RE-WRITING PUBLISHING:

FANFICTION AND SELF-PUBLICATION IN URBAN FANTASY

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Abstract

Fanfiction is the practice of fans writing stories using the world and/or characters of an established work of fiction in order to rework this material. This thesis examines the relationship between fanfiction and digital self-publication within the popular fiction genre of urban fantasy. Emerging technologies in digital publishing have created a new world for authors and readers alike. Online publishing companies make it possible for any author to self-publish an ebook and distribute it through a global platform without an agent.

The practice of writing fanfiction connected with urban fantasy has combined with the relative ease of digital self-publication to create an environment within which many new authors can explore non-traditional forms of publication. While all genres have access to this possibility, I suggest that urban fantasy is one of the few that is poised to revolutionise the publication industry due to its historical connection with digital fanfiction.

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Introduction

      This thesis seeks to examine the relationship between fanfiction and digital self-publication within the popular fiction genre of urban fantasy. The practice of writing fanfiction has combined with the genre of urban fantasy and the relative ease of digital self-publication to create an environment within which many new authors can explore non-traditional forms of publication. While all genres have access to this possibility, I suggest that urban fantasy is one of the few that is poised to revolutionise the publication industry due to its historical connection with digital fanfiction and its subject matter.

      Fanfiction is the practice of fans writing fiction using the world and/or characters of an established work of fiction such as a television show, film, or novel, in order to rework this material. This fan practice is commonly considered to have its origin in fanzines focused on the television show *Star Trek* (1966-1969) beginning in 1967, though there is some debate about this (Coppa; Jenkins *Textual Poachers*; Verba). Early fanfiction was shared through handmade fanzines but quickly developed a place online in the internet age. Now fanfiction is written almost exclusively online and can be based on any media product you can imagine.

      The type of urban fantasy that I am discussing does not have as long a history as that of fanfiction, but it does have its roots in earlier forms of fiction. Essentially, my concept of urban fantasy comes from a publishing label rather than a strictly literary genre. These books are generally considered to describe any fiction in an urban setting that incorporates paranormal elements. Many texts could retroactively fit these criteria: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and much of the gothic literary tradition. More recent authors such as Neil Gaiman and Charles de Lint fit

into the literary category of urban fantasy. Generally, the publishing genre of urban fantasy shares a number of elements with the literary category including the tendency for the story to be "told from within, and, from the perspective of characters acting out their roles[. Additionally,] it may be difficult to determine the extent and nature of the surrounding Reality [as] UFs are normally texts where fantasy and the mundane world intersect and interweave throughout a tale which is significantly *about* a real city" (Clute and Grant).The final distinction there, that the story be "*about* a real city" is the most significant distinction between the literary and publishing versions of the genre. While the city is an important element to the publishing category of urban fantasy, the stories are not necessarily about it; rather, they are about a strong female protagonist who not only fights the monsters, but often also befriends some of them and engages in sexual and/or romantic relationships with the sexiest of them. It is with Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* and *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), however, that we begin to see a move toward the specific type of urban fantasy I am discussing. Rice creates vampires who are dangerous, adventurous, and sexy. Laurell K. Hamilton took this description of vampires and created the *Anita Blake* series of books, beginning with *Guilty Pleasures* (1993). These books differ from Rice's in that the protagonist of the stories is not a vampire, but a strong (seemingly) human woman who interacts with, and often kills, sexy vampires (among other "monsters"). This series established many of the tropes we see in current urban fantasy: a "Kick-Ass Heroine" (Mamatos 5); a "sense of sex and the physical details of the body that readers [want]" (Mamatos 5); real problems that allow the reader to identify with the protagonist (Mamatos 7); and a woman who "calls the shots with her relationships" (Mamatos 9). Likewise, the *Anita Blake* series also set the template for the

publishing category of urban fantasy in that most novels in this genre follow a detective story format with at least one major mystery to be solved. The mystery is such that it allows the protagonist the opportunity to make use of a new skill or piece of information that she has recently acquired. Hamilton's series began the publishing genre of urban fantasy and it continues with such series as Kim Harrison's *Hollows*, beginning with *Dead Witch Walking* (2004), and has also moved into young adult fiction including Cassandra Clare's *Mortal Instruments* series, beginning with *City of Bones* (2007).

New technologies in digital publishing have created a new world for authors and readers alike. Companies such as Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing make it possible for any author to self-publish an ebook and distribute it through a global platform without an agent. This is an attractive option for many, especially those who have had some success with their fanfiction works.

In many ways my selection process for works and authors to discuss within this argument was an organic one. I have read fairly extensively in the genre of urban fantasy and I identified a trend of authors self-publishing. I began to look for connections between authors in this genre and other forms of digital writing. As I searched, my interest in fanfiction led me to some authors who had made the transition or continue to write both fanfiction and professional fiction. Both popular fiction genres in general and fanfiction as a whole represent such large bodies of material that it was necessary to restrict my search. As such, I decided to focus on female authors of a specific type of urban fantasy as much as possible both because this is the type of urban fantasy that is currently most popular, and also because both genres are gendered to a certain extent. Many of the authors and corporations discussed in this thesis are popular within the genre

and are pushing the boundaries of publishing traditions. Most authors were chosen because they embody as many of the elements of the specific argument as possible. Specifically, Darynda Jones was chosen because she is an urban fantasy author with female protagonists who encourages fan involvement as a way of connecting with her readership. Cassandra Clare is discussed in terms of moving from writing fanfiction to traditional publication because she has successfully made this move within the genre of urban fantasy. While successful at moving from fanfiction to traditional publishing, E.L. James is discussed in the same section as an indicator of the massive success and notoriety possible with this move, though she is not discussed in as much detail as Clare because James is working at a tangent to urban fantasy only and her fanfiction popularity did not equal her traditional popularity. In the section on self-publication, Connie Suttle and Amanda Hocking are discussed as they have gained their urban fantasy readerships entirely on the basis of their digitally self-published novels. Hocking in particular presents as an indicator of the success of this model, though she also problematises the situation in her switch to traditional publishing; therefore, Suttle is suggested as a counterpoint to Hocking's well-publicised move. I attempted to survey as much of the genre of urban fantasy as possible to determine the ideal representatives for each of the sections throughout this thesis, appreciating, of course, that the selections I have made are, at least in part, connected to my own personal experience of the genre. I also recognise that I was not able to deal with the entirety of the twenty years in the genre's history, nor am I remotely capable of dealing with the entirety of fanfiction as a form of writing. It is, in fact, for this reason that I looked first for urban fantasy authors to discuss, rather than attempting to identify fanfiction authors with connections to urban

fantasy publications. Nevertheless, this thesis presents major representatives of the connection I see happening between fanfiction and digital self-publication within the genre of urban fantasy.

Fanfiction represents a field of fan studies that is often considered in relation to sociological studies -- that is, the people who participate as fanfiction writers are studied to determine *why* they choose to engage in such activity. While more studies of actual fanfiction stories themselves are developing, there is a need to consider fanfiction as a genre as much as an act in that it is a form of writing in the same way that poetry, for example, is a genre of writing made of diverse forms. Likewise, urban fantasy is considered genre fiction and not worthy of literary study as evidenced by the lack of academic scholarship discussing the genre. This is, of course, also due to the short history of the genre, but the fact remains that very little is known in scholarly environments about this genre that is created and populated almost entirely by women authors, readers, and characters. While I do not purport to deal with the entirety of either genre in this thesis, I do feel it is necessary to consider the ways in which these two types of writing are connected, particularly in terms of the publishing industry. As such, I have shown connections between the two genres in terms of digital writing and publishing. Urban fantasy is a genre generally written by women for women and can be connected to both fanfiction and self-publishing. Urban fantasy takes these connections and becomes something unique: a traditionally published fiction that adopts many conventions from these alternative literary worlds. This thesis is concerned with why and how published urban fantasy is a novel form of fiction -- one that interacts with its audience in a

different way and understands its characters in a different way, in large part because of its

connection to fanfiction and digital self-publishing.

Historical Overview

Fanfiction is a fairly recent term and concept but the proponents of the genre suggest that it has existed since Homer at least. Let us consider the definition of fanfiction as stated in the Introduction: it is the practice of fans writing fiction using the world and/or characters of an established work of fiction such as a television show, film, or novel, in order to rework this material. According to this definition, Homer's *The Odyssey* could be considered fanfiction as it was most certainly reworked by many "fans" before finally being written down. This also suggests that any sequel or book in a series that reworks the original tale from the perspective of another character could be considered fanfiction. In fact, postmodernism's move toward derivations of pre-existing works could also qualify as fanfiction under this general definition (Jenkins "How Fan Fiction can Teach Us"; Minh). Obviously, none of these things are actually considered fanfiction. First of all, they were not written by fans of the source material. Even when a work, such as Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1967), is written by a "fan" of a work and reworks the original it is still not actually fanfiction because there are both legal and historical elements to the concept (to be discussed in the following discussion) that need to be considered, neither of which apply to Stoppard's work.

There are two things to consider when looking at fanfiction from an historical perspective. First of all, the term "fan" in its current sense did not exist before the 1880s. Originally this term was used to refer to people who enjoy baseball, and it was shortened from the longer "fanatic" (Dickson; Jenkins *Textual Poachers*). Therefore, one suggestion is that the term "fanfiction" cannot accurately refer to anything written before this date, since the idea of a fan in the way that we consider it did not exist. This is not to

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say that people did not enjoy media products at this time, but that their engagement was different. Fans are not passive receivers of media content; they are active participants in ten on engaging in close reading and rereadings of texts, meta discussions of content (both verbal and visual), and creation of their own works inspired by media content (Jenkins *Textual Poachers* 17-18; Zubernis and Larsen 16-17). Jenkins suggests that "fans assert their own right to form interpretations, to offer evaluations, and to construct cultural canons. [And] therefore fans raid mass culture, claiming its materials for their own use, reworking them as the basis for their own cultural creations and social interactions (*Textual Poachers* 18). Non-fans who enjoy media products generally do not engage in similar activities. We can, perhaps, consider material before the 1880s as the prehistory of fanfiction and fandom in general. More importantly though, if we are going to place limitations on the timeline, fanfiction could not exist as a genre before the early part of the eighteenth century in the United Kingdom because authors did not own the material they wrote ("History of Copyright"). We know that women in the eighteenth century shared novels full of marginalia and conducted book circles where they shared their own writings based on their favourite novels or discussed alternate endings for those books (Judge). There are also cases of writers appropriating the work of others in unauthorised sequels; for example, Henry Fielding wrote a sequel to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, Or Virtue Rewarded* (1740) titled *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (or *Shamela*) (1741) (Judge). Works of this sort are most likely to be included retroactively in the genre of fanfiction in part because of the status they hold as both being critical of the source material and as parody, but also because authors at this time began to fight for copyright. These authors were less concerned with the loss of

income if someone else published a sequel or shared their own alterations among their friends, and more concerned with ensuring the characters they had created were not mistreated in fan rewrites (Judge). This part of copyright law in Britain began as a way to protect, not texts as a whole, but characters from being sullied.

