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IT'S REAL FOR US:
THE LITERARINESS OF FANFICTION AND ITS USE AS CORRECTIVE FICTION

An Honors Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Graduation with
Undergraduate Research Honors
Georgia State University

2013

by

Lauren Monroe

Committee:

Daniel E. Marshall

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Date

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by
LAUREN MONROE

Under the Direction of Daniel Marshall

ABSTRACT

The focus of this thesis is how fanfiction, an underground subculture of web literature written about popular books, films, television shows, and comics, treats the original works it derives from. In this study I will examine the ways in which fans reshape the original stories of the works they write about, and the ways in which they do not, and speculate the reasons they have chosen to do so. This project examines fanfiction surrounding three young adult novels: *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games*, and *Harry Potter*. I examine each of these works and their respective fanfiction in order to highlight important themes in each work and problems inherent in each story to account for the changes fanfiction writers make in their literature. I have chosen one overarching theme in the fanfiction in each fandom and will explore why fanfiction authors have overwhelmingly chosen to change the source material to suit that theme.

INDEX WORDS: Fanfiction, Young Adult Literature, *Harry Potter*, J.K. Rowling, *The Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins, *Twilight*, Stephanie Meyer

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An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts in English
in the College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University

2013

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DEDICATION

For Laurel, who introduced me to it all.

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Introduction

What is fanfiction and why does it matter?

Fanfiction refers to a massive underground subculture of fan literature written by fans and for fans. Fanfiction authors use the storylines, characters, and settings of their favorite novels, television shows, movies, or comic books and write their own stories about the original work. Fanfiction authors create masterpieces that are a combination of basic adherence to the original characters and plotlines their fiction stems from along with their own ideas. Fanfiction comes in all shapes and sizes. One-shots are one-chapter short stories. Multi-chaps are long, often novel-length stories with many chapters. *AU* stands for *Alternate Universe* in which the characters are placed in a different setting or timeline. Fanfiction that is compliant with “canon” does not alter the original work other than to build on top of it. *Gap-fillers* either continue the story after it ends or consist of scenes that are mentioned but not thoroughly described in the original work. But why are authors writing thousands of pages of online text at a time? Lev Grossman in “The Boy Who Lived Forever” explores the realm of Harry Potter fanfiction. But first he remarks that the fans “don't do it for money. That's not what it's about. The writers write it and put it up online just for the satisfaction. They're fans, but they're not silent, couchbound consumers of media. The culture talks to them, and they talk back to the culture in its own language” (Grossman). Indeed, fanfiction is a collaborative and communicative process. Its online interface allows for rapid publication. Its being published on the internet also allows for near-instant feedback when other fanfiction writers and readers favorite and review works that they particularly enjoy or dislike. Most important, as Grossman emphasizes, fanfiction communicates with its source material. It is an exercise in taking a beloved story and enhancing it. Fans take the stories that they love and mold them to suit their needs. Critics of fanfiction often slate the practice as appropriative; they assert that writing stories about characters and plot lines that already exist, that are not

original to the author, is little more than theft. Barring the fact that true originality is impossible to achieve, the re-telling and re-writing of existing stories is nothing new. It is only with the recent advent of copyrighting that an originality crisis has taken place. Works that are largely “unoriginal” are part of the building blocks of literary canon. Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur* is a translation of the French Vulgate Cycle. A majority of Shakespeare’s plays were adapted from and inspired by earlier works. Even Seth Grahame-Smith’s more recent *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is an adaptation of Jane Austen stories. Adaptive works have been deemed literary for centuries. The way in which an author alters a story speaks volumes about what they find important. Analyzing fanfiction as popular literature can reveal what fans of a given work find important, what they like and dislike about particular stories, and what they are looking for in their fiction.

In this project I will examine the fanfiction in three large online fanfiction communities that each revolve around a popular young adult novel. The *Twilight* series, *The Hunger Games* trilogy, and the *Harry Potter* series have similar target audiences, are popular on a large, global scale, and even share a common fanbase. Examining what fans are changing, or *not* changing, in their fanfiction surrounding these three works reveals what a common, core fanbase enjoys and finds important about the stories they read. More importantly, fanworks can reveal idiosyncrasies in plot and character development in the original work. This project will focus on the degree to which a work is altered, what element of the original work is overwhelmingly changed in fanfiction, and why these fanfiction authors change what they do.

Because the realm of fanfiction is so vast, narrowing the field and choosing what fictions to focus on is difficult without some sort of quantitative measure. As such, I have chosen to focus largely on stories from *fanfiction.net* because it allows users the option to sort by number of favorites, reviews, by length, by character, etc. It also allows users the option

to form groups in a certain fandom for a specific type of story, whether it is a particular pairing, a theme, an alternate-universe, or certain part of the original work that is altered. Thus, I have sorted the fanfictions I am focusing on by popularity (number of favorites and reviews) in order to gauge the types of story-lines, themes, pairings, and character analyses that fans enjoy most. I have sorted through groups first to find one overarching theme in each fandom that fans find interesting and compelling enough to read and write in overwhelming numbers. Although each fandom has a diverse collection of fanfiction spanning multiple themes, each one also displays one or two themes that are overwhelmingly popular over other themes. I have chosen to focus on what I found to be the most popular theme in each fandom and why fans are writing these similar stories in such volumes. Through an exploration of these fanfiction, I plan to pinpoint how fans are talking back to the works they love.

Chapter One

Removing the Fangs *Twilight's* Vampires

The large majority of *Twilight* fanfiction is in a category labeled “AH,” or “All-Human.” These works remove the supernatural element from *Twilight* by making the vampires in the story human. It is an interesting change as one of the defining characteristics of *Twilight* is that the struggle inherent in the romance between Edward and Bella is as a result of Edward’s vampirism; their physical relationship is made difficult because Edward has complete physical power over Bella. Kristine Moruzi reflects on what Edward’s vampirism does for *Twilight*, especially through the lens of postfeminism:

Edward is the vampire of this postfeminist movement because he enables Bella’s sexual exploration while making few demands of his own. His control and containment of his desire present a foil for Bella’s emerging identity as a sexually active adult. Moreover, the eroticism of this series is heightened and furthered by the tensions arising from the human-vampire relationship. Were it not for Edward’s superhuman strength and his overwhelming desire for her blood, the narrative impetus would be much less interesting. By shifting the discussion of sexual intercourse into the supernatural realm, Meyer strategically reframes the discussion to make sexual intimacy too dangerous for Bella, not because of the intercourse itself but because of her lover’s vampirism. This strategy allows Bella to maintain her sexual postfeminist agency while also containing that agency by making it life-threatening. (52)

However, the fanfiction community reveals that a large portion of fans do not believe that Meyer’s story depicts much agency on Bella’s behalf, in large part *because* of Edward’s

vampirism. Edward's vampirism gives him unchallenged physical power over her; the fans are changing that in their fanworks.

A large portion of the popular stories on *Twilight* are re-written versions of the original romance; the only difference is that Edward is changed into a human. This act removes the "otherness" of Edward as well as his supernatural power over Bella. *My Beloved Window* by Muff'Nbutter does just that. The author retains most of the original setting; Bella moves from Phoenix to Forks to live with her father and meets Edward there. Although many of the elements of the original relationship remain, the playing field is significantly evened when Edward becomes human. Edward and Bella's first interactions happen as Edward, who lives across the street from Bella in this story rather than across town, watches Bella through the windows of their respective bedrooms. However, in the original story Edward continues to sneak into Bella's room at night to watch her while she sleeps; his vampirism allows him a stealth that gains him access to her room without her noticing. In this story, the watching is mutual; Bella's relationship with Edward is much more balanced in its beginning stages:

As my attention turned to my beloved window, I noticed that a light had gone on in the room facing mine. There was someone walking around in that room....After a moment, I realized that the someone was a boy... I tried my best not to look, but I couldn't take my eyes away for long... forced myself to go to the window and try to close the curtains, but they were caught on something and wouldn't shut. The person across from me noticed the movement and he paused with his shirt halfway off. I also stood motionless, just staring over at the person whose face I couldn't see. After a minute, he seemed to regain his composure and tossed his shirt across the room. He

walked closer to the window and waved at me. It took me a moment to get over my shock and wave back. (Muff'Nbutter)

Bella and Edward's relationship here is much more consensual, a departure from the tone of the original. Bella is the initiator and it is only after she begins watching that he returns her interest. There is also a sphere of separation between them; Edward does not have the superhuman capability to enter into Bella's room without her knowledge or permission. Instead they stay separated, each in their own room, and are evenly matched in terms of power and behavior. The story also explores Edward's point of view in the beginning stages of the relationship, further leveling the relationship between Bella and Edward. Edward here expresses anxieties about how Bella perceives him; he both enjoys and has anxieties about her scrutiny, an element noticeably absent in the original story. In *Twilight* the reader is only privy to Bella's thoughts and Edward's vampirism gives him an experience, a mystery, and a power that sharply contrasts with Bella's status as a clumsy, anxiety-ridden teenager. In Muff'Nbutter's story, Edward shares that status: "After I showered and put on my clothes, I couldn't help but open my window to see if Isabella was at her window again. I could see her still form in her bed, and was both strangely disappointed and relieved that she wasn't there staring at me. I wished I could have said goodbye, even though I hadn't technically even said 'hello' yet" (Muff'Nbutter). Edward returns Bella's interest but also expresses relief that he is not under her gaze anymore. Edward's relief grants Bella power over Edward that she does not possess in this stage of the original story. Examining both viewpoints equalizes the relationship between them.

