (2006-2008), no longer online, http://fanlore.org/wiki/Drop_Dead_Gorgeous

while working as an auror, and also involves the rights of magical creatures to attend Hogwarts. Other methods include choosing to write Next Generation stories, often starring young Albus Severus Potter and Scorpius Malfoy as either friends or romantic partners; their relationship is generally seen to make up for the lack of change accomplished by the previous generation.[54] Sometimes, fan fiction also functions as an exploration of a universe in a different style or form; A.J. Hall's *Lust Over Pendle*[55] and sequels for instance takes characters from Harry Potter and places them into a golden age detective novel, that takes its form from Dorothy Sayers and her contemporaries, rather than Thomas Hughes and Enid Blyton. Similarly, FayJay's *Invisible to See*[56] retells *Pride and Prejudice* through a Potter lens (with Justin Fitch-Fetchley playing Wickham to Harry's Darcy and Draco's Elizabeth) and Amanuensis retells *Henry V* with Harry Potter characters in *A Little Touch of Harry in the Night*.[57]

When Textual Offspring Grow Up

Popular fan fictions often create fandoms of their own, and many fan writers have used this playground and fan base to go on to publish their own original work, among them young adult authors Cassandra Clare, Sarah Rees Brennan, Karen Healey, Alaya Dawn Johnson, and fantasy authors such as Jaida Jones and Danielle Bennett. Perhaps the best examples are Clare's wildly beloved Draco trilogy[58] (published over six years and approximately a million words, this series features a friendship between Draco and Harry and romantic relationships between Harry

[54] See Scoradh, *The Road Less Traveled* (2007), http://scoradh.livejournal.com/tag/the%20road%20less%20travelled, and Gyzym, *A Small Spark Neglected* (2011), http://archiveofourown.org/works/154063 for some examples.
[55] A.J. Hall, *Lust Over Pendle* (2002), http://lop.shoesforindustry.net/ See also Wemyss, The Evelake series (2011-2012), http://archiveofourown.org/series/6223 for stories in a similar vein.
[56] FayJay, *Invisible to See* (2002-2003), http://archiveofourown.org/works/4724/chapters/5948?view_adult=true
[57] Amanuensis, *A Little Touch of Harry in the Night*, (2003), http://www.amanuensis1.com/alittletouchofharry.html
[58] Cassandra Claire, The Draco Trilogy: *Draco Dormiens*, *Draco Sinister*, and *Draco Veritas* (2000-2006), no longer online, http://fanlore.org/wiki/The_Draco_Trilogy

and Hermione as well as Draco and Ginny) and Jones' epic *The Shoebox Project*[59] (a Marauders Era Sirius/Remus story taking place in the 1970s, which, though permanently unfinished, still has almost 10,000 fans at its home on LiveJournal.com.) Intriguingly, one can see traces of their fanfictional roots in their professionally published work.

The characters in Clare's best-selling Mortal Instruments series (2007-2014), for instance, bear more than a passing resemblance to her versions of Rowling's characters, which for many fans began to supersede Rowling's own characterizations. Clare's Jace Wayland is described almost identically to her Draco Malfoy, both in personality and in looks. As well, she reuses whole passages from her fan fiction in her professional work, for which one example will suffice. In *Draco Veritas*, the third installment of Clare's fan fiction trilogy, Clare tells a story of his youth, where his father, Lucius, gives him a wild falcon to tame, which Draco does tirelessly, even though the "falcon did not like Draco, and Draco didn't like it either." Eventually, after a good deal of bloodshed and pain dealt by its claws and beak, he succeeds, realizing that

> the falcon was beautiful, that its slim wings were built for speed of flight, that it was strong and swift, fierce and gentle. When it dived to the ground, it moved like forked lightning. When it learned to circle and come to his wrist, he nearly cried with delight. Sometimes the bird would hop to his shoulder and put its beak in his hair. He knew his falcon loved him, and when he was certain it was not just tamed but perfectly tamed, he went to his father, and showed him what he had done, expecting him to be proud. Instead, his father took the bird, now tame and trusting, in his hands, and broke its neck. "I told you to make it obedient," his father said, and dropped the falcon's lifeless body to the ground. "Instead, you

[59] Ladyjaida and Dorkorific, *The Shoebox Project* (2004-2008), http://shoebox.lomara.org/about/.

> taught it to love you. Falcons are not meant to be loving pets: they are fierce and wild, savage and cruel. This bird was not tamed; it was broken." Later, when his father left him, Draco cried over his pet, until eventually his father sent a house-elf to take the body of the bird away and bury it. Draco never cried again, and he never forgot what he learned: that to be loved was to destroy, and that to love was to be the one destroyed.[60]

Clare utilizes this exact story in the first installment of her professional trilogy. In *Draco Veritas*, she begins the story with the following lines:

> When Draco was six years old, his father had given him a bird to carry his mail. The other children Draco knew had friendly owls, or the occasional bluebird, but Draco's father gave him a falcon, with bright black eyes and a beak that curved like the mark on a Sickle.[61]

For the professionally published text, *City of Bones* (2007), however, she edits out the explicit references to Rowling's world—the owls, the Sickle (a wizarding coin)—in order to produce the following:

> "When the boy was 6 years old, his father gave him a falcon to train. Falcons are raptors—killing birds, his father told him, the Shadowhunters of the sky.
>
> "The falcon didn't like the boy, and he didn't like it, either.[62]

Other than these slight changes, the stories in the two texts are virtually identical.

While Jones and Bennett's *Havemercy* (2008) does not reuse Jones' co-authored *Shoebox Project* as explicitly as Clare's two pieces do, the text that Jones and Bennet have produced is

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[60] Clare, *Draco Veritas*, Chapter 8, personal archive.
[61] *Ibid*
[62] Cassandra Clare, *City of Bones* (New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2007), 204.

still reminiscent of fan fiction tropes, featuring queer relationships between its four male protagonists (like those between the four Marauders: Remus, Sirius, James, and Peter in the Shoebox Project.) Similarly Alaya Dawn Johnson's *Moonshine* (2010) stars a young social-worker in the twenties, working for the acceptance of magical creatures in an alternate universe, recalling Hermione Granger's less successful quest in the Harry Potter series.

The implications of this kind of crossover between fan fiction and professional fiction, where *selvage* creates more *selvage*, are wide-ranging. Most politically significant, perhaps, is the manner in which these new texts can reflect more progressive ideals than the conservative texts which spawned them, depicting a forward motion that is appealing. Some of these ideologies include queer representation, an interest in activism, and a pleasurably self-aware engagement with both reading and popular culture: all values that cross-pollinate between the fictional world and the real one in excitingly far-reaching ways.

Chapter V: The Magic Box
fantasies of dialogue

"When you wake up, you'll have a mum and dad, and you won't even remember me. Well, you'll remember me a little. I'll be a story in your head. But that's OK: we're all stories, in the end. Just make it a good one, eh? Because it was, you know, it was the best: a daft old man, who stole a magic box and ran away. Did I ever tell you I stole it? Well, I borrowed it; I was always going to take it back. Oh, that box, Amy, you'll dream about that box. It'll never leave you. Big and little at the same time, brand-new and ancient, and the bluest blue, ever. And the times we had, eh? Would've had. Never had. In your dreams, they'll still be there."

-Steven Moffat, *Doctor Who*

If we trace the arc of the previous chapters, we can see that the reader has been steadily gaining ground, almost achieving parity with the writer. But static, singular texts which are complete, finished entities—as, for example books whose authors are long buried—can only do so much to acknowledge their audience. Ongoing television series, on the other hand, are dynamic, constantly evolving narrative texts that are literally influenced by their fans, as they happen. In any long-running series, new installments are created subsequent to the completion and public dissemination of previous ones, with sufficient time for audience reception to travel backwards to the writers as well as percolate among the community of readers. Serial narratives therefore allow their audiences to enter and influence the story while they are still being built. This recursive world-building is especially marked in the era of instant mass communication and new media technology, and is especially evident in the television programs that I will focus on here, all of which demonstrate tangled, complex, boundary-crossing relationships with their fandoms.

In this final chapter, I want to suggest that television functions as the apotheosis of this process, where the boundary between reader and writer—represented in televisual narratives by the screen itself—is at its most permeable, allowing the text to exist as a conversation between multiple collaborators who are both producers and consumers. The content of such programs

often metatextually reflects the progression of the consumer into producer into an ascension narrative with religious overtones, endlessly preoccupied with the process of creation.

Repetition, Familiarity, and Myth-Making

Throughout this project, we've returned over and over again to a single question: what makes a narrative incite continuation? Three basic elements emerge: a narrative that has paratextual resources of cachet that may be mined and exploited for profit and status; a fictional universe that is realized, stable, and consistent enough to offer continuers a solid footing upon which to stand; and sufficient gaps and imperfections within this solidity that permit entry, creation, and variation on the part of subsequent authors. Alongside these elements, however, there has also been another: the element of credibility; on some level, no one wants to continue stories in which they do not believe. What makes a story believable is, of course, entirely subjective. However, more interesting is the process by which narratives *become* believable. Here, repetition is key. The second time a narrative is experienced, it becomes a known quantity; we understand what is going to happen, how it should end. When the narrative satisfies and adheres to this expectation, its correctness and iterative familiarity become equivalent to "truth." Rereading offers this reinforcement, as do adaptation and allusion, which also retread over already traversed ground, lending it greater solidity and perpetuating its authenticity. The small screen and its previously unprecedented access to repeated consumption[1] further endorse the cinematic verisimilitude (and suspension of disbelief) of film and dramatic performance, making them increasingly less ephemeral. Theorists of cult television like Sara Gwenllian-Jones and Roberta Pearson discuss how the television's positioning within the home creates the illusion of

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[1] Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 155.

proximity to and personal association with media producers and actors,[2] another example of the relationship between familiarity, trust, and truth.