The struggle over protecting literary works is one that current fanfiction and source material authors deal with today as well. Some authors are still very concerned because they "don't want people making off with [their characters], thank you" (G. Martin). Others feel generally "[upset] . . . to even think about fan fiction with [their] characters" (Rice). Finally, there are those who get physically ill when considering fanfiction: "it makes me want to barf whenever I've inadvertently encountered some of it involving my characters" (Gabaldon qtd in Constant). While these authors own the rights to the characters they have created and feel this entitles them to stop all other writers who choose to use those characters for other purposes, reworking material in the source texts (including the characters) is generally legal under most national copyright laws (Tushnet; Schwabach). Copyright law is complicated and has become even more so in a global and digital environment. In terms of international copyright law, however, there are basically two elements covering rights and protection for authors and their works: economic and moral rights. Economic rights basically allow the author to profit from their creative works for a limited time that differs by country. Moral rights protect the person of the author and include the right to protect the integrity of the work. Most national copyright laws include a form of what American copyright law refers to as "fair use." This element of copyright law allows for transformative or parodic works as well as other "fair uses"

of the material including commentary and educational use (Geist).[1] While most fanfiction can be proved legal as a parody under copyright law and there has recently been a movement to educate fan creators through the Organization for Transformative Works ("What We Believe"), most authors of fanfiction either do not know their rights or cannot afford to push the issue in court. Therefore, most fanfiction authors hide behind screen names and immediately remove any material as required when they receive a cease-and-desist letter. This fear of prosecution (real or imagined), brings another crucial element to the definition of fanfiction. Earlier "fan" works could not be considered fanfiction as it is currently defined because they did not complicate the issue of copyright (as copyright laws did not exist). Therefore we can see that the issue of copyright is important in that it affects the fan writers' choices.

As such, fanfiction as we currently conceive of it, and as I will be considering it in this project, only encompasses the works created by fans since the nineteenth century. For the most part, fanfiction refers to those stories written since the birth of media fandom in the 1960s, and anything prior to that time (such as the original Sherlock Holmes fanfic) is identified as fanfiction on a case by case basis.

Fanfiction as both a genre and a phenomenon has its roots in science fiction. In particular, fanfiction (and fandom in general) in its current form began with science fiction fanzines like *The Comet* in 1930 (Coppa). These often handmade but always fan-produced collections of interviews, debate, and gossip were based on officially published science fiction magazines, such as *Amazing Stories* (1926-2005) or *Wonder Stories*

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[1] For evidence of this clause in action see the case of *The Wind Done Gone* (2001) and 2 Live Crew's song "Pretty Woman" (1989). In both cases the defendants were shown to have made fair use of the source material through parody and commentary that was obviously a product of the transformative artist's own creative abilities (Hilden).

(1929-1955), and published in the intervals between the official publications. The fiction in these early zines was only fanfiction in that it was fiction written by fans – it was by and large original fiction by fans of science fiction. By the time media fandom (in the form of *The Man From U.N.C.L.E* (1964-1968) and *Star Trek* fans), appeared in 1966, fanfiction resembled the form with which we are now familiar (Verba). *Star Trek* fans in particular poured their creative energies into all types of fan art from the very beginning. The popularity of fan fiction as a genre increased greatly after the publication of *"Star Trek" Lives!* in 1975 (Coppa). This text about the fandom surrounding the source show included a final chapter titled "Do-It-Yourself *Star Trek* – The Fan Fiction." This chapter helped to introduce those fans unaware of fanfiction to the growing movement. It also recognised this form of writing "as literature written mainly by women" (Coppa 46). This inclusion relegated fanfiction to the sidelines of media fandom from the beginning while making it clear that women were a large part of *Star Trek* fandom.

Fan communities and collections of fanfiction continued to grow throughout the 1970s and 1980s through zines and conventions. With the birth of what came to be known as the internet, fandom and fanfiction exploded. Often educated women working at or going to universities, fanfiction writers were some of the first people online (Coppa 53, 54). Fans created online communities through Usenet groups and email lists where they could meet, discuss, and share their fanfiction or ideas about their favourite shows. It has been suggested that the internet is "the ideal medium for fannish interaction" (53) due to its relation to "an oral culture in the immediacy of communication" (Hardy). Due to the constraints of the early World Wide Web, fans began to write software to help them deal with the increasing numbers of fanfiction uploaded to their sites regularly. These

early online fans were well ahead of most of the rest of the world in terms of online

presence (Coppa). The move to online communities helped the fanfiction movement to

flourish and move beyond small groups of known women in one area to many women

spread across the continent, and eventually the world. In addition, the move online helped

to bring slashfic[2] into the mainstream of fanfiction and encouraged participants to begin

discussing motivation and the practice of writing fanfiction or engaging in any fannish

activity. As an indication of this movement, Henry Jenkins published his seminal work

on fan activity, *Textual Poachers*, in 1992. This was the first academic work to consider

fan activities, and Jenkins demonstrated that most of the fans involved in these creations

were women (*Textual Poachers*).

Today fanfiction is more popular than ever -- so popular that mainstream media

sites are now commenting on the phenomenon as authors like E.L. James make headlines

crossing over from writing fanfiction to signing traditional publishing deals. Fanfiction

has moved from email lists and Usenet groups through geocities sites and LiveJournal

onto Fanfiction.net or Archive Of Our Own (ao3.com). Fans can discover these fanfiction

sites through fandom connections on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, or Tickld. There are

multiple sites that include fanfiction for specific groups: some are moderated and peer-

reviewed before being posted; others like Fanfiction.net are not. An entire global culture

has grown around the genre including distinct terminology, some of which has moved to

mainstream ("beta readers"); others have not ("slash," "suckfic"). At any given time

online it is possible to find millions of fanfiction stories, with a category for almost every

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[2] Slashfic refers to fanfiction that pairs two male characters from the source material in a sexual and/or romantic manner who were not previously involved in such a way. The term comes from early *Star Trek* slash tales involving Kirk and Spock where the slash (/) in the indication "Kirk/Spock" became the term representing all such stories. (Coppa; Jenkins *Textual Poachers*)

fandom ever encountered, no matter how small. There are even websites that attempt to match fans with fanfiction writers so that those smaller fandoms can be represented. While some small zines still exist, the majority of fanfiction exists digitally and the genre flourishes globally because it is online.

But what does fanfiction look like? First it is important to be clear that fanfiction is not homogenous; it can be anything that any particular writer wants it to be. Jenkins suggests that "[f]an writing builds upon the interpretive practices of the fan community, taking the collective meta-text as the base from which to generate a wide range of media-related stories" (*Textual Poachers* 156). Fanfiction also often includes the most popular elements of storytelling particular to the media product(s) in which it is interested. While avoiding exposition, because readers should be aware of the main characters and their current situation, fanfiction takes those familiar elements and reworks them to change something about the main story. Lev Grossman states that "[i]t's about twisting and tweaking and undermining the source material of the fanfiction, and in the process adding layers and dimensions of meaning to it that the original never had" (loc. 251). Sometimes these changes are personal and include adding a character that can allow the fanfic authors to imagine themselves in the story. Other times, the changes are meant to "fix" something about the source material: changing the outcome of a particular plotline, for example. Jenkins points out ten basic ways to change a television show through fanfiction: recontextualisation that fills in the gaps in the source material; expansion of the existing timeline with character origin stories or the creation of futures beyond the show finale; refocalisation of the plot onto "secondary characters, often women and minorities, who receive limited screen time" (165); moral realignment of villains or

heroes to explore the changes this could make to the overall story; genre shifting from a focus on science fiction to a more traditional romance plot, for example; the creation of crossovers between media products like the currently popular Superwholock fandom combining characters from *Supernatural* (2005-), *Doctor Who* (1963-), and *Sherlock* (2012-); character dislocation, which we now refer to as alternate universe fic, that takes characters from their existing world and places them in a different one (this concept will be discussed more in a later section); personalization whereby fanfic authors write thinly-veiled (often perfect) versions of themselves into their stories (referred to as Mary Sues); emotional intensification of narrative crisis to highlight the interpersonal relationships of characters; and eroticization of the characters, often to explore the limits of strong relationships that exist in the source material (2013, 162-177). Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin suggest that "[i]n collage and photomontage as in hypermedia, to create is to rearrange existing forms" (39) and this is exactly what fanfiction does. Bolter and Grusin are discussing film adaptations when they suggest that "[w]ith reuse comes a necessary redefinition, but there may be no conscious interplay between media. The interplay happens, if at all, only for the reader or viewer who happens to know both versions and can compare them" (45), but we can see that this point applies to fanfiction in that readers understand the works to be both connected to and separate from the source material. For many readers the greatest enjoyment of such works comes from understanding the fic in terms of both its source material and the tradition of fanfiction that precedes it.

The genre of urban fantasy does not have as long a history as that of fanfiction; in fact, urban fantasy as I will be discussing it began when fanfiction was already

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flourishing online. Like modern fanfiction though, urban fantasy has a rich and extensive past. As implied by its name, urban fantasy began as a sub-genre of fantasy itself. Fantasy has often been linked with myth and legend but, while the genre certainly has its roots in those types of stories, fantasy differs most noticeably, as suggested by Joan Aiken, in that "myth is universal [while] fantasy is personal" (qtd in P. Martin 173). This link between myth and fantasy can also be seen in the connection to Northrop Frye's Romance mythos. This mythos presents a quest narrative featuring a traditional hero. The narrative follows the hero's life from his childhood, often as an orphan, through multiple challenges and stunning deeds to a major battle that may or may not result in the hero's death (Frye). This basic description can also be seen to describe many fantasy tales, particularly those sub-genres of high fantasy and sword and sorcery.