However, there are some stories that, even in making Edward human, retain the power imbalance between Edward and Bella. In "The Blessing and the Curse," author

The Black Arrow depicts a controlling Edward and submissive Bella who are more like the original story. However, because Edward is human in this depiction, his controlling nature manifests in different ways. *Twilight* allows Edward's control to be subversive; his control is not necessarily entirely deliberate (although some aspects are) because it is an aspect of who he is. His vampirism grants him the physical advantage over Bella that gives him a controlling element. Making Edward human, however, removes much of this physical advantage and makes Edward's controlling nature more obvious and intentional. In this particular story Bella is somewhat of an adopted daughter to the Cullens, and she has spent her childhood with Edward and his family. Bella still, in having any sort of relationship with Edward, is more focused on and involved in his family than she is with her own, as she is in *Twilight*. However, Edward's control over Bella, which borders on abuse, is implied in one of the first mentions of him:

They were born at the same hospital, and slept their first night on Earth in the hospital, in cribs side by side. They were definitely a strange sort of twins. Bella shook off the disturbing thought as she felt her car's tyres [*sic*] crunching the gravel driveway, and with dizzying relief saw that Edward's car wasn't there. She let out a breath that burned her lungs like acid and felt like she had been granted a reprieve. She could pretend he didn't exist for a while longer.

(The Black Arrow)

In this story, instead of Bella yearning to get to know Edward, she knows him and his controlling nature so intimately that she would like to pretend he doesn't exist. Only a paragraph later, Bella recalls that Edward has viewed her as an object to be manipulated since they were both young: "By sixteen, Edward held her not by the hand, but by the wrist, a human restraint. She could still remember the hot, electric sting of his skin on hers.

'Bella,' Seven year old Edward was saying, 'You are mine. You are my person. Don't argue,' he added, though she had not spoken, 'It won't help. I own you.' Adult Bella, watching this dream through a window in her memory, opened her mouth to scream at her younger self, scream at her to fight back, to drop his hand and sever the connection" (The Black Arrow). Here, Edward's power over Bella is more overt; he openly tells her that he owns her as if she is an object, as if she is lesser. Although this element is present in the original story wherein Bella is depicted, mostly by her own thoughts about herself, as weaker and lesser than her supernatural counterparts, it is heightened in "The Blessing and the Curse." Malin Isaksson and Maria Lindgren Leavenworth remark on how fanfiction often either lessens or heightens elements of their original works, claiming that much *Twilight* fanfiction strives to "re-fang the relatively harmless vampires of Meyer's canon" (140). "The Blessing and the Curse" alters Edward's character to make him more threatening. Although Meyer's Edward has manipulative elements, his power is much more subtle because it is a symptom of his supernatural otherness. The Black Arrow's Edward is depicted as much more harmful and dangerous to Bella to the point that she not only recognizes that he is a potentially toxic presence in her life, she also strives to remove him from it. The author does retain some of Edward's guilt at his having power over Bella, but in this story the power struggle is not accidental; Edward is aware of his controlling nature and is unable to keep it at bay:

I've always known that my kind of love just... crushes people. I've always known how hard it's been for you to bear. So I just let you live a little longer...Even now, I'm so scared of dragging you under again. I'll ruin you. I take your silence and your privacy. I make you feel unsafe. I just wanted you to live free from what has always been a hell for you. (The Black Arrow)

Here Edward specifically states that he knows he makes Bella feel unsafe and cannot control his behavior. Changing Edward from a vampire into a human gives Edward more culpability for his actions; thus, Bella does not see him as quite as harmless as she does in the original story. Because his control over her is psychological more than physical, Bella feels *more* unsafe with an Edward who is human because his manipulation is more deliberate. This fanfiction does not level the playing field between Edward and Bella. Instead, it emphasizes the inequality inherent in the original work and amplifies it; it places more culpability on Edward and gives Bella's character a more realistic wariness of the harm that Edward has the potential to inflict on her. "The Blessing and the Curse" can easily be interpreted as an indictment of the power imbalance inherent in Meyer's story; the story emphasizes the imbalance to illustrate harmful elements of Edward and Bella's relationship that are subtler when explained by Edward's otherness, on his vampirism.

A third story that also makes the vampires human does the opposite of both of the preceding stories. *Blind* by Jayeliwood makes the relationship between Edward and Bella a lot more level than Meyer's depiction while still containing a power imbalance. However, it does turn the tables in that Bella has the physical advantage over Edward because the author makes Edward blind. In this story, Edward is depicted with a disability that grants Bella a lot of the liberties and power that Edward has over her in the original work. Here, Edward has to prove that he is capable of acting independently, something Bella feels forced to do often in *Twilight* with the disconnect between her being human and Edward's being a vampire. Their first interaction angers Edward because Bella assumes that he is incapable of completing certain physical tasks. Bella asks if he would like assistance: "'Would you like some help?' I heard the girl ask in a little voice beside me.... 'Listen, I've gotten along without a ton of help for about eighteen years now. I'm fine. Thanks.'" (Jayeliwood). Here, Edward's rare bout of

anger is a result of his knowledge that he is physically weaker than most of the people he comes in contact with, especially Bella. Manipulation on Edward's part has little impact in this story because of his physical weakness. He often makes comments that what he takes control of in the relationship is a result of the power he feels he lacks as a person with a disability:

"Jesus! Edward it's almost sixty dollars!" She nearly shouted.

"Calm down. It's fine. Remember Bella, I asked you to come with me. It's my treat. I wanted to do this," I tried to soothe her...I cut her off by snatching the ticket away. I scribbled my name carefully at the bottom along with the amount of fifteen dollars for a tip. I hoped it was clear enough to read.

"There." I placed the pen back on the table. Bella was board straight beside me. "Look, I'm sorry. I can't do much but I can do this. Please don't be mad."

(Jayeliwood)

Even when Edward takes control, he expresses concern multiple times for Bella's emotions. He realizes that she is upset that he takes total control in paying the tab for a meal on their first date; he both tries to soothe her and pleads with her outright not to be mad at him. The control that he does take is a direct result of Edward's knowledge that he has very little physical power over Bella. Although some of Edward's desire to take some small control in the relationship may be a reaction to the subverting of the traditional gender roles that are ingrained in *Twilight*, the relationship depicted in *Blind* is, for the most part, much more balanced than the one depicted in the original work. Bella explicitly states, in a conversation with her mother, that she and Edward are equals. Furthermore, both Bella and her mother discuss the fact that the traditional gender roles of the dominant, more physically powerful man and the subservient, weak woman are noticeably absent:

"Why are you dating someone who's blind? He can't take care of you."

"Excuse me?" I growled.

"Sweetheart, let's be honest here. Every woman needs a man that can support her and give her a good life. You shouldn't waste your time on someone who can't." She said this as if was the most natural thing in the world.

"Mother, you may need a baby sitter, but I don't. I care very deeply for Edward. We're equals." (Jayeliwood)

In this story, Bella and the other characters directly address the presence of prescribed gender roles for men and women in a relationship – the exact gender roles that Bella and Edward adhere to faithfully in *Twilight*. *Blind* instead discusses the presence of these gender roles in society in the open, reverses them in the relationship between Bella and Edward, and recognizes the presence of backlash when Edward and Bella combat them. Instead of implicitly weaving these strict gender roles into her story the way Meyer does, Jayeliwood's characters openly discuss their presence and rebel against them. Jayeliwood's characterization of Bella in particular takes the half-hearted attempts Meyer makes at making Bella seem independent (an attempt that is overshadowed by Edward's power and control over Bella due to his vampirism) and brings them to fruition. Meyer often has Bella protest small elements of Edward's control over her. For instance, during the third installment, *Eclipse*, Edward is afraid that Jacob, as a werewolf, does not have control enough over his anger to feel that Bella is safe being around him. Despite all protests from Bella, Edward outwardly prevents her from seeing Jacob during most of the first half of the book. His tactics for keeping her away from Jacob range from literally dismantling her truck so she cannot drive to see him to outwardly kidnapping her for a weekend when he will not be in town and placing her in Alice's keeping so she cannot leave to see Jacob. Bella protests

vehemently at first, but her protests are powerless against the Cullens' supernatural powers and she eventually submits. However, in *Blind*, Bella's protest at her mother's insistence that she needs a man to "take care of her" has an effect because this story treats Bella and Edward as true equals. Bella becomes angry at the suggestion that she needs any help taking care of herself and the implication that she needs a man to take care of her. She does not relent even when her mother continues to refuse to accept her relationship with Edward later in the story. Although occasionally Edward does try to take control of the dynamic, he relents if Bella asks him to or expresses her displeasure: "'And, you're sure you won't let me pay?' He asked, pouting slightly....'I'm sure,' I said firmly. He pouted a little more, then sighed. 'Fine,' (Jayeliwood). Edward's reaction to Bella's protest is near-childlike; it is neither violent nor intimidating as it would have been in *Twilight*. He pouts instead of protesting more violently. Here, it is actually Bella who is firm and unyielding, traits usually attributed to Edward in the original work. In "Negotiating norms of gender and sexuality online," Annbritt Palo and Lena Manderstedt reflect on online communities of *Twilight* fans' reactions to the gender roles that are ingrained so strongly in *Twilight*. They analyze many fans' concerns that readers of *Twilight* will take the borderline abusive, gender-strict relationship between Edward and Bella depicted in the series as normal. The overall conclusion about the strong prescribed gender roles in *Twilight* and Edward's controlling treatment of Bella is that *Twilight* is an overall product of rape culture. They focus particularly on one fan's comments on the series:

This participant not only perceives the relationship between Edward and Bella as abusive, but also implies that she is afraid that this pattern will be considered normal in real life by readers of the *Twilight* series... "It's deeply disturbing to me the stalking, the death threats, and the constant mentioning of

Bella as food is somehow supposed to be romantic. I suppose this is just another product of our rape culture, where we inextricably link sex and violence and the threat of violence is somehow supposed to be endearing.”
(Palo and Manderstedt 152)

The *Twilight* series’ immense popularity presents a valid concern in the case of readers of the series. *Twilight*’s having such an overwhelmingly large and faithful fanbase implies, on the surface level, that readers do indeed consider the relationship normal and that the violent implications of Edward and Bella’s relationship are indeed found endearing by fans. However, *My Beloved Window*, “The Blessing and the Curse,” *Blind*, and a multitude of other fanfiction stories in the *Twilight* fandom indicate otherwise. The overwhelming popularity of all-human fanfiction already removes the supernatural element in *Twilight* that makes the abusive component of Edward and Bella’s relationship more subversive. Thus, authors often make Edward less threatening by making him a more “normal” human boy who is largely respectful of Bella. In the case of *My Beloved Window*, Edward has the potential to exert power over Bella but chooses not to and chooses to respect her as an equal. *Blind* outwardly reverses the power imbalance in *Twilight* and makes Bella the character with physical power over her partner. Although Bella does have unquestionable power over Edward, *Blind* depicts their relationship without any of the toxic power dynamics of *Twilight*. The author keeps the relationship on an equal plane. In the cases where authors do retain the power dynamics inherent in the original relationship between Edward and Bella, authors like The Black Arrow make Edward’s abusive nature more rooted in reality by making his abuse something any human in our world could inflict. In that respect, “The Blessing and the Curse” includes every abusive implication of Edward and Bella’s relationship that *Twilight* cushions with its veil of supernatural creatures and fantastic

situations. Thus, Edward and Bella's relationship is able to be viewed for what it is when the frills are taken away--as an abusive and manipulative one with a severe power imbalance in favor of Edward. The fanfiction that proves the most popular in the *Twilight* fandom consists of stories that fight the abusiveness inherent in *Twilight*, either by making Edward someone who considers Bella an equal by transforming him into a human, or by relating his abusiveness more closely to real-world domestic abuse. The fans seem to feel as if the relationship depicted in *Twilight* is abusive and imbalanced. Thus, they are re-writing the dynamic to either exaggerate the abuse or lessen it.

Chapter Two

A new fight for Katniss: continuing *The Hunger Games*

Another young-adult novel that has gotten similar attention from young-adult fans, and even shares a large part of its main fanbase with *Twilight* is *The Hunger Games*. Although *The Hunger Games* trilogy does address the same audience, its subject matter and treatment of core issues like war, control, and gender is very different. Suzanne Collins's trilogy also has a woman as its main protagonist, and has something a bit like Meyer's love triangle in the *Twilight* series. However, its treatment of these similar themes differs greatly and has an effect on the type of fanfiction being written about it. For instance, just in the realm of gender, where the romance *Twilight* creates revolves around strict gender roles: Edward is strictly masculine and Bella is faithfully feminine, Katniss in *The Hunger Games* is quite gender fluid and, when she adheres to one gender expression, leans towards a masculine one.

Unlike in *Twilight*, the plot in *The Hunger Games* revolves much less around the love triangle depicted in it if at all. Katniss's indecision about whether she loves Peeta, Gale, both, or neither takes a back seat to the main action of the plot. Thus, the fanfiction that grows from *The Hunger Games* series explores different themes. In fact, *Hunger Games* fanfiction rarely deviates drastically from the canon, or the original story. Although there are multiple explanations for the series' fanfiction being so faithful to the book, the likely culprit, especially when *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games* are compared, is that *The Hunger Games* is a more balanced story in and of itself. The heroine of the story does not adhere to any one gender role and if she prefers one gender expression, it is one that traditionally defies her biological sex; although she does have similar romantic quandaries as Bella, Katniss ignores romantic worries in favor of focusing on the conflicts at hand that she deems more important.

The plot itself rarely focuses on Katniss's potential love interests; instead of the main plot being a romance, romance takes a back seat to a complex narrative about oppression, war, death, and revolution. Thus, fiction being written about it normally consists of "gap-fillers," in which writers explore a gap in the story that the original author does not cover, or expansions in which the writers continue the story somewhere after the original author left off. The fanfiction is almost always canon-compliant. Instead of changing elements of *The Hunger Games*, fans merely pick up where the original author left off. Most of the popular fanfiction surrounding *The Hunger Games* series explores the relationship between Katniss and Peeta after the end of the final book of the trilogy, *Mockingjay*. Indeed, Suzanne Collins ends the trilogy having vaguely described that, although Peeta has been "hijacked," or mentally abused to be afraid of Katniss, that he recovers and that the two "grow back together" (452). She later reveals that they have two children together years after the end of *Mockingjay* (455). However, the information she gives on Katniss's life after the events of the trilogy is limited. It is not likely coincidence that three of the most popular stories on *fanfiction.net* in *The Hunger Games* fandom all center around Katniss and Peeta's relationship post-*Mockingjay*. Two of them, *Grow Together* by Miss Scarlett 05 and "The End Is The Beginning" by spanglemaker9 chronicle Katniss and Peeta's growing back together after the events of the trilogy, something that is only hinted at by Collins. These stories retain much of Katniss and Peeta's original characterization even in exploring their relationship. Even when Miss Scarlett 05 claims in an author's note that in *Grow Together* "the trilogy is finished, Katniss has had her adventures and now her story is more of a romance," the narrative still contains many elements that made Katniss's navigating romance in the original series difficult for her.

For instance, part of Katniss's trouble in growing back together with Peeta in this story is her difficulty coping with the Hunger Games and with Peeta's hijacking and subsequent attempt to kill her immediately after his hijacking. In one instance, after Katniss begins to allow Peeta to sleep in the bed with her again and takes comfort in it like she did in *Catching Fire*, Katniss wakes from a nightmare about Peeta:

"Katniss wake up."

I open my eyes. Peeta is sitting with me in my bed. He's holding one of my arms. It's dark. My throat hurts. I'm struggling for breath. I clutch my throat and look at him.

"Don't come near me"...

"What happened in your nightmare? Did something hurt you?"

"You strangled me." (Miss Scarlett 05)

Romantic fanfiction in the *Hunger Games* series is still heavily influenced and driven by an outside plot. Although *Growing Together* strives to depict a romance, the romance itself does not present the power imbalance found in *Twilight*. The relationship is affected by outside issues. Even in writing a *Hunger Games* romance, authors stay true to the tone of the original work in that romance does not drive the plot.

In *Growing Together*, Katniss and Peeta's romantic relationship is thoroughly explored, but the problems they face in their relationship are driven by events that take place in Collins's trilogy. Even after deciding that she is comfortable in a relationship with Peeta, Miss Scarlett 05's Katniss is reticent to move forward too quickly and is often still preoccupied with dealing with the aftermath of war rather than attending to romantic issues: "After months, I'm finally happy with our arrangement. Apparently it only makes him want more. And more isn't something I'm sure I can offer at the moment" (Miss Scarlett 05). In

this story, Katniss does not leap into marriage or even a steady relationship even after she decides she's happy with Peeta. Miss Scarlett 05 may have written a romance, but she retains Katniss's reticence to become emotionally involved too quickly and her prioritizing other matters in life before romance. Indeed, the story often inputs scenes detailing the rebuilding of bomb-ravaged District 12, of the lingering presence of a less-powerful but largely intact Capitol.

"Katniss! Peeta!" the neon clad trio cries. "Just a minute of your time!"

They've already had too much of my time. No more. What they're doing in bombed out District 12, I don't know, but I'm not sticking around to find out....The reporters descend upon District 12 en masse for the next days. I first catch a glimpse of them just two days after the Mockingjay Miracle Worker segment aired. They all look young and have a Capitol air to them. The crew could be camped out for weeks like what happened with our return two years ago. I won't be able to leave the house without being asked to announce baby names. They'll want exclusives—each more uncomfortable than the last. I'd hoped now that the war is over there would be something more compelling than teenagers fresh out of the mental hospital.

The first crew piles haphazardly out of the train with cameras, cables and light reflectors. In dusty District 12, they're hard to miss. (Miss Scarlett 05)

Miss Scarlett 05's fanfiction does not deviate from Collins's commitment to plot before romance. Her exploration of Peeta and Katniss's romance becomes an exploration on the aftermath of war. She addresses the rebuilding of bombed District 12, the remnants of Capitol culture that remain even after the Capitol is overthrown, Peeta and Katniss's

overcoming mental scars left by two Hunger Games and a war, and the country's remaining fascination with Katniss as the figurehead of that war.

Spanglemaker9's "The End Is The Beginning" is a one-shot, or a one-chapter short story, that achieves largely the same thing that *Grow Together* does – it details Katniss's overcoming her post traumatic stress disorder and her reconciling with Peeta. Like Collins's series and *Grow Together*, Katniss's growing back together with Peeta is framed by her coping with the aftereffects of war. In spanglemaker9's story, Katniss does not even immediately acknowledge Peeta when he returns to District 12: "Peeta... it's too complicated and thinking about him is a thorny place that I get lost in and can't get back out of. So I don't" (spanglemaker9). Katniss outright rejects interacting with Peeta when he returns, preferring to stay away from anything and anyone that has painful memories attached to them.