The age at which exposure to fiction occurs can also be a factor: the media that children engage with generally appear to have a higher truth-value than the narratives encountered in later years, simply because in childhood, the boundary between fiction and reality is a blurred and permeable one.[3] In a 2004 study, Tanya Sharon and Woolley conclude:

> With experience, children acquire increasing knowledge about everything in their world—both about real entities and their properties, and about such socially supported myths as Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. Thus, there is the simultaneous development of beliefs considered correct (e.g. dinosaurs are real) and of beliefs considered incorrect but age-appropriate (e.g. Santa is real). But at the same time, as children believe in the reality of fantasy figures, or are unable to say with certainty that they are pretend, they treat them very differently from real entities in terms of the properties and abilities they are willing to grant. In this way, children seem to place fantastical entities in a separate category—neither unquestionably real nor pretend, but somewhere in between. This category could then form a natural bridge to the adult category of fantastical entities. [4]

It's intriguing to note that most such studies leave out the question of religion—the most common and most socially acceptable form of "adult" myth-making—but common sense tells us that religious faith ought to follow a similar pattern, where beliefs inculcated during childhood

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[2] See Sara Gwenllian-Jones and Roberta Pearson, eds., *Cult Television* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).
[3] Miller, *The Magician's Book*, 22-23.
[4] Tanya Sharon and Jacqueline Woolley. "Do Monsters Dream? Young Children's Understanding of the Fantasy/Reality Distinction," *British Journal of Developmental Psychology* 22 (2004): 308.

have an immeasurably long-lasting and fundamental effect on the adult's relationship with "fantastical entities."

Thus, in "The Myth of Superman," Umberto Eco compares the comic-book superhero and the gods and heroes of the Western tradition—Greek, Nordic, Messianic—whose genesis is inarguably religious in nature. The difference, Eco claims, between the "novelistic" superhero and the mythic hero lies in the *predictability* of the latter:

> The traditional figure of religion was a character of human or divine origin, whose image had immutable characteristics and an irreversible destiny. It was possible that a story, as well as a number of traits, backed up the character; but the story followed a line of development already established, and it filled in the character's features in a gradual, but definitive, manner. […] The story has taken place and can no longer be denied. […] the account favored by antiquity was almost always the story of something which had already happened and of which the public was aware [unlike…] the modern novel [that] offers a story in which the reader's main interest is transferred to the unpredictable nature of *what will happen* [… and where…] the event has not happened before the story; it happens *while* it is being told, and usually even the author does not know what will take place.[5]

Comic-book narratives—which generally tell stories wherein the outcome is unknown to the audience until the end—function like novels instead of myths. What makes comic-book heroes such as Superman myth-*like* despite their plot-driven focus, Eco argues, is their existence in a perennially deferred climate, where development, though present, is episodic and repetitive. The very seriality of this type of narrative—also found in situation comedies and other stories that are designed to allow the audience to enter the text at any point—works against its plot-driven

[5] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 108-109

novelistic tendencies; although different events keep happening, they're the same basic *type* of events, achieving a mythic quality.

Naturally comic-book culture has changed a great deal since Eco's essay was conceived, particularly its relationship with continuity, episodicity, arc, and plot. The self-contained epic is now a common form within the comic-book medium, for instance, and these epics have a progressive arc unlike the narratives to which Eco alludes. Despite this journey towards the novelistic, comic-book story-lines have retained their mythic qualities, at least partially because material culture also has a relevant effect. Narratives that readers and audiences are able to revisit multiple times become more mythic upon rereading, because they are by definition familiar and thus more predictable the second time through. While the initial comic-book form was inherently ephemeral at one time—printed on cheap paper, difficult to keep intact, seemingly disposable—the collation of comic-book storylines into trade paperback volumes with much stronger binding and correspondingly easier retention makes these storylines that much more re-readable. Similarly, television narratives—which at one time depended upon fickle and undependable rebroadcasts for re-watching—have become steadily more accessible with the advent of VHSs, DVDs, and now digital and streaming files. This fixed and assured access, which can be returned to at will, is a literal, physical embodiment of the steady, solid structures that maintain belief.

Collaborative Authorship, Error, and Credibility

Long-form narratives rarely have single authors. Narratives that combine written, visual, and performance elements also often have multiple authorships comprised of writers, artists, performers, and patrons/producers. I think many of us have a vision of the solitary artist or writer, but it is difficult to imagine a kind of writing that is more antithetical to such a vision than

that of the television writer. In a 2010 roundtable which collected veteran television writers and producers, participants were asked to define the concept of "the writer's room." Each writer stressed the collective nature of the "room," where

> "a group of like-minded folks […] come up with stories that will best serve [the] show for which they've been hired to write for;" "[… it is] the collective brain of a TV show;" "[…] where ideas are put through the ringer. Where sidetracks in conversations take you down new, more interesting paths. Where personal histories become character fodder. And where passionate debate yields results that are otherwise unattainable by a single voice."[6]

What all these writers stress in these descriptions of "the writers' room" is the collaborative nature of writing that necessarily occurs in television production. The lack of "a single voice" inevitably creates discontinuities, however slight or great, in characterization and these contradictions mean that error has entered the universe: there are now multiple competing versions of the narrative, not all of which can be "correct." Thus, fans are forced to rank and hierarchically organize the various pieces of conflicting information that they are given. This principle has an unexpected outcome: it invests the fictional universe with a sense of independent reality. Fans can accuse the writers, supposedly the gods of this little universe, of not being true to the "real" characters. This accusation of falseness implies by its very statement, the possibility of objective authenticity and implies that error can, counter-intuitively, enforce believability.

The longer a single narrative continues, the more opportunities it provides for such errors and gaps to occur; the sheer amount of data is often too much for newer authors to recollect or adhere to even if they do. Additionally, when long-form narratives, such as those found within a

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[6] "Inside the Writer's Room," June 8, 2010, http://www.whedon.info/Jane-Espenson-Inside-the-writers.html

comic-book or television series, have been continued for a long enough time that a reader can have been continuously exposed to them from childhood through adulthood, these narratives and their characters are clearly going to take on myth-like proportions in readers' minds, because of the way in which children are more receptive to belief in fantastical entities or myths. Thus, these stories become sacred texts—the canon—and their protagonists, the saints, gods, and heroes of childhood. It's no wonder that participants in media fandom often refer to the producers of these narratives as "The Powers That Be" with all the religious connotations the term implies.

Ascension Stories and Metanarratives

As television narratives progress—particularly fantastical and science-fictional ones, which often follow a kind of hero's journey—continuity and arc frequently necessitate the characters' "leveling up" to become stronger and more competent. Characters that start out with merely extraordinary gifts often become almost godlike—if not literally deified—by the end of the story, which then functions as a kind of ascension narrative. Interestingly, the metanarrative of a long-running serial—the story of how the story came to be—frequently mimics this content-matter, where fans of a program eventually themselves become producers of it, gods of a fictional cosmos that they were once mere observers of.   Probably the most famous of these is *Star Trek*, a universe which has continued in one form or another since 1966.

Conceived by Gene Roddenberry as an age-of-sail/frontier-western story set in space that was also modeled upon Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) —combining an absorbing adventure with a political and moral allegory—*Star Trek*'s original series lasted only three seasons and never achieved high ratings. It did however produce an immensely passionate fanbase, who made up for their lack of numbers with the intensity of their devotion to the program. In fact, when the show was on the verge of cancellation after their second season, a hitherto

unprecedented letter-writing campaign by fans convinced the production company, Paramount, to green-light the third and final season. The fan community's relationship with *Star Trek* has been read by many as an unsettlingly religious one; in his article, "Star Trek Fandom as Religious Phenomenon," Michael Jindra remarks upon the way in which cult fandoms like *Star Trek* take on sacramental terminologies like "canon" and engage in practices that verge on worship[7] while Gene Roddenberry himself was famously disturbed by fans' idolatry, saying "It frightens me when I learn of 10,000 people treating a 'Star Trek' script as if it were Scripture."[8] Despite this off-putting image of the fan as religious cultist, it was of course this level of devotion that kept *Star Trek* a viable property in the years that it was off the air. It was the fans' ardent interest in the franchise that encouraged Paramount to release the animated series in 1973, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* in 1979, and every subsequent entry into the universe, an interest that was expressed in large part through the production of fanzines (i.e. collected fan writing in magazine form that included articles, poems, humor, and fiction set within the universe).

The barriers between science fiction audiences and producers have always been excessively permeable. As Cory Doctorow writes:

> Scratch a science fiction reader and you'll find a science fiction writer. Science fiction is the original home of the talented amateur. Since the mid-1920s, scientists and science enthusiasts have aspired to publication. Asimov, Clarke, Bradbury and the rest of the Founding Parents started out as fans, eagerly trading mimeographed 'zines with other bespectacled proto-nerds.[9]

[7] See Michael Jindra, "Star Trek Fandom as Religious Phenomenon," *Sociology of Religion* 55.1(1994): 27-51.
[8] *Williamson Daily News*, March 25, 1976.
[9] Cory Doctorow and Karl Schroeder, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Publishing Science Fiction* (New York: Macmillan, 2000), 1.

