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Fanfiction Reviews and Academic Literacy: Potential Impacts and Implications

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FANFICTION REVIEWS AND ACADEMIC LITERACY: POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND IMPLICATIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study is meant to elucidate how fanfiction-related activities can incorporate many types of critical review, to call attention to what has been overlooked as significant forms of learning, and to understand and take advantage of the opportunities fanfiction's unconventional writing affords in lieu of more deliberate learning environments. This thesis was undertaken due to the significant gap in work done by aca-fan — a portmanteau of *academic* and *fan*— scholars who have strong links to the fanfiction community and culture. The aspects explored are the technical writing skills and techniques demonstrated in fanfiction reviews, the influence of the nontraditional online learning environment, the rhetorical strategies that reviewers use to give feedback, the significant categories of things that reviewers comment on, and the value of skills taught peer-to-peer in this manner. The results of my research suggest that peer review in a relaxed, non-academic context leads to improved confidence and skill among a wide demographic range. This thesis proposes that fanfiction writing, reading, and reviewing supports learning. The evidence suggests that it be incorporated where applicable in formal classroom learning to supplement traditional understandings of grammar, syntax, tone, and the use of universal tropes.

This study is dedicated to all of my fanfiction mentors and editors, past and present, who

encouraged me to come out of my shell, be brave, and tell a story that I would want to read, and

to my loyal readers, who enjoy and also enhance my self-indulgent inner universe.

Special thanks go to the *Dragonball Multiverse* community wherein I first floated the idea of

writing my own fanfiction seriously, and its English section's moderators and regular

commenters, who formed my first readerbase, and continue to support me today.

To my friends and editors, particularly American Vigor, davidstarlingm, DeadlyChestnut,

Devilman, Elbadj, Renalto Lifecraft, Saucemonkey, and SwanOfWar, thanks for being the best

DBZ nerd friends I could ever ask for.   (˜ŎꓴŎ˜)~♡

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS, & DEFINITIONS

Aca-fan — a portmanteau of *academic* and *fan*, describing one who is both

AGM — abbreviation for the *Dragonball Z* fanfiction *A Good Man*

AU — abbreviation for *alternate universe*, a genre of fanfiction where events diverge subtly or strongly from canon

Fanfic — fanfiction

FF.net — common abbreviation for www.fanfiction.net

DBZ — common abbreviation for the series *Dragonball Z*

DMCA — Digital Millennium Copyright Act

Doujinshi — Japanese fancomics made for-profit

ELLs — English language learners

Fanon — information or characterization that has never been confirmed in canon but is widely accepted as such by fans

Headcanon — information or characterization that has never been confirmed in canon but is accepted as such by an individual or group of fans

ICTs — information and communication technologies

MMORPGs — Massive multiplayer online role-playing games

NML —New media literacy

OC — original character

Shoujo — A genre of manga aimed towards a young female audience

Shounen — A genre of manga aimed towards a young male audience

SoD — abbreviation for the *Dragonball Z* fanfiction *Savior of Demons*

WaW — abbreviation for Writing about Writing

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The first chapter highlights the exigence and importance of my study by briefly examining the superficial origins of fanfiction, then presenting my research questions. The following chapter, the second, dives deep into the history of both fanfiction and academic response to it to provide a comprehensive base of knowledge. In Chapter 3 I introduce my theoretical frame and methods of data collection, as well as explain why I chose these methods. Chapter 4 presents the complete body of data I obtained over the course of this study in the form of questionnaire statistics and deep analysis of chapter reviews on a single story. Chapter five presents the gross results of my findings, while Chapter 6 explains the pedagogical ramifications of those findings.

Between these formal chapters, I offer interchapters wherein I reflect on my personal thoughts and experiences while writing the chapter. These are markedly less formal on purpose, as they represent a somewhat casual dialogue with the reader. For this reason, material contained in the interchapters will certainly be more impassioned and biased, but also will give insight into my thought processes and actions. There may be trace amounts of excessive fangirling, though I have tried to restrain myself and keep it to a minimum. (⌐‿⌐)ᵁ

CHAPTER 1: BEGINNING TO DIG IN
THE RHETORICAL SANDBOX

<u>Introduction</u>

Fanfiction, more than a mere pastime or time-waste, is now garnering interest among teachers, who wonder if its utility as an exercise can be harnessed scholastically. Part of this stems from students' disinterest, frustration, or apathetic view towards scholastic writing, as epitomized in the observation that "[w]hen young people find school spaces limiting, those passionate about writing turn to other spaces" (Lammers et al., 2015, p. 277). Rosinski (2016) found that writers of non-academic texts "showed more rhetorical sensitivity (who to write, when, in what medium, how) in their self-sponsored writing than in their academic writing" (p. 266) as well as showing far more interest in their self-sponsored writing when it contained some perceived agency — a trait they universally did not associate with purely academic, assignment-based writing.

From Rich's *New York Times* article (2008), which for many readers was their first encounter with the term, to Bode's (2008) symposium, explaining the phenomenon from a professional writer's perspective, to Doctorow's (2007) earlier magazine article praising it as a portal to better writing, fanfiction — the process of using copyrighted characters to tell an original story — has been controversial, its usefulness argued, dismissed, or championed for many reasons. "Recent years have brought us a wide range of adaptations, translations, & transformations – at times they use the source as a mere inspiration, at others they critically talk back to the text" (Busse, as cited in Böck et al., 2017, p. 127), but not all remix writing is created equal in the eyes of society — particularly those who create copyrighted material, and those in academia who teach with it. Tosenberger (2014) makes a hard-hitting statement, declaring that

"[e]ven if the levels of emotional engagement and some of the fannish behaviors may be similar in both groups, the fact that sports fandom is coded as 'normal' and media fandoms as 'deviant' means that these types of fandoms relate to the culture at large in radically different ways" (p. 6). As Littleton (2011) notes, "fanfiction and its creators have also traditionally been marginalized by academia as being derivative works not worth full attention" (p. 21). Tosenberger (2014) further laments that "Many of the best fan stories (as well as many of the mediocre and the worst) are completely unpublishable for reasons that have nothing to do with nebulous assessments of literary quality, and everything to do with the fact that fanfiction is often so deeply embedded within a specific community that it is practically incomprehensible to those who don't share exactly the same set of references" (pp.1-2). While some mediums host to fanfiction are more or less mainstream, and thus easier for the general public to understand, others are highly obscure, and are received differently. As Tosenberger (2014) wryly writes, "Fannishness, by definition, has always implied something extreme, intense, more powerful than simple appreciation […] [h]owever, not all fans are created equal, and not all forms of fannishness receive the same level of cultural approbation" (p. 6).

The work of Black (2005-2009) is particularly important for its pedagogical implications — using fanfiction as a writing tool or creative writing exercise has been questioned due to knee-jerk responses related to the "novelty" of it as a remix genre, but her work shows that, within reason, it can be used to stimulate interest and cultivate adeptness. Rosinski (2016) writes, "[w]hile the more common knee-jerk reaction seems to be assuming that self-sponsored digital writing negatively affects more formal kinds of academic or even professional writing, it is possible that the reverse occurs as well, that the self-sponsored digital writing that students engage in so frequently might have a positive effect, or could have a positive effect, on their

academic writing" (p. 247). Aside from the social ramifications of destigmatizing fanfiction, academic interest such as Black's (2005) extensive, often introspective look at literacy through fanfiction informs this study as well.

The emerging perspective of fanfiction writing as a rhetorical form has been prevalent in recent research, especially in the work of Black (2005), but a specific focus on it as a literacy aid is under-researched at this time, as most fanfiction-related articles focus on the legality of the genre, rather than its ability to impart improved literacy skills. While "[t]he earliest forms of fan fiction date back to fan art and fanzines created by science fiction fans in the early 1930's" (Lammers, 2011, p. 5), fanfiction exists in the modern sense as a multimodal experience through digital writing, visual imagery in the form of fanart, and other forms of rhetoric such as videos, flash animation, sculpting, etc. The origins of fanfiction lay in the pen-and-paper medium (including so-called "drawer fiction," private work not meant to be shared or distributed), but "[t]hough it has come a long way from its roots […] to its digital age, the essence of fanfiction remains the same: fans of texts creating new adventures for the characters and universes they love" (Littleton, 2011, pp. 30-31). "Fan fiction thus harks back to older models of creativity as it resists the idea that beloved characters or places could (or should) be owned" (Busse, 2017, p. 129), giving rise to a microcosm of universes inside every budding writer (or fan's) head, waiting to be shared for the pure sake of storytelling.

There is an interesting insight into fanfiction as being closer situated to drama and staged theatrics than to any literary genre, according to Busse's (2017) interpretation of Coppa's (2006) quote: "in literary terms, fan fiction's repetition is strange; in theatre, stories are retold all the time" (p. 134). This makes sense for veteran readers of fanfiction, who often experience

4

characters as costumes, templates, or molds upon which to impose their own, often more

original, stories. In much the same way an actor might put on a mask and costume to become

Julius Caesar, Hamlet, or Hamilton in different performances, fanfiction writers put well-known

characters into different scenarios, remaking them for different audiences' tastes. The plethora

of activities that lend themselves to fanfiction stimulate both right and left brain creativity

making teacher evaluation of writing samples more meaningful. At the same time, through

exploring fanfiction, students receive feedback from the community as a whole, and improve

their writing skills in an environment outside of formal scholastic training, which will be the

primary focus of this study.

Fanfiction remains strange and ever-changing in its literary placement; and the question

as to what it *is* remains ambiguous, though I will attempt to further define it later in my thesis via

the operational definitions of my questionnaire's respondents. How they define fanfiction will

serve to educate those unfamiliar with the term, who may not be exposed to the genre beyond the

often-biased presentation in legal settings, or the sterilized arms-length definition presented in

op-ed pieces. Is it shameless plagiarism and copyright theft? Though early alarmists had the

knee-jerk reaction of "yes," later scholars and lawyers have relented from their initial umbrage at

this new form of compelling media. Perhaps the best way to understand fanfiction is to become

involved and immersed in it, and develop one's own definition. I view fanfiction as its own

chimerical beast — whatever a writer makes of it. For the purposes of this study, I concretely

define fanfiction as any non-profit, fictional, literary content based upon copyrighted material

that explores themes and/or ideas not explored via the originating medium. This meshes well

with the definition provided by Lammers et al. (2015): "[f]anfiction as a larger genre can be

understood as a massive endeavor in borrowing—from established stories, characters, and

cultural forms" (p. 282). This "borrowing" is at the heart of fanfiction. Pugh (2005) reflects that one of their mailing list acquaintances mused that "people wrote fanfic because they wanted either 'more of' their source material or 'more from' it" (p. 19), and it is this "want" that leads to the subsequent borrowing. To want to borrow a work in the first place, it must be compelling, at least in some way to some people. An empathetic character is a work of clever literary artistry, but "[t]hat a writer can create fictional characters who come alive so fully that readers feel they know them, can understand their motives, predict their actions, continue their stories and grieve when they 'die' […] [t]hat, surely, is as close to God as any author can come[;] [b]ut once that has happened, they can no longer be solely 'my characters'" (Pugh 2005, p. 17). What often occurs then is a sordid sort of "custody battle" between authors and fans, over the characters that both parties profess to love like children.

Perhaps fanfiction can be best described by what it does, and what it compels readers to do, as Busse (2017) opines: "[f]an fiction, at its base, is about processes of reading, and yet as readers become writers, they begin competing for authorial possession if not of the words, then of the ideas, characters, and tropes" (p. 128). Besides this, "conventions and norms within FFN facilitate the writing itself […] [a]s legitimized practices, genre conventions such as one-shot writing, borrowing, and character pairings represent shared expectations for the fanfiction abstract audience (Lammers et al., 2015, p.281), leading to a highly stylized standard of participatory consumption. One example of these legitimized practices is the prerequisite of knowing the source material and existing fan sentiment before attempting to write a fanfiction on it. Akin to doing background research and an extensive literature review before writing an article, "in order to read and fully appreciate any given work of fanfiction, one should also have an understanding of the body of discourse within that fandom" (Tosenberger, 2014, p. 13). An

6

invaluable aspect of this is knowledge of both canon and fanon. *Canon* is the documented framework of the official story and all associated characters. It is by its nature restrictive, whether by genre, in-universe physics/logic, and other factors, the violation of which can be tantamount to treasonous disrespect in some fan circles. However, rather than being an obstacle, these restrictions more often serve as a challenge to writers. Pugh (2005) writes that "fanfic writers suggest that the more sophisticated, complete and internally consistent the canon, the harder it is to write originally and creatively within it — in much the same way that mediocre books sometimes make better films than great ones, because they give the film-maker more scope for his own imagination — and interpretation" (pp. 40-41). The operative term here is "interpretation," and this is where *fanon* comes in: "[n]ow and again, a fanfic writer's addition to canon seems so apposite to other writers in that fanfic universe that it becomes 'fanon' — i.e. although it was never part of the canon it is generally accepted and used by other writers" (Pugh 2005, p. 41). Of course, there is always the danger of diverting too much, taking the story too far from canon, but as Coleman (2010) notes from Anne Kustritz's work, "the primary reason authors write fan fiction is to improve upon the original texts from which they draw, especially when 'the concept and the characters are not being fully exploited by the source product'" (374). (p. 97). The driving force is usually some dearth of creativity on the part of canon, whether major or minor, that fanfiction authors take upon themselves to amend. "If the original scriptwriters fail to explore ideas or relationships adequately," says Pugh (2005), "they leave space for fanfic to do it; if on the other hand they spell everything out, there is little space left

[…] [h]oles and inconsistencies in plot lines tempt fanfic writers to try to resolve them" (pp. 40-41). How writers fill in those holes is one of the popular focuses of fanfiction studies.

As important as defining what fanfiction is, any study of it warrants a brief explanation of its *appeal*, the thing that draws so many millions to write not-for-profit stories instead of, say, making money writing original fiction like mainstream published authors. Part of the appeal and draw to fanfiction is the unresolved "what if..?" often left behind by a canon author. Either through death, apathy, or genre restriction, a character's backstory is left untold, or a plotline unresolved. Fanfiction rescues the reader from forever yearning for closure, as it often encompasses reams of material on secondary, tertiary, or even dark horse background character favorites that the canon could never realistically deliver. Far from being shoehorned or pigeonholed into one form or another, "fanfiction can be a prequel, sequel, retelling, pastiche, or none of the above; fanfiction can show characters in their original universe or transport them to another time, place, dimension, or reality" (Tosenberger, 2014, p. 16). In this sense, it is less aggressive appropriation and more a loving cataloguing, restoration, and reshaping of the canon texts. As Busse writes, "[f]an fiction by definition is not only intertextual with but also bound by source text and, in most cases, by community expectations" (p. 134). In a similar vein, Tosenberger (2014) writes about fanfiction that "[a]ll recursive literature depends upon a reader familiar with the text being referenced […] [w]riting about preexisting characters and plots does close down certain avenues of artistic inquiry, but more than compensates by opening up a whole host of other artistic directions not open to 'original' fiction" (p. 15). Deviate from canon in fanfiction and there had best be an explanation for it. Despite how lawless and freewheeling online fanfic communities might seem, "structures do exist that impact how knowledge is

transformed and how power and control shape pedagogic communication in these online spaces" (Lammers, 2011, p. 122). While creativity and experimentation is allowed and encouraged, straying too far from established personalities (known as OOC or Out of Character) is deeply frowned upon in most communities. To put it succinctly: "[t]o function as fan fiction, certain expectations must be met, be they characters, setting, or, in fact, narrative tropes and story lines" (Busse, 2017, p. 135). While there's nothing wrong with thinking outside the box in regards to character behavior and actions within the narrative, if fic writers ignore established canon traits, or arbitrarily change defining characteristics, "they run the risk of alienating readers who are experts on and zealots about those rules […] [i]f they acknowledge the divergent elements, they also run the risk of alienating readers, but can make these differences work as conflicts within the narrative. (Flynn 2010, p. 133). In this vein, "[m]ost articles portrayed fanfiction as additional, if unofficial, extensions to existing intellectual properties" (Berkowitz, 2012, p. 202). The factor that goes hand-in-hand with fanfiction's appeal is its medium. "Online fan spaces create a culture of their own and must communicate the norms and expectations to members using the technology available" (Lammers, 2011, p. 151), leading to a unique online environment.

The decision to pursue this area of study, specifically literacy and increased confidence through fanfiction, was a decidedly personal pursuit for me as an author, because I am a longtime member of the fanfiction community, albeit one who only in the past few years embarked on her own fanfiction-writing project. Like many Millennials, I began reading fanfiction at a young age, mostly as a way to supplement my explorations into specific fandoms. At first there was no dedicated platform that I committed to, but a college art class that required students to create a DeviantArt account meant that on Jun 2nd, 2006, I joined the well-known art community. It was

9

here that I encountered the artwork of user ruga-rell, who did lineart illustrations for a *Dragonball Z* (DBZ) fanfiction called *Honor Trip* by an author called American Vigor. Insinuating myself into American Vigor's project by offering to color ruga-rell's artwork, I soon found myself giving Vigor advice and suggestions on the story itself, to the point of influencing major decisions as an editor. He was impressed by my creativity and editing work, and encouraged me to begin writing myself. I joined Fanfiction.net in July of 2008, so that I could read, favorite, and review stories, but it would be a few years before I got up the courage to write my own. Instead, I was active mostly in reading and reviewing. As of this writing, I've penned 372 signed reviews, mostly for DBZ fanfictions.

On January 4th, 2013, I submitted my first official fanfiction, a companion side-story for *Honor Trip*. At only 11,518 words, it paled in comparison to my later writing, but it was well received and reviewed by fans of the parent story. Spurred by the votes of confidence from the community, I published my premier work, *Savior of Demons*, on June 30th, 2013. This has been my constant artistic outpouring from that day, with over thirty chapters, over 200,000 views worldwide, and over 1000 individual reviews written for it. I also see myself as fulfilling a typical observation made by Littleton (2011), whereby "[m]embers of fanfiction communities often begin as readers of fanfiction, and then become responders of fanfiction, before some choose to write and post their own stories" (p. 8). As I outlined in a personal post on a FF.net forum (Weiler, 2015), the obsession began even earlier than that:

> For me...*Savior of Demons* had literally been in my head for over a decade. It
> started as a dumb little fan-idea, but as it marinated in my brain, and I grew more
> mature, it changed. So then, I had a rough outline, of where I wanted it to go. I

had no ending in mind, just very vivid scenes playing in my head — like scenes from the anime, playing in my head. I anguished and worried about writing it, which is why it took so long for me to start writing. In hindsight, this was a good thing. If I'd started writing as a teen, it would've been angsty teenage drivel, and very forgettable in a sea of similar fanfic garbage. So I had an idea, roughly, and I was also lucky enough to have maturity on my side. In addition, I had editors, right from the start, who I knew were the real deal. Saucemonkey, my Continuity Wizard, was already prolifically writing *Piccolo's Choice*, and I was and still am his editor. Davidstarlingm and NPBerryhill were already writing and getting rave reviews on *Bringer of Death*, and American Vigor was wowing us all with *Honor Trip*...in all actuality, Vigor was really the push I needed, because my confidence after writing the Arcos Special for *Honor Trip* was at an all-time high, and I knew I could write content that people actually wanted to read. I ideally wanted to release Chapter 1 of *Savior of Demons* on my birthday, June 20th, as a gift to myself. However, I realized that this wasn't feasible, so I pushed the date back, and thus was born my tradition of posting chapters on the last day of the month. Recently I've amended that to a two-month release date, but as my schedule frees up, I'll probably go back to once-a-month posting. (para. 2)

Through my own experiences in early childhood literacy outside the scope of formal schooling, to my college communication courses, to my experience as a college instructor, I have been fascinated with language and how it functions, especially in a special cultural format: storytelling. The exigence of this study sprang from my desire to build on the work of Black

11

(2005) and other authors, to portray fanfiction culture as a positive, rather than a subversive, force in the world of the future, particularly in the classroom. Though acceptance has grown from the days of William Shatner telling crazed fans in a Saturday Night Live skit to "get a life,", fanfiction "has begun to earn more serious attention as interest in the field of digital writing has increased" (Coleman 2010, p. 97). In Roozen, Woodard, Kline, and Prior's (2015) inquiry into fanfiction and its effect not only on students but teachers, one of the subjects interviewed "responded by writing, 'the research areas [of the university's] new curriculum covers— evaluation, comparison, synthesis, and argument—are all a part of what fan fiction authors (good ones, anyway!) do,'" (p. 212) which gives an insight into how teachers-as-fans position themselves when navigating the proposition of incorporating fanfiction into the classroom. The authors observed that these laminated trajectories have not just transformed this young educator's developing identity, but also stand to shape how their students interpret and interact with the university's composition curriculum more broadly (p. 212). Fanfiction need not be a canned and captive module in a college classroom, but neither should it be expunged with extreme prejudice.

