

The (Queer) Reader Writes Back: Understanding The Profusion if Queer Voices in Fanfiction

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Abstract: *'Fanfiction' is the moniker given to experimental forms of story-telling wherein 'fans' of a particular form of media (books, movies, shows, and so on) craft their own versions of the plot. In this mode of literary expression, the secondary writer generally retains the original characters but alters elements of the plot, through intertextuality (colloquially termed 'cross-overs'), alternate endings and inserting the authorial self into the narrative. Contrary to the popular notion that this is a modern invention, fanfiction has canonically existed from the 1950s, with unacknowledged versions of this phenomena existing since the dawn of literature itself. In our post-modern technological society, with the help of the Internet, fanfiction has become part and parcel of literary consumption worldwide. The immense popularity enjoyed by applications and websites like Wattpad, Archive of Our Own etc is proof of the ubiquitous nature of audience-driven digital literature. Although generally overlooked by academicians and literary scholars as a viable field of academic research, fanfiction has far-reaching impacts on the way literature is consumed today, especially by the younger generation. This paper aims to study the way fanfiction breaks the hitherto insurmountable boundary between the audience and the author by entering the reader into the creative process. Moreover, a trend observed in recent years has been the mushrooming of queer iterations of mainstream heterosexual narratives, in fanfiction. The paper will therefore also attempt to trace the connection between this proliferation of young, queer voices in fanfiction and how it succeeds in revealing the submerged queercoding in the popular literary productions of the day. This paper will explore popular "ships" like 'Drarry' from the Harry Potter franchise, 'Johnlock' from the popular BBC series Sherlock and the 'Ineffable Husbands' (Aziraphale / Crowley) from the novel-turned-series Good Omens by Neil Gaiman for the purposes of this study.*

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