Why is this so? Perhaps it is because science fiction has—since its inception as a genre of its own in the 1920s—always been perceived as a niche market not for mass-consumption. Those who enjoy the genre thus initially formed a small and intimate community, perceived to be outside the norm. As a result, it developed the close-knit culture that such a stigma can sometimes produce. When *Star Trek* fandom got started in the 1960s, concurrently with the program's debut, it spoke to this community who rapidly took it to their hearts. Thus among the rolls of fans who contributed to the first *Star Trek* fanzine, *Spockanalia,* which began publication in 1967, we find names like Lois McMaster (later Bujold) who would go on to win the Hugo (science fiction's highest honor) and Poul Anderson who was already well-known as a writer of science fiction; subsequently, both already published authors like Marion Zimmer Bradley and writers who were later to turn professional like Jacqueline Lichtenberg would regularly contribute stories to other fanzines.[10]

The relationship between fans and media producers—specifically Star Trek fandom—is lovingly and brilliantly satirized in a film called *Galaxy Quest* (1999). In it, the has-been stars of a once popular science fiction television show called "Galaxy Quest" are making a living on the convention circuit. Meanwhile, an alien race with no concept of fiction has mistaken broadcasts of 'Galaxy Quest' for 'historical documents' and built a full-size working version of the NSEA Protector, the show's spaceship, as well as functioning versions of the other technologies portrayed in the show. These aliens recruit the erstwhile actors to help them fight an genocidal enemy who is trying to wipe out their entire race. During the course of the film, the actors must get assistance from the fans of the show (whom they had previously despised) since they are the only ones who truly understand the spaceship or indeed any of the technological specifications:

[10] Joan Marie Verba, *Boldly Writing: A Trekker Fan and Zine History* (FTL Press, 1994).

BRANDON

But I want you to know that I'm not a complete brain case, okay? I understand completely that it's just a TV show. I know there's no beryllium sphere...

JASON NESMITH

Hold it.

BRANDON

…no digital conveyor, no ship...

JASON NESMITH

Stop for a second, stop. It's all real.

BRANDON

Oh my God, I knew it. I knew it! I knew it![11]

In this exchange, the fans claim that they understand the difference between fiction and reality, and the producers of the fiction then inform them that their previously ridiculed belief was actually wholly justified; not only is the fiction real, but now the fans' expertise and passion is essential to the progression of the plot.

In fact, Gene Roddenberry's response to fan labor was almost uniformly positive. He, as well as other show producers—both actors and writers—would admit to reading fanzines regularly. In his introduction to a volume that eventually collected and commercially published fan fiction, *Star Trek: The New Voyages* (1976), Roddenberry wrote:

> We were particularly amazed when thousands, then tens of thousands of people began creating their own personal Star Trek adventures. Stories, and paintings, and sculptures, and cookbooks. And songs, and poems, and fashions. And more. The list is still growing. It took some time for us to fully understand and

[11] *Galaxy Quest*, dir. Dean Parisot (1999; Universal City, CA: DreamWorks, 2009), DVD.

> appreciate what these people were saying. Eventually we realized that there is no more profound way in which people could express what Star Trek has meant to them than by creating their own very personal Star Trek things. Because I am a writer, it was their Star Trek stories that especially gratified me. I have seen these writings in dog-eared notebooks of fans who didn't look old enough to spell "cat." I have seen them in meticulously produced fanzines, complete with excellent artwork. Some of it has even been done by professional writers, and much of it has come from those clearly on their way to becoming professional writers. Best of all, all of it was plainly done with love.[12]

Most of the members of the cast also contributed introductions to stories, letters in the voices of their characters and so on; Nichelle Nichols, who played Uhura, even contributed a story of her own to the volume. Later when creating *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987), Roddenberry apparently introduced the character of Worf after receiving fan feedback that castigated him for not including Klingons in the Next Generation crew.[13]

Other instances of fan-influenced or fan-created canon include prominent science fiction fan William Rostler's suggestion of Uhura's first name, which was never revealed in the original series: in a Star Trek tie-in work, he suggested that her name be "Nyota" and both Roddenberry and Nichols agreed. This paratextual establishment became canon in the 2009 film, when it finally appeared on screen; the film also made reference to the long period of time when the name was unknown by having Uhura refuse to reveal it to Kirk until the film's climax. Likewise, the popular series of fan films, *Star Trek: Phase II*, which continued the stories of the original crew of the starship Enterprise, blurs the boundary between producer and fan: stars from the

[12] Gene Roddenberry, "Foreword," *Star Trek: The New Voyages* (New York: Bantam, 1976).
[13] Joan Verba, "Interview with Henry Jenkins," May 2010, http://henryjenkins.org/2010/05/_httpwwwjoanmarieverbacom_your.html

show appeared on the series, lending it authenticity and authorization; similarly, the actor who plays Kirk in *Phase II* appears in the 2009 film on the bridge of the Enterprise as a sort of inside joke that gives the fan production credibility by making it part of canon. Incidentally, it also lends the professional film credibility with fandom, something that earlier in media history might not have been perceived to be important.

Perhaps the most famous example of a fan becoming involved in the Star Trek franchise is the case of Ronald D. Moore, who began as a fan of the original series and went on to be a writer for *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987-1994), and the showrunner for *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (1993-1999), as well as shows like *Roswell* (1999-2002) and the acclaimed reboot of another sf television classic, *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009). He recollects the beginning of his professional association with Star Trek as beginning from a romantic relationship he'd had with a woman who worked on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Knowing he was a fan of the series, she managed to get him a tour of the sets in the second season. In the four weeks it took to arrange his visit, Moore wrote a spec script for the series, and then managed to give it to one of Roddenberry's assistants, who liked it and passed it onto someone who became Moore's agent. They resubmitted the script to Michael Piller, the new executive producer, who bought it, produced it, and added Moore to his stable of writers for the series. Moore says

> I knew that I could write that show because I knew *Star Trek* really well—I sort of lived and breathed it for years, and I knew I could do it. I had always wanted to write for it, and here was my chance, and I took a shot.[14]

After Moore's success at joining the writing staff, Piller began an open door policy on spec scripts, and other fans were successful at getting their scripts produced. However, these were all

[14] "An Interview with Ron Moore," *IGN*, December 4, 2003, http://au.tv.ign.com/articles/444/444306p1.html

scripts that were sent in with the expectation of eventual production—unlike fan writing in the purest sense, these scripts were written not for sheer love of the narrative, but with the hopes of graduation to a professional level, although fannish fondness did clearly play a role. Intriguingly, Moore continued to display a level of closeness and interactivity with fandom; as well, his narratives tended towards similar questions about faith, mythology, and theology: *DS9*, *Roswell*, and *Battlestar Galactica* all eventually took on the characters' ascension to mythic and godlike status, mirroring Moore's own journey as a writer to become part of "The Powers That Be."

Another famous example occurred in another cult television show: *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995-2001). Itself a spin-off of a previous program, *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (1995-1999), *Xena* was the story of a formerly evil warlord on quest for redemption, accompanied by her faithful companion, Gabrielle. The program is to date probably the most popular cult television show to feature two women and their relationship as the primary focus. Many fan writers rapidly latched onto the romantic subtext between Xena and Gabrielle, and began to write stories that featured the two as more than friends. Fan author Lunacy recounts the beginning of this phenomenon in her article "The History of *Xena* Fan Fiction on the Internet":

> 1996 also saw a growing awareness among fans of the subtext, which is now such an ingrained part of the fandom. The focus of many heated discussions during the series' first year, the subtext nevertheless soon gave birth to a genre within the fanfic known as *alternative* or *alt* fiction. These were stories which added a romantic element to the relationship between Xena and Gabrielle, depicting them as lovers or potential lovers.[15]

[15] Lunacy, "The History of Xena Fan Fiction on the Net," *Whoosh!* 25 (Oct. 1998), http://whoosh.org/issue25/lunacy1.html

The producers of the show, particularly Rob Tapert, clearly acknowledged the attraction that many fans clearly felt towards the idea of a romantic relationship between Xena and Gabrielle. While the program never explicitly confirmed the nature of the relationship, it continued to leave the door ajar for such interpretations, often teasing viewers with scenes that could be read as sexual or romantic without ever committing to them wholly, or for that matter, assuredly denying them. Outside of the text, however, producers, writers, and cast members all agreed that by the sixth season of the show, Xena and Gabrielle were basically "out of the closet," and "soulmates in love" with a fully sexual relationship. Intriguingly, the sixth season was also when Tapert introduced a new writer to the staff named Melissa Good.

Tapert had wanted to get the fans more involved with the program, and he developed the idea that he should get a fan to write an episode. Steve Sears, another executive producer of the program, suggested a popular fan fiction writer with whose work he was familiar, Melissa Good, who had written several novel-length *Xena* stories and had a devoted fanbase of her own. Tapert detailed the process of introducing Good to the staff, and explained that although the professional writers had been anxious about the potentially dangerous disruption of the normal fan-professional hierarchy, he was pleased with how Good's episodes, "Legacy" and "Coming Home" had turned out. Tapert went on to clarify that he appreciated working with Good because of her affective relationship with the text or in other words, because

> she loves Xena and Gabrielle. That's invaluable to me. […] I have this giant Sappho episode that I've wanted to do since the middle of the second season. At that time [I was told] "You're only going to get into trouble." Liz thought that I

> was going to show predatory lesbians and that was unflattering. But I've worked out bits and pieces with Missy.[16]

While Good produced entirely new storylines for the program in her episodes, not duplicating any of her already extant fan fiction, it was clear that her belief in the "Sapphic" subtext of the narrative was making itself felt in canon.