My own teaching background also plays into my interest in this topic; since 2010, I have taught SPC 2608 Fundamentals of Speech Communication at Eastern Florida State College (EFSC). Most semesters, I also have opportunities to substitute for teachers in the same section, so my experiences are not limited to my own classroom. This role has seen me use my creativity to explain and teach complex ideas to a diverse spectrum of students. Like Roozen et al. (2015), I feel that "much as students' histories with literacy beyond school can enrich classroom learning—teachers' histories can likewise play a crucial role in shaping pedagogical practices in ways that can reconfigure student learning" (p. 206). I often find that my students are also

12

interested in fandom in one way or another, and their speeches often follow their passions. With its intuitive multimodal, cross-genre, open-source culture, fanfiction is a repository for many potential lessons that I, and other instructors, can use to reinvigorate tired classroom curricula. The power and passion behind fanfiction is something I have experienced personally, making me not just another researcher, an outsider like many of the early studies' writers, but an intercessor with mutual respect for both academia, and the realm of fandom from which I will respectfully draw.

Many scholars who delve into the realm of fanfiction are not themselves enormous fans or even consumers of the source material. Such an approach lends itself well to cold, clinical analysis, but it fails to capture the spirit of what fanfiction *is*: an obsessive love for a genre, series, and/or character that spurs an individual to pour out hours of time and digital ink on a product that they cannot legally profit from, whose only reward is the accolades of fellow fans. Often in reading these papers and journals on fanfiction in academia, I get the distinct feeling that the writers and their product are being studied like strange and alien species under a microscope, subjected to the categorical template of creative writing, instead of being anthropologically elevated to a respectful subject analysis. Not that this is intentional, or even disrespectful, but sometimes the most valuable insights come from insiders. In regards to the inevitable question of bias, Ames (2010) writes that researchers "often insist upon maintaining proper academic distance when analyzing their objects of study […] [h]owever, when studying fandom, this sort of critical distance has proven to be unproductive because one often needs to have an investment in the community, or the entertainment outlet grounding it, in order to fully understand the texts being studied and to navigate successfully through its mass of followers" (p.

20). Like Ames, I feel that fanfiction is one of the subjects that cannot be epistemologically separated from its creators and their unique shared culture. Ergo, as a member of the community, I feel like a worthy ambassador, a representative of that weird world who can play translator for the befuddled outsiders who ask, "what's the big deal with fanfiction, anyway?"

<div align="center">Intent of Study</div>

The intent of this study is to crystallize the existing research in fandom studies, focusing it towards the link between improved reading and writing rhetorical literacy and the acts commonly associated with fanfiction (reading, writing [including editing], and reviewing). Through the lens of Tardy's interpretation of Bazerman's (1997) "familiar places," I initially intended to examine a sample of young people who are still in school (high school to college), solicited for participation through social media. This study follows their everyday activities in planning, writing, and editing their stories. My sample is currently engaged in all or most of the following categories: fanfiction writing, fanfiction editing (Beta Reading), and fanfiction reviewing. Examining the experiences of individuals, I illuminate a correlation between several key markers of literacy, and the fanfiction they write.

The secondary stage of my research centers on one particular story, author SwanofWar's *A Good Man*, and the reviews it has amassed along the course of its publication. My goal here is to examine the role of feedback on fanfiction stories, and examine what differentiates them from traditional classroom feedback. I examine every review of *A Good Man* starting at chapter 70, & analyze the reviews for the last six chapters of the story, analyzing the type and tone of feedback given. First, some background stats and an overview of this story: *A Good Man* (AGM) is a Dragonball Z fanfiction, a series that I have an intimate knowledge of and connection to. It was published December 5, 2013 and concluded with its last update on October 1, 2017, for a

runtime of two years and eleven months. It spans 75 chapters and a total of 424,207 words.

Despite the rather unusual genre (for this series, anyway) of Sci-Fi/Crime, coupled with its T

rating, it is listed as having 517 favorites, 543 follows, and most importantly, 1,182 reviews.

Due to its length and popularity, the arbitrary analysis range of the last six chapters and

restriction to 30 words or more for my sample set seems appropriate.

Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis research is to understand the content and rhetorical strategies

fanfiction reviewers employ on Fanfiction.net, and how these factor into the target author's

improved literacy. At this stage in the research, literacy in fanfiction will be generally defined as

understanding rhetorical techniques such as suspense and foreshadowing, demonstrating proper

English spelling and grammar, and confidence or a sense of identity as a writer.

The central question at the heart of fanfiction research in general is: "What good is it?"

How does the process of writing fanfiction help young readers and writers develop genre

knowledge? What relationships between literacy and fanfiction can a rhetorical study uncover?

That is, can traditional literacy — the practical ability to read, write, and analyze fiction or

nonfiction documents — be helped or hurt by engaging in fanfiction-related activities? Is the

influence from these alternative "rhetorical sandboxes" negligible, or significant? Answering

these wide queries will not be possible in this study's scope, so in lieu of that, I intend to answer

a single, more focused question:

What significant categories of things do reviewers comment on?

The basis for these particular questions comes from my observation that peer review

through fanfic activities, especially reviewing, invites the basic techniques for being a critical

consumer of information. The "fun" environment of fanfiction makes the process of learning these techniques far more appealing for younger readers than rote classroom lessons, although those peers in the community doing the teaching must have necessarily picked up the proper techniques outside of the fandom. In other words, despite a disinterest in scholastic learning, the desire to improve their fanfics spurs students to make rhetorical moves consistent with traditional writing classes' tenets. Far from blindly stumbling through the machinations of rhetoric improvement processes, "[t]hrough the exchange of feedback, […] authors are able to develop their ideas more clearly and improve their texts by shaping their stories to meet the needs of themselves and their audience, fellow fans of the characters they are writing about" (Littleton, 2011, p. 56). I wanted to explore this hypothesis, and document the rhetorical strategies employed by readers, writers, and reviewers within the fan community. In potential future studies, I would like to answer the broader question of whether there is an underlying system of "merit" for rating fanfiction reviews, based on the reviewer's real-world literacy, as defined by their scholastic prowess and rubric-based grading systems.

Interchapter 1: The beginning of my journey

Part of the appeal of fanfiction, I think, comes from its relative "safety" as a genre. The characters, worlds, and plots already exist, and the (often young) writer only needs to rearrange these elements, while adding a few of their own for flavor. There is no pressure, so the writer is free to explore their creativity to its fullest, and since the fanfiction community encompasses the broadest spectrum of evaluators from the youthful to mature "baby boomers," it is not nearly as judgmental as an academic venue, with critiques often outweighed by encouragement. My experience writing *Savior of Demons* (SoD) is a perfect example, if a bit skewed by my age. I

first published SoD on June 30, 2013. Prior to that, I had been an editor and colorist for various other fics and fanmanga, the most influential being *Honor Trip*, *Bringer of Death*, and *Universe F*. My role grew from that of a proofreader to a consultant, and as I became more and more involved in the stories I edited, their authors asked me why I didn't write my own fanfiction — I was obviously talented, they noted.

My initial response was that I feared failure, was unsure if I could commit to a schedule, and I didn't think anyone would want to read a story with such a concept as *Savior of Demons* — villain redemption fics are commonplace, so how would mine make any impact? Hesitantly, I took my friends' advice, and started drafting a chapter, mulled over during a summer vacation in Hawaii, built in my head over years of daydreams and inspirations, and tempered by an extreme editorial conscientiousness. I had the rough ideas in my head, though at this point I didn't have the ending visualized, and the ideas I had bottled up for years began to flow forth — leaving me astonished at how much I had actually written by the first chapter's end. It was too long for an opening chapter, so at my editors' suggestion, I cut it into about three chapters, careful to end each one on a significantly interesting plot twist or cliffhanger. Satisfied, I finally published Chapter 1, ten days after my estimated deadline of June 20, as a late birthday present to myself.

The response was explosive. Overnight, my phone blew up with a deluge of FF.net notifications, so much so that I had to turn the ringer off so I wouldn't be distracted by it every few minutes. The first chronological review I received displayed the classic camaraderie of a fanfiction community. It started with praise, and mentioned "some minor quibbles" (Savior of Demons, Ch. 2) in regards to characterization and the structure of my paragraphs. My response to that review was to clarify why I wrote a character as being overtly suspicious of a former villain, and, ironically, to prevent carpal tunnel in my readers as they scrolled down, I tried to

17

keep my chapters short. Now, of course, I'm famous for my lengthy chapters, but I did take that initial advice about paragraph spacing to heart. Today, I read each review I get, and I respond to 99% of them. This again highlights how truly connected the fanfiction writer is to their readers. Readers in many cases are also peers, and as people reviewed SoD faithfully, so I reviewed their works with the same balance of praise and friendly nitpicking. It is a symbiotic relationship of improvement.

CHAPTER 2: BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF
PREVIOUS ACADEMIC SANDCASTLES

Literature Review

The exigence for this study stems from a relative paucity of academic studies that both

examine fanfiction as a mode of learning, as in the works of Black (2009) and Booth (2004), and

those that utilize the knowledge bases of the fanfiction authors themselves as seen in Black's

(2005) and Chandler-Olcott & Mahar's (2003) studies. The need for this topic grows as

fanfiction permeates the mainstream collective consciousness both domestically and globally.

Once dismissed as a fringe pursuit with no ramifications beyond eccentricity in regards to

hobbies — a position that proliferated in response to Jenkins' 1992 work, *Textual poachers:*

Studies in culture and communication — today fanfiction writing, editing, and reading raise

important questions about literacy as they become more visible and commonplace. Utility for

literacy is important "[b]ecause fanfiction groups are, in essence, writing groups, [so]

understanding how feedback is used and valued within these communities can, hopefully, help

composition scholars see possible connections to other writing contexts" (Littleton, 2011, p. 41).

Berkowitz (2012) opined about the impact that high-profile publications such as *The New York*

Times have on the public's view of fanfiction. He found that within popular and news media

discourses, the opposing tensions of marginalizing the co-cultures adopting fandom and the

promise of an easy fix for boring curricula prove detrimental to obtaining clear results. When

newspapers and other media "reflect society's existing beliefs and values" (Berkowitz, 2012, p.

200), fanfiction is often demonized at worst, or dismissed as a fringe oddity at best. Aside from

general contempt residual of earlier, misguided authors, there are some greater questions of

importance regarding fanfiction in the classroom, whether formally embraced or casually

explored. Most contemporary studies did not "specifically [study] whether or not any kind of

writing or rhetorical knowledge transfers between self-sponsored digital writing and academic writing" (Rosinski, 2016, p. 248), which is the aim of my research. One big discriminatory hurdle is the neo-Luddite view — rare but still occasionally present — that any technology in the classroom is inherently bad, causing impressionable young minds to spontaneously lose any ability to write in complete sentences, communicate effectively, and/or be independently creative. These tend to be the same vocal minority of minds who decry fanfiction as uncreative intellectual property theft, with no desire to understand the nuances that underpin this sweeping assumption. So, how *does* fanfiction affect grammar, spelling, and syntax, and what good is it in the classroom? Language evolves; that is not under dispute, but broad rules for current modern language are still important in conveying mood, tone, and other details accurately. Thus, we see that even in the laissez-faire realm of fanfiction review and critique, these fundamental "rules," though not always as rigidly adhered to as in a classroom, still drive much of the feedback and subsequent revisions. Lammers (2013) wrote an article exploring the phenomenon of "fangirls as teachers," concluding that online interactions between fan writers are peer-based, but also dependent on utility. Like Lammers' article, "much current research focuses on online authors and their collaborations, assuming that the dynamics of online writing sites are similar to the dynamics of face-to-face writing groups" (Magnifico et al., 2015, p. 159), when in fact, the two have more differences than once believed. Does copying existing media and "remixing" it create novelty, or plagiarism? Lewis et al. (2009), like many others, have concluded that at the very least, fanfiction writers have free range to remix copyrighted works, so long as they do not profit. Are social skills diminished or cultivated through online communities sharing a common passion? At least for students with dyslexia or other learning difficulties, Rich (2008) found that

they benefit from the comparatively more judgment-free rhetorical sandbox that fanfiction provides, in lieu of a rigid school system where their failures may be more harshly judged.

With the progression of time, fandom has permeated the mainstream collective consciousness. Fanfiction — writing, editing, and reading — has raised important questions about literacy. Jurgensen (2006) asked, does copying existing media and "remixing" it create novelty, or plagiarism? Are social skills diminished or cultivated through online communities sharing a common passion? The first wave of academic discussion on fanfiction came from outside the fandom, and presented a flawed, sometimes uninformed perspective of complex activities and interactions, as epitomized in Jenkins' (1992) infamous text. In recent years, the approach has shifted to "aca-fans" — scholars like Rebecca Black who are members of both academic and fandom-related communities. These scholars have bridged the gap, and have taken important steps towards an honest examination of fanfiction, informed not only by their insider experiences, but by their rhetorical experience. In this case, insider experience is paramount to properly conveying the topic.

Whenever the topic of fanfiction arises, the question of intellectual property law violation enters the conversation as well, so it is only appropriate that my work touches upon it briefly. The degree of transformativeness is important to consider when judging whether a fanwork violates copyright law. Heymann (2008) drew a parallel between the surrealism art movement and remix culture and fanworks to make fanfiction more palatable and legitimate. By contrast, others (Hetcher, 2009) primarily focused on the legality of fanworks and the implications of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), comparing fanfiction to earlier cases of grey legality such as music file sharing. For example, Tushnet (1997), with a background in copyright law, early on championed fanfiction. She argued that it was a creative process that

21

should fall under the fair use exception to copyright restrictions, due to the productive addition of creative labor and because it is noncommercial. Waters (2004) added that as long as fanfiction is utilized as a non-commercial form of rhetorical exploration and enjoyment, it could add one more effective layer of motivational instruction to rhetoric. Citing J. K. Rowling, he exemplified her positive example of a modern author who has no conflict of ego, or insecurity, or possessiveness about her characters, and welcomes fan writers embellishing and expanding their colorfulness in the name of rhetorical creativity.

Black (2005) used the term "Net Generation," originally coined by Tapscott, to identify young people who spend a great deal of time engaged online, often with fanfiction, honing their skills of prewriting and narrative writing. Westcott (2008), delving into the fanfiction phenomenon, also found it to be a highly social participatory culture and thus also concluded that it taps into the collaborative nature of writing about writing. Black's (2007) revolutionary approach using Instant Messenger to investigate how literacy is affected by online spaces, uncovered uses such as an online classroom and sandbox for young writers. A further study two years later (Black, 2009) examined the effects of new media and technology on one's writing effectiveness — specifically in the areas of self expression and imagination. Alvermann and Hutchins (2012) admit that the practice of remixing online text is redefining literacy and the methods by which people learn rhetoric. "As a learning environment, [fanfiction allows participants] to take up the role of transmitter in some pedagogic interactions and acquirer in others" (Lammers, 2011, p. 150), which turns the static, in-person teacher-student dynamic on its head. The use of in-site commenting methods, along with external mediums like Google Docs, outside forums for discussion, and others shows that "although collaboration per se is not new, electronic interactions and collaboration have acquired a new nuance" (Lunsford, 2017, p. 8).

Additionally, "digital information and communication technologies also support more small-scale practices that individual fans engage in within these online affinity spaces, including those that can be creative, educational, critical, promotional, controversial, activist, adversarial, or profitable" (Sauro, 2017, p. 133), meaning that writers can choose to interface with the macro- or the micro-communities, whichever they are most comfortable with. Community motivation is therefore a primary and essential aspect of fanfiction, if it is to be academically repurposed.

Online fanfiction challenges schooled experiences, it personalizes learning space, and drawing from solid documentation put forth by Black (2005), it is an excellent tool for learning English, whether for school or for social reasons, ergo acting as a vehicle for social inclusivity. Most notably, "one of the persistent barriers halting ELL students' literacy achievement relates to the marginalization and social isolation that they often experience in and outside school" (Li, 2012, p. 213), making fanfiction a viable means of bridging this gap. The relationships between online writers, readers, and reviewers demonstrates that "second language learning is a dynamic social process that involves complex social relationships that learners form with others as they engage in literacy activities […] [T]hese social relationships provide an individual with access to material, and informational and linguistic resources through membership in social communities" (Li, 2012, p. 315). Jenkins (2004) similarly noted that homeschoolers who get their education through unconventional venues and use fanfiction to improve their critical writing and reading skills also are incentivized to develop mature behavior (the likes of which it takes to run and maintain a fan-based website). On the topic of maturity, "schools often shy away from contests as a form of pedagogic discourse because they fly in the face of the mentality that 'everybody is a winner,' which is so often encouraged in school" (Lammers, 2011, p. 152), which can be damaging to young writers who need to learn how to fail and improve their work. Fanfiction

communities are, according to Littleton (2011), "self-sponsored writing groups," and "[s]ince participation is entirely voluntary and members are free to leave at any time, writers must be motivated by forces besides grades and tangible rewards" (p. 8). Fanfiction contests, whether formal or casual, are a regular enough occurrence online to form a counterargument to politically correct methods of teaching that disallow for recognized tiers of skill. Since these are necessarily voluntary, nobody in these circles, it seems, is hung up on hurt feelings of inferiority.

Lammers (2011) highlights the cooperative and often encouraging exchanges between a fanfiction writer and their audience. She describes a writer conveying that a fanfiction community was "instrumental in her development as a writer" (p. 29) because the other members would read critically and deeply, then attempt to give useful critique and feedback. Another member of the same group described positive operant conditioning to continue writing via encouraging reviews saying that readers couldn't wait for the next update. Littleton (2011) noted that "[t]hough many comments on these fanfiction stories were basic, quick responses (i.e. —this is good), many also seemed to be an integral component of the writing process, an idea I have tried to stress to my own students, though sometimes with only limited success […] [f]or fanfiction writers, however, feedback from other fans seemed to be desired and valued" (p. 2). Contrary to what a peripheral view of this group might indicate, fanfiction writers display a "sophisticated awareness of audience complexity" (Rosinski, 2016, p. 257), adjusting their writing for mixed audiences. Doctorow (2007) also praised fanfiction as a portal for better writing, through practice, critique, and most importantly, enthusiasm.

A review of the literature reveals a definite shift in fanfiction acceptance in recent years. From the days of Tushnet (1997) and Waters (2004), who credited fanfiction as a creative writing process that perhaps could have a positive effect on writing for writing curricula, a steady

metamorphosis of what fanfiction writing is has taken place in academia. Although the concept

of copyright infringement still looms for many, its definition has "softened" somewhat to accept

fanfiction work as created by its own merits; utilizing methods that encourage deeper, more

complex story, character, and setting development. Busse (2017) brings up the appeal of

repetition in fanfiction, as an extension of the natural repetition of reading & language in general.

She says that fanfiction is a celebration of repetition, its raison d'être in a sense: an explicit

repeat engagement with characters, worlds, scenes, stories, & moments in the source materials,

endlessly remixed & reanalyzed for deep meaning (pp. 133-134).

Booth (2014) sees fandom as an important tool in the instruction of rhetoric today. He

applauds its promotion of critical thought and mandatory hegemonic cultural judgment, and as

Bode (2008) adds, fandom creates an egalitarian system of peer review. This peer review takes

on different, multimodal forms as opposed to traditional classroom instruction, with "fanfiction

writers see[ing] editing and revision as overlapping concepts, and many authors seek comments

on both at the same time" (Littleton, 2011, p. v). Rosinski (2016) intelligently observes that

"students' digital conversations constantly shift across media as well as audience, context, and

purpose" (p. 249), reflecting the adaptability of these people in regards to genre shifts in

changing digital terrain. Quoting Lunsford (n.d.), Rosinski determines that the problem in

introducing fanfiction into the classroom may lie primarily with teachers' hesitance, rather than

students' ability to meld the recreational with the academic. Curwood (2013), examining the

multimodal and semiotic literacy practices utilized in fanfiction, and addressing the editorial and

collaborative aspects, found that writing was improved in response to critiquing reviews, or by

working with other individuals on the same story. The concept of "mentor texts," which are canon guides to fanfic writers, also helped writers stay true to source material.

When constructing a text, a fanfiction writer must cater to both an abstract audience as well as a social audience, with whom they interact directly via posts, private messages, and reviews. Lammers' (2011) analysis "demonstrates the flexibility of transmitter and acquirer roles" in fanfiction communities. Such fluidity "allows the official knowledge to be constructed by multiple voices" (p. 152). Unlike structured, scholastic writing, where professors assign merit based on perceived quality, successful writing in the online fanfiction public "requires understanding and conscious engagement with [an] abstract audience" (Lammers et al., 2015, p. 280).