There is a rich history of fantasy that extends throughout literature, but fantasy as we consider the genre today became popular in the early part of the twentieth century. The first well-known and popular author of fantasy was J.R.R. Tolkien, who became the grandfather of modern-day high fantasy after the publication of his first novel *The Hobbit; or, There and Back Again* in 1937 (P. Martin 210; Stableford 223). Before this the beginnings of what would become fantasy were developing. Philip Martin suggests that there are three main elements to fantasy stories of the mid-1800s: "whimsy, adventure, and a romantic, medieval mysticism" (173). He suggests that these elements can be seen Lewis Carroll's 1865 publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; William Morris' fantasy novels such as *The Well at the World's End* (1896); and the work of Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Robert Louis Stevenson in nineteenth-century adventure tales (P. Martin 173-210). It

should be mentioned that in most of these stories the fantasy elements are generally

marked as being elements of a dream or another world, the veracity of which both the

reader and the protagonist are left to question at the end of the tale. As the twentieth

century progressed, the genre of fantasy grew and began to break into multiple sub-

genres. While critically we tend to consider fantasy a homogenous genre that

encompasses all "literature which does not give priority to realistic representation"

(Jackson 10), it is in fact quite a diverse genre. There are many ways of categorizing

these sub-genres and all of the terms are fluid. John Clute and John Grant in *The*

Encyclopedia of Fantasy catalogue a myriad of sub-genres within fantasy and offer

historical backgrounds for each. Meanwhile, Farah Mendlesohn, in *Rhetorics of Fantasy*,

suggests that there are four categories of rhetoric within the genre and that all sub-genres

fall into one of these categories (Mendlesohn 123). Both of these ways of defining a

genre are relevant to urban fantasy as it is not just a fluid sub-genre but also a way of

engaging with the material and the reader.

Early work on fantasy as a genre was done by Tzvetan Todorov. Todorov

discusses what he calls the fantastic in terms of the impression of the reader (Todorov).

For a text to be considered a part of the fantastic genre it must satisfy two conditions and

will often also satisfy a third. First of all the world of the text must appear realistic and

the occurrence of one or more unnatural events must cause hesitation on the part of the

reader. Secondly, the reader must not interpret these events in terms of poetic or

allegorical meanings. Finally, the hesitation felt by the reader may or may not be

represented within the text through a specific character and, possibly, one of the main

themes of the text. Without these conditions a text may not be considered as fantastic

(Todorov). It is important to recognise that this genre of the fantastic is not generally equated with urban fantasy, but it is one of the earliest analyses of fantasy as a genre and relevant to all later work on the topic. Todorov's fantastic is, even now, best represented by Edgar Allan Poe's tale "The Black Cat" as this story never offers the reader any actual proof that the narrator is either crazy or truly experiencing a supernatural phenomenon. Urban fantasy narratives, on the other hand, may start out with a narrator who questions the supernatural elements they begin to experience but quickly comes to realise it is all real.

The literary conception of urban fantasy as a genre, as opposed to the more commercial genre I discuss, was originally defined by place. The city was not just a setting or an important characteristic of such novels; it was also a character within these fantastic tales. The works of authors such as Charles de Lint and Neil Gaiman represent this early version of the genre quite well. In these works, the city itself can seem to act upon characters. Working more within fantasy/horror, Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* offers vampires for the first time as sexy creatures that the protagonist may desire. There were earlier indications of what became paranormal romance (Stableford 163), but the introduction of a sexy, yet dangerous being that complicated the question of good and evil was novel. By the time the film adaptation of Rice's novel was released in 1994, the first real heroine of urban fantasy, Anita Blake, had been introduced to the world (*Guilty Pleasures*, Laurell K. Hamilton, 1993) and urban fantasy as we now recognise it was born. While the city is still an important factor in these types of urban fantasy novels, it no longer represents an important character on its own. Urban fantasy represents the amalgamation of multiple sub-genres within fantasy such as contemporary

fantasy, occult detective, magical realism, detective/thriller fantasy, supernatural fiction, and the gothic. Generally, urban fantasy novels involve tough female protagonists discovering and/or battling supernatural elements in our real world. The stories often follow a detective/thriller format and often feature first-person narration. This genre is almost exclusively represented by novel series[3]. There are a few urban fantasy novel series that feature men, most notably Jim Butcher's *Dresden Files* (2000 -) series, Simon R. Green's *Nightside* (2003-2012) series, and Kevin R. Hearne's *The Iron Druid Chronicles* (2011 -) series, but the overwhelming majority of this genre involves female protagonists, often written and read by women as well.

While most urban fantasy appears to play with and subvert traditional gender roles through a strong female hero as the protagonist, this role is complicated by the need to also embody elements of the traditionally feminine characters. Not only does she fight the dragon, as it were, but she must also be saved from time to time. The complication of gender roles extends beyond that of the protagonist and her actions to the male lead or leads. These men cannot fully play either the role of hero, as it is filled by the female protagonist, or the role of traditional heroine, in order to maintain their identity as strong, heterosexual males and love interests. Urban fantasy protagonists perform masculinity in order to succeed in a traditionally male-dominated genre—that of fantasy—and role—the warrior hero, but the genre also creates a place where strong female heroes can maintain certain aspects of their femininity while embracing, and not just performing, some elements of masculinity.

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[3] For example, the progenitor of urban fantasy, the Anita Blake series, is still ongoing and has reached book number twenty-two, *Affliction*, published Summer 2013 (Hamilton).

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest that the female writer's "battle . . . is not against her (male) precursor's reading of the world but against his reading of her" (2027). Female urban fantasy writers are fighting, as their characters fight, for a place in the action-packed genre of fantasy and for strong female characters with which female readers can identify. As such, these writers exaggerate some aspects of their protagonists' personalities, generally the traditionally masculine characteristics, while introducing emotion and romance to the stories. Additionally, Gilbert and Gubar suggest that "it is debilitating to be any woman in a society where women are warned that if they do not behave like angels they must be monsters" (2029). They use this idea to suggest that women writers and literary characters alike are pigeon-holed in culturally created gender roles, but many of the women in urban fantasy are literally monsters: they are either killers (legally, as police officers for example, or "for hire," as mercenaries), or they are supernatural beings; often they are both. In this way, I suggest that women writers of urban fantasy take the prescriptive and constricting gender role and put it to their own use. By having their characters embody the role of monster, they deny society the right to name them as such and are able to move beyond that characterization to tell the stories they want to tell, in the way they want to, and with the gender roles they want.

First-person writing allows us to see beyond the tough exterior of the protagonists that is presented to the diegetic supernatural world—to see that these women do have emotions, self-confidence issues, etc. Writing about feminist detective fiction, Tasker suggests that "[t]he female protagonist's journey to self-discovery is a typical feature of women's fiction, as the heroine progresses from ignorance to a knowledge of self and a position of strength" (234). Generally in urban fantasy, female protagonists are presented

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as amateurs whose most important challenge is that of self-discovery and personal growth. This focus on the personal is different from stories featuring traditional male heroes. As suggested by Gilbert and Gubar, women writers have no precursors to replace, just as there is no precedent for female heroes. As such, the role cannot simply remain the same with some gender differences; it must become something new altogether. This is what most current urban fantasy attempts: female heroes becoming commonplace and male heroines developing. Feminist detective fiction author Mary Wings "has said that she 'wanted to write about women who fucked and drank and detected their way through exciting stories'" (qtd in Tasker 236) and this is what urban fantasy is also doing—offering real women characters who get to do everything their male counterparts do while maintaining their positions as women.

Women writers of urban fantasy are writing characters that are strong in masculine terms—physically, emotionally, and often necessarily single; but we also get to hear their emotions and desires and often get some sort of romance or sexual interaction. In this way, writers are working toward characters that can be physically and mentally strong and still feminine. The idea here is that this is women's fiction and, because it is fantasy as such, exaggeration and some element of the supernatural are expected and required. Perhaps women have begun to write characters that can redefine gender and gender identification. Women writers of urban fantasy may be able to push boundaries to some extent, partly as a result of the supernatural context in which they write.

Remembering that novels, particularly those in genre fiction, represent the outcome of the business of publishing is important to understanding the history of their

creation. In fact, writing about romance novels in the 1980s, Janice Radway has suggested that societal factors alone cannot determine the popularity of a specific genre. She states that "changes in book production, distribution, advertising, and marketing techniques" (20) have an effect. Generally we think of the publishing process as a straight line from an author who gets an idea and writes a manuscript, through an agent, to a publishing company who prints and distributes the resulting novel. In fact, this process is relatively new and is even now changing. Radway begins her history of the publishing industry in the United States with the first American press in Massachusetts in 1639. The publications were the result of men who could pay to have their books published (20). In fact, most early publication in America was the result of authors paying printer-publishers to print and distribute their works as well as forfeiting a royalty for each book sold (20). It is important to note that, since the printer-publisher was paid for production either way, the authors "exerted almost total control over their works" (21). In an era of global publishing and blockbuster book production, this concept can seem strange. We now have publishing companies who pay the author to publish with them, instead of another publisher, as well as paying the author royalties for book sales. The industry has completely flipped.

In the nineteenth century the publishing industry assumed small niche markets for individual books or authors and relied on the authors to know their audiences in order to sell their books. As technology changed, it became possible to produce books more cheaply, leading to printer-publishers interested in actually making money in the business (Radway 21-23). The first mass-market paper-bound books began their publishing run in 1839 to permanent subscribers. This move proved that a heterogeneous selection of the

population would buy cheap novels on a regular basis, ensuring a profit for the publisher. This was still a small part of the publishing industry however, and gradually came to be associated with specific genres. For example, detective novels in the 1940s were mass-produced and sold by Mercury Mysteries, and romance novels have been sold in the same way by Harlequin since 1957 (Radway).