However, both authors link Katniss's growing closer with Peeta to her recovery. As Katniss recovers, she becomes closer with Peeta as a result. Katniss begins to accept Peeta's presence and gradually welcomes him back into her life. At first she limits her interaction with him to a few minutes every day: "Peeta is there and not there. He's present, but only in the periphery of my life, like Haymitch. Like how I am to them, too, I suppose...before long, I am part of a community again, whether I want it or not. I spend the whole long summer lost in the woods, learning to exist again" (spanglemaker9). Katniss's slowly welcoming Peeta back is tied to her overall recovery.

As she learns to interact with her community again and begins to find something to do with her days, communication and reconciliation with Peeta follows. Her permitting romance back into her life does not occur until she recovers on her own first. Jessica Miller explains in her exploration of gender in the relationship between Peeta and Katniss that Katniss is too self-reliant to allow herself to be swayed by anyone but herself: "Although she

occasionally seeks counsel, she's too independent to be told what to do by anyone, whether it's an admirer like Gale or Peeta, a mentor like Haymitch, or a political leader like President Snow or Alma Coin" (Miller 148). Katniss's psychological recovery is not dependent on Peeta; her burgeoning relationship with Peeta is dependent on how much she has recovered on her own. Spanglemaker9's depiction of Katniss and Peeta's growing together is often focused on Peeta's progress, along with Katniss's recovery, as contingent upon how much she is willing to reconcile with him:

One day, as we try to remember a detail about one of the miners, Peeta suggests we write it all down, like we used to with my mother's book. He says we're the closest thing to a history District 12 will ever have. It makes sense, and let's face it; it's another thing to fill my days, to keep me busy, to keep my mind from lingering on things it shouldn't.

So every day, after our meal, we spread out on my kitchen table. I write and Peeta draws. We put it all down, everything we can remember about District 12; the people, the events, starting with our earliest memories and working forward. It absorbs us, and I realize that this helps Peeta as much as it helps me...

He finds me again in those memories. The me of the burnt bread and the dandelions. I can almost see it happen in his eyes. I watch his shoulders relax day by day. I see his smile come quicker and last longer. He starts to look more and more like the Peeta I knew in our first Games and less like the haunted shell returned to me in 13. (spanglemaker 9)

Katniss initially views making the book with Peeta as something to fill her days and a practical measure to record the history of District 12 that was nearly lost. She realizes that,

for her psychological recovery, she needs things to keep her busy as the days progress. When she takes note of how she and Peeta are growing back together, she places the action largely on Peeta, detailing how it helps Peeta as much as her. She does not find Peeta in those memories, Peeta finds her. The impetus is on him and it is only after she decides that Peeta is enough like the old Peeta she knew before his hijacking, after she deems him safe enough to interact with, that Katniss spends more time with him.

Even so, Katniss treats her growing relationship with Peeta as a strategic measure of self-preservation at first instead of a romantic relationship: “I don’t really think about what I’m doing, or what it means. I just know that we are better this way than we are separately. And after all we’ve lived through, if we can find some comfort in each other’s’ company, then we should. It would be foolish not to” (spanglemaker9). Katniss does not initially speak about her affection for Peeta. She instead focuses on the fact that they are mutually able to provide one another comfort, emphasizing that it would be foolish to remain separate when they are psychologically and emotionally more whole together. Spanglemaker9’s Katniss is true to Collins’s Katniss in that she focuses first on survival; all other matters are secondary. Abigail Myers, in an article about why Katniss chooses Peeta, reflects on how Katniss chooses Peeta because he gives her the best chance for survival, over Gale:

For Katniss, choosing Gale would be an implicit endorsement of his plot with Coin that killed her sister and other innocent young people. That’s a choice she cannot abide...Because Katniss remains true to her nature by choosing Peeta, her choice makes sense, rationally, and morally...Gale is correct when he says that Katniss would choose the one that would best help her to survive--but it’s not just physically. Peeta helps her to survive as herself, with her values intact. (143)

Gale does indeed tell Peeta during the events of *Mockingjay* that her choice will not be one necessarily driven by emotion. Gale does seem to know Katniss better than Peeta does, well enough to know that how well he knows her will not be a factor in whom she ultimately chooses: "Katniss will pick whoever she thinks she can't survive without" (*Mockingjay* 385). Thus, spanglemaker9's Katniss is true to the original in that she treats Peeta first as a means of survival and second as a romantic partner.

However, Katniss eventually recognizes that she loves Peeta outside of her need for him to survive. Spanglemaker9 develops what Collins only summarized at the end of *Mockingjay*: that Katniss and Peeta eventually fall in love with each other in reality, separate from the performed, false relationship they were forced into in the public eye of the Capitol, and that Katniss does have true affection for Peeta. Collins does indeed say explicitly that Katniss loves Peeta at the very end of *Mockingjay*: "When he whispers, 'You love me. Real or not real?' I tell him, 'Real.'" (453). However, Collins fails to detail how that love developed. She leaves the reader with only a brief summary that does not detail how Katniss and Peeta's relationship changes from a strained one, with Katniss and Peeta both psychologically damaged at the end of a war, to a loving one. Spanglemaker9's fiction addresses that lack of development. The author explores Katniss's opening up to Peeta gradually, detailing that Katniss is slow to accept him back into her life: "Then, slowly, I reach out for him, some part of him. I never reach for Peeta. He's always done the reaching. But I reach for him, and my fingers find his shirt, and I tug" (Spanglemaker9). Spanglemaker9 details where and how the change in Katniss takes place, exploring how she changes in the way she interacts with Peeta. "The End Is The Beginning" details the moment where the affection between Peeta and Katniss becomes mutual and Katniss seeks love and companionship from Peeta. It is an important development that isn't extensively detailed in

the original series. The reader rarely sees Katniss reach out to Peeta; as Katniss states in “The End Is The Beginning,” Peeta usually does the reaching. But Spanglemaker9 details what Collins only summarizes: that eventually Katniss does reach out to Peeta on her own.

Spanglemaker9 concludes the story where Collins ends the last chapter of *Mockingjay* before the epilogue, where Katniss tells Peeta that she does indeed love him. However, instead of affirming what Peeta suspects, that her loving him is “real,” Spanglemaker9’s Katniss echoes the exchange in *Mockingjay*, but also directly tells Peeta she loves him: “So afterwards...he asks me, once and for all, if this is real, if we are real, I tell him it is. I tell him ‘It’s real.’ I tell him ‘I love you.’ I promise him ‘Always’” (Spanglemaker9). “The End Is The Beginning” explicitly states what is implied in *Mockingjay*. The fanfiction surrounding Katniss and Peeta’s relationship in the *Hunger Games* fandom fills a gap in the development of their relationship. Collins tells her readers that Peeta and Katniss grow back together, but she doesn’t show them. Thus, fanfiction writers fill the gap in writing how Peeta and Katniss overcome the aftereffects of war and how their previously strained relationship becomes a loving one.

Another popular fanfiction that continues Collins’s story after *Mockingjay* also explores Peeta and Katniss’s relationship, but instead of detailing how Katniss reconciles her relationship with Peeta, *Worse Games To Play* by Belmione explores Katniss’s decision to have children with Peeta. Collins details in her epilogue that Katniss and Peeta have two children together, which defies Katniss’s assertion earlier in the trilogy that she will never have children: “‘I never want to have kids,’ I say. ‘I might. If I didn’t live here,’ says Gale. ‘But you do,’ I say, irritated” (*The Hunger Games* 11). Katniss’s initial decision not to have children is clearly influenced by where she lives at the beginning of the series, in an

impoverished District 12 controlled by the Capitol, a world that Katniss does not deem fit to bring a child of hers into.

Collins reveals in the epilogue that Katniss eventually agrees to have children, but that she always has anxieties about her decision: “It took five, ten, fifteen years for me to agree. But Peeta wanted them so badly. When I first felt her stirring inside of me, I was consumed with a terror that felt as old as life itself. Only the joy of holding her in my arms could tame it. Carrying him was a little easier, but not much” (*Mockingjay* 454). In another difference from *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games*’ treatment of Katniss’s pregnancy avoids forcing Katniss into a traditionally feminine role when she becomes a mother. Instead, Katniss retains the gender fluidity that she displays throughout the course of the trilogy. Katniss moves freely between gender spheres and often errs on the side of a masculine gender expression rather than a feminine one. Katniss’s pregnancy and transition into motherhood in *Worse Games to Play* is something of a foil to Bella from the *Twilight* series. Just as *The Hunger Games* trilogy places more priority on plot and gives romance less of a role than the *Twilight* series, Katniss as a mother defies the traditional tropes of the physically helpless pregnant woman and the wistful, soft mother that Bella embodies. Katniss’s decision to have children with Peeta is largely fueled by Peeta’s asking for them, not her desire to have children. Katniss is not traditionally maternal in that she is openly oppositional at first to the idea of children. Jessica Miller explores how Katniss’s treatment of pregnancy, especially in the context of her relationship with Peeta, subverts gender roles:

Bucking the popular cultural trend of the helpless girlfriend (Bella in the *Twilight* Saga) who needs to be saved by her man (Edward), Collins presents Katniss as the savior, the strong one. Yet Katniss still needs Peeta's warmth and decency. Even their postwar domestic life bucks gender expectations:

Peeta begs for children and Katniss relents; Peeta bakes and Katniss hunts. The romance between Katniss and Peeta offers a welcome foil to the many romances in popular culture that hew closely to the expectations of stereotypical femininity and masculinity. (Miller 155)

In *Worse Games to Play*, Belmione stays true to Collins's description in that it takes Katniss fifteen years to relent to Peeta's begging.