The question of how motivation and self-esteem are affected by participation in online fan-based communities has also been explored in past literature. Curwood, Magnifico, and Lammers' (2013) look at online rhetorical interactions showed that imparting understanding of audience, purpose, and genre were the focus; since the communities are typically open sandboxes for creativity — the freedom to critique, learn, and crystallize knowledge, all under the guise of fun and fandom — these communities were found to be highly motivational and esteem-building. Ford's (2013) examination of fandom going mainstream as a legitimate field of research and expression prompted concerns that its status would no longer be an "undisciplined" discipline, and fan culture would reflect a drastically altered participation pattern. However, this was not the case. Ford's study found that diverse fandoms brought forth many different genres which encompassed many different fan behaviors, providing an underlying consistency for the "undisciplined" discipline and paving the way towards social acceptance. However, Sauro (2017) writes that "[n]ot all researchers are as equally positive about the domestication of fan

practices for educational purposes" (p. 141), citing a study by Minkel (2015) in which a student-run course at the University of California Berkeley attempted to bridge the gap between academia and fanfiction. A breach in fandom-specific etiquette led to blowback from fanfic authors, illustrating the need to treat fan spaces with respect, instead of an unfeeling vehicle for improvement. More successful ventures into using fandom in the classroom were reported by Sauro and Sundmark (2016), wherein a classroom assignment had students writing from the perspectives of literary characters to fill in the gaps in an existing story. This exercise allowed them to "incorporate aspects of plot, setting, and style to fit in with the larger story, and linguistic competence, through the ability to imitate the specific lexical and grammatical choices of their character in speech and thought" (Sauro, 2017, p.142). "Fanfiction by its very nature is composition […] [t]hough fanfiction usually involves creating fictional stories based on other people's characters or settings, fanfiction authors still incorporate many hallmarks of composition, such as innovation, revision, editing, and feedback into their writing process" (Littleton, 2011, p. 19). Using elements of fanfiction writing (creating a scene from whole cloth, while remaining within the larger story's parameters) without trespassing into established fan spaces thus seems like the best way to structure fan-based curricula.

While fanfiction has doubtless received a wealth of scholarly attention, it tends to be of the legal (Tushnet) or broad pedagogical (Black) bend. A careful, systematic examination of fanfiction review comments has been slower to emerge, and it is this gap that my research addresses. Some studies have addressed feedback on fanfiction and its potential for classroom application, but very few have bothered to zero in on fanfiction.net-style reviews as a vehicle for not only social communication, criticism, and the trigger for personal growth within the community but also a possible teaching mechanism to improve writing skill. Gutiérrez (2010)

touches upon it when he writes that "[t]ext-to-text connections are where members of a fan community really excel, frequently displaying encyclopedic knowledge […] [with] most of them welcom[ing] insights that help them appreciate their chosen texts in the context of history, politics, and the wider culture" (p. 230). Gutiérrez makes the connection that teachers could be the ones to encourage these connections, but stops short of analyzing reviews.

Reviews are a key discursive link between fanfiction writers and their readers, and serve as the space in which fanfiction writers and readers interact, in addition to their role as the main form of feedback for fanfiction writers. The regulatory, highly-structured, disciplined nature of fan communities is highlighted by Lammers (2011) when it is noted that "[t]here are far more regulations about behavior in these spaces than is often made explicit in a college syllabus, for example, contrary to misperceptions of online communities as exemplifying an organic, everyone-gets-along attitude" (p. 141). This observation was taken from an in-person physical study group though, so it does not maintain the format and nuance of an online review. To borrow a term from Littleton (2011), online "fanfiction communities of practice" provide a hidden opportunity to explore the intimate, non-academic setting of the review in a way that reveals motives and feedback. This is important, Littleton says, "because fanfiction groups are at their essence writing groups" (p. 9), and it behooves us to study them in their natural setting — online, and uninhibited by academic genres or research-based parameters. Academic instructors may tend to give less individual attention to each piece of creative writing they review because of class load and time constraints. Their reviews may even reflect the inability to remain objective in their evaluations because of many factors, one of which is burnout combined with deadlines. Since fanfiction reviews cover a wide spectrum, from simply praise for the author's effort to honest critiques of grammar and spelling, there are many helpful suggestions to be

garnered from fanfiction review. Therefore, an in-depth examination of effective fanfiction review methods and styles, could provide solid, instructional implements in the writing for writing tool box.

Interchapter 2: And now, a thank you to the aca-fans

It's interesting, looking back, at the research done on fanfiction. Though as an informal way of storytelling it has probably existed since literature itself, fanfiction has still been greeted as a strange practice, its practitioners as outsiders. Henry Jenkins probably contributed largely to that view, though many of his peers were more open to this "new" form of storytelling. Still, many people today will react to fanfiction with confusion, misinformation, and often contempt. "Why don't you write something original, that you could make money from?" is a common query, according to many fanfiction writers' blogs. So is, "So you write *Fifty Shades of Grey* sort of stuff?" Thanks to less than positive media and academic influences, certain stereotypes of fanfiction writers have emerged — that Most Fanfic Writers Are Girls (TVTropes.com), that they do not respect copyright laws or authors' ownership of characters, and most cringe-worthy, that most fanfiction is pornographic. This latter stereotype probably derives from the sensationalism and subsequent attention paid to scandalous R-rated stories based on much tamer source material, as well as looser censorship laws surrounding Japanese and other foreign media from which many fans derive inspiration.

Once you get past the tarnished image of fanfiction, it is, like all hobby activities, extremely fun and fulfilling. At a deep level, who hasn't toyed with the idea of writing a fanfiction? Whether it's to rewrite a bungled ending to a favorite series, or resurrect a killed favorite character, most people are not 100% satisfied with their favorite media. Some merely

daydream about "What if's," but for others, the compulsion is so strong that they put it to paper to satisfy that urge. Fanfic writers are irrepressibly human. They love and hate characters and their creators, often in fickle cycles, but keep going back for more. They spend tireless hours of obsession toiling for no profit, all for what is often derided as an inferior pastime for nerds.

It is far beyond time that fanfiction writers receive their due, and the various studies, analyses, and research done on this unique culture are key to that recognition. Anyone who writes a literature review can see the chronological progression from bewilderment to begrudging understanding, from opprobrium to approbation, from ostracism to acceptance. This has been in large part due to scholars who are aca-fans, those who are not wholly outside the world of fanfiction, looking in. They don't have to wonder and puzzle at the appeal of fanfiction, because they feel the same way.

CHAPTER 3: PLANNING MY OWN SANDCASTLE

Theoretical Frame

For the coding model, Tardy's (2009) interpretation of Bazerman's (1997) "familiar places" is ideal, as it encompasses the different types of knowledge that can be shown in written fanfiction and the responses to these bodies of work. Of these, there are a few subcategories that warrant a brief explanation. First, formal knowledge refers to structural elements of genre, or that which makes up the quintessential fanfiction. In other words, what makes a fanfiction different, its own breed of rhetoric? The theorized elements that set it apart include observations that fanfiction is almost exclusively found in an online or multimodal space, that it by and large is serial, rather than released whole into the world, that it often makes use of a genre change, and that it tends to use more mature, sophisticated, or adult-oriented storytelling elements than the original source material.

Next, procedural knowledge is the act of knowing how fanfiction functions in fulfilling its role — whether to tell a story, practice technical writing, or for simple self-fulfillment. This element analyzes the relationships between rhetor (author) and audience (readers and reviewers), which in this case can be very intimate, with comments and reviews bridging the feedback gap that normally exists for traditional authors, who are more separated from their fans. Rhetorical knowledge analyzes and interprets the purposeful rhetorical moves of fanfiction as a genre, weaving these insights together with its role to persuade and act as a social link within the sociorhetorical context. As evidenced by the near-ubiquity of disclaimers at the start of most fanfictions, fanfiction authors do not intend to encroach on the original source material, or its author. The fanfiction instead serves as a social event for writers and readers, a proving ground to practice skills, and a way to invent — albeit with guidelines to act as a "safety net" for those

who feel that their own ideas are not original enough. Finally, subject-matter knowledge looks at the deep historical context of this genre; since fanfiction has and still does operate in a grey area of legality and with varying levels of societal acceptation, this facet will provide an anchor for the others. Writing a comprehensive fanfiction that follows the canon of a given series can by the same token involve more deep research than the genre would first appear to display. In particular, for lengthy series encompassing multiple volumes, or a series with contradictory material, a writer must study the canon vigorously in order to decide which canon they will consistently follow, and/or which canons they will ignore and for what reasons.

<div align="center">Methodology</div>

Setting

      My analysis is informed by my own insider experience as a fanfiction author, editor, and reader on a website called fanfiction.net (FF.net), as well as incorporating data from interviews with other writers on the site. As a brief overview for those unfamiliar with the website, Fanfiction.net is a multi-fandom hub for writers. Littleton (2011) identifies October 15, 1998 as the day FF.net first appeared, saying that it "quickly became the archive of choice for many" (p. 21). FF.net's birth "represented a shift towards forums as the major distributor of fanfiction and away from mailing lists" by offering fanfic readers to submit comments and feedback in a user-friendly forum format (p. 21). It is an international site, frequented by writers of all nationalities and levels of writing skills, making it the most well-known and popular space of its type online. Depending on one's interests, you can use FF.net to write and/or read about virtually any interest and/or obsession. This versatility and scope is what makes FF.net so popular.

      From the front page, the listed categories are Anime/Manga (my stomping grounds), Books, Cartoons, Comics, Games, Misc, Movies, Plays, and TV. Below that there are also

umbrella categories for crossovers — stories that encompass or use characters from more than one of the general categories listed. Within any given category, users can filter their search alphabetically by series name, then further narrow the results by the date a story was updated, characters, length of story, status (complete or in-progress), genre, rating, and language. There also exist fan communities and user-created forums. Taken together, the FF.net package allows users to greatly customize their experience while using the site. While there are other sites that allow or even cater to fanfiction, FF.net is by far the most popular.

Analyzing the online space in which these activities take place is accomplished by describing the layout of FF.net and detailing examples of interactions between users. My own presence as an active participant there since January 5th, 2012 also informed my decision to use this website as my chosen field of study. Like Black (2009), I have a "nuanced and contextualized understanding of the social, literate, and meaning-making practices that fans engaged in through fan communities" (p. 402).

Data Collection Methods

I utilized snowball sampling to recruit volunteer subjects through social media sites such as Tumblr, where the reblogging feature inherent to the site made it easy to bring my study to the attention of fanfiction authors who will be receptive to participation. A short synopsis of the study and its goals ensured that the majority of participants are actively involved in one or more of the facets of fanfiction studied. I invited a small number of participants to participate directly from FF.net; these are authors and reviewers I have had contact with through reviews and back-and-forth communication, whose writing styles I believe fit the study. These writers

supplemented the more randomly chosen snowball samples in that their observed habits match

some or all of my hypotheses. Using qualitative methods, I collected coding data on the ongoing

stories that these authors write, including insights into their rough drafts, and reviews. Through

semi-structured interviews, I used these bodies of data to clarify and inform my coding process.

To provide context, biographical questions, such as asking what a writer's first language was and

their GPA in school before and after discovering fanfiction, were also included. Signed human

subject forms from research participants served to verify identities (which will otherwise be

obscured), as well as establish guidelines for the protocol of this study.

Participants

Those involved in this study were required to be of legal age, and still involved in school

at some level. The accepted range was comprised mostly of college/post-college level subjects,

or the international equivalent thereof. Acceptable applicants clearly gave their consent for

participation, which included online real-time interviews, access to their published stories as well

as any existing rough drafts, and any supplementary material such as fanart.

Researcher's Role

As mentioned in previous sections, I am an active member of the fanfiction community.

I am open about my interest in learning as it relates to the genre, and many of my online

acquaintances know that I teach in the real world. Therefore, when I approached them for this

study, I anticipated that most of them would have no qualms about providing the data and

participating in the interviews necessary for the success of this project. Upon preliminary efforts to solicit subjects, many expressed great enthusiasm in assisting with this research.

Data Collection and Analysis

Since my study seeks to determine qualitative correlations between improved literacy and fanfiction-related activities, I restricted the scope of my questions to that topic as much as possible. Readers will note that pieces of my research resemble genre analyses, due to the uniqueness of fanfiction as a rhetorical activity. Tardy's interpretation of Bazerman's (1997) "familiar places" is a promising starting point for coding, encompassing formal knowledge, process knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, and subject-matter knowledge. To recap from my previous introduction to the terms, formal knowledge refers to structural elements of genre, or that which makes up the essence of fanfiction. Procedural knowledge is knowing how fanfiction works to fulfill its role of telling a tale, practicing writing, or merely for self-actualization. This element describes and looks at relationships between the rhetor (author) and audience (readers and reviewers). Rhetorical knowledge scrutinizes the intended purposes of fanfiction as a genre, pairing that insight with how it persuades and acts as a social link within the sociorhetorical context. Finally, subject-matter knowledge looks at the deep historical context of this genre; since fanfiction has and still does operate in a grey area of legality and with varying levels of societal acceptance, this facet will provide an anchor for the others.

The analysis portion of this study consists of samples from actual stories and reviews published on FF.net, as well as textual analyses of interviews with the writers. I only looked at the digital spaces that encompass one popular fanfiction-hosting site, as to look at others in the same study would prove to be a Herculean task. Interestingly, Fanfiction.net is not quite the ideal setup for peer-review feedback, as pointed out by Littleton (2011). She notes that

35

"[b]ecause feedback is left at the end of each story at Fanfiction.net, comments consisting of Global Praise are easier to leave than comments focused on Sentence or Word Edits" (p.92). However, as this is the site I am most familiar with, as well as being the most popular and widely-known, I use FF.net for my review analyses. Based on Tardy's four spheres, I coded for content, such as typographical errors in a published story, and context, such as purposeful misspellings as part of a meme or inside joke.

Codes

This study uses closed-ended questions via questionnaire (see Appendix A), and segues to open-ended follow-up interview questions. The codes follow Tardy's four spheres, such that each initial question fits into one of the categories. Formal knowledge was tested through queries such as, "Describe what elements every good fanfiction has to have." Process knowledge questions encompasses items such as, "Do you write just for fun, to improve your writing skill, or for some other reason?" Rhetorical knowledge was tested through questions like, "Would you say that you're part of a community of fic writers?" Finally, subject-matter knowledge questions, such as "Do you do a lot of research on a series before starting your stories, or just dive right into writing?" provide an anchor for the other categories. The purpose of this data collection is to elucidate what fanfiction writing does for literacy, and how it does it — affecting rhetorical literacy by aiding the development of expertise. This expertise in turn has measurable effects on more important literacy, used in school, work, and social environments outside of fanfiction writing, which could inform a follow-up longitudinal study.

An important point on the journey to understanding fanfiction was the deep analysis of an actual fanfiction, and its associated reviews. For this, I chose *A Good Man*, and endeavored to

36

apply Littleton's (2011) study and analysis of fanfiction response to it, using the categories of review he in turn borrows from Jay Simmons (2003). These are: Global Praise (GP), Global Criticism (GC), Reader's Needs (RN), Text Playback (TP), Personal Responses (PR), Sentence Edits (SE), and Word Edits (WE). These seven categories elucidate how constructive and even relationship-building based comments are used to further encourage writers to continue a story written in parts. The categories also demonstrably serve as a logical starting point for similar in-depth studies into classroom peer review, as a quick summary of their functions shows.

Global Praise is merely positive and/or congratulatory, something to the effect of "Great job! This was awesome!" or, "I really liked this chapter! Can't wait for the next one!" Though these seem superficial and unnecessary in large quantities, they serve a useful role in encouraging authors to continue their work, especially over the course of a lengthy fanfiction.

Global Criticism, as the name implies, is a sweeping condemnation or less severe criticism of the whole piece. Littleton added this category as a complement to Global Praise. What distinguishes GC is that unlike the other categories, which involve some semblance of thought and analysis, GCs "instead consist of a negative, simplistic, emotional response that does not provide reasons for their conclusion" (p. 75). Trolling comments, usually left anonymously, are prime examples, "This story sucks!" being the mildest.

Reader's Needs addresses the desires of the reviewers, needs that the author meets from chapter to chapter. They "address a reaction to the text from the reader's personal connection and experience" (Littleton, 2011, p. 74), and include requests for information, clarification of a scene, etc. This category is widespread in fanfiction, but less common in traditional author/reader relationships, where it is usually, if ever, conducted in person and in real time.

Text Playback reviews assess the overall structure, organization, and progression of the story. Comments like, "This chapter built up the suspense beautifully" or, "I love how you have a callback to the beginning here," are examples. These tend to be complementary in nature.

Personal Responses are those that "focus […] on the psychological involvement of the author as a person, rather than the author as the author of the piece" (Littleton, 2011, p. 73). They, like Global Praise, are usually intended to fill social roles or rapport-building — or the opposite, as the case may be. They comment on the author's state of mind, and may not provide relevant criticism of the story itself. As an example, while working on this thesis I made this fact known to my readership; subsequent reviews often had comments encouraging me or wishing me good luck on my studies. Personal Responses are more social-oriented than story-oriented.

Next, Sentence Edits scrutinize the superficial grammar of a story or chapter. They frequently "focus on sentence-level grammatical errors, such as fragments, run-on sentences, tense shifts, etc." (Littleton, 2011, p. 73) and as such tend to be surface-level feedback, without deeper insights into the story itself. These are the typical red pen nitpicking comments.

The final category is Word Edits, where a reader points out typos ranging from transposed letters to malapropisms. Things like, "You spelled 'receive' wrong on page 3" or, "be careful, lightening and lightning aren't the same word and spellcheck won't catch it" are examples. It is important to distinguish between these codes, because there will be different amounts of each type on different stories. "Not all writers seek constructive feedback on their papers, and many writers are motivated by positive comments, no matter how simplistic those comments might be, as evidenced by the comments desired by fanfiction authors at Fanfiction.net" (Littleton, 2011, p. 55), so it stands to reason that the type and quality of

feedback will vary based on the author's intent, and whether they actively solicit a certain category of response.

Process and Limitations

The study began with a social media solicitation for volunteer participants (see Appendix B). Closed- and open-ended survey questions comprised the first questionnaire that suitable volunteers then received. Personalized follow-up interviews with select authors helped to narrow down response codes that have to do with rhetorical literacy. Depending on the data collected, there may be only one follow-up interview used here, or multiple sessions, all conducted online through either a service such as Gmail Chat, or FF.net's internal messaging system, whichever the participant is comfortable with, in order to reinforce anonymity.

By observing digital spaces that encompass only one popular fanfiction-hosting site, FF.net, this study has a limited scope in terms of community, behaviors specific to fanfiction.net, and the pool of interested applicants who will volunteer. Due to fanfiction being a hobby, some participants were expected to drop out of the study to have more time for work, school, or their writing. The process was necessarily extended over a long period, depending on the update schedules and availability of participants, as well as my own time.

Interchapter 3: There will always be trolls

At this point in my research, I had put down all the template information, from the formatting notes in my rough draft to the elements of this study that I cannibalized from a previous semester's project. In the beginning, it was largely hurry-up-and-wait, as I was at the

mercy of whoever decided to fill out my questionnaire. There were a few setbacks. At the start of this project, I created a multi-page questionnaire (See Appendix 1) that people could fill out. However, given that it was in Microsoft Word, there was no elegant, consistent way to complete it, ergo my first three responses were submitted via e-mail — the answers pasted into the text box. After some exploration of my options, I turned to Google Forms, and transcribed my queries into a questionnaire that was sleek, homogenous, and most of all, easy to fill out. I created the form and shared the link, then sat back to watch for responses.

In my naïveté though, I had neglected to set the proper permissions for this online form; this was my first time using Google Forms for research purposes, and I had accidentally set the sharing permissions to allow anyone with the link to not only fill out, but edit the form. This resulted in vandalization of the questionnaire almost immediately; after someone in a forum where I had shared the link brought it to my attention, I closed and deleted the form, and started from scratch. After this false start and learning from my mistakes, I once again shared the link, and encouraged respondents to share it with anyone they knew who also read fanfiction. Now that my methodology was sound and my mode of distribution had taken off, I started getting responses in droves, far exceeding my initial goal of ten at minimum. In fact, including the three initial manual responses, I had exactly forty, more than double what I had expected from simple snowball sampling. Now, I could get to work applying my hypothesis to the data.