Interestingly, Good remained unaware that she had been chosen due to her previously published fan fiction, believing at the time that she'd been selected because she had met Steve Sears at a fan convention. Sears did not reveal that he'd read her stories until much later because television producers do not wish to admit that they read fan fiction, for fear that fans may sue if canon plot lines resemble their own.[17] Years later, Doris Egan, science fiction author and one of the executive producers of popular program *House* would post the following comment regarding media fan fiction on Tor editor Teresa Neilsen Hayden's blog *Making Light*:

> For what it's worth, I'm a professional writer who for a long time never saw the point of fan fiction. But somewhere after writing my fourth book, I dipped a toe in the water, and found it personally fulfilling. Yes, I've written slash, and I've found it a creative joy—it was pure fun facing problems I'd never faced before, trying to integrate a sexual relationship with a story plot so that both were advanced simulataneously [sic]. I could say more about this, but honestly, I wouldn't know where to stop—I could write essays on the subject, and god knows I haven't the time. More pertinently, in terms of this discussion, I'm a television scriptwriter, and as TV writers go I'm highly ranked (co-executive producer of a

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[16] "An Interview with Robert Tapert," *Whoosh!* 52 (Jan. 2001), http://whoosh.org/issue52/itapert1b.html

[17] "Interview with Missy Good," *Whoosh!* 63 (Dec. 2001), http://whoosh.org/issue63/igood1.html

> prime time show) with a respectable amount of experience in the industry on a wide variety of one-hour dramas. Here's what I've learned: First, all producers know about fan fiction, and know about slash. Producers and writers who haven't read much of it—who've only picked up what you may find by chance at, say, fanfiction.net, assume it's all crap. (Though generally they have no moral or ethical issue with it.) Other TV writers—just like a number of other novelists I know—love it, and have nothing but respect for that talented top one or two percent of fanwriters. In fact, they may be fans of the fans. […] I have to respect the confidences of others, but yes, fan fiction writers have occasionally been asked if they would like to go pro. Indeed, there are some I'd ask myself, but I don't have my own show and can't make the offer.

Egan goes on to suggest, however, that turning into a professional ignores the true purpose of fan fiction; its amateur quality, she argues, is precisely what makes it great:

> Although [advancing to professional status] isn't why one writes fan fiction. If you think of it purely as a training ground, you're missing the point of the genre. You write fan fiction to follow up interesting characters and premises, and to do things creatively that you can't do very well in the pro world. Again, I'd have to write at too great a length to really explain what I mean, so I'll simply point out that it's much easier to write a deeper, more intense, and more realistic story in fan fiction than it is on a TV show, where the characters all have to be put back in the box exactly the same at the end. The joint mythmaking aspects of fan fiction as a whole is one of the things I get a big personal jolt out of.[18]

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[18]Doris Egan, posting to Teresa Neilsen Hayden, "Squick and Squee," *Making Light*, December 5, 2004, http://nielsenhayden.com/makinglight/archives/005871.html#69429

Being a fan, then, is its own reward and writing canon is perceived here as being in some ways lesser. This is a clear reversal of the ascension narrative that we see occurring in Star Trek fandom, where becoming a professional canon creator equates with graduating to the highest rank possible, and that all fan labor is a journey towards. Once a closeted identity, guarded, masked, and almost universally stigmatized by the main-stream, fannish membership steadily became a more and more important part of media production.

***Buffy*, *Angel*, and Stories by Fans for Fans**

As we've discussed, avenues into the text for fan authors are made by fractures in an otherwise firmly founded fictional reality. These fractures are produced by multiple narrative threads (often constructed by disparate authors) that jostle and collide, creating an atmosphere of constantly shifting mutability within certain rigid constraints. One excellent example of such a narrative universe is the multiplicitous world of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, sometimes colloquially referred to as the "Buffy-verse," which began in the mind of screen writer, Joss Whedon, who wanted to turn the "little blonde girl who goes into a dark alley and gets killed in every horror movie" into a hero. First released as a film in 1992 under the direction of Fran Rebel Kuzui, the narrative shifted focus from Whedon's original vision to become an extremely campy send-up of the traditional vampire b-movie, where a self-absorbed, vapid, and vain cheerleader senses vampires with the ultimate girl power of PMS. Aided by other superhuman powers such as super-strength and accuracy, and her wrong-side-of-the-tracks boyfriend—played by then teen-heartthrob Luke Perry—Kristy Swanson's Buffy battled the forces of vampiric evil headed by a scenery-chewing Rutger Hauer. Surprisingly, considering the movie's lack of box-office success (failed movies aren't usually made into television shows), the idea was reincarnated when Whedon was approached about turning *Buffy* into a television series. He

decided to pitch the series with the central conceit of "high school as horror movie": translating the anxieties of adolescence into supernatural monsters. Despite the complete tonal shift from parody to dramedy as the series progresses, we realize that the television show is, in many ways, a sequel to the film; its events have taken place in the show's universe, though not precisely as they were depicted in the movie, creating the discontinuity so essential for fan writers to feel able to gain ingress into the narrative. Buffy, now played by Sarah Michelle Gellar, no longer got menstrual cramps when vampires came near; however, she *had* set fire to her school gym at a high school dance, as depicted in the film.

As one might imagine, vampire mythology is one of the foundation-stones of the Buffy-verse. In the first season, Whedon's vampires operated within specific, consistent parameters. A vampire was a demon inhabiting the undead body of a mortal host; when attacking or otherwise agitated, the vampire's demonic visage would come to the fore. A person, drained of blood by a vampire, who then drank this vampire's blood, would arise from the dead as a vampire themselves. They could be killed by exposure to daylight (which caused them to burst into flame), by decapitation or by Buffy's preferred method: a wooden stake through the heart. Final death for a vampire comes with a twist in the Buffyverse: to avoid the mess of bodies to clean up, Whedon's vampires explode into dust in a pragmatic mix of special effects and narrative necessity.

Even without the corpses, some justification for Buffy's wholesale slaughter of these entities—made, after all, from innocent victims—is necessary. In the second episode, "The Harvest," Buffy's mentor, Mr. Giles, tells us that a character who has been turned into a vampire can no longer be saved, saying: "Jesse is dead! You have to remember that when you see him,

you're not looking at your friend. You're looking at the thing that killed him."[19] The distinction between vampires and humans they once were is described as a lack of soul; the reanimated body has the memories of the original person and their personality may resemble or otherwise react to their original personality, but their soul (according to Whedon the part of a person that "instinctually draws them to do good")[20] is wholly absent, replaced by demonic appetite. While the mythology is somewhat fuzzy and strays into deep philosophical and religious waters that it is in no way suited to navigate, it at least remains internally logical in the first season. The only exception to this rule is Angel, Buffy's mysterious vampire swain, who after a century of havoc has been cursed with a soul as an act of revenge by some of his victims, in order to make him experience guilt, suffering, and remorse over all his crimes. As the series continues however, and more characters and plot twists are introduced, the morality play of the Buffy-verse begins to get more complicated, especially with the addition to the cast of a vampire named Spike.

Introduced in season two, Spike became one of the most popular and the most debated characters of the series. Originally conceived as a disposable villain who would be killed off after a few episodes, Spike captured the hearts and imaginations of a legion of fans, and thus was retained far beyond his initial lease. With his insane, psychic vampire paramour Drusilla at his side, Spike was the essence of cool. In his first episode, we are told that "our new friend Spike" is "known as William the Bloody" and "earned his nickname by torturing his victims with railroad spikes." He is "barely two hundred, not even as old as Angel"; he "fought two Slayers in

[19] "The Harvest," written by Joss Whedon, (March 10, 1997; Century City, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2005), DVD.
[20] See Scott McLaren, "The Evolution of Joss Whedon's Vampire Mythology and the Ontology of the Soul," *Slayage: The Online International Journal of Buffy Studies* 5.2 (Sept. 2005), http://slayageonline.com/PDF/mclaren.pdf

the last century. And killed them both."[21] Angel, we discover, is well acquainted with Spike, since he's the one who "sired" him (i.e. turned him into a vampire)—and he tells us that Spike is "worse" than any other creature the gang has yet encountered.

As the series progresses, we discover that almost nothing we learn in this episode is true. Angel is not, in fact, Spike's sire. Instead, he sired Drusilla, who in turn sired Spike. Spike's human past is in fact that of a gentle, awkward, Victorian would-be poet, whose verse is so "bloody awful"[22] that it earns him the moniker of William the Bloody—a name that fans had always assumed to be related to a history of mass-murder. He is not even 200 years old, but somewhat less than 130 at the date of his introduction. Far from being the worst, unlike other vampires we've met, he chooses not to slaughter his family, instead turning his mother into a vampire in order to save her from tuberculosis.[23]

Even without these discontinuities, Spike brought instability into the conception of the vampire by being solicitous of his lover Drusilla, showing real tenderness and concern for her. By the end of season two, he has teamed up with Buffy, albeit, for selfish purposes, to save the world from the real villain of the season, Angel, who has been transformed into his former evil persona. As the show continued, Spike progressed through a strange evolution. Implanted with a behavior modification chip which wouldn't allow him to hurt humans in any way,[24] Spike is forced to learn to live peaceably alongside the gang, eventually falling in love with Buffy herself, and progressing from villain to comic relief to romantic lead, incidentally throwing all the

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[21] "School Hard," written by Joss Whedon and David Greenwalt, (Sept. 29, 1997; Century City, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2005), DVD.

[22] "Fool For Love," written by Douglas Petrie, (November 14, 2000; Century City, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2005), DVD.

[23] "Lies My Parents Told Me," written by David Fury and Drew Goddard, (March 25, 2003; Century City, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2005), DVD.