At approximately the same time that publishers were recognizing the benefits of mass-produced genre fiction, the concept of electronic books (ebooks) was developing. In 1930 Bob Brown, inspired after viewing his first "talkie" film, wrote a book suggesting that the world of book publishing needed a similar revolutionary move in technology. He wanted a machine that would allow us to read any published book in an aesthetically pleasing manner that also saved trees (Schuessler). He did not successfully create such a device but the idea had been planted. By 1949 Father Roberto Busa had begun work on the first electronic text work in the humanities; his *Index Thomisticus*, a collection of all of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, was entered on punched cards (Hockey 5). This was a time-consuming piece of work. At the beginning of the 1960s Doug Engelbart and Andries van Dam began working with hypertext, creating two separate systems that could provide linking within a given document. Van Dam's File Retrieval and Editing System (FRESS) was used to teach all poetry and literature classes at Brown University from 1969 until 1979. Using this program, reading and writing is done online (deRose). It is important to note that the first use of the term "electronic book" is credited to Andries van Dam during this time (Ardito), but Michael S. Hart is actually credited as the inventor of the ebook. Hart created the first ebooks, and offered them for free, through the creation of Project Gutenberg in 1971 ("Hart"; Flood "Michael Hart"; Grimes). Most

of the digital texts to this point were created for and used by universities, governments, or large companies. These texts tended to consist of technical manuals or scholarly works. By 1990 however, we see the first hypertext fiction published by Eastgate Systems. Michael Joyce's *Afternoon, a story* was available on floppy disk[4] and told the story through hyperlinks (Walker; Norman).

From the creation of the first hypertext book in the 1990s, the speed at which the technology required for the ebook that we recognise today was created increased almost exponentially. Early adopters of ereader creation were Sony (1992) and Amazon (2007). Google also began digitizing library collections in 2004 ("Google Checks out Library Books"). Between 2007 and 2010 Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Indigo, and Sony all began competing with one another to create newer and better ereaders and add new ebooks to their catalogues. It is now possible to read ebooks on many devices including tablets, ereaders, smart phones, and computers. Ebook sales have increased to the point that Amazon announced in May of 2011 that ebook sales in the United States exceeded all print sales (Rapaport) and ebook sales in 2012 accounted for approximately 20% of the total market (Bosman; Greenfield). It is now also possible for authors to encode and upload their own novels to the catalogue of major book distributers without requiring an agent or a separate publishing company ("Kindle"). Authors can also upload their texts to independent sites like Smashwords or free sites such as Wattpad. These authors are responsible for advertising their own work but they receive a larger royalty on every book sold. While most self-published authors will not make enough money to write full-time, in terms of the industry, self-published authors and small, independent publishers are making an impact. In 2009 the number of independent works was 764,448 while

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[4] *Afternoon, a story* remains available for most systems through Eastgate (Joyce).

traditionally-published works only numbered 288,355 (Milliot). The publishing industry

has come to recognise that not only are digital titles here to stay, but authors are also

looking for alternate ways to control their material and get their books read by the public.

We are at an important moment in the publishing industry as so many elements

are coming together to force a change in the way we produce, publish, receive, and think

about novels and their authors.

Building a Fanbase: Engaging with Fans

Online fans are gaining power in the entertainment industry, including fiction publishing. Fan activity can help to make a blockbuster book out of any publication or even indicate to a potential author that there is a market for their self-published product. While some authors reject fan involvement, many have chosen to embrace their fans and often offer prizes for creative fan works such as memes, art, and fiction. Many authors have come to recognise that engaging fans helps to sell books and create a fanbase for future books; more than this, engagement with fan groups before publishing offers authors an indication of the market for their writing.

Online fan involvement can constitute anything from sharing information about an author's work with friends online, or making fan art of any kind, to discussing an author's work on a blog or a discussion group. Lynn Zubernis and Katherine Larsen suggest that fans fall into three basic categories of involvement: consumptive, productive, and interpretive category (18). Consumptive fans are those who may read information about their favourite media product on official websites, but will not actively seek out information in fan-only spaces. Those who are most likely to refer to themselves as "fans" of a media product, rather than someone who just likes the product a lot, begin with the productive category. In this category, fans begin to seek out material related to the product they enjoy anywhere they can find it, leading them to fan-only sites where they are likely to encounter fan art, fanfic, and/or meta discussions of the product. These fans do not generally create works of their own, instead they appreciate the works of others. Finally, interpretive fans are those who take the material as given and interpret it in a way that is meaningful for them. These fans are the creators of fanworks and they often engage almost exclusively with other fans in fan-only spaces (18). When fans do

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these activities, they are engaging with, promoting, and recontextualizing the material. In

Textual Poachers, Jenkins positions fans as poachers in terms of Michel de Certeau's

conception of the term (154-155). De Certeau says that "[t]he reader takes neither the

position of the author nor an author's position. He invents in text something different

from what they 'intended'" (loc. 2468). In this explanation of readers' actions, de Certeau

suggests that readers are poachers who do not passively accept what is given; rather they

actively interrogate and read into it a meaning all their own. Jenkins takes this idea and

applies it to media fans, who, he suggests, also work to interrogate the texts of which they

are fans. Unlike de Certeau's poachers, though, fans not only make new meaning in

existing texts, but they also create works of their own (Jenkins *Textual Poachers* 45).

Fans appropriate the material given to them and work to make it their own through

revising the presentation, character motivation, or plot development. Fans also take the

material as given and create art, literature, and music as criticism and for enjoyment.

While it can be useful to create a dialogue between fans and authors through the

sharing of work, some authors are wary of engaging fans for multiple reasons. One fear

that can deter many public figures from engaging with fans is the fear of threats on their

lives and/or livelihood. The term "fan," having its basis in the term "fanatic," still

presents images of socially inept people who are disconnected from society and who

obsess to an unhealthy extent over a particular celebrity (Jenkins *Textual Poachers* 11).

Such an image is represented by those fans that have crossed the line and attacked or

killed the object of their obsession as well as those fans that trample or attack other fans

in an attempt to get close to a celebrity. As examples of this, Jenkins reminds us of the

stalker-fans of The Beatles (Charles Manson), Jodie Foster (John Hinkley), and John

Lennon (Dwight Chapman) (Jenkins *Textual Poachers* 13), but we can see that, even

with – or perhaps because of – a burgeoning fan culture, these extreme examples still

exist. In September 2013 a fan almost succeeded in pulling Beyoncé off the stage in

Brazil (Rahman), and a woman who was charged with stalking a fan author (Melissa

Anelli) of *Harry Potter* (books: 1997-2007, films: 2001-2011) fandom (Annese). This

story shows that extreme fans, or fanatics, can fixate on celebrities of the fan world (also

known as BNFs or Big Name Fans) as well. Though the fanaticism of such fans happens

less often with published authors than more public celebrities, authors are not exempt

from such fan attention (Dugdale). In fact, the almost instant connection the public now

has through social media with previously unseen authors, combined with the blockbuster

status some book series gain, have created a situation where it is easier for such people to

attack authors.

Beyond this fear, however, the threat of loss of livelihood is also very real. The

legal issues and uncertainty surrounding fanfiction are dangerous for authors who may

wish to engage with their fans. By officially "allowing" fanfiction, an author opens the

door to a potential flood of fanfiction and story ideas sent directly to his/her inbox. If the

author writes a story that resembles any one of those fan stories, a legal battle could

ensue. In fact, that is what happened in a well-known (within fandom) case between

Marion Zimmer Bradley and a fan author named Jean Lamb. For two decades Bradley

was keenly involved with her fans, particularly the Friends of Darkover group. Bradley

regularly "engaged with her fans by editing their stories and publishing them in fanzines,

holding contests for fan works created in her universe, and finally professionally

publishing . . . 12 anthologies of fan-written stories" (Coker). In addition to this work,

Bradley offered editing and story suggestions, promoted the fan group in her books, and used the group's fanzines to communicate with fans much like current authors use websites and blogs to keep fans informed of their activities. This all changed, however, in 1992 when "a fan named Jean Lamb wrote a novel titled *Masks*, starring one of Bradley's minor characters . . . and published it in an issue of a fanzine" (Coker). The real problem occurred when Bradley contacted Lamb to discuss an upcoming Darkover novel (announced as *Contraband*), and allegedly offered a set fee as well as acknowledgement in the book for the right to use an unknown portion of Lamb's work. Lamb apparently felt the terms were not clear enough and countered with a different offer. As a result, the publisher dropped the book and Bradley stopped working so closely with fans. Initially fans were quite upset with Lamb and the response she received suggested that she should be happy her work was being acknowledged. As time went on though, the public perception of the value of fan works has changed so that many now see Bradley as just as culpable as Lamb in this case (Coker). This case shows why published authors may wish to distance themselves from the fan works created. The complexities of maintaining the balance between engaging with fans and preserving their copyright means that many authors simply publicly ignore fanfiction. A growing group of authors, however, has written, and continues to write, fanfiction. These authors are looking for new ways to incorporate their love for the genre without endangering their own copyright.

Generally, most fanfiction is considered legal under fair use laws, and because most fanfiction authors do not seek remuneration for their work a precedent has yet to be set. The World Intellectual Property Organization suggests, for example, that "[i]t is up to a right-owner to act as his own policeman" ("Enforcement" 207). Many copyright

holders assume this means that there are times when creators of the original works (or their representatives) have to enforce their copyright, whether they want to or not, in order to maintain that copyright. Additionally, and as indicated by the Bradley-Lamb case mentioned above, they must enforce their copyright in order to prove that they have not taken ideas from fans without properly crediting them. This was the idea behind a Warner Brothers decision to issue cease-and-desist letters to many fan-run *Harry Potter* tribute sites upon gaining the film rights to the book series. J.K. Rowling, author of the blockbuster series, had previously encouraged fan involvement as she felt that creating fan works offered her typically young readers a way to express themselves and to learn to improve writing skills (Jenkins "Why Heather Can Write" 185). Upon the acquisition of the film rights by Warner Brothers in 2001, many of those sites run by young fans were told to shut down or they would face legal action. This act was standard practice for the film company in an attempt to police and protect their copyright. The cease-and-desist letters with within the rights of the company, but the fan sites were operating with the bounds of fair use in that they were critiquing and commenting on the *Harry Potter* material or generating fanfiction and fan art that did not infringe on Warner Brothers or J.K. Rowling's rights. As most fans are unable to afford proper legal council in such a case and, more importantly, because many fans assume that they *are* infringing on the rights of established authors, multiple sites would have been removed from the internet forever. One young fan, however, chose to fight back and rightly assumed that the many voices of the fans could overwhelm the corporation and make them reconsider that position. Essentially, individual fans do not have the legal or financial power to counter charges of copyright infringement, even though they may be operating within their rights.