CHAPTER 4: SHAPING MY SANDCASTLE'S
SPIRES AND TURRETS

Data Analysis

<u>Initial questionnaires</u>

Analyzing the data itself is a monumental task in any given project, scholarly or

otherwise, but thesis work on fanfiction studies produces some truly eclectic responses that test

the compartmentalization and categorization abilities of any seasoned researcher. Particularly

with open-ended questions, such as asking participants what they do for a living, I received

responses ranging from the expected (student, journalist, academic), to the outliers

(Cosmetologist, investor), to the plainly — or hopefully — tongue-in-cheek (God). To reiterate

my thesis statement, I hope to find a positive relationship between interacting in the fanfiction

community and the development of sophisticated writing skills. I will go through each query's

results, analyzing each individually before summarizing the data as a whole.
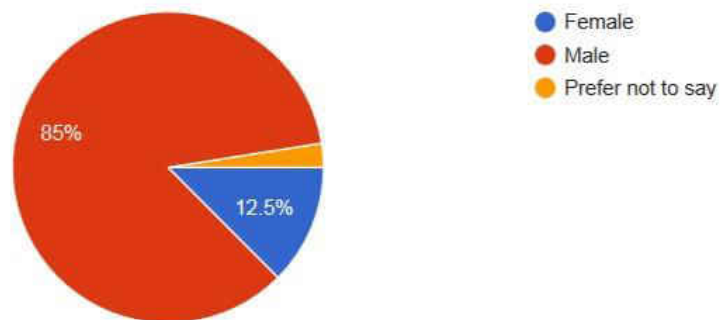
Figure 1 - Gender?

The very first question I asked in Part I actually gave me an astonishing result. Inside as

well as outside the fanfiction community, it is usually regarded as common knowledge that Most

Fanfic Writers Are Girls (TVTropes.com, 2008). From the early days of erotic *Star Trek*

fanfiction to the modern Internet landscape, there have been, and still are, many prominent female authors. Oddly, my sample appears to trend towards a male bias. One reason for this could be the fan community I started my search in: the DBZ fandom is identified as *shounen*, though despite this label, it has always had an abundance of female fans. Regardless, I was surprised by this data.

Is English your first language?

40 responses
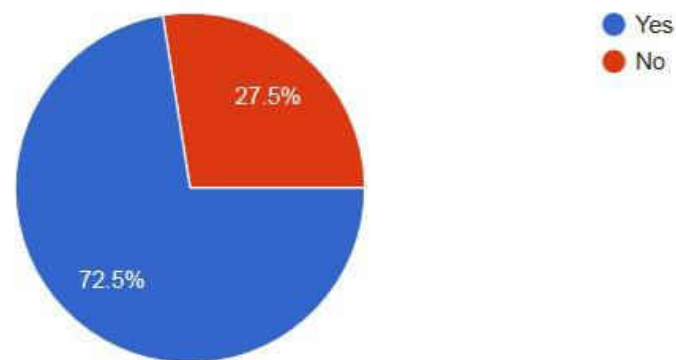
Figure 2 - Is English your first language?

Here was a result that I expected; although fanfiction is an international phenomenon, most often people tend to explore and interact with it in their mother tongue. The English-speaking fanfiction community is well-established and connected online, with 31.4K worth of English-language stories for the *Dragonball Z* category on FF.net alone as of this writing. Compare this to the 3.4K of Spanish, the next highest in the same category, and Japanese, at a paltry two fanfictions, and it's easy to see how English speakers dominate specific hubs of fandom, such as Fanfiction.net.

In what age group are you?

40 responses

Legend:
- 19 and under
- 20 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60 +

57.5% / 22.5% / 20%
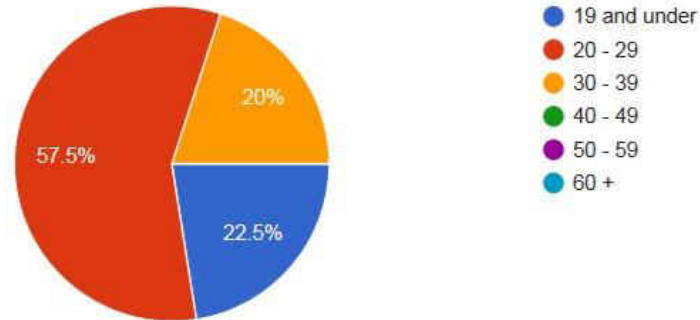
Figure 3 - In what age group are you?

Here again, the results followed my intuition. Fanfiction writers, readers, and reviewers generally tend to be older than teenagers, especially the seasoned, experienced, or prolific ones, but most people begin their journey into fanfiction territory when they are prepubescent. Of course, there are also the fans who remain faithful to the storytelling medium of fanfiction into their 30's, which the above figure also illustrates. Of note is that in the sample above, though there were six categories, only the lower three age ranges were represented. That the vast majority of producers and contributors to fanfiction are young adults comes as no surprise.

At what age did you get into fanfiction-related activities?

40 responses

Legend:
- 19 and under
- 20 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60 +

77.5% / 20%
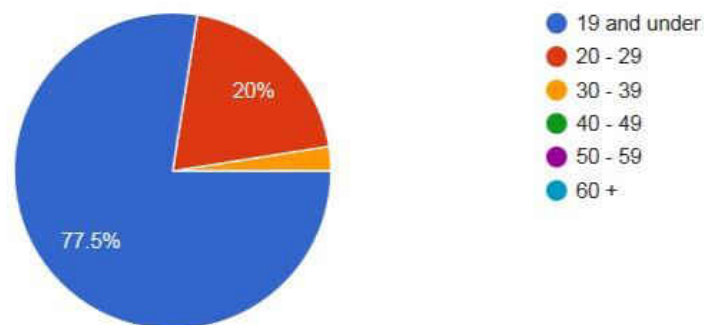
Figure 4 - At what age did you get into fanfiction-related activities?

43

My previous point is illustrated more clearly above, when I ask what age people were when they first experienced fanfiction. The staggering number of "19 and under" responses are self-evident in establishing a trend for fanfiction providing interest, if not improved ability, in writing. A smaller percentage were late to the party at 20-29 when they first joined the community, and a small but intriguing minority (one respondent) was older than that. As shown by the previous data in Figure 3 though, older participants in fandom are not altogether rare.
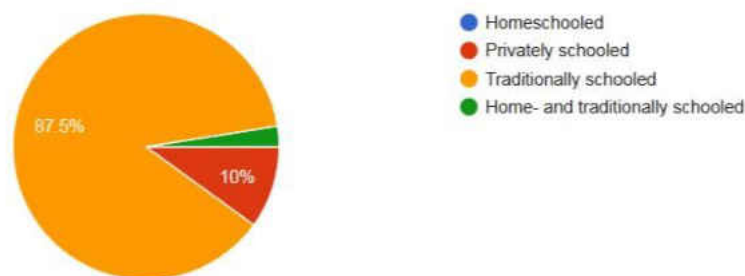
Figure 5 - Were you homeschooled, privately schooled, traditionally schooled, or other?

Being homeschooled myself, I wanted to explore the scholastic backgrounds of my respondents. Specifically, I wanted to see if their school environment may have encouraged or discouraged their foray into fanfiction, or encouraged/discouraged an interest in writing in parallel or in opposition to fanfiction. In this sample, only one person had any homeschool experience, and the vast majority went through traditional avenues for education, so this avenue may need to be explored in future, more targeted research.

In terms of your current occupation, how would you characterize yourself?
40 responses

- Writer
- Administrative Assistar
- Journalist
- Secretary
- Academic
- Professional
- Technical expert
- Student

- Designer
- Administrator/Manager
- Cosmetologist
- Bagger
- Retail worker and student
- Investor
- God
- Eclectic professional

- nurse
- Laborer (I work at walmart distribution center)
- Cook

Figure 6 - In terms of your current occupation, how would you characterize yourself?

The occupations query held some interesting results; I was expecting a majority of students, which was confirmed beyond a shadow of a doubt, but I also anticipated a lot of writers or similar professions — people you might expect to use fanfiction as a fun exercise to practice their skills. As seen above, this was not precisely the case. At 7.5% each, the two categories of technical expert and the broad "professional" label were the second- and third-highest. Writers only came in at 5%, and only two respondents identified themselves as such — the same number as administrative assistants. Clearly, besides the students who have not decided their career paths yet, we fanfic writers are an eclectic bunch.

The following are my findings from Part II, which incorporated an agree-disagree scale. The graphs displaying each query can be found in Figures 7.1-3 on the following page. Most people were decidedly against open, real-world displaying of fanfiction activities to others. Online, the majority were neutral, with the other responses forming a mirrored bell curve. Surprisingly, the majority of people did not consider themselves part of a larger, defined fanfiction community at all, perhaps due to diffusion of fandom interests across the internet. Despite this, only a small minority disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "I consider myself an artistic or creative type of person." Most people, as I theorized, wrote just for

45

fun, but simultaneously wrote to improve themselves, and subsequently took pride in their growth and development as writers. This shows in the next group of questions, where most replied that they consciously did background research on concepts, characters, etc. before writing, and used constructive criticism to improve after. Though most were neutral on how connected they felt to those who interacted with them online, most agreed that fanfiction fulfilled them in some way.
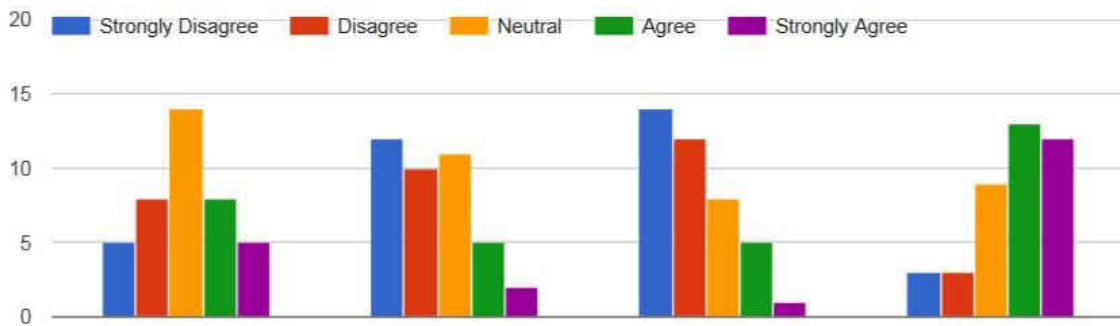
Figure 7 - Identity and Community. Questions below are listed left to right on the graph.

Figure 7:
Fanfiction is a big part of my identity online.
Fanfiction is a big part of my identity in the real world.
I would say that I'm part of a community of fic writers.
I consider myself an artistic or creative type of person.
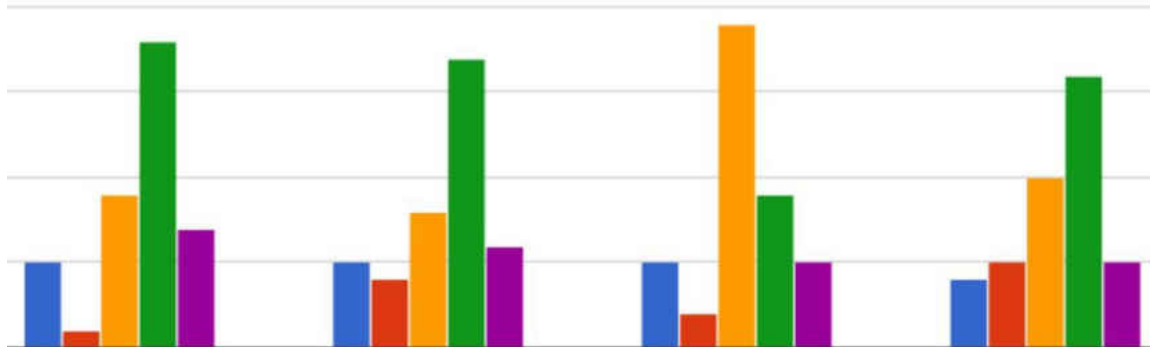
Figure 8 – Why Do You Write? Questions below are listed left to right on the graph.

Figure 8:
I write just for fun.
I write to improve my writing skill.
I write for some other reason(s).
I take pride in my storytelling abilities and think of myself as an author.
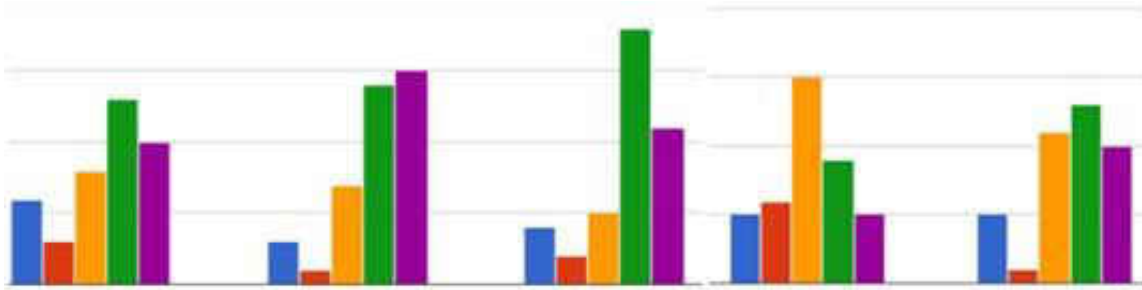
Figure 9 – Editing and Feedback. Questions below are listed left to right on the graph.

Figure 9:
The content of my fanfiction is well-researched.
I am very careful to spell- and grammar-check chapters before publishing them.
I take constructive criticism from reviews and use it to improve my writing.
I feel very strongly connected to my readers and reviewers online.
Writing fanfiction is satisfying and/or fulfilling to me.
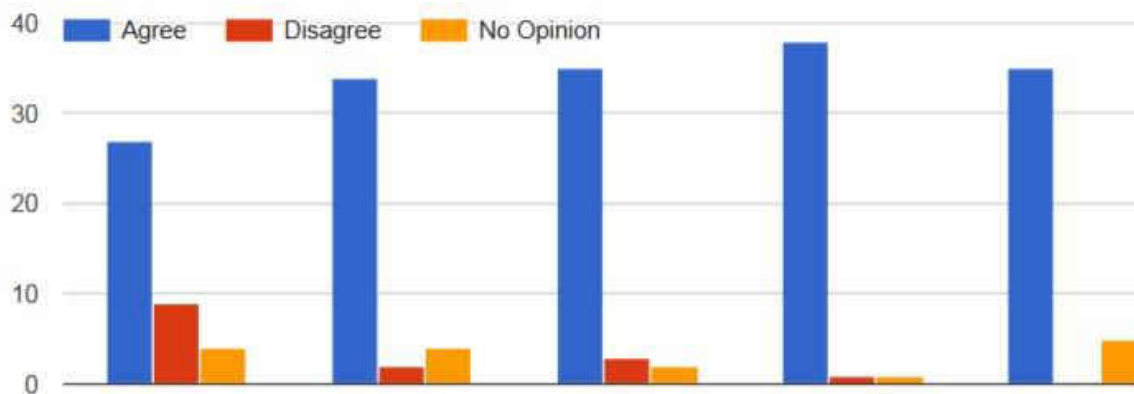
Figure 10 – Editing and Feedback. Questions below are listed left to right on the graph.

Figure 10:
I read fanfiction as frequently or more than I read published books.
I think that fanfiction is a legitimate form of creative art.
Fanfiction that is objectively better than some published novels exists.
Fanfiction can be just as complex and compelling as acclaimed literature.
Writing fanfiction improves your writing skills.
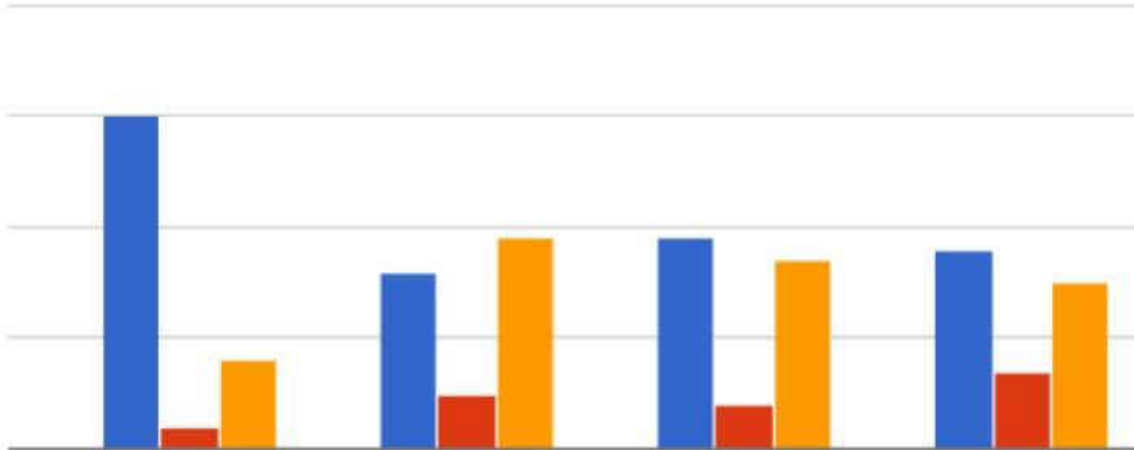
47

Figure 11:
Fanfiction is largely overlooked as a way to practice critical reading.
When I review fanfiction, I'm very meticulous and try to give helpful advice.
When I review fanfiction, I focus on encouraging the author, not critiquing.
When I review fanfiction, I focus on formatting, grammar, and spelling as well as OOC behavior in the characters.
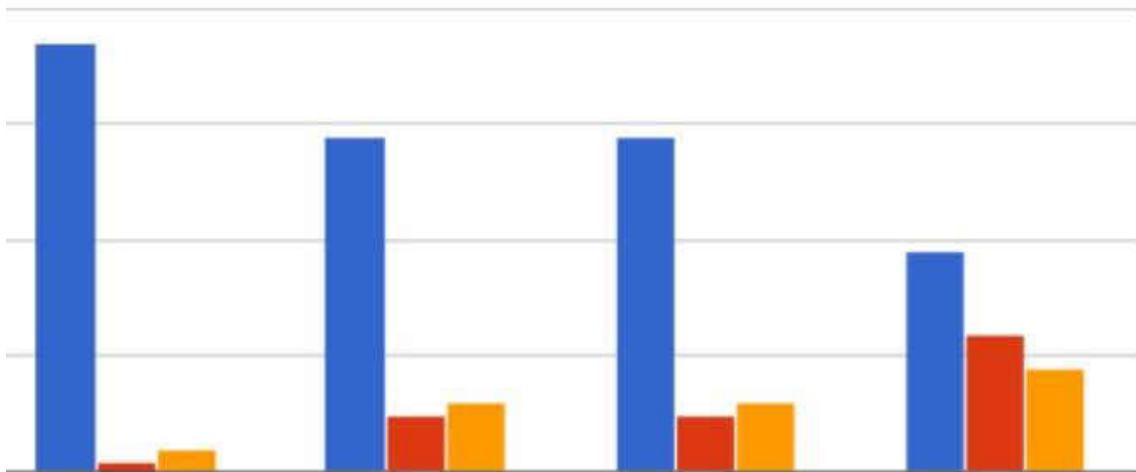
Figure 12:
It's easier to read a fanfiction when there aren't a lot of errors and typos.
I can't read a fanfiction if the formatting is so bad it's distracting.
I can't read a fanfiction if the characters are written badly or OOC.
If a story is written badly, I will write a review to express why to the author.

When asked in Part III, "What particular aspect(s) of fanfiction appealed to you?" the responses were varied, but held some commonalities, chief among them a desire to see more of the story than what canon provided, putting established characters into novel scenarios that were not explored in canon, and revising/exploring the backstories of characters who were poorly characterized in canon/wasted opportunities for plot threads and further expansion. "What ifs" were a common response to this query, as well as alternative timelines/scenarios. For this latter answer, I feel it is closely linked with responses to the effect of, "repairing failed storylines and failures on the part of writers," whereby a fan appropriates and remixes material based on the opinion that the author fumbled or otherwise made mistakes in regards to plotholes, sideplots that went nowhere, and/or forgotten or mischaracterized characters. Somewhat defying the stereotypes and expectations, only four of these responses explicitly listed the mature/adult side of fanfiction as a prominent appeal when they first began consuming fan media. Only two listed erotica as their primary interest, and both included other aspects, such as romance, as well.

Motivation is the ruling force behind all writers, and fanfiction writers are no different. Some are veritable fonts of creativity and write multi-chapter works in a matter of days or weeks with little sleep in between, so desperate are they to share their passion. Others trudge along steadily, picking up speed when inspiration strikes, or slowing in the doldrums of writer's block. Still others post erratically — a chapter of a longer work one day, a standalone snippet the next, then a week of radio silence while their creative juices simmer in preparation for the next injection of inspiration. For many of my respondents, they "felt like [they] had a great idea," had a "desire to put imagination on paper," or were "motivated by a lack of what [they] considered well-written stories." The "what-ifs" surfaced again in this response, with potential and possibility for unexplored scenarios spurring them to write. There was also an element of "I

49

could do better than…" whether it referred to the original author of a work, or another fanfiction writer. Indeed, the frustration at not being able to find stories featuring a less-popular character has often spurred writers to make their own, opening the gate for others to imitate, to one-up, and to give homage to in their own works.