[24] "The Initiative," written by Douglas Petrie, (Nov 16, 1999; Century City, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2005), DVD.

previously established rules on vampires into disarray. As a soulless being who learns to change into a "good" person, he casts Buffy's role as the slayer into a moral gray area: if Spike can be saved, what about all the vampires Buffy has killed? Could they have been saved too? As a vampire who voluntarily earns a soul, he destroys some of Angel's credentials. This is even aesthetically reflected on the show when Spike, introduced more and more into the main heroic action, must operate in sunlight just as the other characters do. The rule about daylight is subtly shifted to a rule about direct sunlight, allowing Spike to traverse Sunnydale with a blanket to shield him from the sun's rays. Despite all this change, however, Spike still retains some inscriptions from his original role as villain. For instance, unlike the original heroes who will change outfits numerous times per episode, Spike almost never changes his clothes, generally appearing in the same black t-shirt, black jeans, red over-shirt and black duster. In order to make sense of all this contradictory information, interested viewers were forced to wrestle and engage with the text in participatory ways, ranging from dismissal and privileging of certain data to convoluted explanations of contradictions to actual rewriting of the text.

More discontinuities abound in the narrative when the Buffy-verse explicitly authorizes alternate universes within its own canon. In an episode of the third season, "The Wish,"[25] one of the characters, Cordelia, wishes that Buffy had never come to their town. The Buffyverse being what it is, she happens to make that wish to a vengeance demon, and it comes true. Through the course of the episode, we exist in a grim, dystopian alternate reality, where Buffy's erstwhile best friends, Willow and Xander, have been turned into vampires. While we escape the Wishverse at the end of the episode, it returns to haunt us in a subsequent episode, "Doppelgangland." Through a spell gone awry, Vampire Willow is summoned out of the reality

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[25] "The Wish," written by Marti Noxon, (Dec. 8, 1998; Century City, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2005), DVD.

of "the Wish" and into the series' regular timeline. Through this mechanism, we are not only informed that Willow was in her words, "kinda gay,"[26]—which viewers had not previously suspected, but eventually turns out to be true—but we also receive foreshadowing of Willow's period as a villain in season six. While the episode returns Vampire Willow to her own reality, just before the poignant moment when she is staked by that dimension's Oz (who is her boyfriend in the regular timeline) it leaves the viewer with the strong sense that the Buffy-verse with which they are familiar is only one of innumerable possibilities permitted within canon and that these alternate universes carry an almost equal weight and valence. It's hard not to extend this to a tacit endorsement of fan-created storylines as well.

When the character of Dawn, Buffy's "little sister" is introduced later in the series, this feeling is further borne out. In the beginning of season five, the writers use a bizarre soap opera tactic: throwing in a new character without any explanation that everyone treats as if she has always been there.[27] Extremely puzzling for viewers, Dawn's entrance into the show was not explained until almost a month into the new season, leaving the audience to wonder if they had gone crazy. We eventually discover that Dawn is actually the embodiment of a mystical force known as the key—the protection of which was essential. In order to preserve it, and knowing that Buffy would do anything in order to protect a member of her family, an order of monks had crafted a body for the key out of Buffy's essence and implanted artificial memories of this body's existence as Buffy's sister Dawn into everyone's brains, thus creating yet another sign of the mutability of the Buffyverse.[28] In the series of "official" comics, published by Dark Horse,

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[26] "Doppelgangland," written by Joss Whedon, (Feb. 23, 1999; Century City, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2005), DVD.
[27] "Buffy vs. Dracula," written by Marti Noxon, (Sept. 26, 2000; Century City, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2005), DVD.
[28] "No Place Like Home," written by Douglas Petrie, (Oct. 24, 2000; Century City, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2005), DVD.

the year one comics, which attempt to reconcile the film storyline with that of the television series, and which Whedon has stated can be taken as canon, Dawn has been retroactively worked into the storyline, even starring in some issues of her own.

What's fascinating about these canonical story-lines is that they are almost exactly like those generally found in fan writing. Alternate universes created by the alteration of a single decision are a staple of fan fiction. So, too, is the addition of "original" characters retroactively inserted into the story, who are considered to have always already been there. Such characters often connect to the narrative via a familial relationship to an already beloved character. The reworking of continuity errors, such as William the Bloody's transformation into William the Bloody Awful poet is an example of no-prizing, a term which comes from comic book fandom, where Marvel creator Stan Lee would award the No-Prize to fans who were able to successfully and ingeniously explain away a continuity error.[29] But these similarities between official and fan story-lines are perhaps no surprise, since Whedon self-identifies as a fan. Consider the following excerpts from an interview with him:

> **[…]Do you read fan comments, and do they influence your thinking about the show? […]**
>
> Whedon: I think it's really neat. I haven't had as much time as I used to to check in and see what people are talking about. [But] sure, I'll read the posting board. I'm always interested to see what people are responding to, and what they're not. To an extent it does [affect me]. […]
>
> **Do you share William Shatner's opinion of the most ardent fans that they need to get a life?**

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[29] See "No Prize," http://marvel.wikia.com/Glossary:No_Prize

> Whedon: I have never had any particular life of my own, so I don't see any particular reason why anyone should run out to get one. […] the show's designed to foster slavish devotion; it has it from me, and I entirely respect it in others.
>
> **How do you feel about the cultural impact of Buffy? The comics, merchandise, fan fiction, etc?**
>
> Whedon: Again, the show was designed to be the kind of show that people would build myths on, read comics about, that would keep growing. So naturally, I'm wicked pleased that it's entering people's consciousness. I obviously can't read [fan fiction], but the fact is there seems to be a great deal of it, and that's terrific. I wished I'd had that outlet as a youngster, or had the time to do it now.[30]

In yet another kind of influence, Whedon acknowledges the sexual tension between Angel and Spike which fans had been seeing—and writing—for years in the final season of *Angel the Series*, a spin-off from *Buffy* which followed Angel's adventures as a noir detective in Los Angeles.[31] The vastly popular fanfictional queer/"slash" relationship was authenticated on the show itself, as Spike says, "Angel and me were never intimate…well, except that once."[32]

Fans became more directly involved in the narrative as well, much in the same way that Melissa Good and Ronald D. Moore ascended into professional production. *Buffy* fan Mere Smith was a regular poster on The Bronze posting board—one of the mainstays of Buffy fandom—and published fan fiction. Through the annual "posting board party"—a place where fans and producers would have face-to-face social interaction—she was able to get to know

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[30] *Joss Whedon Conversations*, eds. David Lavery and Cynthia Burkhead (University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 16.

[31] As we see with programs like *Xena* and *Angel*, the spin-off, with its mitotic reproduction and exponentially collaborative nature, provides a preponderance of fractures for other continuers to enter the narrative universe.

[32] *Angel*, "Power Play," written by David Fury, (May 12, 2004; Century City, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2006), DVD.

writers for the program. Using these connections, she was able to become a staff writer for *Angel*, writing many episodes of the show's five season run. As many fans-turned-pro do, Smith removed all her unauthorized fan fiction from the web following her employment with the program; however, a fellow fan author, Margot Le Faye, had this to say about Smith's fan work:

> How did I get started writing fanfic? If you go to my site, one of the first pieces you'll come across is my very first fic, All Too Human. It's a piece [pairing Buffy and Spike romantically]. Written during S2. February 1998, to be exact. And, as can be seen from the dedication in the piece, written at that time, it was inspired by an e-mail conversation with my fellow Bronzer, ~mere~ Better known today as Mere Smith, writer for Ats.[33]

It seems clear that fan desires for romantic pairings were easily communicated to an authorship that was so intimately entangled with its fandom.

This democratization of the narrative, where the audience wrests or is given control over the narrative creates a meta-universe surrounding the text, that responds to multiple points of pressure in its production. It is a perfect example of what critic Henry Jenkins calls convergence culture, which is

> politically important because it expands the range of voices that can be heard: though some voices command greater prominence than other, no one voice speaks with unquestioned authority. The new media operate with different principles [...]: access, participation, reciprocity, and peer-to-peer rather than one-to-many communication. Given such principles, we should anticipate that digital

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[33] Margot Le Faye, posting to "Great Authors," *Octaves of the Heart*, http://www.octavesoftheheart.com/octaves/bestauthors.htm

> democracy will be de-centralized, unevenly dispersed, profoundly contradictory, and slow to emerge.[34]

Whatever these new rules may involve, they must now account for those fans who create canon for the very same fictional universes they engaged with as playful amateurs. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the longest running science fiction television series extant: *Doctor Who*.

The Many Worlds of *Doctor Who*

Beginning on November 23, 1963, *Doctor Who* is the longest running science fiction series in television history. Initially conceived as children's entertainment with an educational component, the story centered around a shadowy, irascible humanoid alien known only as the Doctor and his travels through time and space in a vessel called the TARDIS (short for Time And Relative Dimension In Space), which he has stolen from his home-planet of Gallifrey in order to run away from his somewhat stodgy people, the Time Lords, and gallivant through the universe. Like the Doctor himself, the TARDIS is a bit dodgy; though it's meant to camouflage its own appearance to fit into with its surroundings, it's broken and stuck on only one setting: a 1950s blue police-box. Despite its absurdly whimsical and unprepossessing exterior, however, the TARDIS is literally "bigger on the inside"—a metaphor perhaps for the Doctor and television itself, as well as the brain and its capacity for imagination. Prior to the beginning of the series, the Doctor, played by William Hartnell, has been traveling only with his grand-daughter Susan; in the first episode, he also picks up the first set of his human companions, Ian and Barbara, who happen to be school-teachers of science and history respectively. It is clear from this narrative choice that the program was initially designed to at least appear educational, and intended to impart information to its young viewers on these subjects. However, the show rapidly changes

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[34] Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 208-9.

focus by the second serial, where the audience makes its first acquaintance with the Daleks, a race of brutal mutant aliens (shaped like pepper-pots) that are the Doctor's greatest enemies. The introduction of the Daleks signaled the transformation of the program into an adventure series, whose main purpose was not didactic in nature, but instead showed the wonders of the universe interspersed with regular saving-the-day plots.