Heather Lawver, who began the fanfiction site *The Daily Prophet* to create a young fan-run version of the newspaper from within the *Harry Potter* books, started a group called Defense Against the Dark Arts to help support fans in their struggles against Warner Brothers. After a great deal of public noise regarding the situation, the studio acknowledged that it had failed to take into account fair use rights and agreed to work toward more collaboration, particularly since the sites in question celebrated the book series and could be work in conjunction with official Warner Brothers promotional material for the films. Ultimately, this collaboration appeared in the form of some perks for officially sanctioned fan sites in the way of insider information and prize packs for fan-run contests (Jenkins "Why Heather Can Write" 185-188). This conclusion, while satisfactory for all, showed that fans can exert a great deal of power when mobilised and that fan labour can be quite useful in promoting any commercial product.

Fan labour is essentially any fan work that helps to promote a media product. This can include writing a review for the newest *Iron Man* (2008, 2012, 2013) film, creating a knitting pattern for the fourth *Doctor Who*'s iconic scarf, or sharing the latest *Hobbit* (2012, 2013, 2014) production video with friends on Facebook. Granted some fan labour is more active than others, and it is that labour, specifically the online elements of such labour, that is most relevant here. It is important we recognise fan labour as a concept so that we can be aware of the ways in which our lives are connected to major corporations. It is also important to recognise the value in fan labour so that the work done by these groups is not devalued simply because it does not have a fixed dollar amount attached to it in the form of a paycheque. This is because, importantly, almost all fan labour is free. Most fans, however, do not participate in their particular fandom(s) because of the

possibility of financial gain (in fact, it can be quite expensive to be a fan), fans produce

fan work because of the joy they feel for the source material, because they wish to

critique that material, or simply because they want the product to succeed. They do not

receive any monetary income from this work, though there is an element of cultural

cachet attached to being known within the fan community and some fans are turning their

fan works into income on art sales sites such as deviantart and Etsy, but the fact is that

someone somewhere is making money off of fan labour, either directly or indirectly.

Abigail de Kosnick suggests that all fan-created works are fan labour, but we can also see

that not all fan labour benefits the entertainment industry. In fact, many producers work

very hard to stop a great deal of fan works as they are often transgressive and run counter

to the image the producers of a given text wish to project. This fear of persecution is why

many fanfiction stories begin with a disclaimer reminding the reader that this fan author

does not own any rights to the world or characters of the source material. Individually,

fans are terrified of legal action as well as the potential mortification they would feel

knowing that their favourite author/producer has shunned them.

De Kosnick states that "online fan productions constitute unauthorized marketing

for a wide variety of commodities" and suggests that "fan activity . . . should be valued as

a new form of publicity and advertising . . . that corporations badly need in an era of

market fragmentation" (99). Some corporations started working with fans online (or

using them, depending on how negatively you view such activity) earlier than others,

partly in an attempt to control fan activity. For example, the creator of *Star Trek*, Gene

Roddenberry, was involved to varying degrees with early fanzines ("Gene

Roddenberry"). But more obvious corporate involvement can be seen in the example of

New Line Cinema and Peter Jackson who, while filming *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, recruited *theonering.net* and *Ain't It Cool News* by offering them exclusive content to keep their followers updated on the filming process. The fan sites were able to say that they offered exclusive content, while Peter Jackson and New Line Cinema had fan outlets for promotional material. The advertising benefits of this move were a secondary concern—New Line was initially interested in keeping fans away from shooting locations (Thompson). Now, however, with the proliferation of transmedia storytelling and the increasing range of platforms with which we engage, media producers need fans to help them navigate and spread their product as widely as possible. This is not unlike Warner Brothers' recognition that the *Harry Potter* fan sites they were attempting to shut down could actually help promote the franchise if allowed to operate even with copyrighted material.

Corporations now work to cultivate fans through their websites and various social media platforms. For example, in order to register on the *Hunger Games* (Books: 2008, 2009, 2010; Films: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015) site (*thehungergamesexplorer.com*), you must sign in using either Facebook or Twitter. This information will then show up on your newsfeed and in the "About Me" section of both platforms. In this way, fans, and fangirls in particular, are spreading the message Lionsgate promotes. They can then actively work to spread this media further through the "Share" menu at the bottom of the screen, allowing them to share the entire site with any of the major social media platforms, or they can share any individual item on the page with the same platforms. The items on this website are a combination of corporate- and fan-produced material. Marianne Martens suggests that "girls labor: (1) as book reviewers on social sites . . . (2)

as content creators on fan sites and anti-fan sites; and (3) as content creators on publishers' proprietary interactive websites" (50). We can see this on *The Hunger Games Explorer* site as it is full of fan-produced images, artwork, gifs, memes, writing, and reviews of the books and other fan websites. The fans on this site actively search the internet for new content to share with this group of people who share their interests, effectively doing the work of the corporation for them.

Fans are often unaware that they are creating new content for the corporation, content that Lionsgate then owns and can do with as it pleases. Martens reminds us that "publishers gamble that users are more focused on the entertaining aspects of their websites . . . than they are on paying attention to the fact that their participation results in economic value for the publishers" (59). Since most people, teens in particular, do not read the legal agreement before clicking "Agree," many fans are unaware that they do not own the images they create when they post on a site like this. Generally, however, they do not care so long as their creation is shared with others. Once sites like this are set up, they usually require only maintenance of the content to ensure that fans are maintaining the corporate-sanctioned image. This is made easier by the slow release of official promotional material. *The Hunger Games* has done a wonderful job of this, gradually releasing Panem Portraits (portrait-style photographs of the main characters), creating both the Capitol Couture website and fan groups on Facebook for each of the 12 districts mentioned in the novels, and setting release dates for online trailers and in-theatre trailers. Ultimately, websites such as *The Hunger Games Explorer*, as Martens suggests, "[serve] as an effective, and virtually free-of-charge, marketing campaign directed by teens for teens" (52). Beyond this, fans take the material provided by the corporation and

spread it but they also often support and even defend it. This is especially true for Twi-Hards (fans of *Twilight* (books: 2005-2008, films: 2008-2012)) who must often defend everything related to their chosen fandom. Corporations have made space for a certain amount of play in order to advertise, but also to put a stop to the proliferation of the more extreme works. They let fans be creative within certain parameters and they maintain control over the overall image.

These corporations also put a stop to a lot of the changes fans might make by actively engaging the author of the adapted work. Having such a beloved authority figure on board for the entire process (and also releasing information slowly and as directed) means that many fans will be more supportive. This sort of advertising and engagement looks like transparency but it really represents another element of control.

Diane Carver Sekeres states that "[i]n contemporary wealthy, media-saturated societies, no one 'chooses' to be a consumer in large part because it is impossible not to be one, as we are born into regimes of consumption" (405) and corporations are "selling a lifestyle rather than a product to the consumer" (402). Once we accept this and recognise that we are all consumers, we can begin to see the power that consumers can have over the market. For example, a direct connection between fans and a studio-sanctioned website like that of *The Hunger Games Explorer* ensures that fans are being heard. Martens suggests that "[t]he direct communication between teens and publishers allows publishers a view of the discourse between teens, and thereby an understanding of teen taste, which in turn allows them to publish products that correspond to the discourse, all without the interaction of the gatekeepers" (52).

This power can be seen in many different fandoms, often involving the mobilisation of young fans. Regarding the backlash to *Harry Potter* fans mentioned above, Jenkins says that the fan group "Defense Against Dark Arts argued that fans had helped to turn a little-known children's book [Harry Potter,] into an international best-seller and that the rights holders owed them some latitude to do their work" ("Why Heather Can Write" 187). By folding some major fan sites into their own promotional material, Warner Brothers was appeasing and using the fans. Jenkins says that "these … trends can also be understood in terms of making companies more responsive to their most committed consumers as extending the influence that fans exert over the media they love, and fans as creating a context in which more people create and circulate media that more perfectly reflects their own world views" ("Afterword" 362).

When we study the works of some fans we are essentially studying criticism of the source material -- whether that source material is an original product or another fan work. While it is true that fans are not always critical of the source material and can work to simply reproduce that material (Jenkins "Afterword"), a great deal of fan work and engagement do question what they also celebrate. When fans recreate a particular section of a novel but change the gender of the characters, or create a video splicing together disparate scenes to show the way a particular character has been marginalised, they are critiquing the work of which they are also fans (Booth). Grossman suggests that "fanfiction asserts the rights of storytellers to take possession of characters and settings from other people's narratives and tell their own tales about them – to expand and build upon the original, and, when they deem it necessary, to tweak it and optimize it for their

own purposes" (loc. 222-236). While some authors fear what the fans might say, others are willing to invite this criticism.

An author that can be seen to invite such fan criticism and participation is Darynda Jones, the author of the *Charley Davidson* series (2011 -) for adults and the *Darklight* (2012 -) young adult series. Jones offers situations in the life of her character as openings for fanfiction stories and asks fans to question how or why a particular event occurred. Jones also maintains her own parody accounts on Facebook and Twitter for her character Charley Davidson. Both Jones and the parody account regularly repost/retweet fan sites, particularly those in other countries, fan blogs, and fan art. This engagement with her fans could be a way for Jones to control what is or is not produced. For example, Jones invites readers with the following passage:

> The Charley Davidson series is filled with fun asides that are rarely explained. For Example:
> "I had on a Scorpions hockey jersey I'd snatched off a goalie and a pair of plaid boxers-same team, different position. Chihuahuas, tequila, and strip poker. A night that is forever etched at the top of my *Things I'll Never Do Again* list."
> Darynda thought it would be fun to see what YOU, her readers, could come up with to explain these.
> Using the line above (or find a line from one of the Charley Davidson books) tell the story of what happened.
> Darynda will select some of her favorites and post them back to this page! ("Fan Fiction")[5]

By offering specific selections as starting points, Jones points most of her fans to a specific type of fanfiction that does not interfere with canon or even critique her story or writing as a whole; it simply fills in the blanks she has left. At the same time, this interaction allows Jones to engage with her fans without the appearance of control. This

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[5] As of February 2014 Jones has updated her home page and this focus on fanfiction has been removed though she does still engage with fans through social media.

interaction with the fans and approval of fan works provides Jones with a way to promote

her books. Combined with the interaction she offers through her social media activity,

Jones is able to maintain a connection that helps her build her fanbase while also

monitoring it.