The next question asked when respondents began writing reviews for fanfics. As a fanfiction writer myself, I had a hunch that there would be far fewer in this category than those who read the stories, and this was confirmed by the number of responses — six — indicating that the individual had never reviewed a story at all. Of the other responses, four clarified that they reviewed infrequently, usually only if a fanfiction truly appealed to them. Some common themes among those who did review stories were a desire to offer constructive criticism, encouraging the writer to continue their work (if still ongoing), and letting the author know that their work was appreciated by the reader.

The next two questions asked about GPA before and after becoming involved in fanfiction communities. I have a theory that the mechanics of reading, writing, and reviewing can reflect in better academic performance in turn, but my responses were slightly skewed by the way I worded the question — my non-American readers had no base of reference for grade point averages. Some helpfully gave guesstimates of what their converted GPA might have been, but five responses were rendered unusable due to lack of data. Of the remaining responses, roughly five were interpreted as 4.0's or A's, about 12 were B's, 3 were C's, and only one response, "Garbage," can be interpreted as a truly poor grade. The follow-up question's responses mostly indicated little or no change due to fanfiction; some participants noted that their grades had dropped due to personal and other factors. Only two specifically implicated fanfiction in improving their scholastic writing, while one stated, "[i]t lowered, the poor grammar had grown

on me." I feel that these results would be better explored with a larger target group of Americans to better test my theory.

Part IV asked about the writing processes of my respondents, from their definition of fanfiction to which genres they had explored. The first question asked if they researched a fanfic before drafting it, or just dove into writing based on surface knowledge. Disregarding the four people who did not actively write, the greatest number of responses — 17 in total — indicated a necessity and desire to research thoroughly before drafting a chapter. Six liked to just dive right in, with some adding that they would research midstream as they went. Interestingly, five responded something to the effect of, "I like to *already* know the source material inside and out *before* I begin writing," indicating perhaps a dislike of having to stop and start during a writing project to look up things for accuracy.

The next question asked respondents to describe what elements every good fanfiction has to have. Reoccurring responses encompassed concepts such as faithfulness to the source material and characterization, "good" writing (spelling, grammar, no walls of text, etc.), and a plot with substance. Another common response was the concept of extending the canon story in a plausible way via under- or unutilized plots and characters in the original. One response in particular seems to accurately sum up the gist of the rest: "The same points of any well written literature […] [t]he addition being breathing true to the established characters [sic] motivations."

I next asked subjects to describe exactly what fanfiction is, in their own words. This question serves to frame the other responses I feel, because individual definitions affect how a concept as widespread and varied as fanfiction is interpreted and internalized. There were a few of what I would label "esoteric" responses, consisting of intangible values such as love, hope, dreams, and "raw emotion," among others contained in longer responses. Other than that,

51

respondents all seemed to agree that "by fans, for fans," is a succinct way of expressing what a fanfic *is*, in the simplest sense.

There was also a reoccurring theme of fanfiction being strictly non-monetary and "without the official approval of the person/group that holds the rights to the character/story" in its goals and production. This complete artistic freedom was clarified in one response as a way to write a story without pressure; things such as tie-in toy sales, strict deadlines, or the line between family-friendly and mature content do not exist to burden and shackle the fanfiction writer. They are freer to do as they please, so to speak.

Somewhat in line with this, another response states that "[f]ans tend to be more respectful of source material and less likely to try to appeal to everyone." Indeed, it is a common phenomenon in fanfiction to be irreverent towards the "sacred cows" of a story's canon, especially if they were produced (often under duress on the author's part) to appeal to a younger generation of viewers or secure a corporate partnership. A nearly ubiquitous disclaimer at the beginning of many older fanfictions — "Don't like, don't read" — shows us that this is an established quirk of the fanfiction culture. Fic writers almost *can't* be forced to pander, because the only thing at stake is, ultimately, popularity. This gives the culture a rough sort of sincerity that is difficult to find in mainstream works, controlled as they are by multiple interests and shareholders. A few responses also echoed the previous question, asserting that fanfiction is chiefly a creative endeavor, where the writer can ponder questions, and then answer them as they see fit in the context of a new narrative.

The next question had respondents thinking about where they got most of their ideas for fanfiction from, and if they were inspired by genres different from the source material itself. A full eleven responses stated that writers used aspects of their own daily lives as inspiration for

story ideas, giving credence to the old writer's saw: write what (or who) you know. Other common fonts of inspiration were, unsurprisingly, other media such as books and videogames.

Listing and briefly describing the writing style and genre(s) respondents have experimented with was the topic of the next query. Four indicated that they were not writers in any sense, though one of the four volunteered that they had written a murder mystery story as part of a school assignment, citing that genre as one they've always enjoyed. Nine people specifically mentioned science fiction as a genre they'd experimented with writing stories in, and given the popular interest in it, I theorize that in the zeitgeist of our modern century, sci-fi holds as much — if not more — interest now given the front-page headlines of Elon Musk's space exploits and similar breakthroughs in medicine, psychology, human augmentation, etc. True to the imagination inherent in the genre, science fiction, especially the "hard" subgenre, has a way of predicting the future in a way that appeals to young writers. In this way, dreams are given form, with the wish that they may someday become reality. Fanfiction is all about escapism and fulfillment hand-in-hand, ergo science fiction would be an obvious choice of genre. On that note, other themes in the responses reveal that people also like to write more familiar, tellurian genres: romance/slice of life accounted for six responses total, while three reported writing historical or nonfiction writing. Another common genre reported was action or action/adventure, with ten responses including some iteration of that category. Six people mentioned fantasy or high fantasy specifically among those story formulas they had experimented with. Three people experimented with the mystery genre, and the same number listed horror among the genres they had tried. Of the rarer genres, only one person mentioned writing a Western, and two had experimented with noir. Five people did not list preferred genres, instead describing their writing style; with third person present tense as the most popular choice overall.

The next question asked if writers tended to stick to the origin canon's stylistic genre, or if they deviated, such as making a story darker or with more mature/adult themes than the original series. This question was meant to measure creativity in terms of writing outside the familiar bounds of canon, which can in many series be formulaic and easy to imitate. Four responses from non-writers are omitted, but the others showed some interesting trends. Six respondents preferred to stick to canon themes and genres, while ten indicated that they preferred specifically writing darker or more adult-oriented themes than the original source material. The remaining answers were variations of "it depends," showing some degree of flexibility for dealing with differing levels of maturity in canon sources. Characteristic of these responses are those along the lines of this one: "Depends on the source material. I can respect the original but I cannot supress [sic] myself." There were also reoccurring sentiments of keeping things plausible as though they were canon, as a way of staying true to the original work while exploring new ideas and characters. Other repeated themes were applying more realism to fantasy-based series/genres, creating danger to raise the stakes in a narrative, and exploring (somewhat introspectively) a particular character's unrevealed reactions to a canon occurrence or event, thus adding depth of characterization to characters that are somewhat flat in canon.

Next, I asked, "Have you ever written a story as a way of testing out a genre or style?" Five respondents don't write fanfiction, so they are once again were ignored for this analysis. Thirteen people responded in the negative, with one clarifying, "I usually write a story based on what I like to read," and one other adding, "though I am interested in trying it." Sixteen responses indicated that they had written one or more stories to test out a genre or style, with a few going into detail regarding their feelings and preferences. One indicated, "I regularly do this," while another opined that they wrote short stories in roleplaying forums, "exploring the

54

lesser known facets of an established character […] [b]ecause attempting to write three dimensional characters is all kinds of fun and weird." This indicates that among those who test out genres, it hinges on the loose, fun, unstructured appeal of fanfiction in general. One respondent wrote stories to test genres both for school and for their own entertainment, showing the cross-educational appeal this exercise might have for teachers.

I wanted to gauge how writing fanfiction competitively might affect writers, so the next item on the questionnaire asked if they had ever written a story based on a prompt or for a contest, and what the outcome was. Twenty-one respondents answered in the negative, with one affirming, "I write for fun," and another "Not of my own will," perhaps showing that structured, timed, and judged contests may be off-putting for the normally-free-in-all-aspects fic writer. Of those who had been involved in contests or competitions, one had won a poetry competition, and scored high on an academic assessment that involved writing from a word prompt. One wrote for a few fan-character contests, but could not provide any details on the process or outcome. Only one mentioned high school writing competitions, indicating that they submitted a few stories for multiple contests, but none won. Three people described writing based upon prompts given to them from members of the fanfiction community, i.e. outside of a formal academic context. The last response of note is from someone who submitted an in-progress fanfiction on Wattpad for a contest — they hadn't been writing with the contest in mind, but entered their work when they stumbled across it.

The next set of questions in Section V: Your Opinions & Views On Fanfiction rely on a three point agree-no opinion-disagree scale to measure respondents' reaction to the items. The first question asked if those polled read fanfiction as frequently or more than they read published books. The "yes" responses here were overwhelming, with 27 in total. Nine disagreed, while

four had no opinion. Thirty-four agreed that fanfiction is a legitimate form of creative art, four had no opinion, and only two thought that it was not worthy of that designation. Thirty-five agreed that fanfiction objectively better than some published novels exists, with only three disagreeing, and two unsure. Thirty-eight said that fanfiction can be just as complex and compelling as acclaimed literature, with only one person disagreeing, and one with no opinion. Interestingly, when asked if writing fanfiction improves your writing skills, thirty-five agreed that it did, five had no opinion, and zero disagreed completely with the statement. Even if they do not think it helps greatly, this result shows that the general consensus is that fanfics do not hurt writing practice.

Thirty responses indicated agreement with the idea that fanfiction is largely overlooked as a way to practice critical reading, with two disagreeing, and eight putting "no opinion." When reviewing fanfiction, the majority of people — nineteen — had no opinion on giving helpful advice, but sixteen others were very meticulous and usually try to give helpful advice, as opposed to five who were not as engaged while reviewing. "When I review fanfiction, I focus on encouraging the author, not critiquing" prompted nineteen positive responses, four that were negative, and seventeen "no opinion" answers. This might indicate that the nature of fanfiction review is more dedicated to encouragement and building self-esteem, rather than a traditional review as academics tend to think of them.

However, there are some elements that prompt scrutiny, as proven by eighteen people who agreed that they focus on spelling and grammatical mistakes in reviews, in contrast to fifteen with no opinion on the matter, and seven who were not as prone to nitpicking typos and such. Across the board, thirty-seven respondents agreed that it's easier to read a fanfiction when there aren't a lot of errors and typos, greatly outnumbering the two on the fence and the solitary

disagreement. This carried over to the next question, wherein twenty-nine people agreed with

the statement, "I can't read a fanfiction if the formatting is so bad it's distracting." Six had no

opinion, while five would presumably soldier on in the face of poor formatting if the story was

compelling enough. People also felt strongly about characterization, with twenty-nine (perhaps

the same as in the previous question?) agreeing that they wouldn't be able to read a fanfiction if

the characters were written badly or OOC. Five were more forgiving on this subject, while six

were, once again, of no opinion. Despite the perception of a fanfiction as bad, only nineteen

would definitively write a review to express why to the author, while twelve respondents would

actively refrain, and nine had no strong feelings either way.

In my experience, a fanfiction will inevitably receive far more views than reviews,

simply because it is easy to consume, but harder to produce. Simply reading a fic is free and

easy, but writing a review, whether positive or not, takes slightly more time and effort — or in

the case of a constructive criticism, time, effort, and confidence in one's own corrections, copy

editing, or beta reading critiques.

Analysis of *A Good Man* reviews

For this section of my research, I use Littleton's (2011) work on fanfiction response,

using the categories of review he in turn borrowed from Jay Simmons (2003). These are: Global

Praise (GP), Global Criticism (GC), Reader's Needs (RN), Text Playback (TP), Personal

Responses (PR), Sentence Edits (SE), and Word Edits (WE). In regards to the length and

complexity of the individual reviews, of those selected for this sample — over 30 words long at

minimum — the shortest review was 32 words long, while the longest was a whopping 494

words, for a total sample of 36 individual reviews. The tones for almost all reviews were

overwhelmingly positive, with some bordering on admiration. Negative content in these reviews was always found in conjunction with positive commentary. Before diving into my findings, I will first reiterate Littleton's review classification terms:

Global Praise and Global Criticism are opposite values; they indicate either congratulatory, positive comments with no constructive critiquing component, or insulting, potentially scathing negative reviews with no constructive critiquing component, respectively. Reader's Needs express a desire for clarification or additional information regarding characters, scenes, or plot points. Text Playback reviews look at the overall progression of a story, often commenting on how skillfully an author used tropes such as foreshadowing and Chekhov's Gun. Personal Responses fill social roles or build rapport with the author, often commenting on their state of mind or making personal inquiries; these are usually parallel to any critique of the story itself. Both Sentence Edits and Word Edits focus on the nuts-and-bolts composition and grammatical skills of the author, but SE reviews are more likely to look at broader aspects such as construction, tone, tense shifts, or number agreement, while WE reviews focus on minutiae such as spelling and punctuation, typos, or malapropisms. Both of these categories are likely to include not only critique, but suggestions for improvement. In many cases, there may be multiple categories represented in one review in this study, necessitating their repetition in this study at certain points, with relevant categories distinguished by bold text formatting.

As a note, having left reviews on this story long before I undertook my thesis, you will occasionally see my username, RyunoOhi, pop up in these analyses. All analysis coding and interpretation is done impartially, so as not to skew data, but I would be remiss to not mention

my involvement in these reviews. All reviews are represented verbatim, with typos, emoticons,

narrated actions, and formatting left intact.

I began by scouring my collection of reviews within the range for those that displayed

Global Praise. Surprisingly — or perhaps unsurprisingly given the length of this story and the

general loyalty of the longtime readers — there were only three reviews from my sample that I

could comfortably categorize as merely GP, due to the restrictions on wordcount imposed by the

parameters. In a long-running fanfiction, comments and reviews tend to skew towards Global

Praise as an incentive for the author to continue their work, but as time goes on, long, gushing

reviews give way to shorter encouraging remarks, most of which did not make it into my

sampling. Since there are so few of these, I have transcribed them below in order to demonstrate

what Global Praise typically looks like, with the corresponding portions bolded:

> Guest chapter 71 . Jul 12, 2017
> **Wow, I just binged read this whole story.** Really interesting to read, even
> though my favourite character was turned into a normal human. Can't wait to
> continue it in he next story!

> GoHaNViDeLSoN chapter 73 . Sep 12, 2017
> **Woah! A pretty intense and lengthy fic altogether ... I might have to give it a
> shot, considering all the good things I've heard about it.** But that, after I am
> done with 'Savior Of Demons' (Oh, I can already see someone cast their biggest
> smiles upon seeing their fav fic being updated :P *waves*)

> Ryu no Ohi chapter 73 . Nov 10, 2017
> **Ohhhhh yeeeeaaaah, now we're getting to the part of the story I've been
> hyped for~!** I've already given you my thoughts on this chapter, but just wanted
> to give you another hit for your review count. :3

From the first review, we get a sense of overwhelming positivity in the overall tone.

Binge-reading is an indication of interest, to the point of reading an entire story in one sitting

because it's that compelling. Slight personal complaints about favorite character getting less of

the spotlight still don't detract from the general respect inherent in a GP review, and most, if not all, of these type of reviews end on an encouraging note. The second review focuses more on generic flattery, combined with a shout-out to another author/work (mine, incidentally). This indicates more unfamiliarity with the story, but an intention to focus more completely on it once they're caught up on another fanfiction. The third review is made in lieu of longer, more in-depth comment on the chapter's happenings, because the poster has already communicated the details through another medium. Ergo, this review is posted explicitly to raise the author's statistics for this story. All GP reviews are positive in tone without adding any specific compliments, but after that, they can vary in structure, length, and exact sentiments addressed.

There were no Global Criticism reviews, though there are two primary reasons that may be the case: first, most GC reviews are shorter than 30 words, more verbal Molotov cocktails thrown hastily than bloviating screeds. When trolling and insulting, the trend usually leans towards brevity. On the anonymous Internet, it's much easier to toss out a short, sharp rebuke than write an essay on what you think is bad — with or without positive critique. The nature of GC also means that it is merely negative, with no additional suggestions or recommendations. Second, the vast majority of GC reviews are posted anonymously; FF.net allows authors to screen all anonymous comments, and they can preemptively delete any nasty or spam-related reviews before they become public. Due to the cowardice of trolls, they very rarely post negative reviews under their own username. As a demonstrative note, my own expertise in using FF.net allowed me to make this deduction instantly, where a more removed researcher might file this as an anomaly, precipitating more in-depth research to uncover the root cause of this strange gap in the data.

The next category is Reader's Needs, those comments asking for clarification or information. There were twelve reviews that either asked questions or asked for clarification of character development or plot points. As seen in the examples, most of these centered on the topic of SwanOfWar's continuation to this story, Light and Shadows, and when it would be released. Examples of these RN comments are as follows:

Yasaboo chapter 70 . May 23, 2017
I'm like Gohan and the rest. **Can't figure out what Vegeta was doing lol but i'm ready for this story to reach it's climax because Neverest was irking the hell out of me.** Die already! But another amazing chapter!

nancy103 chapter 71 . Jul 5, 2017
Great climatic events for this chapter! I know we are almost done but looking toward the next epic story. **I guess it must have something to do with Goku and Neverrest the way Vegeta said "10 years"?**

Ryu no Ohi chapter 71 . Nov 10, 2017
First off, my apologies for not reviewing this sooner! I held off so that I can each of your chapters the attention they deserve, rather than rushing a review. Huh, Nettelish, unbiased? **IIRC, isn't she a Saiyan?** Seems Nevrrest seems to think that way. Sepis is still loyal to Nevrrest, after all this. Man, I can't say I'd be so forgiving in his place. **I do have to wonder why Nevrrest was given the designation of 0002 - there was an empty slot for Vegeta, yes, but after that I would think that the consecutive slots would be filled up randomly by whoever they captured next.** Ooooooh, seems Chi-chi has a legitimate reason to be worried, judging by Nettelish's wandering hands. I liked the scene between Bulma & Vegeta. Intimate, but not in a lewd way. You can tell just how comfortable they are around each other, & that's difficult to portray. Meanwhile, Nevrrest seems well adjusted to prison life, judging from her "strike first, make an impression" show there. So Goku refused yet another call to a position of power, just like he did with Kami. I wonder how being an honorary justiciar will change his perspective, though. Oh no, their grand plan is to maroon Nevrrest on Earth for Goku to babysit (bird-sit?). xD I don't think she'll cotton to that. I can't believe Goku used puppy-dog eyes against Laswe...& it worked! ROFL.

jungkookies chapter 72 . Jul 27, 2017
Oh my goddd. What a rollercoaster ride. This has the right balance of feels, action and all the rest! And oh gosh the 'bro' vibes I'm getting from Goku and Vegeta. ABSOLUTELY PERFECT. REMINDS ME OF THIS FAN ART I SAW. Yay! Dr Tottle's alive again! And so are Nettlish and Hameus. I won't lie, I'm a bit unsatisfied that the Bulma forgave the Justice so easily but eh. It's just a minor

thing. This is undoubtedly one of best fics in DBZ category and I don't know why you don't have more reviews. You deserve a mighty fine congratulations! **I wonder if Neverrest is going to feature in Light and Shadows? She's kinda grown on me despite being the bane of everyone's existence.**

[Team Soda](#) chapter 72 . Aug 12, 2017
I cannot express enough how much I despise OCs in Fanfiction, but you somehow managed to make some compelling characters. Sure I forgot what most of them look like and filled in the blanks myself, but damn did you do a good job! And you also stayed true to the characters of Dragon Ball while tweeting them in a believable fashion in response to their circumstances. Been with this story for I want to say thirty or so chapters, and I'm glad it's reaching it epic conclusion. Truly one of the very few gems in the DragonBall Fanfiction section if I do say so myself. **So there's going to be a sequel, huh?** Sounds awesome! Can't wait!