Katniss's response to Peeta the first time he asks her about children is true to the stubborn nature Katniss has throughout the events of Collins's trilogy: "When Peeta first asked me about it, I gave him a short, flat 'no,' and rolled over, my back to him. He didn't say anything in return. He knows not to argue with me. My decisions are always definitive, always final..." (Belmione). Katniss does not entertain the thought the first time that Peeta asks for children, true to the Katniss that told Gale that she would never have children. However, when Peeta continues to press it, Belmione elaborates on why Katniss is still reticent to have children even though the Capitol is no longer in control of District 12:

Every time he mentions it, it's the same nightmare. Always the same. I dream of reaping day. I dream that the Games never stopped. I dream of mentoring child after child, and watching them all die year after year after year. Bloody, wasteful deaths. I awaken shaking enough to wake Peeta. His arms tighten around me sleepily; he whispers kind words to me. He doesn't realize he's causing this particular nightmare.

The next time he mentions it, I say more than just 'no.' I try to explain.

"Peeta, I can't. You know it scares me."

"Yes. But I also think it would make you happy. I really do."

"It would make you happy. I'd never stop being afraid."

"Katniss, I really don't think anything bad would happen. I don't."

"Every time you even talk about it, I have nightmares about it. Please, Peeta, leave it be." (Belmione)

In *Worse Games to Play* Katniss harbors the mental scars from war that result in her nervousness to have children. Even though she intellectually understands that the Capitol no longer has influence over the Districts and the dangers that would threaten her potential children have been eliminated, Katniss retains the same insecurities about having children. Her nightmares about children take her back to a Capitol-era Panem; Katniss has residual anxieties that are difficult to shake even after the Capitol has been overthrown.

As such, Katniss's agreeing to have children is not because she overcomes her anxiety. In *Worse Games to Play*, Katniss's decision to have children is fueled by her desire to be kind to Peeta. Katniss expresses that she feels guilty for saying no to Peeta and allow him to ask her whether her decision has changed once a year. Katniss tells him no for fifteen years, and when she does change her mind, her agreeing to have children is a gesture of kindness towards Peeta, not an indication that her anxieties have been alleviated:

I go upstairs, take off my father's old hunting jacket and hang it back up. I twiddle my thumbs for a few minutes on the bed, just staring at the ceiling. I am still terrified. I will always be terrified. I was waiting to see if I'd ever feel better about it. I never will. But I try to come up with more reasons to say no to Peeta, reasons beyond just, "I'm scared." And I can't. I can't anymore. I think back on all these years with Peeta. I love Peeta. I think, though, that sometimes I'm too cold to Peeta. Sometimes I think I'm mean to Peeta. This one gesture will be one of the few really nice things I've ever done just for him. He's done more than enough for me. (Belmione)

Katniss admits that she does not feel any better about having children, that it still frightens her and will always frighten her. Katniss relents and acquiesces to having children because she feels as though Peeta is unfailingly kind to her and she feels as if she does not return his affection enough. She feels guilty for her terse and stubborn nature in light of Peeta's warmth and patience. *Worse Games to Play* provides an explanation as to why Katniss agrees to have children with Peeta when it is out of character for Katniss in light of the rest of the trilogy.

Belmione provides details about Katniss's change of heart that Collins does not cover in her short epilogue. However, Katniss's selflessness does not come without consequence. Her reaction when she becomes pregnant reveals the residual anxiety that she suffers:

"What! What was I supposed to do? You look at me like you do, with that face you do, and you ask me all sweet and quiet and patient for fifteen years running, and I know you want a baby so bad you're going to burst, and I just want you to be happy and I don't feel like I'm nice enough to you and I wanted to give you this one thing, so I said yes, and now I'm freaking out because I didn't really think about it on my end! Okay?"

"You did it for me?"

I nod, embarrassed that there are tears on my face now.

"Katniss, I wanted you to be happy, too. I didn't want you to do it if you didn't want to. That was the whole point of asking the way I did." (Belmione)

Belmione explores how Katniss copes with her pregnancy when she still harbors anxieties about having children. *Worse Games to Play* attempts to fill the gap that Collins leaves in merely summarizing Katniss's decision to have children with Peeta. It explores how Katniss copes psychologically with having children when it is established at the very beginning of the

series she has anxieties about it. Belmione addresses first Katniss's anxieties that Collins depicts in the epilogue, about her initial fear when she feels her daughter moving inside her. Katniss confides in the doctor that lives in District 12, something that she is reluctant to do in both the trilogy and in *Worse Games to Play*:

I can't fall apart. I don't have that luxury. I can't end up like my mother did- in so many pieces she couldn't even take care of us. [...] I tell her about my crippling anxiety...I tell her about my reticence to have children in the first place. She nods, frowning lightly.

"Well, the anxiety doesn't surprise me, especially if you were somewhat reluctant to have children beforehand. Serving as the figurehead in a war at age seventeen certainly doesn't help on the anxiety front either. The movement feels invasive and foreign. All your fears play right into it. But, of course, that's beside the point. The point is to get this so you can manage it."

(Belmione)

Belmione depicts Katniss's anxieties, but more so emphasizes the need for Katniss to overcome them. Although Katniss is reluctant to confide in a doctor, her burgeoning sense of responsibility for her child spurs her to ask anyway. It is the sort of sacrificial behavior that characterized her relationship with Prim.

Belmione often makes links between Katniss's parental treatment of Prim in the books and Katniss's relationship with her daughter, Iris. Because *Worse Games to Play* is one of the few works explored in this project that is currently unfinished and is an ongoing work in progress, Katniss's interaction with her son is limited thus far in the story. However, the portion of the story that is completed depicts many of the intricacies of Katniss's relationship with her daughter. In the very first chapter, the link between Katniss's parental,

protective nature over children like Rue and Prim and her unborn child is emphasized: "I've never told him why I didn't want children. Peeta has probably just assumed that I'm not the motherly type. My problem is that I am. I care too much. All I can think about is how I can't have my child end up like Rue or Prim," (Belmione). The comparison continues after the child is born. In one poignant scene, Katniss tells her infant daughter about Prim, telling Iris: "There was one more person. I loved her as much as I love you [...] Her name was Prim and she was my baby just like you are," (Belmione). Belmione attempts to explain how a Katniss that insists throughout the series that she does not want children reacts to motherhood by reminding the reader of how Katniss's parental nature manifests in the series through her caring for Prim. Throughout *Worse Games to Play*, Katniss even refers to Iris often as "little duck," the same nickname she used with Prim during the course of the book trilogy.

As the story progresses, Katniss is openly protective over Iris similar to the way Katniss is protective of Prim in the series. However, a unique aspect of Katniss's relationship with her children is her reticence for them to find out about her involvement in the Hunger Games. Even after the Capitol is overthrown, Katniss expresses concerns about how her children will cope with the history of Capitol oppression, with the Hunger Games, and how she and Peeta were an integral part of their abolishment. As Iris grows older, Belmione reveals that even simple questions that any child might ask a parent can be difficult to explain and often trigger bad memories for Peeta and Katniss. Iris asks why Peeta has a prosthetic leg in one scene, and in another wonders where his psychological breakdowns and hallucinations come from. While Belmione's Peeta normally handles his daughter's questions fairly well, Katniss does not cope as well. In one scene, Iris begins to understand the concept of death while on a hunting trip with her mother. Katniss attempts to explain to a questioning Iris that

killing animals isn't bad if done with a purpose in mind, if the killing is not mindless and is done for food and resources. Iris's follow-up catches Katniss off guard:

"Can't kill people."

I can feel my throat close up a little.

"No. You should never kill another person."

She pauses once more.

"You never killed people?" she asks, matter-of-fact, pointing to me. I stop moving. My two-year-old child has just asked me if I've ever killed anyone. She is confident that I haven't. My mouth is desert-dry. What do I tell her? I can't scare her. More importantly, I have to make sure she knows how grievous a crime it really is. How can I do that if I tell her the truth?

(Belmione)

Katniss must cope with the psychological baggage that results in her children finding out about her violent past. She must attempt to find a way to tell her children about the Hunger Games and the war while ensuring that they understand the gravity of violence against other human beings.

Later in the story Katniss must also cope with her guilt over the violence she perpetrated in the Hunger Games. In one instance, Iris strays into the woods without any supervision and without her parents' permission. When she is tracked by coywolves, a coyote and wolf hybrid in line the genetic animal mutations found in both arenas in the book trilogy, Katniss must fight and protect Iris in the same ways she protected herself and Peeta in the games. After Katniss has fought and killed the pack of coywolves, she must cope with Iris's reaction:

I'm in a hazy middle ground between the now and a series of flashbacks from my first games. [...] Iris watches me with wide eyes, stock-still. She flinches a bit as I come closer and I stop for a moment. I realize now what I must look like to her. Right now, I am no longer her serious, stiff, but quietly loving mama. I probably look faintly like I remember myself looking directly after my first games. Dirty, covered in blood, half-crazed, and undeniably feral. She has just seen what I'm really capable of. (Belmione)

Belmione stays true to the anxieties Katniss voices in Collins's epilogue about her children finding out about the Hunger Games. Collins's Katniss asks "How can I tell them about that world without frightening them to death?" (454). Belmione's Katniss is forced to understand that elements of her past will frighten her children and she will have to field their questions whether she is ready for them or not. However, despite her difficulty in coming to terms with her children discovering her past, Belmione's Katniss does begin to cope with, if not a positive outlook, a practical one:

She's holding me together right now. Her and Peeta both. I don't worry tonight about nightmares, about her being worried about me. I can't change it. She's going to worry about us, and she's going to find out that her parents are troubled people. She already is. I can either worry myself to death about it, or accept it. After watching her take everything in stride, coping better than I ever have, I choose to accept it. I even let her help. I fall asleep with her curled up at my front, Peeta pressed up against my back and feel truly safe for the first time in almost eighteen years. (Belmione)

Worse Games to Play both depicts Katniss's experience having children that Collins's epilogue summarizes and moves past it. It answers the question that Katniss asks in Collins's

epilogue when Katniss wonders how she will introduce her children to the world she lived in as a child. In *Worse Games to Play*, Katniss learns not only to cope with the fact that her children will learn about her past, but accepts it and lets her children help her recover, much the way Peeta helps her in the original series.