The extra-textual elements that Jones uses in her involvement with fans constitute

paratext for the books themselves. Gérard Genette says that paratextual elements

"provide the text with a (variable) setting and sometimes a commentary" (3). Basically,

anything related to but beyond the actual text can be considered paratextual. This

includes, but is not limited to, the title, preface, or cover image. This does not mean that

these are elements that can be disregarded as irrelevant to the actual narrative; rather, "the

main reason for the paratext . . . is not to 'look nice' around the text but rather to ensure

for the text a destiny consistent with the author's purpose" (Birke and Christ 67).

Dorothee Birke and Birte Christ define three functions of the paratext based on Genette.

First is the interpretive function whereby "paratextual elements suggest to the reader

specific ways of understanding, reading, interpreting the text" (67). In terms of the

Charley Davidson novels these elements can be seen in the headings for each chapter.

Before beginning a new chapter, Jones includes a humourous quotation, often cited as

being from a t-shirt or a bumper sticker. For example: "Do not meddle in the affairs of

dragons, for you are crunchy and taste good with ketchup. – BUMPER STICKER"

(Jones 285). While indicating elements of the plot to come in the following chapter, these

headings also remind the reader of the real world outside of the storyworld, thereby

increasing the connection to the real that is so important in urban fantasy, but they also

instruct the reader to understand both Charley and the narrative as sarcastic and

humourous. Charley is thus framed as a cynical character without appearing to be too serious or negative.

The second function defined by Birke and Christ is the commercial. These paratextual elements "advertise a text, label it with a price, and so on, and promote the book's sale" (Birke and Christ 68). This would, of course, include everything from the solicited blurbs on the back of a novel by other similar creators, book trailers available on YouTube, or book reviews on other websites. Additionally, the blurbs by other authors help to situate the novel as part of a genre and a tradition of storytelling. A recommendation from an author like Stephen King, for example, will suggest that the novel has more of a horror element than a novel with a recommendation from Charlaine Harris, who is known for writing paranormal romance. Digital books, lacking a back cover, have an added benefit of including many more or longer recommendations from authors on the website for the book. This also includes any websites that act as discussion groups for books, like GoodReads, and the online engagement encouraged by authors intended to attract readers. Creating online personas for characters, as Jones has done with Charley Davidson, also acts as a commercial function of the paratext in that people who encounter Charley's persona without having read, or even heard of, the books may be intrigued and, therefore, convinced to buy the first in the series.

The third function can be called the navigational. These elements "guide the reader's reception in a more mechanical sense, both when approaching the text and when orienting herself within the text" (Birke and Christ 68). Such functions tend to be fairly traditional; there are page numbers, a title and copyright page, and well-defined chapter breaks. Of course, digital copies of books often include location numbers instead of page

numbers and hyperlinks from the table of contents to specific chapters, but these elements are all still ways to assist a traditional presentation of material. Ultimately, "[p]aratext . . . manages the reader's purchase, navigation, and interpretation of the text in its specific mediation. Individual elements serve one or more of these functions, which, moreover, closely interact and impact on one another" (Birke and Christ 68). For this reason it can be difficult to determine exactly which elements are paratextual and in what way.

Birke and Christ are particularly interested in applying paratext to digitised narratives. As such, they have identified three fields of debate in this area. These elements are intended to relate directly to hypertext novels and ebooks as such, and many of the concepts relate to novels published traditionally with a digital option, those published digitally only, or fanfiction itself. First is the issue of the materialisation of the text whereby we question the dichotomy of text as material vs. paratext as non-material: "for Genette, paratext is an accompaniment to text as book, the question of how far it should be associated with the text and how far with the book does not really become pressing" (Birke and Christ 69). This relates directly to the question of the relation of text to medium. This debate is difficult for proponents of digitised fiction as it privileges traditional text and the physicality of the novel over the less traditional. With ebooks, however, this debate is less problematic. While there is no physical text in the same way as with a traditional book, ebooks are still limited in that there is a file that, if Digital Rights Management (DRM)-locked, cannot be changed by the reader. And often the reader uses a specific, physical and hand-held device in order to read ebooks. This means that everything within that limited screen is part of the book and everything outside of it is not, just as with a traditional book.

Secondly, Birke and Christ consider the boundaries of the text. This idea is strongly related to the ideas discussed above in that it forces reflection on the edges of the text, and so the medium. Fanfiction is not bound by the same kinds of edges as traditional texts. But if, as Genette suggests, paratext can be broken into two groups where peritext are considered those "paratextual elements which are physically part of the book, such as titles, prefaces or notes," and epitext are the "paratextual elements which are not physically part of the printed book, such as authors' interviews or publishers' advertisements" (Birke and Christ 69), then the question becomes: can we still be so strict with these definitions given the obviously pliant structure of digital texts? I think that these definitions can help us to categorise different paratextual elements so long as they do not force a privileging of such elements. Birke and Christ further complicate this question when they suggest that "the concept of paratext loses its analytic value at the moment when, on the World Wide Web, context (or the universe of texts) moves so close to the text that 'thresholds,' paratextual elements that negotiate the space between text and context, become increasingly difficult to isolate and identify" (80). This element of digital texts applies more to fanfiction and other digitised text that exists online and shares space with other material, such as banner ads, links to other stories, or reader comments, likes, and feedback. Ebooks, on the other hand, generally are not clouded by such external context, unless the reader chooses to search the internet beyond the text for information regarding a specific word or idea. In the case of Jones' Charley Davidson texts this lack of external content is even more pronounced, as these ebooks are simply copies of the traditionally published texts. Despite Jones' online engagement with fans, she did not design her texts to be digital only or even digital first editions. Either way, the

digitised nature of fanfiction and ebooks and their constant connection to extratextual

elements does change the notion of paratext and its distinction from text. Online

interaction has made the question of author (or character) as paratext a relevant one. This

does not mean that we should throw away these ideas, but rather these changes open up

many new opportunities for authors to promote their books and ideas, for readers to

understand and engage with those ideas, and for theorists to consider the interplay.

Finally, the question of authorisation is important to consider here for Genette has

determined that "those and only those elements belong to the paratext which can be

attributed to the author" (Birke and Christ 70). With some texts this may become a

problem as a team of creators may be involved in designing paratextual elements, but

certainly in the case of digital self-publication, authorial control is the only control

available. This idea is problematised by fan involvement but, as we have seen, many

authors work to control fan involvement whenever possible.

Through the creation of a fanbase, authors can ensure book sales for future works

and keep existing fans interested between publications. If the possibility of a fanbase is

apparent before initial publication, a potential author can feel much more secure in the

venture. While Darynda Jones had a three-book deal ahead of publication (that is, she did

not self-publish first), she was a member of other groups such as the Romance Writers of

America and the Ruby-Slippered Sisterhood. The second of these groups is the more

important one in this situation as this group of 2009 Golden Heart nominated authors

created a blog to share their work with each other and potential readers ("Our Story"). By

joining such a group, Jones was given access to other supportive authors, and to a

fanbase. The readers of this site know that they have access to new publications by

authors who write within a genre they already enjoy. Jones suggests that the high sales

numbers on her first novel are a result of timing and the innovative high concept of her

Charley Davidson series (Berkley), but, like other advertising, Jones' online presence and

connection with her fans also plays a part in her success.

This use of an online space for fans of similar works as a way to build interest in

potential publications is not unlike the way many self-published authors make use of

book discussion sites such as GoodReads. GoodReads is a free website operated by

Amazon that allows readers to track and rate the books they read. Users can add to the

circle of friends with whom they share this information, though all ratings are visible by

any user, and they can join groups created within the site. Groups can be based around

one or more specific genres (urban fantasy or fantasy and horror, for example), they can

be created by a group of friends in real life, or they can be created around any other

defining characteristic (there are free book giveaway groups, for example). Users can

choose to link their GoodReads account with Facebook and/or Twitter so that every book

they rate, review, or add to a list ("read" or "want to read") will appear as an update on

those other platforms.

Within the groups, readers can find other fans like themselves. These groups act

as running book clubs that offer a space to discuss the book of the month (most groups

feature one or more books each month), or other topics related to the theme of the group.

For example, in the "Urban Fantasy" group there are threads for general discussion,

general urban fantasy discussion, reading challenges spearheaded by members of the

group, book recommendations, the book of the month or previous books of the month

discussions, and a thread for book promotion. These discussion threads are common to

many of the groups on GoodReads, as is a notice for all authors who choose to become

members of such groups warning them of the protocol for promoting their work. Again

within the "Urban Fantasy" group rules, this notice reads:

> **Authors read before posting!** If you want to promote your book, website, or group in the Urban Fantasy Group, you must be actively involved in the group. (Actively Involved is defined in this group as posting to discussions more than two times a quarter.) If you join solely to promote your book, website, or group and do not enter any of our discussions, you are spamming our group and your self-promoting posts will be deleted. This is a zero-tolerance policy. ("Urban Fantasy")

Generally, the community will police its own groups by calling to the attention of the

moderators any authors who are violating the agreed-upon stipulation or posting

promotional material too regularly in any discussion thread but the one specifically set

aside for promotion. GoodReads, and other such sites, act as excellent resources for

potential and new authors. By joining one or more genre groups, authors can access a

complete audience of readers already interested in their style of novel. Additionally, some

of the members of such groups will regularly review new novels both for GoodReads and

for their own review websites, offering authors free advertising aimed at even more

readers within the targeted demographic.