Though not initially designed as such, *Doctor Who* eventually became emblematic of the television narrative and possibilities that could be found in no other medium. Television studies and film studies are frequently grouped together under the same umbrella, but though they share many similarities, there are intrinsic differences to the two mediums. One of the most significant of these differences is length: the cinema is not the appropriate venue for long-form story-telling, as anyone who has seen a favorite novel adapted for the big screen can attest. *Doctor Who*'s peculiar length and longevity are made possible by a practical decision that had a resounding effect on the narrative: when Hartnell was no longer able to play the part for medical reasons, the program's producers decided that the Doctor's alien species, the Time Lords, would have the power to "regenerate" at the time of death, shifting into a new form. Although this new incarnation would have different physicality, mannerisms, and dominant personality traits, it would still be the same character, with a contiguous memory and narrative arc, satisfying viewers who, as Raymond William Stedman concludes in *The Serials*, mainly continue watching programs because they are invested in characters over plot:

> Given characters worth savoring, care about them serial followers do. They love them, loathe them, admire them, feel superior to them, laugh with them, worry about them, but never do they ignore them. Captured by the special magic of the serial narrative, they come to the world of continued drama […] with arms open,

> senses honed. Amid critics and skeptics they await the next tantalizing development.[35]

Thus the producers' innovative decision—forced onto them by pragmatic exigencies—meant that *Doctor Who* would keep its staying power, even with a new actor playing the role, because the character's journey would continue, even as the program was able to reinvent itself around a seemingly unfamiliar protagonist.

Doctor Who went off the air on its twenty-sixth anniversary, November 23, 1989. By this time, the Doctor had been played by seven successive actors, but after the fourth and fifth, played by Tom Baker and Peter Davison respectively, the program—though still an institution in Britain—had waned somewhat in its popularity and though there were a few spoofs and parodies that followed as well as one U.S. television film that introduced an eighth Doctor, the latter's failure ensured that the program remained dormant on television screens until 2005, when it was brought back onto the air by Russell T Davies [sic], himself a long-time fan of the series.[36] In the intervening period, fans of the series kept the property viable by the production of fan narratives, fan films, and lively fan discourse and theorization verging on the Talmudic.

Raymond Williams's foundational theorization of the then-nascent medium of television in 1974 has influenced most subsequent television criticism. According to Williams, television washes over us in an endless and overwhelming wave of miscellaneous information that he calls "flow," which does not really permit the analysis of discrete texts or even admit the existence of

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[35] Raymond Williams Stedman, *The Serials: Suspense and Drama by Installment* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 497.

[36] See Balaka Basu, "When Worlds Continue: The Doctor's Adventures in Fandom and Metatextuality," in *Ruminations, Peregrinations, and Regenerations: A Critical Approach to* Doctor Who, ed. Christopher Hanson (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 164-177. Here I discuss in greater detail how the Doctor of the new series is coded as fan not just of other texts but of his previous incarnation, thus replicating the fan status of the new series producers, writers, and actors.

a television paratext. For instance, he believes that we are to read the commercials as well as the programs which air after, before, or at the same time on different channels as part of the *same* television text, since all of this material may be part of a single viewing experience.[37] This conceptualization doesn't really seem to reflect the habits of the contemporary viewer, who may fast forward through commercials if a program is taped, often watches only certain specified programs rather than watching whatever is on at a particular time, and who in other ways actively controls their own viewing experience, rather than letting a pre-programmed "flow" wash over them. Thus, Kristin Thompson persuasively argues against this principle of flow, suggesting that the "interruptions" posed by commercials and other paratextual interjections do not become incorporated into the story, since contemporary viewers are well able to tell the difference between narrative and what is outside it.[38] However, if we consider the entire series to be the text, as opposed to the discrete episode, or the single evening's viewing, interruptions may be of significantly more value than is accounted for in Thompson's analysis.

Throughout the nineties, a vast body of fan productions in fanzines, radio-plays, and amateur films—which one could easily read as "interruptions" in the authorized discourse—were the only ways to get "more" *Doctor Who*, a commodity that was apparently much in demand for series devotees. When the series rebooted in 2005, its writers were almost entirely culled from the *Doctor Who* fan community, many of whom had used the intervening time to become professional television creators themselves—screen writers, actors, and other kinds of producers—making it even harder to distinguish between text and paratext. This was made

[37] Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Routledge, 1974), 87.

[38] Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in Film and Television*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 17-18. This does not account, however, for the way in which commercials have been wound into television serials, as for instance in extensive product placement. The scope of this chapter does not allow further examination into this phenomenon.

possible by the fact that this fan community had been skating over this fan-producer divide for some time, since the line between fan-labor and official merchandise had become extremely blurred. The production company, Virgin, that had bought the imprint responsible for official *Doctor Who* novelizations realized that after the program halted production, there would be no more new material to novelize. They approached the BBC for the license to publish new *Doctor Who* material, which was finally granted after the program went off the air. One of the first writers they hired was Paul Cornell, who had made a name for himself as an author of *Doctor Who* fan fiction, and was beginning to work in television writing as well. After the 1996 television movie, the BBC revoked the license for new *Doctor Who* material, so Virgin simply created a new line of novels following one of the Doctor's new companions—Bernice Summerfield, a character created by Cornell—independent from the Doctor. Meanwhile, between 1985 and 1991, two fans, Bill Baggs and Gary Russell, produced a series of audio dramas, distributed on cassette, with twenty six separate episodes, starring Nicholas Briggs as the voice of the Doctor. This unlicensed series, known as the Audio-Visuals was popular in fan circles, and though it violated the BBC's copyright, they tacitly allowed it to continue. After the Audio-Visuals, Russell went on to become the producer for a new company, Big Finish Productions, whose first project was producing audio dramas which featured Bernice Summerfield. Eventually Big Finish received a license to produce official Doctor Who audio-dramas and novels once more, and fans of the series as well as the program's initial producers went on to create them. It became hard to distinguish between official material and fan material; although now producers were receiving remuneration for their labor and their work was licensed and authorized, only people who had affection for the series really got involved in these projects, since there was not a great deal of high-culture status associated with these productions. These

fans were perhaps rewarded when the series came back to the screen in 2005; Paul Cornell and Gary Russell joined the *Doctor Who* writers' room under the aegis of Russell T Davies (himself purportedly a participant in fandom), while Nicholas Briggs went on to voice the Daleks. Not least among these fans was an actor named David Tennant, who after working on several Big Finish radio plays went on to star as the Doctor himself from 2006 – 2010.

Paul Cornell, who wrote several acclaimed episodes of the new series, describes how the production of *Doctor Who* was particularly friendly to the journey from fan to professional, because it had what he terms "a fallow period… like crop rotation" where "new things can develop." These gaps—also seen in texts like Star Trek and James Bond—allow fans to "start working professionally" which is what he says happened in the fifteen year period between old "Doctor Who" and new "Doctor Who." This gave fans of the show time where they could think about "how the show worked" and figured out its "nuts and bolts." This was also a time where fans began to work for production companies that licensed ancillary material to the program, producing a series of Doctor Who novels. Cornell claims that

> From the first season of 'Doctor Who' writers, the only one who hadn't contributed to a BBC or Virgin 'Doctor Who' book was Rob Shearman, and the only one who hadn't done anything for Big Finish was Moffat, although he'd had a story in a Big Finish book. A lot of the tropes of modern 'Who' comes from those books.

His own path from fan fiction to professional publication he describes as even more direct:

> There's a direct line from the stories I first started writing as a kid, as essays, (which) featured some of the characters who then appeared in my fan fiction. I adapted a piece of my fan fiction for the 'Doctor Who' novels, I adapted one of

> my ‘Doctor Who’ novels for ‘Doctor Who’. There is a direct line. I’m really pleased with that.[39]

As Cornell remarks significantly, his fan work directly influenced the narrative direction of the program. His story, “Total Eclipse,” which appeared in the fanzine *Queen Bat* became the basis for his first authorized *Doctor Who* novel. A subsequent *Doctor Who* novel, *Human Nature*, was adapted into two episodes of the series, Human Nature/Family of Blood.[40] And yet the influence of fandom diffuses much farther than this.

Steven Moffat, who became the show-runner for *Doctor Who* after Russell T Davies’ departure, has not been shown to have written for fanzines. He did however publish a short story in a Big Finish collection called *Decalog 3: Consequences.*[41] The story, titled “Continuity Errors,” is a chillingly clever use of time travel in which the Doctor attempts to take out a book from the restricted section of “The New Alexandria Library” regarding the massacre of a certain species, but is balked by the hostile Librarian, Andrea, who is unwilling to let him break the rules. As the story unfolds, the Librarian’s hostility towards the Doctor begins to be mitigated, while simultaneously her life stops lining up with information that we’ve previously been given about her. The Doctor has, of course, been traveling back in time, to alter her situation for the better in order to manipulate her into being less hostile. Though grateful for her changed circumstances, Andrea realizes that her life isn’t internally consistent and refuses to give him the book anyway, on the grounds that the Doctor is manipulating her for his own potentially dangerous purposes, and not out of altruism. Eventually the Doctor realizes that the root of his problem is a lecture that Andrea attended in her youth, given by a Professor Candy, which

[39] Paul Cornell (2009), Dublin, http://drwhointerviews.wordpress.com/category/writers/page/2/
[40] “Human Nature/Family of Blood,” written by Paul Cornell (26 May 2007, 2 June 2007; London: BBC Video, November 2007), DVD.
[41] Steven Moffat, “Continuity Errors,” *Decalog 3: Consequences* (London: Big Finish, 1996), 214-239.

described how dangerous "the Doctor" can be; while the story began with an excerpt of the original lecture as heard by Andrea, at the end, we see a substitute talk delivered by a mysterious "guest lecturer" on why books should be lent to any who need them. The story concludes with the Doctor getting the book. Bits of this story appear in many of Moffat's television episodes: Professor Candy actually makes a named appearance in the episode "Let's Kill Hitler,"[42] and the plot of the Doctor going back in time to alter someone's personality in order to get what he needs is the main focus of the episode, "A Christmas Carol."[43] Meanwhile, a library very similar to the New Alexandria Library appears in "Silence in the Library."[44] And these are only the replicated moments that can be traced linearly through a single author's work.