The majority of fanfiction written for *The Hunger Games* does not alter the original trilogy. Seemingly, fans do not find many elements of the original story lacking. Instead, the fanfiction retains most elements of the original plot and expands the *Hunger Games* universe by exploring the characters' lives after the course of the novels. *Hunger Games* fanfiction addresses a need for closure, as the novels end with little more than a summary of what happens to Katniss later in life. While *Twilight* fanfiction changes much more of its source material because fans are addressing the inequality inherent in Bella and Edward's relationship, *Hunger Games* fanfiction, as a general rule, remains canon compliant and merely extends the series to offer more detail and explanation of how Katniss ultimately recovers from the events of the book series.

Chapter Three

How Parents for Harry and Slytherin House Changes Everything

The last work that has a vast online community of fanfiction readers and writers, arguably the largest fanfiction community in any fandom on any fanfiction archive, is the Harry Potter fandom. The Harry Potter fandom is the largest, most prolific fanfiction community explored in this project; fanfiction surrounding *Harry Potter* is widely diverse. However, the most popular fanfiction plotlines in the Harry Potter fandom are fairly obvious despite the diversity of the fanfiction being written in the fandom. The most reviewed, favored, and shared stories in the Harry Potter fandom usually surround one of two subjects – either an emphasis on alternative parental figures for Harry, or an exploration of Harry’s relationship with Slytherin house as a result of his link to Lord Voldemort. Fanfiction writers overwhelmingly provide Harry with more present and reliable parental figures and/or create a more well-rounded depiction of Slytherin house and its occupants, painting a more complex relationship between Harry and characters like Draco Malfoy and Severus Snape.

The most reviewed fanfiction on *fanfiction.net* in the Harry Potter category is a story called *An Aunt’s Love* originally by Shadowsylvia and “adopted” (edited and continued) by Emma Lipardi. Emma Lipardi provides Harry with a parent figure in the form of his aunt. In her book *The Riddles of Harry Potter*, Shira Wolosky remarks on how parent figures are a central tenet of the main plot of the series: “Harry’s story through the books is very much a history of his changing relationship with the parents he lost” (Wolosky 107). The story *An Aunt’s Love* takes place in the summer after the events of *Order of the Phoenix* in which Harry is coping with the death of his godfather, Sirius Black.

In *An Aunt’s Love*, Harry’s Aunt Petunia takes an interest in Harry’s well-being. Wolosky comments on Harry’s relationship with the Dursleys: “Harry, raised by the

Dursleys, has the privilege of realizing the fantasy Freud called the “family romance,” that the awful people living with him are not his real parents” (107). *An Aunt’s Love*, however, completely subverts the family romance in making Petunia slowly sympathize with Harry. The story begins in Petunia’s point of view, describing her distrust of and frustration with Albus Dumbledore. Petunia receives a letter from Dumbledore explaining Harry’s difficult experience at the end of the school year. He advises Petunia to allow Harry to mourn the death of his godfather. Petunia, however, dislikes Dumbledore’s hands-off approach to helping Harry cope:

What did he mean, that she should allow the boy to grieve? The boy wasn't grieving! He was killing himself slowly through means of apathy! Apathy about simple things like food, sleep, even hygiene. She re-folded the letter, grateful, not for the first time in her life that Albus Dumbledore wasn't in front of her at that moment. She had known that something like this would happen if she allowed her nephew to go to that school! She had known very well how meddling that man could be. Hadn't he meddled with her own life when she was a child? (Emma Lipardi)

Petunia is already distrustful of Albus Dumbledore from when her sister Lily attended Hogwarts. Petunia views Hogwarts as a harmful influence and dislikes being told to leave Harry alone when he is clearly coping poorly.

Although the story is placed between books five and six in the series, Petunia’s distrust of Dumbledore foreshadows the revelation of his duplicitous nature in *The Deathly Hallows*. When Dumbledore sends Harry a letter detailing that he will be taken to Grimmauld Place to take sanctuary with the Order of the Phoenix, Harry watches Petunia’s reaction with disbelief:

"Who says you're going? I'm still your guardian, and he can't fight the law."

Harry smirked at her, looking far too old for his years.

"Dumbledore is above the law. Didn't you know that?"

Petunia frowned.

"If that man, or anyone connected to him, so much as lays a finger on this house without my permission, he or she will find out exactly why it is not wise to tamper with Petunia Dursley."

Harry sat back a little. Where in the world had that come from? Neglect and dislike for years, and now this? He shook his head, wondering if he were dreaming. (Emma Lipardi)

Harry can no longer retain the delusion of "the family romance" where Aunt Petunia is concerned because she begins to advocate for his well-being. Instead of Aunt Petunia openly disliking Harry for little reason other than his being magical rather than muggle, Emma Lipardi casts Petunia's cold treatment of Harry early in life as a protective measure, however extreme and misguided.

Petunia takes matters into her own hands early in the story. She knows that Voldemort is looking for Harry and, therefore, she takes Harry away to a mental institution to help him recover from his depression. Moreover, she keeps the location of the institution from him, allowing him to sleep in the car on the way, all to throw Voldemort off of his trail:

This would be much easier with him asleep. If he wanted to write to someone and tell him where he was, he would not be able to. Also, Voldemort would have a harder time trying to find him if Harry had no idea exactly where in the country he was. Dumbledore's attempts would be laughable. She almost wished that she could be a fly on the wall when that wizard found out what

she had done. She would pay good money to see such a "powerful wizard" outsmarted by a Muggle! (Emma Lipardi)

Petunia attempts to save Harry's life by making the link between Voldemort and Harry's mind useless to Voldemort. If Harry does not know where he is, Voldemort cannot use Harry's mind against him. Petunia later reveals that her prejudice towards magic is not unfounded. Emma Lipardi adds complexity to Petunia's dislike of magic that is largely flat and directionless in the book series. Instead of her prejudice being a result of jealousy and lack of knowledge, Petunia dislikes the danger inherent in practicing magic:

"I don't like magic, or the ways of wizards. I've made that no secret. Vernon and I had a feeling of what would happen if you were exposed to it. We tried our best to keep you from it, that unnaturalness." Harry glared at her. "We tried our best, and it wasn't good enough. Off you went, only eleven years old, to a world you didn't understand and no one in our family could possibly explain." She stopped, not sure of what to say next.

"You kept the knowledge of what I am..."

"For your safety!" She shrieked. "We knew! That headmaster of yours told us what would happen when it was time for you to go to school. We knew that you would be in constant danger from the minute you knew about it." (Emma Lipardi)

Petunia goes on to reveal that she has an extensive knowledge of the dangers and intricacies of the Wizarding world. Petunia reveals that she and Vernon were originally going to try to send Harry to a muggle high school to keep him safe, and that they would be able to then gradually show Harry how proud they were of him. Emma Lipardi's Dursleys are given a motivation for their harsh treatment of Harry. Their distance and ill-temper is made to be a

protective mechanism. Petunia continues by revealing to Harry that she knows the danger he has gotten into each year at Hogwarts through year five and how strongly it has affected her:

"You fought against a basilisk! With a sword. If it had not been for that bird, you would have died!"

"You knew?" Harry asked.

"Of course we knew! Every time that, that, MAN sent us a letter, I was sure that it was announcing your oh-so-unfortunate death!" She said in a fierce whisper [...] "I don't think you realized how he was preparing you for something. You've almost died so many times that I'm afraid that I have lost count. No one who has raised a child from one year old should have to count how many times that that child has been in danger." (Emma Lipardi)

Petunia not only reveals that her distaste for magic is a result of the number of times her family has been put in danger by it, she openly expresses worry for Harry and acts upon it. She does not sit by and watch him be placed back in danger by Albus Dumbledore. Petunia's prediction is also frighteningly insightful for Harry's muggle guardian. She echoes Snape's question in *The Deathly Hallows* long before Harry's seventh year: "You have kept him alive so that he can die at the right moment?" (Rowling 551). Petunia realizes that Dumbledore does not have Harry's best interests in mind, takes action and places Harry's safety into her own hands.

Later in the story, Emma Lipardi reveals that Aunt Petunia's worry is not a new development. Harry finds Aunt Petunia's journal and reads about the night she found him on her doorstep:

It's happened. My sister met her end from that horrible wizard. She died.[...]