Many new authors regularly offer advanced reading copies (ARCs) or free copies

after publication for those willing to read and review their book. This is a common

practice in the world of traditional publishing, but it has increased significantly and the

types of reviewers offered copies have changed with the advent of digital self-

publication. While reviews by large publications such as *The New York Times* are still

coveted by authors, self-published authors recognise that their market is not only found

through such a publication. By courting members of smaller review websites or book

groups like those found on GoodReads, authors can speak directly to the people most likely to read their books. Darynda Jones, as a traditionally published author, also engages in this type of promotion through interviews she does for smaller, genre-specific review sites and her inclusion on the Ruby-Slippered Sisterhood website. When a small, digitally self-published author wants to promote a new work, she can send potential reviewers a digital file rather than a hard copy of the book. This saves the author the cost of ordering a set number of ARCs and offers her the opportunity to reach out to many more reviewers than would normally be possible, meaning that the number of small but relevant reviewers with access to these novels increases. Finding these reviewers can take some work unless the author is already a part of one of these online groups before publishing. Fans of the urban fantasy genre, for example, will have found each other through online book groups, review websites, or other online readers after seeing a review on Amazon, Indigo, or Barnes and Noble. The level of fan involvement in which aspiring authors engage can help to determine the success of a potential novel.

Selling a novel requires an audience for the material. Traditional marketing such as soliciting reviews from well-read authors in the genre or well-read publications like *The New York Times*; book tours; or television, newspaper, and radio advertising is not generally available to self-published authors due to the high cost of such promotional material. As such, authors in a saturated market have come to recognise the need to sell themselves and their work through other means. Fan engagement through official websites, genre-based websites, online book clubs like GoodReads, and creative use of social media not only help an author find an audience, but these activities also help her maintain and grow that audience.

Fanfic to Profic: Making the Move from Fanfiction to Professional Publication

Not all authors hoping to get a publishing deal have taken a traditional route. While some authors have always wanted to be a published author and have sent their manuscripts to multiple publishing houses in hopes of receiving a publishing deal, some published authors began their writing careers in a fan capacity. These authors began writing fanfiction as part of their fan engagement with a media product, but were encouraged to consider traditional publication outside of fandom. In recent years some fanfiction authors have made waves in the publishing industry for earning a great deal of money for their previously free fanfiction. Most notably, of course, is the case of E.L. James and her *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy (2011, 2012). This work consists of her fanfiction *Master of the Universe* published with very little changed except the names of the characters to avoid copyright infringement (West; Litte). *Master of the Universe* was a *Twilight* alternate universe (AU) fic that placed Edward Cullen in the position of young CEO and BDSM enthusiast[6] obsessed with the young university student Bella Swan. The nature of an AU fic lies in the fact that the characters an author loves are placed in a new environment often to either experience a new storyline based on their existing character traits (what would happen if Harry Potter had grown up as a scientist instead of a wizard?), or they play out the original storyline in a new world. *Master of the Universe*, and so *Fifty Shades of Grey*, represents the latter type of AU. In *Twilight* (Isa)Bella Swan is a quiet, awkward, well-read teenager who falls in love with a boy at her new school. Edward Cullen is a seemingly young but mature boy who has a secret: he is a vampire. The two meet and there is an instant attraction that Edward tries to deny at first. When Edward realises he can no longer control his obsession for Bella, they begin to date and

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[6] BDSM (Bondage, Discipline, Sadism, and Masochism) represents a sexual practice involving bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, and sadism and masochism.

he shows her his secret life as a vampire (Meyer). *Fifty Shades of Grey* tells the story of

Ana(stasia) Steele, the shy, awkward, well-read university student preparing to graduate

who meets Christian Grey, the young yet powerful CEO who has a secret: he enjoys

BDSM and employs a sex slave (though he is without one when he meets Ana). Christian

is drawn to Ana but he tries to deny his obsession until he finally introduces her to his

secret life (James). Ultimately, both Bella and Ana are drawn into the secret worlds of

Edward and Christian respectively, but both alter the male characters' understanding of

their worlds. In the case of *Twilight*, Bella allows Edward to opportunity to see the

wonder of being a vampire through a fresh set of eyes while also making him reconsider

the concept of family. In *Fifty Shades of Grey* Ana makes Christian reconsider love and

his future, in that he begins to consider a more traditionally romantic style of relationship.

Likewise, the love story of Ana and Christian very closely mirrors that of Bella and

Edward but the specifics are otherwise different. There are no vampires or werewolves in

Fifty Shades of Grey, though they abound in *Twilight* and the secrets the two men have

differ, though both could represent a death of sorts if discovered; Edward would be

hunted down if he were publicly named a vampire and Christian would lose his business

if his alternative lifestyle was exposed.

AU fic is a popular crossover genre for those authors wishing to publish their

fanfiction traditionally because it is easy to disguise the stories as part of a genre as

opposed to a copy of an original plot. For example, we see the similarities between the

love stories in *Twilight* and *Fifty Shades of Grey* (intelligent, young girl meets young yet

mature man with a secret who tries to deny his obsession but then brings her into his

world), but the fact that one story is specifically derivative of the other would not be

apparent to someone reading within the romance genre without extratextual information as both novels obey genre conventions.

In 1911 Arthur Conan Doyle suggested to Arthur Whitaker that he "change the names [in his Sherlock Holmes fic] and try to get it published" (qtd in Jamison 43). This case "illustrates how the question of 'filing off the serial numbers' -- revising fanworks to publish them as original à la *Fifty Shades* -- has not always generated the same controversy and upset it often does today" (Jamison 44), controversy that should not be levelled at one person since E.L. James is not the only person to publish her fanfiction for a profit. She is not even the only author to publish *Twilight* fanfiction for a profit (Pantozzi), but she is notable as the author to make a great deal of money from her fanfiction. In fact, James is cited as the reason Random House made $400 million in 2012, half of which was a result of her series (Greenfield; Barber). James originally digitally published *Fifty Shades of Grey* and the resulting sequels through an independent publisher because she was encouraged by other fanfiction writers and readers to try to make some money from the popularity of her story (West; Zutter). After signing with Random House, James' popularity continued to increase as the books were suddenly available everywhere and talks of a film deal began to circulate (the film adaptation is currently set for a 2015 release date) (Kroll). Again, this highlights the importance of having a fanbase of readers available to ensure profits before publishing, but it also indicates another reason fanfiction authors are more prepared to self-publish than other potential authors: support. While not entirely cohesive, the fanfiction community can act as a supportive group of fellow authors and editors.

Many online fanfiction sites encourage authors to find one or more beta readers in order to be sure their work is edited. More than that, making use of a beta reader has "become a convention within the fan fiction community, and even at the micro level, there is an aspect of community maintenance to this convention" (Karpovich 174). Editing in the fanfiction community does not only entail typical copy-editing; it also involves editing for story, character, plot, and canon elements. This means that a beta will look through a fic to find moments when the characters step out of their canon roles or do something that the canon version would not do. They also provide feedback regarding story construction as any editor would, and some betas specialise in writing style and grammar. A fanfiction author can choose to ignore or accept any changes suggested, but the process of working with a beta can help to shape an author's writing, just as can happen in the relationship between a good editor and author. In fact, many fanfiction authors develop strong working relationships with their betas that can last months, years, or even decades. In addition to this support function, fanfiction sites usually include a comments section for each fic, often for each chapter of a fic as well. Within this section, readers can praise, critique, or make requests of the author. This form of immediate feedback, particularly when it is positively phrased creative feedback, can be very useful for new authors to improve their writing because "fanfiction communities can provide a supportive network for beginning writers in a way that no commercial enterprise possibly can" (Jamison 19). Also notable of this feature is the fact that the comments can be left on individual chapters so that the author can adjust the story and their writing style within each individual fic. In addition to the support fanfic authors can receive through beta reading, many fanfiction sites include forums for discussing topics ranging from canon
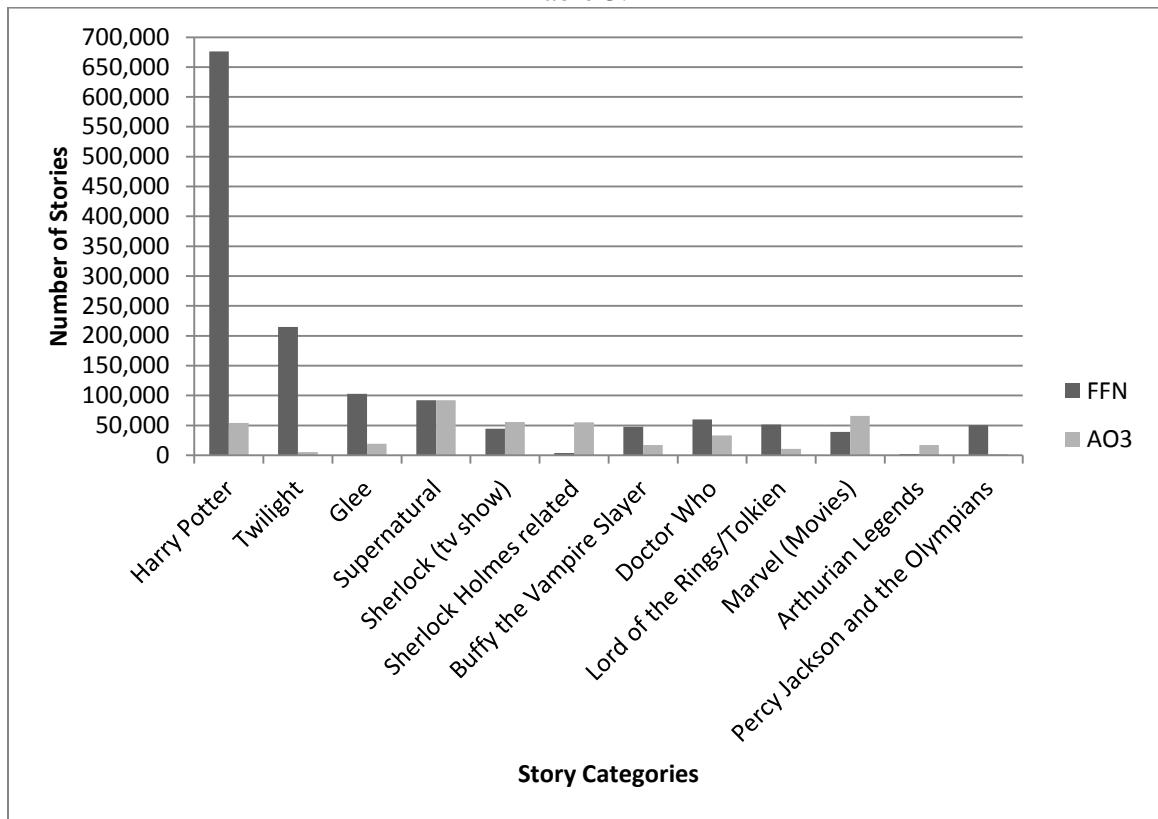
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and fanon[7] to writing style and support. Ongoing discussions in this particular area range

from discussions on how to self-publish to debating the use of an agent and traditional

publishing. While most fanfiction writers have no aspirations to a professional fiction

career, some enjoy writing so much that they wonder if they should try to publish original

fiction.