[Ryu no Ohi](#) chapter 72 . Nov 10, 2017
Ah yes, the flustered chaos of getting a pregnant lady to the hospital. Poor Vegeta nearly forgot his clothes in his mad rush, haha. The bedpan business was just...I can't even... xDDD A little comedy like this is important in any story, & you've knitted it into the narrative brilliantly. Goodness, they really played Nevrrest like a fiddle in that trial. Surprised she didn't break down & throw a tantrum right there in the courtroom. **Oh, oh, is that fox Konkichi? Or just another fox person? I remember him from Dragonball, & I'm so happy when writers bring in cameos of minor characters like him.** Awww, baby Bra, already a handful! **Huh, so Vegeta wished Planet Blech back...but why? Maybe to put Nevrrest's nose in it?** Laswe learning the Kaioken will certainly be useful, but I'm wondering if Goku can teach it himself. The North Kai is the real master of the technique, & I doubt he'd be too pleased a student of his was training others he hadn't chosen himself. I laughed at Piccolo being all thoughtful & protective of Gohan & Videl's wedding, when Goku flaked out about it. ...I just about LOST IT at the thought of Frog!Ginyu on trial, bwahahahaha! That epilogue, though. That was really poignant. I don't know what else to say, other than I love your story, & the effort you put into it. You're an amazing storyteller.

[jungkookies](#) chapter 73 . Sep 13, 2017
:D Another chapter...! **Oh gosh, does that mean Nevrrest is is joining the Z-Fighters?** It'd be a nice addition... :P This is one of the finest gems in the DBZ community... keep it up!

[KewlFoxyKatt](#) chapter 73 . Sep 13, 2017
So wait in exchange for threatening to destroy earth and trying to kill everyone not to mention being unapologetic about her actions and torturing Vegeta, she gets a cushy vacation with her best friend in hopes that she won't build up strength to kill the person she hates most and his family including his newborn child. Meanwhile she's being watched by someone who will likely

let her kill almost everyone before even trying to take her down. **Also Goku will likely cheat on Chichi who will apparently just deal with it because... Why?** Oh and she has another mouth to feed without Goku having any money. Seriously break up with him Chichi. Oh also this is a horrible idea also just kill those two please. I understand you want to make another story but those two really need to go like forever or at least wish all of her strength away or something. Take some kind of precaution also what the hell is the justice good for it they can't keep dangerous prisoners?! Like what the hell are you even doing?! Gosh I love this story

ta.shrivastava chapter 73 . Sep 13, 2017
Yeah, Goku is really oblivious. **Now I am thinking, weather the sequel of this story will focus on Neverest's stay on earth? And a new villain? Maybe not a new villain, something different?** I am sure that all these questions will be answered, eventually.

Super Pank 13 chapter 74 . Oct 1, 2017
Un nearly sucked all of Goku's blood, but even after that, didn't changed into a good person. How would you explain this? Isn't absence of awareness, the reason for being bad? Isn't bad, just the absence of goodness?

jungkookies chapter 75 . Oct 1, 2017
Thank YOU for giving us this wild and wonderful ride. This has made me laugh, cry and do many other things. I actually stayed up at night questioning a lot of things in this story; questioning justice and mercy and all these other ideals that I once believed was solid and unchangeable. This story was a life changer in its own ways. So thank you. Thank you so, so much for inspiring me. This wasn't just a DBZ fic. It was an experience. And I look forward to continue experiencing what I got from his fic in the next fic Light and Shadows. If it's even half as good as AGM I know I will enjoy it. **I've frequented your deviantart and seen some art for your new villain (I can never remember his name but doesn't I mean 'arms' or something? Was it Xiuxi or something?) and he seems to be of a very different flavor from Nevrrest.** He's intrigued me and I can't wait to see more of him. Honestly, I'm slightly ashamed that I never really left reviews for earlier chapters. I only started reading when you had finished posting the chapter where Nevrrest downs Gohan and was caught up in a race of catch up. For now, I just have to reiterate what I said before. Thank you!

DragonLord501st chapter 75 . Oct 1, 2017
Thank you for writing such a good story that we, as readers, were able to explore! **The question, when are we able to see the next iteration of your series?** I for one, am very excited to read more of you're work as it makes me remember the OG vegeta, before he was tossed to the side in dragon ball super yet again.

The common thread throughout each of these reviews is that in 99% of them, the personal pronoun "I" is used, as though these reviews are a transcript of a conversation conducted between writer and reader. This underlines the importance of the lessened distance between fanfiction authors and their readership. All of these address some element of the story or chapter, but also address the writer themselves, either explicitly or implicitly. Most of the queries, here defined as any request for information ending in a question mark, are also actual questions, not merely rhetorical for the purposes of conversation. The readers are thus actively requesting insight and clarification with RN comments.

Text Playback reviews were by far the most passionate type left for this story, compelling as it is. There were seven of these, overwhelmingly positive, with only two expressing any negative opinions as far as story progression and/or utilization of characters. The positive TP reviews remarked on the weaving of the story itself and the skillful/successful use of various literary tropes. As examples, captain carrot 44's review read, in part: "Everything from the plot to the characterization (of both canon and original characters) was excellent," while jungkookies' review began with: "Oh my goddd. What a rollercoaster ride. This has the right balance of feels, action and all the rest!" The full transcripts follow below:

> Ryu no Ohi chapter 70 . Jun 6, 2017
> Well, Sepis is dead, Nevrrest is really off the deep end, & now Veku's time is just about up. I wonder how this will turn out. Seems her guard is down, though, so at least Veku can take advantage of that. So, Veku won with mere moments to spare. That's great, but I have a feeling that Nevrrest still isn't done fighting. They'd be wise to keep their distance from a desperate, downed enemy. Even if she can't attack them physically, she still has a sharp tongue. Guilt-tripping Goku is easy for someone like her. Ah, so Vegeta still wants a piece of her. I figured he'd be too tired to fight. Saying Vegeta's arrogance will be the death of him is like proclaiming that water is wet, Nevrrest. Yet, after the beating he's taken, Vegeta's still managing to injure Nevrrest. **I don't know what's going to happen in the next chapter, but I'm counting on you to make it spectacular!**

chapter 71 . Jul 14, 2017

Wow, what an incredible journey you have taken us on. I can't belive we're at the end. Everything from the plot to the characterization (of both canon and original characters) was excellent. And the main theme of the story – Vegeta's redemption – was executed beautifully. You have showed that Vegeta was a changed, reformed man while Nevrrest was going through a change in the opposite direction. At first I was very sympathetic to her – after all Vegeta destroyed her entire world and many others and he really got off easily. He never really paid for his past deeds – his death at the hands of Freeza was a result of his betrayal, not a punishment for his crimes. Just because he helped save the world or even the universe it doesn't automatically erase his deeds. After all, if you killed a man and than saved another man's life, you still would've been put on trial for murder. But as the story progressed and Nevrrest sank deeper into her obsession it became clear that she's not interested in justice, only in vengeance. She no longer had any moral advantage over Vegeta and simply became an obstacle, a challenge to overcome for our heroes. But she was still a compelling villain. Although Vegeta and Nevrrest are similar in a lot of ways the main difference is that Vegeta was able to let go of his past and start anew (though not without mistakes along the way). They were both created, molded into monsters by their nemesis – Frieza in Vegeta's case and Vegeta in Nevrest's. Only Vegeta eventually rebelled against it, became his own person, while Nevrest never even bothered to try. **I admire how you've managed to keep everyone in character.** Your representation of both Goku and Vegeta is probably the best I've ever seen in fanfiction. Vegeta's pride and stubbornness, Goku's will and compasion and their shared resolve – it was all there. **The same goes for other canon characters. There was not a single moment when I thought „this is out of character for him/her". I also really enjoyed your original characters.** They were all so well written and fleshed out. Each with distinct personality and different backstory. As for the epic conclusion to their fight with Nevrrest, there was no suprise there. I knew it was going to end this way. Vegeta deserved to be the one to finally put Nevrrest in her place, and I was sure he would spare her life, thus proving once and for all that he is a changed man. This is, without a doubt, one of the best fanfictions I've ever read. Thank you for creating this masterpice and I honestly can't wait for your next story. One last thing I need to get out of my system – I don't know if this was intentional or not, but as a lawyer I really cringed at the Justice's legal proceedings. They were really awful and had nothing to do with justice.

Ryu no Ohi chapter 71 . Nov 10, 2017
First off, my apologies for not reviewing this sooner! I held off so that I can each of your chapters the attention they deserve, rather than rushing a review. Huh, Nettelish, unbiased? IIRC, isn't she a Saiyan? Seems Nevrrest seems to think that way. Sepis is still loyal to Nevrrest, after all this. Man, I can't say I'd be so forgiving in his place. I do have to wonder why Nevrrest was given the designation of 0002 - there was an empty slot for Vegeta, yes, but after that I

would think that the consecutive slots would be filled up randomly by whoever they captured next. Ooooooh, seems Chi-chi has a legitimate reason to be worried, judging by Nettelish's wandering hands. **I liked the scene between Bulma & Vegeta. Intimate, but not in a lewd way. You can tell just how comfortable they are around each other, & that's difficult to portray.** Meanwhile, Nevrrest seems well adjusted to prison life, judging from her "strike first, make an impression" show there. So Goku refused yet another call to a position of power, just like he did with Kami. I wonder how being an honorary justiciar will change his perspective, though. Oh no, their grand plan is to maroon Nevrrest on Earth for Goku to babysit (bird-sit?). xD I don't think she'll cotton to that. I can't believe Goku used puppy-dog eyes against Laswe...& it worked! ROFL.

jungkookies chapter 72 . Jul 27, 2017
Oh my goddd. What a rollercoaster ride. This has the right balance of feels, action and all the rest! And oh gosh the 'bro' vibes I'm getting from Goku and Vegeta. ABSOLUTELY PERFECT. REMINDS ME OF THIS FAN ART I SAW. Yay! Dr Tottle's alive again! And so are Nettlish and Hameus. I won't lie, I'm a bit unsatisfied that the Bulma forgave the Justice so easily but eh. It's just a minor thing. This is undoubtedly one of best fics in DBZ category and I don't know why you don't have more reviews. You deserve a mighty fine congratulations! I wonder if Neverrest is going to feature in Light and Shadows? She's kinda grown on me despite being the bane of everyone's existence.

Ryu no Ohi chapter 72 . Nov 10, 2017
Ah yes, the flustered chaos of getting a pregnant lady to the hospital. Poor Vegeta nearly forgot his clothes in his mad rush, haha. The bedpan business was just...I can't even... xDDD **A little comedy like this is important in any story, & you've knitted it into the narrative brilliantly.** Goodness, they really played Nevrrest like a fiddle in that trial. Surprised she didn't break down & throw a tantrum right there in the courtroom. Oh, oh, is that fox Konkichi? Or just another fox person? I remember him from Dragonball, & I'm so happy when writers bring in cameos of minor characters like him. Awww, baby Bra, already a handful! Huh, so Vegeta wished Planet Blech back...but why? Maybe to put Nevrrest's nose in it? Laswe learning the Kaioken will certainly be useful, but I'm wondering if Goku can teach it himself. The North Kai is the real master of the technique, & I doubt he'd be too pleased a student of his was training others he hadn't chosen himself. I laughed at Piccolo being all thoughtful & protective of Gohan & Videl's wedding, when Goku flaked out about it. ...I just about LOST IT at the thought of Frog!Ginyu on trial, bwahahahaha! **That epilogue, though. That was really poignant. I don't know what else to say, other than I love your story, & the effort you put into it. You're an amazing storyteller.**

The two negative TP reviews from The Jingo (Nov 23, 2017) and KewlFoxyKatt (Sep 13, 2017) were both critical of larger plot elements but remained courteous, with both reviews ending in praise. The former addressed SwanOfWar's climactic chapter, expressing dismay that the nominal main character of the fanfic was shafted in the final fight when the villain engaged more physically and emotionally with the series protagonist instead. The latter lamented the apparent lack of justice (and perhaps common sense) on the part of the protagonists for sparing and possibly enabling the defeated main villain to take future revenge, despite forgiveness and character growth being core repeated concepts at the heart of this story. These are as follows:

> The Jingo chapter 72 . Nov 23, 2017
> Overall, this was amazing. I enjoyed the narrative, the interactions of the various characters, and how it all came together. You dealt with Vegeta in a way that makes him 'pay' for his crimes without requiring outright death, and provided a more poignant proof of his redemption as a person. **The only thing I would criticize is that you 'Goku'd' the story. Essentially, you did what Toriyama does in Dragon Ball.** You built up this very heavy Vegeta-Nevrrest dynamic at the start. The hate and obsession practically dripped from the words. And that confession she made about thinking she might love Vegeta as well - it really drove home her mental state and just how fixated Nevrrest was as a person. Then Goku swooped in and kicked ass, and Vegeta seemed to become little more than a nuisance to Nervrrest. **It just doesn't jive with me as a reader.** She spends decades of her life chasing Vegeta, day in and day out dreaming of having him at her mercy to torture and execute, and then promptly forgets about him once Goku walks on stage and gives her a few good punches. Nevrrest is in many ways a mirror of Vegeta himself, and the story is billed as revolving around Vegeta's arrest by her and the conflict therein. **But there's no sense of a real final battle or resolution between them.** He taunts her in the execution room, and then spares her life. But between and after that point there's not really a definitive sort of interaction between them. Vegeta seems to give her no thought after the battle. **The fact this will continue in Light and Shadows gives me some hope that this plot gets resolved.**

> KewlFoxyKatt chapter 73 . Sep 13, 2017
> **So wait in exchange for threatening to destroy earth and trying to kill everyone not to mention being unapologetic about her actions and torturing Vegeta, she gets a cushy vacation with her best friend in hopes that she won't build up strength to kill the person she hates most and his family including his newborn child.** Meanwhile she's being watched by someone who will likely

67

let her kill almost everyone before even trying to take her down. **Also Goku will likely cheat on Chichi who will apparently just deal with it because... Why?** Oh and she has another mouth to feed without Goku having any money. Seriously break up with him Chichi. Oh also this is a horrible idea also just kill those two please. **I understand you want to make another story but those two really need to go like forever or at least wish all of her strength away or something. Take some kind of precaution also what the hell is the justice good for it they can't keep dangerous prisoners?!** Like what the hell are you even doing?! Gosh I love this story

There were only three reviews designated as Personal Responses, two positive and one negative, from ta.shrivastava (Jul 5, 2017), Dragonll237 (Sep 12, 2017), and KewlFoxyKatt (Sep 13, 2017). The latter was the only negative PR review, although looking at the entire review gives a sense that the negative line "Like what the hell are you even doing?!" is a tongue-in-cheek remark at the end of a critical analysis, supported in that it is immediately followed by "Gosh I love this story" as the last sentence of text. Were a larger sample across more chapters taken, I suspect there would be more reviews representing this category. The nature of longer fics usually leads to some banter back and forth between the author and regular readers, in my experience. Transcripts of three PR reviews follow below:

[ta.shrivastava](#) chapter 71 . Jul 5, 2017
Your note reminded me of myself, almost two years ago, I found this story. On the profile of RyuNoOhi's. Back then, my English in the conversation was a mess, and I could only understand what is written or being said to me. From that, I have come so far, I have written my own story! Soon my master piece will be published, you get what I am trying to say? In short just like this story, I have come so far. And also await the sequel of this wonderful story.

[Dragonll237](#) chapter 73 . Sep 12, 2017
Eee! I am so excited for Bra/Bulla! Also, the last bit about cute minkey eyes was adorable. **Though I myself probably would have declined the request of keeping Neverest on Earth, I see your mind is made and it is really just smart to end it. Ps. The bits with Nettelish and Goku seemed a bit... erm... cheeky?** Either way, I am excited for the next chapter.

[KewlFoxyKatt](#) chapter 73 . Sep 13, 2017

68

So wait in exchange for threatening to destroy earth and trying to kill everyone not to mention being unapologetic about her actions and torturing Vegeta, she gets a cushy vacation with her best friend in hopes that she won't build up strength to kill the person she hates most and his family including his newborn child. Meanwhile she's being watched by someone who will likely let her kill almost everyone before even trying to take her down. Also Goku will likely cheat on Chichi who will apparently just deal with it because... Why? Oh and she has another mouth to feed without Goku having any money. Seriously break up with him Chichi. Oh also this is a horrible idea also just kill those two please. **I understand you want to make another story but those two really need to go like forever or at least wish all of her strength away or something.** Take some kind of precaution also what the hell is the justice good for it they can't keep dangerous prisoners?! **Like what the hell are you even doing?!** Gosh I love this story

Next, I looked for any reviews criticizing sentence structure, grammar, tense, etc. There were zero Sentence Edits in this sampling. To give perspective to this, from personally reading the entire story and commenting on every chapter, I can attest that there have been a few sentences and paragraphs containing syntax-related errors by this author, though they are always minor. Given that this is the tail end of a 75-chapter story, it's only natural that an accomplished author would internalize feedback and use it to avoid future errors.

Finally, due to the parameters of the study as well as the focus on the final five chapters, Word Edits were similarly scarce. As with Sentence Edits, this sample encompassed five chapters in which there were no typos to comment on. To reiterate a point I brought up earlier, this sample is derived from the final five chapters of a 75-chapter story; any errors or typos consistently commented upon by reviewers would have been eliminated from later chapters as part of the feedback process. Obviously, this is one immediately measurable benefit of reader feedback, which could be measured more accurately over the entire log of reviews for a single story, if resources and time permitted.

Interestingly, though many reviews contained elements of critique, the spelling and grammar of the body of reviews collected displays notable typographical "sins" not as strictly policed in the fanfiction world: run-on sentences, missing ending punctuation, misspelled words, and obvious keyboard misfires are commonplace and seemingly inconsequential in the scheme of feedback. To make it clear, in the scheme of this study the disconnect between feedback and the reviewers' actual quality of casual writing are not relevant. However, out of curiosity, to avoid bias, and for the sake of thoroughness, I logged the violations of spelling and grammar found in the table below. This is merely to catalog linguistic data, not to judge ability or skill level of the review writers (I even, embarrassingly, found a typo in one of my included reviews, proving that I am far from immune to an errant incorrect keyboard tap).

Table 1- Typos Observed in Reviews

Type of Error	Username	Number of Errors* per User *of each given type*
Incorrect capitalization *Ex: i'm, mr., john smith, etc.*	Yasaboo, brittypearl, FireStorm1991, Sina, Pie 555, DragonLord501st, Kiss7bliss	1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 1, 1
Missing punctuation *Ex: I love this When will you update*	FireStorm1991, Kiss7bliss	1, 1
Misspelled word/name *Ex: lightning/lightening*	Dragonll237, ta.shrivastava, Guest*, captain carrot 44, The Jingo, Sina	3, 1, 1, 4, 1, 2
Incorrect grammar *Ex: it's/its, incorrect possessive apostrophe*	Guest*, kmaverick9000, nancy103, captain carrot 44, jungkookies, Hektols, Team Soda, Sina, Super Pank 13, DragonLord501st	1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1
Run-on sentences/omitted commas/omitted words *Ex: I really liked your story and think you're an amazing author and this should totally be made into a movie like you know with a SFX budget and everything.*	Ryu no Ohi, felixng2013, jungkookies, Hektols, KewlFoxyKatt	1, 1, 2, 4, 1
Sentence fragments (when not intended conversationally) *Ex: And also await the sequel of this wonderful story.*	ta.shrivastava, captain carrot 44,	2, 1

* For the purposes of this study, each guest review will be counted as if it is a separate individual, as I have no way of verifying the identities of repeat reviewers.

Interchapter 4: Reflecting on shortcomings

Even with a cooperative crowd of fellow fanfic enthusiasts serving as my target audience, gathering this data and subsequently interpreting it proved challenging. In looking back at my questionnaire items, I feel that there is certainly room for improvement, should I or any other interested party take up this research in order to expand upon it. One mistake that I documented is the failure to recognize international conventions, as shown by the lack of proper data in the questions regarding GPA changes before and after a person's interest in fanfiction. If I had that

item to reword and redistribute, I would probably replace it with a more generic scale, instead of a U.S.-centric measurement.

Another potential issue I noticed is that a few of my questions in effect repeated queries or parts of queries, giving me repetitive, albeit consistent, data. When I asked, "About when did you first start reading fanfiction?" I was essentially repeating the previous item of, "At what age did you get into fanfiction-related activities?" with slightly different wording. There were also many more items on the questionnaire geared towards people who wrote fanfictions, which posed a problem when many of the respondents did not, in fact, write. In the future, a better system might divide responses based upon N/A answers into a separate category, with different questions dedicated to the consumption of fanfiction instead of its production.

My final error in setting this up was not automatically collecting e-mail addresses from respondents, which may make follow-up interviews more challenging to orchestrate. Originally, this was done to protect privacy and encourage participation (as some peoples' e-mail address contain real names or other identifying information), but in hindsight this was an oversight.