My nephew appeared on the doorstep, as though placed there by her magic [...] He's such a quiet baby. I wonder if he remembers what he has seen? He looks like his father, with black hair that will be messy one day, no doubt. His eyes are Lily's. I feel like she's watching me. Dumbledore wrote a note telling me to explain what happened to Harry when he is old enough to understand. When is a child old enough to understand that an evil wizard killed his parents and then tried to kill him? Two? Three? Eight? How can I tell him that his parents were murdered? Killed? In front of him? How can I tell him that he is a wizard? How in the world am I going to raise a magic child? (Emma Lipardi)

Petunia has worried about Harry since he was dropped off at her doorstep. Emma Lipardi's Petunia is more dynamic; her coldness towards Harry early in his life is explained as a front and a protective measure. Petunia has no idea how to cope with telling Harry that his parents were killed in front of him, similar to the way Katniss is unsure how to tell her children about the Hunger Games in *Worse Games to Play*. Eventually, Aunt Petunia's concern for Harry carries over and influences Vernon and Dudley Dursley. In one scene, Dumbledore and Snape come to the Dursleys' house to retrieve Harry and take him to Hogwarts. Petunia insists that Hogwarts is where Voldemort consistently looks for and finds Harry and that she's sent Harry to a muggle school for the year to keep him safe. Vernon defends his wife when Dumbledore refuses to listen to her: "I believe my wife told you the boy will not be going back to your school [...] My wife told me he almost died. No more, Dumbledore. He is our nephew, our responsibility, and now we will do what we like, including keeping him from the magic you're so fond of." Vernon Dursley stepped forward and glared at Dumbledore. 'Get out,'" (Emma Lipardi). When Snape and Dumbledore protest, Vernon

steps in to defend both Petunia and Harry. *An Aunt's Love* overturns one of the defining aspects of the *Harry Potter* series. Emma Lipardi grants complexity and sympathy to the Dursleys, particularly Petunia, altering one of more disturbing aspects of the series. The Dursleys prove protective and even loving towards Harry; their meanness towards Harry early in the series is revealed to be a mechanism meant to protect Harry. Thus, Harry gains two parent figures that he lacked in the series. Where Vernon and Petunia fail Harry in the book series, they become the parents they should have been to him in *An Aunt's Love*.

The other preeminent theme explored by Harry Potter fanfiction writers surrounds Harry's link with Lord Voldemort and his almost being sorted into Slytherin. Fanfiction authors in the Harry Potter fandom often write stories that explore what might happen if Harry were closer with the members of Slytherin house. The same stories often sort Harry into a house other than Gryffindor, which serves to eliminate the polarization of Slytherin vs. Gryffindor that causes Harry to dismiss his Slytherin brethren as evil in the original series. These Slytherin-centric stories serve to add dimensions to characters whose complexities and motivations are often overlooked.

Another work filed under Emma Lipardi that is, this time, entirely written by her, sends Harry back in time from the events of *Deathly Hallows* to his first year at Hogwarts. In *What is Right*, Harry is killed by Voldemort at the end of his seventh year and is given a chance to go back and alter the events of the Harry Potter series. He retains all of his memories and is sent back to his first year. When Harry goes back, the Sorting Hat refuses to sort him as it recognizes that Harry harbors an adult's brain and memories and that he is merely masquerading as a first-year Hogwarts student. As such, Harry is granted the ability to choose his own house by Dumbledore since the Sorting Hat refuses to sort him.

Harry picks neither Gryffindor nor Slytherin. Instead, he sorts himself into Ravenclaw to explain his immense knowledge he has through his memories of his last life and as an attempt to keep himself out of the polarization between Gryffindor and Slytherin. Ravenclaw affords Harry a freedom that the other houses do not. Harry remarks early on about how Snape in particular treats him differently when he is sorted into Ravenclaw:

That was the largest and most disturbing change in this new life. Snape had changed. He did not treat Harry the way he had the first time around. He had mostly ignored Harry, though he did treat Harry the same as the other students in his Ravenclaw/Hufflepuff class. Indifferent. While that would have been fine for Harry before coming back to his eleven year old self, he needed to be close to Snape. Snape was the key to everything that would happen later on.

(Emma Lipardi)

Sorting Harry into Ravenclaw directly affects his relationship with the people who are closest to Voldemort and, thus, to his defeat. Indeed, Harry becomes friends with even Malfoy and his family during the course of *What is Right*. He remarks at one point that Snape and Malfoy are the only two people at Hogwarts who treat him normally: “Draco Malfoy was another story. Harry had only two people in the whole of Hogwarts he could count on to treat him normally. Snape and Malfoy. Draco Malfoy was different, so long as he was not around anyone else besides Harry. When they were alone, he was a carefree eleven year old with a penchant for badgering Harry into a game of chess, a quick walk outside, or a few rounds of Exploding Snap” (Emma Lipardi). Harry develops a friendship with Draco Malfoy which serves to add humanity to Draco’s character that is not as obvious in the book series.

However, Harry also remains friends with Hermione and cultivates a new friendship with Terry Boot in Ravenclaw. Being sorted into Ravenclaw results in Harry having a more

diverse group of friends. He does not limit his friend base to his classmates in Gryffindor House. Although prior knowledge of the war aids Harry in ensuring that he does make friends with the “right” people, his being in a different house eases his passage. Ravenclaw allows Harry to befriend both Gryffindors and Slytherins, two houses that harbor influential people on both sides of the war.

Harry’s friendship with Malfoy also gains him sympathy with Malfoy’s family. Malfoy’s father in particular remarks on how he does not blame Harry for Voldemort’s fall, a drastic change from the original series where Harry was sorted into Gryffindor: “‘Boy’ is the key word, Severus. Why would Harry Potter have anything to do with the Dark Lord’s fall? His parents, however, I do hold responsible.’ Malfoy explained” (Emma Lipardi). Lucius Malfoy’s relationship with Harry as his son’s friend directly changes his opinion of Harry. Instead of blaming Harry for Voldemort’s fall, he instead blames his parents. Harry’s becoming friends with Slytherins makes both parties more understanding. Both Harry and the Malfoys no longer see one another as an “other,” as an enemy and no more. Harry and the Malfoys have a more dynamic understanding of one another in *What is Right* and it gives more complexity to both sides of the conflict.

Harry’s relationship with Snape changes drastically as well. Because Harry has the memories of seven years of Hogwarts schooling, he is able to play at being a potions prodigy as a first year. Thus, Harry is able get closer to Snape:

Harry had figured out that he could gain Snape’s trust through the man’s profession. After all, Harry had at least ten years of potions knowledge stuffed into his head, as well as any number of books. Enough to make him appear a bit of a prodigy. It was enough to catch the suspicion and attention of the Potions Master. Harry had approached the man after class one day and asked a

few advanced questions. He acted frustrated when Snape had said that Harry was not yet ready to brew such things in class. Harry then asked if it was possible to receive independent instruction. Snape had been intrigued enough to agree to lessons outside the classroom. (Emma Lipardi)

Harry develops a friendship with Snape by displaying an interest in and a talent for potions. Harry's mission is successful. Snape not only agrees to teach Harry, he becomes something of a mentor for him. As the story progresses, Snape becomes openly protective of Harry, as displayed when a former unexpectedly Death Eater attacks Harry when he visits the Malfoys' house. While the Malfoys are displeased about the attack and admonish the rogue Death Eater, Snape steps in as a protector: "Tsk. That doesn't look good, Mr. Potter." Snape said as he rearranged Harry so that Harry's uninjured side rested against Snape's shoulder. "Let's get you away from him." [...] Harry wrapped his arms around Snape and held on. He knew Snape would dismember anyone who dared touch Harry now" (Emma Lipardi). Harry's growing closer to Snape makes him wonder how his experience at Hogwarts would've differed if he had been sorted into another house to begin with. Harry is especially pensive concerning Snape's treatment of him had he been sorted into Slytherin like the Sorting Hat suggested:

Harry stared at Snape. He idly wondered if this was what the man would have been like if he had chosen Slytherin all those years ago when the Sorting Hat had suggested it. Would Snape still have been so supportive? Would Snape have fought for Harry? Would Snape have listened to three frantic first years about the Philosopher's Stone? The possibilities of what could have been rattled through him and he shuddered. (Emma Lipardi)

Being allies with Snape would have made defeating Voldemort simpler for Harry. He would not have been under the false impression that Snape was working against him, would not

have had to go through Dumbledore to communicate worries about Voldemort, would likely have been discouraged from taking matters into his own hands as Dumbledore encouraged him, and would have had an ally who was a spy for Voldemort the entire time. Indeed, things might have been very different had Harry been sorted into Slytherin to begin with. The last fanfiction in this project explores just that.

Better Be Slytherin by jharad17 re-writes Harry's first year at Hogwarts. However, instead of being sorted into Gryffindor, Harry is sorted into Slytherin. *Better Be Slytherin* serves as a combination of the important elements in *An Aunt's Love* and *What Is Right*. Harry is sorted into Slytherin to begin with, as the Harry in *What Is Right* wonders about. Snape serves as a father figure for Harry, switching from someone who is largely cold to Harry in the books, like Petunia, to one who is outwardly protective of him. This story is one of the most popular in a genre of Harry Potter fiction called "Severitus," which refers to fiction in which Snape acts as a friend, mentor, and/or father figure for Harry.

These fictions have strong basis in the books as Snape proves an unlikely protective figure at the end of *Deathly Hallows*. Although Snape does not necessarily care about Harry himself, he does care about keeping Lily Potter's son safe and is outraged when he discovers that Dumbledore has been waiting for the right moment to kill him:

"Now you tell me you have been raising him like a pig for slaughter--"

"But this is touching, Severus," said Dumbledore seriously. "Have you grown to care for the boy, after all?"