What's fascinating about the fan community is how *multiple* authors create a continually dynamic conversation that can never be stilled, and how ripples in the fannish waters reverberate against each other in ways that are impossible to chart. Ownership of ideas becomes very difficult to assign or parse. While "A Christmas Carol" is clearly influenced by Moffat's own short story, it also demonstrates similarities to a short story published by Paul Cornell in *The Telegraph*, "The Hopes and Fears of All the Years,"[45] which shows the Doctor spending every Christmas with a small boy as he grows into an old man. (The Doctor gets 80 or so Christmases one after the other, while the boy has to wait a year in between them.) "A Christmas Carol" neatly combines these two ideas into a single episode and it's impossible to say where exactly they originated, not least because the fan community *is* a community with all that entails; Cornell

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[42] "Let's Kill Hitler," written by Steven Moffat (27 August 2011; Cardiff: BBC, 2011), AVI.
[43] "A Christmas Carol," written by Steven Moffat (25 December 2010; Cardiff: BBC, 2010), AVI.
[44] "Silence in the Library," written by Steven Moffat (31 May 2008; London: BBC Video, 2008), DVD.
[45] Paul Cornell, "The Hopes and Fears of all the Years," *The Telegraph*, Dec. 22, 2007, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3670111/A-Doctor-Who-story-The-Hopes-and-Fears-of-All-the-Years.html

met his wife at a *Doctor Who* fan group, and Moffat, it turns out, was the best man at their wedding.[46] The constant conversations and communications are impossible to pin down with any accuracy; all we can conclude is that they *must* happen.

In fact, as head-writers and show-runners, Moffat and Davies are at the pinnacle of this fan-turned-pro hierarchy; they are now able to canonize their own fan-theories. In archived bulletin board conversations, we can see for instance, one of Moffat's comments on rec.arts.drwho from 1996:

> Here's a particularly stupid theory. If we take "The Doctor" to be the Doctor's name—even if it is in the form of a title no doubt meaning something deep and Gallifreyan—perhaps our earthly use of the word "doctor" meaning healer or wise man is direct result of the Doctor's multiple interventions in our history as a healer and wise man. In other words, we got it from him. This is a very silly idea and I'm consequently rather proud of it.[47]

In his episode, "A Good Man Goes to War," Moffat has one of his characters, River Song, confirm this theory, saying:

> You make them so afraid. When you began all those years ago, sailing off to see the universe, did you ever think you'd become this? The man who can turn an army around at the mention of his name. Doctor. The word for healer and wise man, throughout the universe. We get that word from you, y'know.[48]

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[46] Paul Cornell, personal communication with the author. February 10, 2009.
[47] Steven Moffat, posting to *rec.arts.drwho*, 1998, http://groups.google.com/group/rec.arts.drwho/browse_thread/thread/7cd734f99a62ae98/c845f05e9b213df9?lnk=st&q&hl=en&pli=1
[48] "A Good Man Goes to War," written by Steven Moffat (4 June 2011; Cardiff: BBC, 2010), AVI

Meanwhile, this same character, River Song, actually appears to have been inspired by Cornell's fannish creation, Bernice Summerfield, somewhat completing this circle of influence.

Another example of the fandom's dynamic pool effect occurs with famed comic-book and fantasy author Neil Gaiman's critically acclaimed episode for series six, "The Doctor's Wife." In this episode, the eponymous "Doctor's Wife" surprisingly turns out to be his beloved stolen vessel, the TARDIS, who is thrust into a human form. Poignantly, they are able to have their first conversation:

> TARDIS
>
> Did you ever wonder why I chose you all those years ago?
>
> THE DOCTOR
>
> I chose you. You were unlocked.
>
> TARDIS
>
> Of course I was. I wanted to see the universe, so I stole a Time Lord and I ran away. And you were the only one mad enough.[49]

In this dialogue, we realize that the Doctor's dearest and most faithful companion has been his iconic "magic box." In his rapturous review of the episode, Peter Anghelides, fanzine editor and fan-fiction writer, who has now published numerous official audio-dramas and novels, writes that the episode reminded him of a drabble (a fan fiction story in exactly a hundred words) that he had published in 1991 called "**Initial paragraphs from a draft letter to my oldest companion.**" Punning on the "Initial" in the title, the story is an acrostic that also gives the TARDIS a voice:

> ***T****heft and disguise started my career, I suppose, though appearing first on that monochrome world Earth established my distinctive style.*

[49] "The Doctor's Wife," written by Neil Gaiman (14 May 2011; Cardiff: BBC, 2010), AVI.

> ***A**fterwards, my look changed several times – shifting shades of light and dark, subtle variations of line and effect, though I could on occasion transform completely, be unrecognisable, camouflaged or transparent even to you.*
> ***R**ecognition's rarely a problem now in our spins around the universe.*
> ***D**oubtless my looks belie my age, but then you know I transcend more than expectations.*
> ***I**'ve known many of your friends, Doctor, yet remain your truest companion.*
> ***S**haring the changing times is what keeps us close.*[50]

While this doesn't mean that Gaiman saw this drabble—in fact, it's quite unlikely—and the drabble is not of the same high quality as the episode, the similarity of the ideas in the two indicates that certain concepts flourish in the ebb and flow of the fannish zeitgeist and free-for-all.

A similar moment occurs in Cornell's story, "If I close my eyes…," published in the fanzine, *Frontier Worlds*, and incidentally edited by Anghelides. This fan fiction, cited by fan historians such as Matthew Knight as one of the stories that brought Cornell to fannish notoriety,[51] involves the Doctor falling asleep and encountering a child in his dreams; meanwhile, the child is falling asleep and encountering the Doctor in *his* dreams. Thus, the Doctor starts to wonder: who is real? And who is the fiction? In the end, however, he concludes it doesn't really matter.[52] Several episodes in the new series are reminiscent of these motifs that occur in this story: the Doctor comforting sick infants, children becoming involved with the

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[50] Peter Anghelides, "Initial paragraphs from a draft letter to my oldest companion," January 8, 2011, *The Red Lines*, http://peteranghelides.wordpress.com/2011/01/08/drabble-who/
[51] Matthew Knight, personal communication with author.
[52] Paul Cornell, "If I close my eyes…," *Frontier Worlds* 18 (1983).

Doctor and his legend, and even an episode, "Amy's Choice,"[53] (2011) entirely centered around whether the Doctor is, in fact, a dream. Additionally, "If I close my eyes…" metatextually validates fiction itself as well as the concept of play. As the Doctor decides it doesn't really matter if he's real as long as he believes he is, so, too, is engagement with fiction justified: as long as it works and gives pleasure, why does it matter whether it's "real" or even if it's "authorized"? Dreaming is its own reward, and constructs its own—perfectly satisfactory—reality.

In *The Writer's Tale* (2010), a book which collects all of his thoughts on writing the fourth season of the program, Davies describes his interaction with a new companion, Penny, whom he had invented, but who was revised out of existence and thus never made it onto the screen. In a world with many alternate universes, created at the point of every decision, he imagines her turning the other way down the street, instead of turning to meet the Doctor, and carrying on her life, never having met him—creating a sort of unpublished fan fiction.[54] Later, he realizes this experience in the show itself, creating an episode, "Turn Left" where the Doctor's *actual* companion, Donna (the one who replaced Penny) has this same experience, creating a parallel universe. Due to this multiplicity of universes, the textual fabric of the program is necessarily porous, allowing numerous points of ingress. Davies and Moffat have respected this, especially with regard to their young fans, who have been able to compete in the *Blue Peter* Script-to-Screen competition to produce monsters, storylines, and characters that are filmed and appear in episodes like "Love and Monsters"[55] becoming part of the "real" narrative.

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[53] "Amy's Choice," written by Simon Nye (15 May 2010; Cardiff: BBC, 2010), AVI
[54] Russell T Davies and Benjamin Cook, *The Writer's Tale* (London: BBC Books, 2010), 67-8.
[55] "Love and Monsters," written by Russell T Davies (17 June 2006; London: BBC Video, 2006), DVD

Gaiman similarly expresses his own relationship with the series in terms of this reality. In an introduction to a *Doctor Who* novella, published in 2003, he confesses:

> In my head the Time Lords exist, and are unknowable—primal forces who cannot be named, only described: The Master, the Doctor, and so on. All depictions of the home of the Time Lords are, in my head, utterly non-canonical. The place in which they exist cannot be depicted because it is beyond imagining: a cold place that only exists in black and white. It's probably a good thing that I've never actually got my hands on the Doctor. I would have unhappened so much.[56]

Gaiman here elucidates the fannish viewpoint on believability perfectly: there is an objective truth (Time Lords exist); canonical producers made errors (all depictions of their home); if he controlled the universe, he would have made his own viewpoint into canon.