With the analysis of *A Good Man* reviews, the process went much more smoothly, albeit not without startup trouble. Originally, I had planned to analyze every review over 30 words posted since July 1st 2017. However, the non-chronological order of reviews, whereby anyone can comment on any chapter without restrictions, made this prohibitively difficult. After some initial trouble establishing a range within which to analyze reviews, I ended up utilizing a much less complicated method. The new method was to start at Chapter 70 and work my way through the final six chapters of the 75-chapter story, pulling out every review over 30 words in length.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS, OR, WHO LIVES
IN THIS CASTLE OF SAND?

Results and Implications

Results

Survey data for this study, though taken from a proportionally tiny sliver of the entire DBZ fanfiction community, reflected the passion, pedantry, and proclivities of those interviewed. Due to my own influence and connections with the community, the mostly-male sample I analyzed could be the product of unintentional bias, but beyond that it jived well with what previous studies have shown about the population who consumes and participates in fanfiction. While a little under 30% of my respondents spoke another language primarily, the vast majority share my mother tongue, with all the complicated grammar, euphemisms, and idioms that English entails.

The quirks of language mean that each fanfiction writer has their own style, but bungling some aspect of English contributes to readability, which affects readership. In the minefield of grammar, syntax, number agreement, and other aspects, ESL students are often much more meticulous, but native speakers have more of a knack for properly displaying the inherent culture in the written words of a narrative. Nevertheless, the two groups can and do learn from each other, as evidenced by significant improvements from one chapter to the next in a single work. Recognizing the global nature of fanfiction, this came as no surprise to Franceschi, V. (2017) when she wrote that worldwide, fans "gather together in digital environments to form international social groups where discussion of the original texts and the sharing of fan-made creative products takes place" and further made note of the fact that most of these cross-cultural, international groups "employ English as a shared language of communication, even when the original texts do not stem from English-speaking culture," especially in the case of manga and

anime (p. 4). ESL writers often state that they are not writing in their native language, and solicit

advice on improvement, while native English speakers often ask for help in maintaining cultural

accuracies they are not familiar with. The idea that fanfiction is a pressure-free expressive

environment is not quite accurate, but neither can we say that it is as rigid and consequential as a

typical writing class. Instead, according to my observations, readers and reviewers both use

rhetorical strategies in line with their comfort level, but through building confidence with

General Praise-type comments, can progress to soliciting more critiques, or writing more critical

reviews. As with many aspects of fanfiction, the truth is à la carte: individual writers can pick

and choose if they want to improve, and solicit as much or as little help from their peers to do so.

The age range for fanfiction is notoriously inclusive, but surveys like this one prove that

the majority of writers are in fact school-age — often using fanfiction to supplement their

academic writing, or to fulfill a perceived or real gap in the academic curriculum. By and large

though, most respondents polled started their exposure to fanfiction when they were in their

formative years. The imagination and artistry present in canon works of fiction provide an easy

source of inspiration, and to discover a community of people who take these inspirations and run

with them, then share them with fellow fans, is a key pull of fanfiction writing communities.

The likeminded passion draws people in, and encourages them to experiment, interact, solicit

feedback, and grow. The age range variable probably also influenced the identification of

students as the majority of fanfic consumers. Students may also have comparatively more free

time to engage in online fandom-based writing, though more targeted questions in a future study

could confirm or disprove this.

As for the impetus spurring each person to begin and then continue to engage in fandom-

related activities, there were many commonalities on this spectrum as well. Complications in

plotlines due to executive meddling or other external factors leads to disappointment, but where ordinary fans would merely shrug and carry on, fanfiction readers and writers seek to improve upon canon. Forgotten characters and plotlines are revived, plotholes dutifully explained or metaphorically filled in, and bad translations are restored to their original connotative meaning. Clumsily handled romances, or just off-screen trysts, seem to be a fan favorite for fic writers, who often seek to add dimensions to characters made flat by author apathy, genre, or time constraints. Though some of these delve into more adult themes, the main draw is the romance itself, and at the heart of that, further deep character development. In seeking to embellish and rewrite canon, fanfic authors strive to make characters more human.

In actually reading fanfiction, most respondents were more sophisticated than dated stereotypes might imply; rather than reading any and all fanfiction centering on a preferred character or series, readers are instead picky, idiosyncratic, and appraising when deciding which stories deserve their attention. Above all other factors though, faithfulness to the source material and characterization were the top criteria for the majority of readers. Respect for canon, while exploring and often breaking the rules of the story, are the two diametrically opposed faces to the fanfiction coin. With popularity and site traffic the only things at stake, fanfiction authors have no priority above the writing itself. The honesty that imbues fanfiction's raison d'être extends to the inspiration for most writers. Most gleaned inspiration from their own life experiences, or from existing genres they greatly enjoyed, making rhetorical moves to incorporate and embellish, tinker with and improve upon these scaffolds. Imitative and autobiographical elements permeate fanfiction, and given that any story runs on popularity and resonating with the audience, this might explain in part why fanfictions are so popular in the first place.

Moving on to the more focused study of *A Good Man* chapter reviews, there were some interesting takeaways there as well. The most prevalent of these results was the overall lack of reviews of a critiquing nature. A 75-chapter story from an already accomplished author, SwanOfWar's story is already polished to the point where critiques of spelling and grammar would be superfluous, and were mostly unnecessary in the five final chapters analyzed. The majority of the reviews were positive, though Global Praise was underrepresented in this study simply due to the self-imposed constraints of the sampling. Overall though, interest in not only this story but the teased sequel fanfiction gave way to an abundance of Reader's Needs, which far outstripped all the other categories with twelve instances in all. At seven instances in this sample, Text Playback was the second most frequent type of review — and by far the most lengthy and passionate. The level of cathexis readers showed in their reviews speaks volumes regarding fanfiction as a transformative genre. It is every bit as compelling, intriguing, and addictive as any big-budget book publication or Hollywood blockbuster, and is more often than not the work of a single individual, rather than an entire team.

Implications

Based upon the data collected in this study, as well as the multitude of personal and secondhand anecdotal experiences experienced as the author, there is much to ruminate on. While some aspects of fanfiction have been better brought to light, even more questions have been uncovered. Potential future research topics might look at fanfiction writers profiled in older articles, and how their writing has or has not improved. This would be useful data for determining whether writing, reading, and engaging in other fandom-related rhetoric activities has a correlation to increased writing and other abilities.

Analyzing the strategies that different fandoms use or don't use could also be elucidating; is a literature-based fandom less likely to use one strategy or another, as compared to a primarily visual media-based fandom? Does genre influence these strategies? Littleton (2011) theorized that fanfic authors are "members of communities of practice," and use the decentralized authority that gives them to solicit the desired quantity and scope of feedback they receive, "rather than through mandates given by an instructor who ultimately determines a grade for the course" (p. 121). This then leads to any preferred type of feedback becoming the dominant type solicited and given in turn, based on practices of the community and domain of the group, rather than a monolithic instructor figure controlling these aspects.

There is also the theory that inspiration from media leads to academic and even life choices that impact future media, markets, and society. The most famous example might be a young person obsessed with science fiction who goes on to build a revolutionary new medical device, or a future philosopher cutting their teeth on fictional works that explore the nature of esoteric concepts. Rosinski (2016) argues that any structured instruction must be "informed by evidence of whether students transfer rhetorical ideas and strategies between their digital self-sponsored writing and their academic writing;" if not, any academic writing instruction is "in danger of being obsolete and failing to address the kinds of knowledge students arrive in our classrooms already having developed as a result of their very active digital writing lives" (p. 29). In other words, classroom writing should try to harness the existing or nascent interests of students, in order to improve their participation.

For any of these hypothetical future ventures, attention must be paid to methodology, on what works and what doesn't in the realm of fandom and its associated activities. In this study, the most productive element was that of immersion — being a member of the fan community in

question greatly influenced intuitive understanding and navigation between professional and personal realms. After all, as Jenkins (2006) writes, "[f]ans do not content themselves with passive enjoyment of their favourite text but develop an affective attachment to them, enhancing the pleasure derived from consumption by engaging actively with them […] [t]hey turn "personal reaction into social interaction" (p. 12). Ergo, if you're not a fan, it's hard to fathom the enthusiasm and drive harbored by fans, as well as some of the tacit knowledge that familiarity cultivates. At the same time, bias is an obvious downside, and it can present challenges to objectively and clearly presenting material and results in the academic context to an audience of laypeople. Like Franceschi (2017), I was already a part of the "social and productive practices of fandom" and could thus solicit participants as "an insider to the world of fanfiction and fandom" (p. 97). Unlike her, I am fully immersed in the anime and manga categories, particularly for the fandom I chose to study reviews for. While her status as a general insider allowed her "a deeper understanding of the workings and mechanisms of the fan fiction universe, and as a result helped [her] to navigate the environment with relative ease" (p. 97), I had no such problems beyond the technical and academic. My online social circles, already established and cultivated, proved fruitful in letting me focus on the deeper research I wished to conduct.

The methodology for this study was varied, but still fell short of illuminating the full body of data that exists. If time and resources were unlimited, or even just extended, more in-depth research would certainly reveal much more about fan activities. In particular, the survey conducted here suffered from some flaws in question wording and subsequent interpretation. If redone, it would benefit from a more international scope, with the understanding that fanfiction is a global phenomenon. Queries related to schooling should thus be worded as to be understood by international audiences, who may not be familiar with U.S. grading systems. Additionally,

some questions repeated concepts in an overlap that proved unproductive in hindsight. Though an attempt was made at personal interviews, it was a small, hard to analyze sample, and might have worked better as a standalone study into the perceived, self-reported positive and negative effects of fandom activities on individuals. There is a potential for some psychology overlap there, in addition to communication applications.

By far the most successful body of data, though still restricted by time and work constraints, was the analysis of reviews on a single fanfiction. SwanOfWar's *A Good Man* proved a fertile field for mining different categories of reactionary review, and the quality and tone of each demonstrated several interesting aspects of the review system as a two-way communication channel between author and reader. A future study might have expanded parameters for the samples, allowing for the analysis of shorter as well as longer reviews, and more reviews over a span of time. If possible, a case study following a fanfiction from first publication to its last chapter would be highly intriguing for measuring an author's capacity for internalizing feedback and using it to improve writing. A more ambitious study could look at a sample of fanfiction authors from an ethnographic perspective — following several authors who all write for the same genre and/or series, but come from diverse ethnic, scholastic, and economic backgrounds. Communication may be universal, but the styles and methods differ, with the overarching question being how much, and in what ways? It's an old adage that writers tend to write what they know, but when you have a young person with comparatively fewer life experiences, how does that translate to what and how they write? Does fanfiction inspire these writers to seek out new life experiences, or at least delve into them for research purposes to improve the believability of their writing? My theory is that in many cases, the answer is a resounding "yes," and it is this influence that makes fanfiction a worthy subject of study.

Interchapter 5: What have we learned?

At the end of it all, the takeaway from all fanfiction studies seems to be this: you cannot break down the door to someone's mind, you have to knock — and sometimes, there may be a secret password. Traditional literature and writing classes ignore this common wisdom and frequently try to put their foot in the door with stuffy, dated texts and learning methods, to which all but the most obedient students will, naturally, be resistant. Making learning and improvement fun should be the goal of teachers, but very often it becomes a tedious task of meeting goals and quotas, forgetting that each student has aspirations and dreams, likes and dislikes. Fanfiction has a long and storied history, but at its heart is the unchanging, unspoken rule: you do it because it's fun. Fulfillment comes by notoriety, praise, and other boosts to the self esteem of young writers, but the hidden benefits include better technical writing and grasp of tropes and storytelling devices, an ability to resonate with the audience by experimenting with what works and what doesn't, and yes, even better social skills gleaned from feedback and exposure to criticism. While fanfiction is far from a universal skeleton key that unlocks every student's door to becoming a passionate, competent writer, it is an admirable step in the right direction, a tool that should be kept bright with use.

CHAPTER 6: OPENING MY SANDCASTLE
OF DISCOVERY TO THE PUBLIC
Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

Though the hype and fanaticism of my own fandom may occasionally leak through, I am comfortable with agreeing with Tosenberger's (2014) opinion that "fandom is by no means a perfect community," (p. 17) but rather, it is a freer space than traditional academic classes for an important learning demographic. For young readers, writers, and reviewers; those for whom official spaces are far more heavily policed, fanfiction is more permissive and less stringent than school, clubs, or any other physical groups dedicated to honing the craft. There may be gatekeepers, guidelines, and clannish guilds one can belong to, but in the end, "[fanfiction] takes for itself spaces within the text and fills those spaces with stories for which the canon has neither room nor desire" (Tosenberger, 2014, p. 17). To this end, the inherent disconnectedness that places fanfiction in online communities, rather than in face-to-face arenas, is a feature, not a flaw. Littleton (2011) theorized that because they are "free to leave at any time without penalty" instead of held as a captive classroom audience, fanfic writers "share responsibility for the group's success or failure," as members of communities of practice (p. 121). Members determine the parameters for the desired type(s) of feedback, and so these "become the preferred types of feedback shared" (p. 121). This gives students a self-determination that normal power structures deny them; in home and especially at school, "it is the instructor, the person in a position of power, who determines the accepted practices of the group" (Littleton, 2011, p. 121).

By allowing this disparate, often ignored demographic a stage, fanfiction in turn gives them access to resources, fellowship, and ultimately, confidence in their abilities. The pedagogical utility of fanfiction is apparent at the surface level, but the ability of teachers to successfully integrate it will be the lynchpin in whether it becomes a common WaW, literature,

English, etc. classroom fixture or not. Fanfiction discourse and experimentation simply cannot happen the same way if they are transplanted to a classroom, and efforts to incorporate it must reflect that and respect the original medium.

My research suggests that fanfic can benefit classroom writing instruction in a few important ways: it can spark interest, it can utilize more informal learning pathways already familiar to students, it encourages camaraderie and meaningful critique, and it teaches students to innovate and think outside the box in an inviting environment. The first takeaway from this, or any, fanfiction study is the sheer infectiousness of fanfiction: it's fun, playful, dramatic, overly serious with purple prose or overly silly with pop culture reference parodies parading across the digital page, but most teachers simply stop at the first aspect — fun — when they fantasize about students injecting that much enthusiasm into writing a book report. As Gutiérrez (2011) pines, "wouldn't it be nice if today's students brought their enthusiasm for pop culture to timeless and enduring works?" (p. 226), echoing the frustration many students and teachers alike feel. Students sneak comics into class, ignoring a droning lecture in favor of exciting escapism. Teachers, upon discovering the lack of interest, castigate, confiscate, and return to the prescribed curriculum, while inwardly wishing that their lessons held their young audience rapt. A love of reading is consistently cited as a cornerstone to academic success, but how do we as teachers draw parallels between *Atlas Shrugged* and *Attack on Titan,* Nietzsche and *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, Plato and *Pokémon*, Shakespeare and *Star Wars*? Rosinski (2016) argues that any structured instruction must be "informed by evidence of whether students transfer rhetorical ideas and strategies between their digital self-sponsored writing and their academic writing;" if not, any academic writing instruction is "in danger of being obsolete and failing to address the kinds of knowledge students arrive in our classrooms already having developed as a result of

82

their very active digital writing lives" (p. 29). The key here are the similarities, not the differences, in stories — the universal tropes that literature is built upon. Luckily, fandom has already gifted us the perfect teaching tool, in the form of TVTropes.com, a site that, despite its name, covers tropes across all media.

As a branch of Wikipedia, TVTropes has the benefit of accessibility; anyone can create a free account to create and edit pages. Though most teachers are rightfully wary of Wikipedia, in this situation it can easily become a repository for exercises that build on core principles of writing and storytelling — all while remaining addictively fun. Case in point, an instructor teaching their students to identify different writing styles might mine the corresponding trope pages for First-, Second-, and Third-Person Narration for pop culture examples. An excellent representation is in the text of the PointOfView tropes page itself, where for an example of Limited/Subjective POV, it reads, "[i]f the pronouns could be changed to first person without losing any comprehension, this is the POV you're in. See the *Harry Potter* series, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*" (TVTropes, 2019, para. 8). Thus, although "students are part of multiple literate activity systems that are in conflict and require reconciliation to achieve an identity as a literate person" (Rosinski, 2016, p. 251), using the myriad of trope pages as examples can more easily and academically bridge this gap. This takes advantage of "fascination with pop culture and its products[,] [which] has spurred the emergence of sections of audiences developing a deeper emotional attachment and investment in the consumed texts" (Franceschi, 2017, p. 3). Acceptable assignments might be finding examples of a trope and adding them to a Trope page, finding parallels between a classic book and a contemporary graphic novel by showing a side-by-side presentation on their respective trope pages, or challenging creative writing students to write a short story using the Random Trope button.

Another important focus of fanfic-based instruction is giving, receiving, and interpreting feedback. One immediate barrier to this is that Fanfiction.net is not quite the ideal setup for peer-review feedback, as pointed out by Littleton (2011). She notes that "[b]ecause feedback is left at the end of each story at Fanfiction.net, comments consisting of Global Praise are easier to leave than comments focused on Sentence or Word Edits" (p. 92). Most fandom-savvy students will be familiar with the FF.net methods of reviewing, but adapting that to a classroom may require some extra steps. As has been reiterated by a multitude of authors and studies, writing fanfiction is different from writing traditionally, insofar as the process is less fluid, more compartmentalized, and usually has looser guidelines. Franceschi (2017) says that "the relationship between writers and readers is biunivocal and not as clear-cut[,]" (p. 119) with Author's Notes and the comment system on FF.net used in lieu of more familiar, direct methods of discourse and feedback. "Additionally," Franceschi (2017) adds, "as many fans who enjoy reading fan fiction also write stories of their own, the roles of writer and reader are often fluid" — we see here the spontaneous fusion and fission of roles as the rhetorical situations dictate, allow, or merely suggest. When the equivalent of a multichapter book updates one chapter at a time, sometimes with months or even longer in between, "[f]ans shift between these two positions on FF.net […]; many registered writers not only use the site to showcase their work, but review and comment on other writers' stories in their fandoms of interest" (p. 119). In the downtime waiting for an anticipated chapter update, a reader may do a drabble, read and critique similar stories, or just discuss the plot through forums on FF.net. This has the effect of immersion in the online writing environment, and "[t]hrough the exchange of feedback, […] authors are able to develop their ideas more clearly and improve their texts by shaping their stories to meet the needs of themselves and their audience, fellow fans of the characters they are

writing about" (Littleton, 2011, p. 56). Ergo, slipping into the role of author, reader, or reader becomes an effortless, intuitive one for fic writers — it's as easy as obsession.

On the topic of obsession and psychological closeness, another pedagogical conclusion I have reached is that more than any other factor, the close, often fluid relationship between writer of fanfiction and reader of fanfiction is intemerate. The sense of "connectedness" that fanfiction and fanfiction reviews seem to foster between author and members of the audience is akin to the dark matter holding the fanfiction universe together — it isn't always readily apparent, but it is all-important, as without it, the disparate elements of the fanfiction community would fly apart and disperse. The shared cathexis that fans of a specific show, book series, or videogame share is the fuel that powers all fandom-related works. Franceschi (2017) writes that fans of series appropriate texts because they feel a deep attachment to them, "which leads them to behave as if they have a certain degree of ownership of the text they adore." She further notes that "when the producers' authority over the official narratives acts against the fans' desires," this naturally elicits very strong reactions from the obsessive audience. Thus, in fanfiction, appropriating writers often openly reject the official canon imposed by the text authors (p. 28). To outsiders who only view these texts recreationally, this seems extreme in its disrespect, but citing Black (2005), Franceschi (2017) highlights that fanfic writers put much more emotional investment in their fan practices, which results in much higher emotional engagement in these activities. Thus, allowing students to invest in these texts, to write these parallel stories, is an excellent academic application (p. 37).

Unlike the authors of their canons, who may be indifferent and mystified at best, or hostile and litigious at worst, fanfiction authors work in the collective, actively engaging their

audiences at nearly every stage in the writing process. Again, the medium of the Internet

facilitates and cultivates this methodology, as seen in a case study analyzing a writer's online

relationship with one of their fans and readers. The "to-ing and fro-ing with [a reader]

exemplifies a kind of writing collaboration that […] shapes [the author's] writing as it provides

direct feedback and a sense of connection" (Lammers et al., 2015, p. 281), and would be much

more difficult to command in the real, physical context of other forums. The effortless

participatory nature of online fanfiction sites "allows an unprecedented variety of participatory

entertainment to flourish, calling into question the traditional Rhetorical Triangle that separates

sender, receiver, and message […] [t]he Digital Generation seems to be no longer content to

remain passive receivers of messages but instead demands to be part of their creation. (Urbanski

2009, p. 3). This kind of fervent passion for being *involved* in the writing process is a tantalizing

aspect of fanfiction for educators to grab hold of and repurpose in a classroom setting.