"For *him*?" shouted Snape. "*Expecto patronum!*"

From the tip of his wand burst the silver doe: she landed on the office floor, bounded once across the office and soared out of the window. Dumbledore

watched her fly away, and as her silvery glow faded she turned back to Snape, and his eyes were full of tears.

“After all this time?”

“Always,” said Snape. (Rowling 551-552)

Snape cares deeply about Harry as Lily’s son. Even though he does not expressly care about Harry as his own person, his ties to Lily make him invaluable to Snape. Thus, Snape becomes an unorthodox father figure similar to Dumbledore. In “Adult Heroism and Role Models in the Harry Potter Novels,” Maria Nikolajeva remarks on how Snape becomes an equal, if not better father figure than Dumbledore by the end of the novels: “By calling his son Albus Severus, Harry pays tribute to the two headmasters of Hogwarts, and his chief parental figures, making the two equally esteemed, perhaps too lenient towards Dumbledore. In fact, Dumbledore and Snape have by now almost reversed roles as positive and negative father figures” (Nikolajeva 204). Although Snape becomes a positive father figure, neither Dumbledore nor Snape show much care for Harry himself. Dumbledore cares about Harry to keep him alive until it is the correct time for Voldemort to kill him. Snape cares about Harry as Lily’s son, but not as Harry.

Better Be Slytherin alters the way that Snape feels about Harry in order to make him a father figure who does truly care about Harry. The process is slow, true to Snape’s character. Snape does not immediately accept Harry; he still openly dislikes him at first just as he does in the books. In one scene, Snape marvels with the rest of Hogwarts about where Harry has been sorted: “I can't believe he's a Slytherin. Yes, well, neither could Severus. By the time he reached his seventh years, he was furious, though carefully hiding his emotions behind a well-constructed mask. The Brat had been here no more than twelve hours, had broken rules already and still, he was a hero. It was obscene” (jharad17). Even when Harry is sorted into

Slytherin, Snape harbors resentment towards him. Characters often reference how they think Harry should have been sorted into Gryffindor. Indeed, Harry's character is not altered much. In a recreation of their first flying lesson that takes place in the books, jharad17 does not change Harry's behavior. When Neville is picked on by Malfoy, he reacts the exact same way:

"Did you see his face, the great lump?" [...]

"Shut up, Draco, he was hurt. I'd like to see you do better with a broken wrist."

"What do you care about stupid Longbottom?" Draco asked. "Sticking up for crybabies now, too?" He turned his sneer on Millicent, and she glared back at him.

The blood rushed to Harry's face. "Just because I don't pick on people who don't deserve—"

"Maybe you should've been a Gryffindork, Potter," Zabini mocked."

(jharad17)

Both Harry and Snape retain the characterizations from the original series. Harry retains his Gryffindor qualities and Snape is still resentful at first towards Harry.

However, *Better Be Slytherin* deviates in subsequent chapters and begins to emphasize a parent/child type relationship between Harry and Snape. At first Snape's concern about Harry's well-being manifests in his sense of duty towards Harry as a member of his house. He expresses frustration with Dumbledore's occasional interference as the headmaster and states that "no matter his feelings toward the boy, Potter was a Slytherin and thus he had a duty towards him" (jharad17). However, a turning point for Snape arises when he learns how the Dursleys were abusive caretakers and did not adequately take care of Harry

for the first eleven years of his life. Snape's reaction is outwardly sympathetic: "It was no good. He couldn't work up a decent gut full of bile against the boy, not after what he'd heard . . . and what he'd seen" (jharad 17). Thereafter, Snape begins to take an interest in Harry's health. He demands updates from Madam Pomfrey about Harry's nutrition (her original complaint being that Harry was malnourished). Harry also collaborates with Snape in trying to keep the Philosopher's Stone from Quirrell. Harry tips Snape off that "Fluffy likes music" (jharad17). Harry also beats Snape down the trap door and Snape must follow him to protect him from Voldemort. Snape is the one who rescues Harry after his battle with Professor Quirrell and Voldemort: "And then the dark figure was crouched over him, with dark hair hanging in worried dark eyes. 'Harry, Harry, stay with me, you foolish child. Don't move . . .'" (jharad17). Jharad17 replaces Dumbledore with Snape as Harry's main father figure at Hogwarts. True to the end of the series, Snape has Harry's best interests in mind more so than Dumbledore. Snape becomes angry when Dumbledore grants Slytherin house points for Harry's defeat of Professor Quirrell and his finding the Philosopher's Stone:

Snape sighed again, but his dark eyes met Harry's, and there was true, almost frantic, grief there. Worry. "Because he is egging you on! By awarding you points for that suicidal adventure, he is encouraging you to act in like fashion in the future. But I'll have none of it. I have promised to watch over you, Harry Potter, and to make sure you stay safe and sane through your years at Hogwarts. I will not let that meddling codger send you on more fools' errands where you're more likely to die than not. Is that understood?" (jharad17)

Snape is able to predict Dumbledore's intent earlier in this series because he becomes close to Harry. Snape realizes quickly that Dumbledore is encouraging Harry to meddle in affairs involving Voldemort, picking up on the fact that Dumbledore may have ulterior motives.

Jharad17 addresses the need for Snape's role as a father figure to be explored more extensively. Thus *Better Be Slytherin's* Snape cares for Harry as his own person and openly looks out for Harry rather than doing so from the sidelines as he does in the books. *Better Be Slytherin* addresses the Harry Potter fandom's need to explore the Slytherin side of Harry and his relationship with Slytherin as well as the lack of parental figures Harry has throughout the course of the novels. A large portion of Harry Potter fanfiction addresses one or both of those defining aspects of the book: Harry's link to Voldemort and Slytherin house and his lack of adequate parental figures. Harry Potter fanfiction and speculates on what it would have been like for the Boy Who Lived, how the course of his life would've been altered, if things had been different.

Conclusion

Is fanfiction literature?

The fanworks surrounding each of the three young adult book series have distinct plotlines and themes that are overwhelmingly popular within each fandom. Each alteration speaks back to the original work, voicing what fans find lacking, or what they don't, in each work. *Twilight* fans consistently make their vampires human, particularly Edward. In a series wherein the romance between Edward and Bella is the main driver of the plot, the inequality inherent in the relationship is masked by Edward's vampirism in the original work.

However, fans are taking note of the inequality. They are either changing it by making Edward a milder human, or even by giving Edward a physical disadvantage from Bella to equalize the relationship. If the power imbalance still exists, it is consciously emphasized by making Edward human. *Twilight* fans are saying that there is inequality in the main romance of the series and that either Edward and Bella need to be on a more equal plain, or that the abuse inherent in the relationship need not be masked with a veneer of supernatural intrigue.

Hunger Games fans are barely altering their source material at all. The story that is driven much more by action and plot rather than romance, paired with the gender fluidity of Katniss as opposed to *Twilight's* Bella seems to demand little change to *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Inasmuch as they are not altering it, Collins's story is an example of what fans like to see: complex, realistic plot lines that explore issues relevant to our culture such as violence, war, and oppression; plotlines that don't focus wholly on romance; well-developed, idiosyncratic characters; and a lack of restrictive gender roles in favor of gender fluidity. What the fans feel is lacking is closure at the end of *The Hunger Games* series. Collins ties up a lot of her loose ends as she has Peeta and Katniss reconcile and indicates that they eventually have two children together. However, she does not explain how Peeta and Katniss

get there from the strained and psychologically troubled place the reader leaves them in at the end of *Mockingjay*. What *Hunger Games* fans truly want is more and, as such, they are writing continuations of Collins's story that merely expand her world rather than altering it.

Harry Potter fans recognize a severe lack of strong parental figures in Harry's story as well as a lack of development and complexity surrounding Harry's "enemies" in Slytherin to whom he is inextricably connected through Voldemort. Thus, Potterheads are taking characters that fail to be adequate parent figures in the main series and giving them a second chance. They make the Dursleys more attentive guardians for Harry; they explore the possibilities of Harry being sorted into different houses and befriending, or at least attempting to understand, his Slytherin brethren rather than alienating them. Most often, Potterheads explore both by examining Snape as a father figure for Harry, writing fiction in which Harry and Snape both attempt to understand and care for one another rather than remaining enemies as a result of a painful shared history that drives them apart in the original series.

In conclusion, what are fans overwhelmingly looking for in young adult fiction? Less restrictive gender roles? Closure at the end of novels? Prominent parent figures where there is a lack thereof and more complex, human villains? The fans of young adult literature want that and more. They want, well, everything. The important thing is that, through writing fanfiction, they are able to get it. They are able to mold works to suit their specific needs, able to speak back to beloved literature with their own literature. The fans want everything. And instead of waiting for someone else to write it, they are taking the matter into their own hands and doing it themselves. Above all, fanfiction authors know how to speak back to the works they love. There are books they want to read. So instead of waiting for them, fans are writing them. And people are noticing. With the advent of more and more fanfiction writers becoming published, paid authors, like *Fifty Shades of Grey* author E.L. James and *The*

Mortal Instruments series author Cassandra Clare, fanfiction and their authors will continue to grow in popularity. Fanfiction authors are turning a deaf ear to those who tell them that fanfiction is not original literature, not real literature. Fanfiction authors reject the notion that one form of literature is more legitimate, more “real” than another. We’re talking to a literature that we love through its own medium, through a literature written for fans by fans, that is just as legitimate, just as real. It’s fanfiction. And it’s real for us.

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