Another interesting thing about these fan-narratives is that, as we've seen, they are in general revelatory: unveiling, answering, and filling. They take stories that have gaps and incompletions and attempt to provide solutions. They actually strive to solidify and pin down the dynamic pool that allows them to form. This is evident from Gaiman's notes on the process of completing his episode. For his story, he invents an original character, a Time Lord called The Corsair, whom the Doctor used to know. Wanting to make sure he was going in the right direction, he sent the following snippet to Moffat:

> DOCTOR
>
> He was called The Corsair. Didn't have a name. Just The Corsair. That was...and he used to travel off exploring the limits of Time and Space. […] One day he never came back. Well, that's the trouble with Time and Space exploring. You

[56] Neil Gaiman, "The Nature of the Infection," 2003, http://journal.neilgaiman.com/2007/05/nature-of-infection.html.

> never know if someone didn't come back, or if they just haven't come back yet. I daresay there are people still waiting for me... (He sees Amy's expression. He just said the wrong thing...Tries to pick up the thread.) I – I met him. He had a tattoo of a snake, an ouroboros on his arm. After every regeneration he'd get that tattoo. I spoke to him once. […] I said, take me with you. I could go with you out there. I could be your assistant.
>
> AMY
>
> So that was how you got your start? Traveling with him?
>
> DOCTOR
>
> What? Oh, no. He laughed at me. I was twelve. Can't really blame him. So this was... aeons ago.

Gaiman records Moffat's reply to this draft as follows: "can we make the Corsair sound less like the man the Doctor modeled himself on? Answers too many questions that should be left alone. He's the Doctor, he does what he does for reasons too vast and terrible to relate."[57] Thus even original and professional creators like Gaiman are subject to these revelatory impulses to explain things which the text must keep secret in order to remain propagative.

Opening at the Close: A *Postcanonical* Methodology

What then is the appropriate response to this continuing impulse? If new stories succeed in providing the answers and solutions they seek, they kill the generative and reproductive possibilities of the text, the very qualities that allowed them to live in the first place. And yet it feels wrong to deny the demands of textual affection, to control and regulate the desires of the reader. Perhaps the answer lies in a post-canon many-worlds understanding of fiction, where

[57] Neil Gaiman, "A Fairly Humongous Doctor Who Q & A Mostly," *journal.NeilGaiman.com*, June 9, 2011, http://journal.neilgaiman.com/2011/06/fairly-humongous-doctor-who-q-mostly.html

mutually contradictory beliefs all produce their own universes, each authentic and *in some sense*, true.

We already use this tactic when considering single texts: as all English teachers know, the text ought not be approached as a riddle, with a single answer that solves its meaning. In reading an allegory, for instance, we know or should know that the text must be thought of on two or more levels *simultaneously*. As Miller puts it,

> Allegory is a form in which images behave like ideas without losing their essential identity as images. When the lover in *The Romance of the Rose* stares into the garden's clear sparkling fountain, we are meant to understand that we are reading about the first time he gazes into his lady's eyes. But [C.S.] Lewis reminds us that we should hold both pictures—fountain and eyes—in our heads at the same time; each one enriches the other and the reader is ravished by two beauties at once.[58]

A *post-canonical* methodology, then, would be able to hold competing and explicitly contradictory texts and truths together, believing in both and allowing neither to negate the other. The text and its continuations, then, are ever poised upon a precipice, never allowed to choose one version over the other. As long as they tremble there, always about to fall but never doing so, the narrative universe remains constantly in flux, continually allowing the ingress and egress of constantly active readers-turned-writers. Concerns about the transgressive potential of texts to cross the border between fiction and reality—ensnaring the reader who may not be able to differentiate between the two—may be resolved by understanding that the reader's pleasure in the text lies in her ability to at once distinguish and elide these two worlds.

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[58] Miller, *The Magician's Book*, 48.

Coda: Return to the Renaissance?

What will a future that builds upon this understanding of continuation—not postmodern, but *postcanonical*—think of our contemporary moment? It might see this period as the rebirth of the "professional amateur," remembering that the amateur is she who is involved for "love" and thinking of the many pathways from fannish love to professional profit that have been carved in the last few decades. Since digital technologies and their effect on our understanding of intellectual property and ownership are creating a cultural shift that may be as fundamental to the power of reading and readers as the early modern invention of the printing press, it might see this period—where copyright and intellectual property law will eventually have to be redefined because of the exponentially expanding possibilities for replication and dissemination available online—as a time of innovation and a competitive "free market of ideas" when art must be tempered like steel in order to survive. To the future, we might look a great deal like the Renaissance, repeated, remixed, and retold.

One hallmark of this moment is the periodic recurrence of conversation about the valuation of derivative texts: some textual producer becomes alarmed at the challenge posed by unauthorized continuation to his or her ownership of the text and writes an impassioned screed condemning the incursion. Continuation authors respond, vehemently arguing for readers' ownership of beloved texts and the right of creative response. Invariably, they look to the Renaissance for support. Shakespeare, they claim, was not original, and yet he is the most famous author to ever write in English; if his derivative 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? It's a somewhat flawed justification, since copyright law and intellectual property as we

understand it today did not exist in the early modern period. However what's fascinating is the way in which the Renaissance prefigured this conversation explicitly and valorized contemporary ideals of reception. Milton's first published poem, "On Shakespeare," for example, is notable for measuring the poet's monument not just in his own poetry, but in "our wonder and astonishment"—the reader's response.

Of course, not all such responses are as respectable as Milton's. Recently, E.L. James published a work called *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011) which neatly outstripped the Harry Potter series to become the fastest selling book of all time. Originally a piece of *Twilight* fan fiction called *Masters of the Universe*, this erotic novel is successfully titillating an immense body of readers, who had never previously been exposed to fan fiction and now appear to be fascinated with James' (admittedly clumsy) deployment of sado-masochism and other fan fictional tropes. Meanwhile, detractors clutch their pearls in dismay, for this is nothing but socially acceptable pornography as well as being badly edited, clunkily written, politically problematic, derivative prose! All of which is absolutely true. Still, there are two important points which this assessment ignores. First, people love this novel and we need to take this love seriously. Readers love this text because they haven't seen anything like it before and therefore they believe this text is unique in the response that it provokes. They don't understand that all fan fiction is *designed* to elicit this emotional response, is constructed entirely to reward this kind of embodied investment and to give this kind of textual pleasure, and that *Fifty Shades of Grey* does so only because it arises from fan fictional circumstances that require these things by their very nature. If readers understood that there is nothing immoral about the pursuit of such enjoyment, they would discover that there's a good deal more pleasure in the same vein to be found for free on the

internet, simply waiting to be tapped. They would then be able to choose examples that were equally satisfying without being quite so dreadfully written.

Secondly, while this particular result is unabashedly terrible, this does not mean the project of continuation itself is faulty. While deploring and bemoaning the existence of *Fifty Shades of Grey*, it's easy to ignore the way in which creative scholarship is thriving in a new idiom under the aegis of the internet, making such critical inquiry a possibility for all manner of voices. In the body of this dissertation, I've several times referenced a site called *Television Tropes and Idioms*. Here fan-critics and writers have assembled an exhaustive collection of tropes, plot patterns, and techniques (not limited to television, despite the site's title); on the page that explicates each trope, the site's readership continually adds to an ongoing list of examples of the trope in literature, film, television, and even fan fiction. Where a literary critic in the academy might describe a textual moment as extradiegetic or intradiegetic, here, a similar moment will be catalogued as Doylist or Watsonian, after the two writers of Sherlock Holmes, one real, the other fictional. Similarly, where we would use the term homoerotic, a TV Troper might affix the same scene with the "Ho Yay" label (short for "homoeroticism, yay!"). While feminist scholars might write pages about the way in which women are frequently portrayed lacking agency in popular cultural narratives, with their lives (and often deaths) read as meaningful only insofar as they affect masculine characters, a TV Troper will simply say the character was refrigerated, a term that originated from the comic-book *Green Lantern*, where the hero's girlfriend was murdered and left in a refrigerator for him to find, but "came to be used more broadly, over time, to refer to any character who is killed off, abused, raped, incapacitated, de-powered, or brainwashed for the sole purpose of motivating another character,"[59] particularly

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[59] See "Stuffed into the Fridge," *Television Tropes and Idioms*, http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/StuffedIntoTheFridge.

female ones. While such terms may seem silly to a wider readership, it should be clear that popular culture is evolving its own language for critical discourse, bringing the tools for a sophisticated and nuanced hermeneutics into the popular arena of the internet's shared playspace, and offering an avenue through which such players can enter into the text, actively correcting and progressively refashioning the stories that have the potential to shape the world in which we live and the realities that we must negotiate.

The tradition of the civic commons is a long and storied one: property that is commonly held for the public good. As we've seen, some scholars have compared the expansive intellectual property doctrines and efforts toward cultural privatization that are so evident today to the enclosure of the agricultural commons that the Tudor regime in early modern England sought to prevent. It's in this spirit that Lawrence Lessig founded the Creative Commons licensing movement, which is predicated upon the following ideology:

> Creative Commons develops, supports, and stewards legal and technical infrastructure that maximizes digital creativity, sharing, and innovation.

Those who seek to make the ownership of ideas discrete have bought into a false narrative of scarcity, believing that ideas are a tangible and exhaustible resource, which is not only untrue, but also a hugely problematic political ideology, one that stifles the free exchange and proliferation of ideas. As sites like *Television Tropes* and archives of fan labor demonstrate, commonly held narrative space, housed by the internet's likewise commonly held cyberspace, is indeed Sidney's "imaginative ground-plot," growing ever more "profitable inventions" that have now become too numerous to count. I want to close, then, by envisioning a future where ownership is not ceded, but shared, founded upon the principle that culture can not be owned singly or linearly. Each text opens new doorways onto a narrative universe; anyone and everyone

should have the freedom to walk through and build what they can envision there, for the betterment and pleasure of all. This pleasure is not a distraction from art, but rather the point of art.

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