Brainstorming is a common enough technique, for example, but putting a fanfiction twist

on it would involve not just one person's input, but perhaps an entire class of raucous students

throwing their two cents in, while the "author" feverishly jots down the most promising, crowd-

sourced ideas. Just like on FF.net, a dialogue is established between authors and readers, though

in this case dialogue would take place in real time, or on classroom forums. In the case of multi-

chapter stories, this aspect is quite important, as "the communication is ongoing throughout the

entire process of writing and updating the fan fiction, and it permeates the entire fan fiction

writing experience […] Suggestions in terms of plot and language are given by readers,

alongside critique and encouragement, which the writer may take into consideration during the

writing process" (Franceschi 2017, pp. 134-135). The lack of self-consciousness facilitated by

this approach of "crowd-sourcing" writing may help to improve the writing repertoire of those

who are not confident in their skills, or as Ritter and Vanderslice (2007) said, "[t]each […] not craft but the intransitive act that is writing itself, as a primary experience, and craft will take care of itself […] [c]reate the structure within which students can imagine the letting go of thinking […] [t]hat is how writing works when it is really writing" (p. 16). In the case of fanfiction — or in-classroom writing assignments — young authors can benefit from knowing their audience, and consequently what they desire from a storyline. It isn't necessarily about writing to please or cater to an audience, but it is more in alignment with the sort of preliminary research and solicited feedback that precede a public speech. The collective aspect of fanfiction makes this job much easier, as "readers give advice in terms of plot and characterisation [sic], support one particular plotline in multi-chaptered fan fiction, or act as impromptu proofreaders." These suggestions can be taken to heart or ignored by the author, but "the direct communication between writer and reader places fanfiction well within the domain of participatory culture" (Franceschi 2017, p. 128). Fellowship and cooperation are thus established as cornerstones of fanfiction, and must be recognized and cultivated as such in the classroom.

Another conclusion I have reached is that the Millennial and Generation Z groups have a fundamentally different approach to learning, and the disconnect between traditionally-taught classes and their media consumption and social interaction habits have, in many cases, reached an impasse. The so-called "Digital Generation" views its texts as more fluid, interactive, and ultimately malleable. They have nontraditional views of what it is to create messages, and what meaning those messages can or can't have. In contrast, the stiff, rigid definitions the older generations seek to appellate to these groups may be shortsighted; study after enlightened study have found that they "often spend a lot of their out of class time employed in significantly

creative, narrative-based activities that do not fit the traditional construction of textual engagement" (Urbanski 2010, p. 239). The narrow definitions of what constitutes "reading" may have something to do with this bias; as Ritter and Vanderslice (2007) observed, many of the brightest students did not read traditional texts — instead, new media dominated their mental library, through not just books, but movies, T.V., and videogames. Confronted with this, their conclusion was that there were "so many ways to engage the mind that the conventional construction 'reading is fundamental' starts to look rather provincial and nostalgic" (p. 4).

Indeed, the more we look at the most successful and popular franchises, and their subsequent fanbases, the more we find that savvy marketers are pushing the narrative on multiple platforms, allowing fans to engage in a variety of ways. Rather than setting forth a story on only one front, for example a hard-copy book, or a serial television show, "transmedia storytelling relies on contributions to the main story from several media outlets, such as television, magazines, videogames, and websites, all of which help develop and enhance the main storyline(s)" (Hassapopoulou 2010, p. 46). Young readers and thinkers, used to multitasking on a myriad of platforms, eat this up, and are happy to engage. The bottom line is that for education to advance, for teachers to truly connect with next-gen students in order to inspire them, some evolution must occur. Meaning making is intimately human, but the methods by which we make meaning change and evolve with new technology. Across new forms of media and multiple nodes, "[c]omputers and robust networks flow us to take the work of others, mix it, mash it, remix it, and send it further on down the digital line […] [t]his is all new […] [a]nd its newness is profoundly important" (Davis et al. 2010, p. 187). Novelty can be discomforting to us as instructors, set in our tried-and-true ways as we often are. However, it is vital to incorporate the new forms of media as they steadily influence the discourse on writing and rhetoric. As Parrish

(2010) eloquently puts it, discrimination against new media "cannot continue […] because it is ultimately an uninformed, self-justifying mindset [that] run[s] the risk of alienating our students." The author goes on further to say, perhaps even more poignantly, "we may not know we have students engaged in the types of digital media described in this collection in our classrooms because of their intense need for self-preservation against the usual reception […] [w]e therefore need to be sure we don't perpetuate that disapproval with our own actions [because] [w]e are all fans of something — sharing that passion with students may open up a safe space for them to reciprocate" (p. 248). The knee-jerk disapprobation we may feel for our students' choice of recreational media matters not — we should be encouraging of the fact that they engage in media consumption, even in a transformative medium we may not be familiar with or well-versed in. Acceptance is the bridge to better understanding, and getting a handle on these transformative modes of communication will allow us to bridge the gap between the old and the new academia.

Especially in the field of creative writing — long established by Ritter and Vanderslice (2007) as "unteachable," unknowable, and esoteric — innovation has to be breathed into the way we teach the genre. Some instructors may have misgivings with teaching fanfiction — if it's anything you want it to be, there are no rules, right? Anxious teachers might imagine a writing class full of uninspired, derivative scribblers with no accountability, but in practice, "students wish to be graded […] "[g]rades matter to students as an indicator of potential and progress" (Ritter & Vanderslice, 2007, p. 51). Far from shying away from criticism, young writers invite it — as long as it is generally gentle, and comes from a fellow diehard fan. How can teachers make the leap into this sacred realm of the fanfiction "in-group?" Being a fan of the same media helps, but as Urbanski (2009) jokingly cautions, "[n]ot every instructor can, or even should, be

leading raids in World of Warcraft late into the weekend nights, nor [should] every writing

teacher […] craft volumes of fan fiction in between grading student papers (though it probably

couldn't hurt)" (p. 8). Instead, the key here is engagement and understanding, a respect for the

medium and the associated rhetoric that drives participation in fanfiction, and fandom in general.

Part of that understanding is recognizing that fanfiction often acts as a catalyst for deep

research into topics that students might not otherwise seek out; it expands their writing repertoire

by broadening their horizons, knowledge-wise. Larsen (2010) writes that fanfiction has given

them "an excuse to research a wide variety of fascinating topics that [they] would not have

otherwise taken the time to study," noting in particular that their stories "are known for their

extensive bibliographies and footnotes, which readers surprisingly appear to appreciate" (p. 136).

The inexhaustive list of eclectic topics they give reads similarly (at least in length) to my own list

of research topics for *Savior of Demons*: septicemia, narcissism, conlangs, reptile anatomy and

reproduction, theoretical planetary orbits around a white dwarf star inside a globular cluster,

nonfatal electrocution, posttraumatic stress disorder, and many more. My experiences are not an

outlier by any means; "fan texts have the primary aim to enhance and deepen the connection with

the primary text and the pleasure derived from the reception of the original material" (Franceschi

2017, p. 34), allowing one interest to act as a springboard to other, often wildly different, paths

of interest. Silly high school AU fanfics aside, writing these stories takes not just dedication, but

hard research and interpretation skills, often much more so than persistent stereotypes suggest.

Urbanski (2009) says it best when he opines that teachers can fall into their own stereotypes,

namely "the curmudgeon complaining about 'kids today,' with all the derisive closedmindedness

that entails. He encouragingly adds that "we must back away from the crisis rhetoric, be willing

to demonstrate the flexibility and resistance to early closure that characterizes the best our

discipline has to offer, and make room in our classrooms not only for the rhetorical activities described [here] but also for those we cannot predict" (p. 8). We as instructors and innovators must look towards the future, while keeping in mind the tried-and-true basics of teaching creative writing and the related disciplines. McFarland (1993) makes an excellent point when he determines that there are "five essentials of a serious writer: desire, drive, talent, vision, and craft […] My point […] is not altered whether the list is held at five, cut to three, or expanded to twenty: of the essentials, only craft can be taught" (p. 34). Without desire to write, there is no drive. Talent can only be intuitively honed; you cannot teach a student to be clever, just as you cannot spontaneously inspire them to see — craft is indeed the only factor that we have any modicum of control over, and it is predicated on whether the other factors are present. While teachers cannot force these first four, fanfiction can often easily inspire them in students.

Peroration: What more can we learn?

Including the many months spent reflecting on and writing this thesis, I have been a student in college academia for 17 years. Throughout this time, I have seen both sides of many issues that affect students and instructors. Time and money alone a curriculum do not make — student engagement is the number one best predictor, in my experience, for how well a concept is learned in class and applied in the real world. Teaching good habits for writing, critiquing, and comprehending the author's intent begins with meeting students halfway — by combining their enthusiasm with your wisdom. It is always difficult to make a dry concept palatable, and this can be further compounded when there are other things competing for attention. Given the

91

choice between reading an assigned 19th century novel or reading manga, comics, or fanfiction, even the most disciplined student can be tempted to renege on their academic obligations.

What if fundamental reading and fun reading were one and the same? Aca-fans like me can dream. To put that dream into practice, however, is a considerable undertaking, not for the faint of heart or soft of principles. You cannot water down academia to fit the fanfic mold, but neither can, or should, you restrict fanfiction to fit a rigid curriculum. Balance between the recreational catharsis of fanfiction and its latent ability to teach and foster skills must be strived for in order to make this hypothetical venture work. To give a parallel example, I undertook this thesis not only to fill in research gaps, but because from a conceptual standpoint, analyzing fanfiction is enjoyable to me. What started as a fun venture has, with the rigors of research, style guides, avoiding plagiarism, adhering to a specific writing style, and especially the looming deadline, become exhausting. Tedious. Decidedly *not fun*. Still, I persevere, for the same reason I am still, as of this writing, carefully planning, drafting, writing, and editing my own fanfiction's 35th chapter. Even though my self-imposed deadlines can induce anxiety, publishing on time is important to me — it's part of what my readers expect, and in exchange for my consistency, they reward me with my own reviews. Some are just Global Praise accolades, yes, but others are more critical, asking deep questions that one would expect in response to legitimately published stories. My experiences are not universal, but they do seem to be typical of fanfiction writers, even though "[n]ot all writers seek constructive feedback on their papers, and many writers are motivated by positive comments, no matter how simplistic those comments might be" (Littleton, 2011, p. 55). Those who do seek feedback inevitably will find an eager swarm of teacher-fans to coax and praise them towards improvement. As a teacher, I try my hardest not to become stagnant in my methods, and the same is true for my personal writing

style. I don't earn any money or global acclaim from my fanfiction, but perhaps more important is what I *do* earn, and own: my shared experiences and skills gained as a result of it. Bringing the focus back to students, I wish to echo Ritter and Vanderslice's (2007) gentle reminder that "the kind of subversive passion we may only vaguely recall" as adults who write, read, and grade daily is alive and well in the student population as a critical component of their world and how they navigate it (p. 17). We could learn a lot from that passion, if we suppress our biases long enough to see the fans' point of view.

APPENDIX A: FANFICTION INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

I have agreed to answer the questions on this page to the best of my ability with the knowledge that these results may be published and made publicly accessible. Yes ☐ No ☐ **Name/Username/Pseudonym:** _____

Fanfiction Involvement Questionnaire

Section I: Personal Information

1. In what age group are you?
   - ○ 19 and under
   - ○ 20 - 29
   - ○ 30 - 39
   - ○ 40 - 49
   - ○ 50 - 59
   - ○ 60 +

2. Gender:
   - ○ Male
   - ○ Female

3. At what age did you get into fanfiction-related activities?
   - ○ 19 and under
   - ○ 20 - 29
   - ○ 30 - 39
   - ○ 40 - 49
   - ○ 50 - 59
   - ○ 60 +

4. Is English your first language?
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ No

5. Were you homeschooled, privately schooled, traditionally schooled, or other?
   - ○ Homeschooled
   - ○ Privately schooled
   - ○ Traditionally schooled
   - ○ Other: _____

6. In terms of your current occupation, how would you characterize yourself?
   - ☐ Writer
   - ☐ Administrative Assistant
   - ☐ Journalist
   - ☐ Secretary
   - ☐ Academic
   - ☐ Professional
   - ☐ Technical expert
   - ☐ Student
   - ☐ Designer
   - ☐ Administrator/Manager
   - ☐ Other, please specify to the right:

I have agreed to answer the questions on this page to the best of my ability with the knowledge that these results may be published and made publicly accessible. Yes ☐ No ☐ **Name/Username/Pseudonym:** _____

Section II: Feelings About Fanfiction

1. With respect to your fanfiction, please indicate how strongly you feel about the following statements:

SD = Strongly Disagree D = Disagree N = Neutral A = Agree SA = Strongly Agree					
Fanfiction is a big part of my identity online.	○ SD	○ D	○ N	○ A	○ SA
Fanfiction is a big part of my identity in the real world.	○ SD	○ D	○ N	○ A	○ SA
I would say that I'm part of a community of fic writers.	○ SD	○ D	○ N	○ A	○ SA
I consider myself an artistic or creative type of person.	○ SD	○ D	○ N	○ A	○ SA
I write just for fun.	○ SD	○ D	○ N	○ A	○ SA
I write to improve my writing skill.	○ SD	○ D	○ N	○ A	○ SA
I write for some other reason(s).	○ SD	○ D	○ N	○ A	○ SA
I take pride in my storytelling abilities and think of myself as an author.	○ SD	○ D	○ N	○ A	○ SA
The content of my fanfiction is well-researched.	○ SD	○ D	○ N	○ A	○ SA
I am very careful to spell- and grammar-check chapters before publishing them.	○ SD	○ D	○ N	○ A	○ SA
I take constructive criticism from reviews and use it to improve my writing.	○ SD	○ D	○ N	○ A	○ SA
I feel very strongly connected to my readers and reviewers online.	○ SD	○ D	○ N	○ A	○ SA
Writing fanfiction is satisfying and/or fulfilling to me.	○ SD	○ D	○ N	○ A	○ SA

Section III: How Did You Get Started?

1. About when did you first start reading fanfiction?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. What particular aspect(s) of fanfiction appealed to you?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. About when did you first start writing fanfiction? Describe what motivated you.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. About when did you first start reviewing one or multiple fanfictions? Describe what motivated you.

FANFICTION REVIEWS AND ACADEMIC LITERACY:

POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND IMPLICATIONS

WEILER, 2019   Page 2 of 5

96

I have agreed to answer the questions on this page to the best of my ability with the knowledge that these results may be published and made publicly accessible.   Yes ☐ No ☐   **Name/Username/Pseudonym:** _____

	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
5.	What was your GPA in school before discovering fanfiction?
	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
6.	What was your GPA in school after discovering fanfiction? If it changed, why?
	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Section IV: Tell Me About Your Process

1.	If you write fanfiction, do you do a lot of research on a series before starting your stories, or do you prefer to just dive right into writing?
	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
2.	Describe what elements every good fanfiction has to have.
	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
3.	In your own words, define fanfiction, as opposed to mainstream fiction.
	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

I have agreed to answer the questions on this page to the best of my ability with the knowledge that these results may be published and made publicly accessible. Yes ☐ No ☐ **Name/Username/Pseudonym:** _____

4.	Where do you get your story ideas? Do you find inspiration in different genres than the source canon?

5.	List and briefly describe your writing style and genre(s) you have experimented with.

6.	Do you tend to stick to the origin canon's stylistic genre, or do you deviate, such as making a story darker or with more mature themes than the original series?

7.	Have you ever written a story as a way of testing out a genre (Gothic horror, steampunk, high school AU) or style (drabble, novella, flash fiction, poetry, songfic)?

8.	Have you written a story based on a prompt or for a contest? If so, describe the prompt, your writing process, and the outcome, such as whether you won a contest.

I have agreed to answer the questions on this page to the best of my ability with the knowledge that these results may be published and made publicly accessible. Yes ☐ No ☐   **Name/Username/Pseudonym:** _____

Section V: Your Opinions & Views On Fanfiction

There are a number of statements listed below. Please select either "Agree" or "Disagree" according to your personal experience writing, reading, and/or reviewing fanfiction. If you cannot make a choice or it does not apply to you, please select "No Opinion."

Statement:	Your Response:		
I read fanfiction as frequently or more than I read published books.	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ No Opinion
I think that fanfiction is a legitimate form of creative art.	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ No Opinion
Fanfiction that is objectively better than some published novels exists.	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ No Opinion
Fanfiction can be just as complex and compelling as acclaimed literature.	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ No Opinion
Writing fanfiction improves your writing skills.	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ No Opinion
Fanfiction is largely overlooked as a way to practice critical reading.	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ No Opinion
When I review fanfiction, I'm very meticulous and try to give helpful advice.	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ No Opinion
When I review fanfiction, I focus on encouraging the author, not critiquing.	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ No Opinion
When I review fanfiction, I focus on formatting, grammar, and spelling as well as OOC behavior in the characters.	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ No Opinion
It's easier to read a fanfiction when there aren't a lot of errors and typos.	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ No Opinion
I can't read a fanfiction if the formatting is so bad it's distracting.	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ No Opinion
I can't read a fanfiction if the characters are written badly or OOC.	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ No Opinion
If a story is written badly, I will write a review to express why to the author.	○ Agree	○ Disagree	○ No Opinion

Thank you very much for participating in this research questionnaire. If you would like a copy of the study, please feel free to e-mail the head researcher, Regina A. Weiler, at regina.w@knights.ucf.edu.

APPENDIX B: PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

After gathering data and analyzing the results, I then reached out to select individuals who would be interested in helping me conduct follow-up interviews. I initially proposed interviewing three people, but I had a fourth respondent, so my sample size grew by one. All but one would be answering questions via private messages (PMs) on FF.net, due to time zone differences. My plan of attack was to have them reiterate which of the three activities (reading, writing, and reviewing) they practiced the most, and then ask further questions based on the "dialogue tree" of their responses. Below are my opening questions to them:

- So, tell me a little about your background; anything that gives a picture of you and your identity. Are you a self-professed nerd, or do you consider yourself something else?
- Just to clarify from the last questionnaire, tell me if you either read, write, or review fanfiction, and which one you engage in most frequently.
- *If they **read**:*
  - I want you to walk me through your selection process for reading fics. How do you decide which to follow, and which to drop after a paragraph or so?
  - What is your favorite part of a story/chapter that you've read recently? Describe your emotions as you read it.
  - What's a big barrier to reading fanfics for you, other than bad writing (e.g. time constraints, infrequent updates, etc.)?
  - What, if anything, motivates you to keep reading a fic?
  - Tell me about the worst fanfiction you've ever willingly read.
  - Okay, here's a weird one: how do you sit when you read? Describe your ideal environment.

- What's your end goal when you read fanfiction?

- *If they **write**:*

  - I want you to walk me through your thought process for drafting fics. How do you decide which canon to follow, and which to ignore?

  - What is your favorite part of a story/chapter that you've written recently? Describe your emotions as you composed it.

  - What's the number one biggest barrier to writing fanfics for you, personally?

  - What motivates you to keep writing your story?

  - Tell me about the worst response you got to your story. How did you initially feel, and how did it affect you?

  - Okay, here's a weird one: how do you sit when you write? Describe your ideal environment.

  - What's your end goal when you write fanfiction?

- *If they **review**:*

  - I want you to walk me through your selection process for reviewing fics. How do you decide which to follow and comment on every chapter, and which to only comment on infrequently, or not at all?

  - What is your favorite part of a story/chapter that you've read recently? Did you write a review telling the author how you felt?

  - What's a big barrier to reviewing fanfics for you (e.g. time constraints, infrequent updates, etc.)?

  - What, if anything, motivates you to keep reviewing a fic frequently, chapter by chapter?

- Tell me about the most scathing review you've ever written. What prompted it? Was it just a rant about OOC characters, or did you try to offer advice too?

- Have you ever read a chapter with the review box open in another tab, so you could review as you read? Do you frequently do this?

- What's your end goal when you review fanfiction?

• Before we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to add or clarify that we didn't cover?

APPENDIX C: IRB LETTER

Determination of Exempt Human Research

From:	UCF Institutional Review Board #1
	FWA00000351, IRB00001138
To:	Regina Weiler
Date:	**December 20, 2017**

Dear Researcher:

On 12/20/2017, the IRB reviewed the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination – Category #2
Project Title:	Creativity, Fanfiction, & Rhetorical Fluency: Does Remix Writing Culture Complement The Classroom?
Investigator:	Regina Weiler
IRB Number:	SBE-17-13669
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

This letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Jennifer Neal-Jimenez on 12/20/2017 04:13:52 PM EST

Designated Reviewer

Page 1 of 1

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