A lot of people, from fan theorist Henry Jenkins to author and Geek & Sundry

vlogger Nika Harper, have cited the practice of writing fanfic as an excellent educational

tool, both in the classroom and for aspiring authors who wish to publish in a traditional

format. Harper reminds her viewers that writing within fanfic can teach aspiring authors

how to write within another's world – a useful tool if said author would like to make

money writing for established comic books, anthologies within an established world, or

book series based on films or television shows (Harper; Jenkins "Why Heather Can

Write"). In the same way that *Fifty Shades of Grey* could easily be seen as representative

of the romance genre rather than derivative of *Twilight*, fanfiction writing can also help

aspiring authors learn to write genre fiction as many of the conventions of a specific

genre can be treated like canon. For this reason, urban fantasy authors can benefit from

this situation. Many of the most popular fandoms that inspire fanfiction can fall within

the category of fantasy, if not urban fantasy specifically. On the fanfiction.net (FFN)

website, for example, six of the top ten fandoms (in television shows, films, and books)

in terms of story numbers can fit within the category of urban fantasy, if only barely in

the case of *Doctor Who* (See Table 3.1). Alternately, the second most popular fanfiction

site, Archive of Our Own.org (AO3), suggests that five of the top ten fandoms fit within

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[7] Fanon refers to the often fan-created story elements that are generally agreed upon by fans to be part of
the storyworld of a particular product though they have never been explicitly stated in the source material
(Deborah Kaplan 136).

the genre of urban fantasy, again including *Doctor Who* and adding Marvel-based stories

(See Table 3.1). While *Doctor Who* and Marvel-based stories do not strictly fit the

category of urban fantasy, they do present similar challenges for writers. The need to

marry the real world with that of the unreal or supernatural, for example, is a skill

necessary in both types of fanfiction as well as urban fantasy.

Table 3.1

Information obtained from Fanfiction.net and archiveofourown.org. Last updated 10 March 2014.

It should be noted that these two sites maintain different rules for submission and for

tagging stories for cataloguing. FFN is a much more public site with fewer rules while

AO3 allows much more extensive tagging of stories. Not included in this data are the

many crossover stories that may include two or more fandoms in any one story. Once a

writer has learned to write within the genre, she is more likely to continue her writing

career within the same genre for, as Harper states "there's a lot of opportunity and talent that shows with taking something that someone else has made and making it your own" (Harper).

Cassandra Clare represents an author who has moved successfully from writing fanfiction to traditional publication. She writes almost exclusively within the urban fantasy genre, and her most popular fanfiction stories were also set within this genre. Clare was born Judith Rumelt but developed the pen name "Cassandra Claire[8]" when writing fanfiction and her first published short story, "The Girl's Guide to Defeating the Dark Lord" ("Girl's Guide"). She dropped the "i" in her last name before publishing her popular young adult novels. In 2007 she published the first of her *The Mortal Instruments* series, the sixth and final installment of which is available as of May 2014. Following the popularity of this series, Clare created *The Infernal Devices* (2010, 2011, 2013) series set in the same universe as *The Mortal Instruments* series but in an earlier era so that it fits in to a subgenre of urban fantasy called steampunk[9]. Building on the popularity of these two series, Clare has announced a new series, *The Dark Artifices*, beginning in 2015; a new series with her friend and author Holly Black set to begin September 2014; multiple short stories with other authors; and she was heavily involved in the production of the film adaptation of *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones* (2013) based on her first published novel.

Clare's most popular fics were based on the *Harry Potter* books with *The Draco Trilogy*, and *The Lord of the Rings* films with *The Very Secret Diaries*. *The Draco*

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[8] In this thesis I refer to Cassandra Clare in most cases by this final form of her name, and use her real name or earlier spellings of her pseudonym only when required by context.
[9] Steampunk is a sub-genre of fantasy or science fiction that is usually set in an alternative history of nineteenth century Victorian Britain where steam-powered machines are the dominant technology.

Trilogy tells the story of a failed experiment in Potions class that forces Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy to switch bodies while *The Very Secret Diaries* can be described as a *Bridget Jones' Diary* (book: 1996) treatment of *The Lord of the Rings* (focusing on the films), including funny diary entries from many of the main characters in the first two films. Both fics were hugely influential within their respective fandoms, especially considering how early within the creation of those fandoms they appeared, and many suggest that the current fanon understanding of Draco Malfoy was partly shaped by Clare's depiction ("Cassandra Claire"). Neither of these stories is easily accessible online anymore as Clare removed them shortly before publishing her professional fiction. She announced this removal in 2006 with the final chapters of *The Draco Trilogy* and suggested that interested readers download copies for themselves. She suggests that she "felt like [her fanfiction] was juvenilia" (qtd in Alter). There was a great deal of controversy surrounding Clare in the fandom world that has generally dissipated since the publication of her novels.

In 2001 the world of *Harry Potter* fanfiction was aflame with the banning of Cassandra Clare from FFN for plagiarism ("Cassandra Claire"; Avocado). While this charge may seem unusual given that Clare wrote fanfiction, which has itself been considered plagiarism by many, in fact other fanfiction authors and readers were those charging Clare with the violation. Clare's writing is full of quotations pulled from other sources. These quotations are never directly cited, but she has included a disclaimer of sorts: "This work contains quotes [sic] from movies and television shows, stories and plays, novels and films. They are cited at the end of each chapter" (Claire *Draco Dormiens*). At the end of chapter five of *Draco Dormiens* we see the first of these

references: "1) 'one of those simple, two-piece jigsaw puzzles' – Blackadder. 2) 'Six inches to the left and grandchildren would have been out of the question.' – Blackadder again" (58). These are fairly specific citations but it appears that they were not present in the original document (Avocado).

The inclusion of occasional quotations however, did not cause the huge plagiarism scare. The biggest issue arose concerning the second part of *The Draco Trilogy*. In *Draco Sinister* Claire included exact copies of lines directly from an out-of-print novel, amounting to at least two pages of material in her text in addition to the aforementioned quotations from television and film. Initially, she mentioned that she was "inspired" by the novel but could not remember the name of the author (Avocado). Once the direct plagiarism was discovered she included the name of the author in her disclaimer and began the process of communicating with said author (Avocado). This controversy precipitated many in the fanfiction community to question the legality of fanfiction itself, as well as further define rules and regulations regarding plagiarism for the major lists and websites involved in the community. The biggest issue for many was the fact that the writing that everyone loved by Clare was, in fact, that of one or many other authors. The controversy appeared again in 2005 and 2006 with Clare's pronouncement that she would be beginning her professional fiction career. Many in the fandom were concerned that she had gained popularity through her plagiarised stories and would now take those skills into the "real world." This distinction between character, writing style, and direct quotation of work in a gray area of legality is an important one for the community and, in particular, as regards Cassandra Clare.

As a professional writer linked very closely with fanfiction (especially at the beginning of her professional career), Clare is regularly asked her opinion on fanfiction. She is open to writers working within her world but she suggests that original fiction is more highly valued for a professional career. Additionally, however, she mentions the importance of leaving characters within their respective worlds:

> Things like characters are copyrighted to the works they appear in – in other words, I own, say Jace Wayland. You are welcome to play around in my fictional world by writing fanfiction or creating other fan works, but you can't use them in work you intend to publish. It's just not a good idea, not for anyone. Publishers want to see you can come up with your own ideas and characters so you are much better off doing that! (Clare "FAQ: About Requests")

Given the charges laid against Clare regarding direct quotation plagiarism and the debate this inspired, it is interesting that her concern, like the authors of the eighteenth century before her, is with her characters. According to this definition of copyright, lifting whole sections of text would be acceptable as long as the characters are different or not directly mentioned. Interestingly, later rumours of plagiarism surrounding Clare's professional career involve copying character traits into her published fiction.

After fighting the plagiarism controversy within fandom and the world of fanfiction, Clare then went on to field vague complaints of plagiarism through publishing fanfiction as her original fiction. These, again, are not legal charges and are generally related to the film adaptation of *City of Bones*. People outside of the genre have suggested that Clare is simply capitalising on the popularity of *Harry Potter*-style adaptations because her *The Mortal Instruments* storyline includes a coming-of-age story in a supernatural world. While the response to these complaints is one of genre -- Clare writes young adult urban fantasy just as J.K. Rowling did in creating the *Harry Potter* books -- those who are aware of the fanfiction suggest that this charge is not baseless. Like *Fifty*

Shades of Grey, Clare's fanfiction *The Draco Trilogy* is an AU fic of a kind. Unlike *Fifty Shades, The Draco Trilogy* does not set its characters in a different world/universe. Harry, Hermione, and Draco all still attend Hogwarts and most of the characters remain unchanged (other than the fact that Clare wrote the tales before all of the books were complete and so some things are different by necessity), but Draco's characterisation is different.

In Clare's world Draco and Harry become friends of a sort and step-brothers, while they remain enemies in Rowling's original work. The other major difference between this work and the original is that in this world Harry and Hermione are dating and Draco is also in love with Hermione but agrees to be her friend only. So Clare presents a situation where a young girl (Hermione), who is still learning about her powers as a witch, is confused about her feelings for two boys. Harry Potter is dark-haired, courageous, and loyal while Draco Malfoy is light-haired and light-skinned, intelligent, and hiding his goodness under a bristly shell (Claire *Draco Dormiens*). Likewise, Clare's *The Mortal Instruments* series presents Clary Fray as a young girl who discovers she has powers and learns to use them while being confused about her feelings for two boys. Simon Lewis is a dark-haired boy with glasses who is very loyal to Clary and courageous when it comes to saving her life while Jace Wayland is golden-haired and golden-skinned, intelligent, and also hides his goodness under a bristly shell (*City of Bones*). Just as the characters in *Harry Potter* and Clare's *The Draco Trilogy* fight evil without involving adults, the teenagers in *The Mortal Instruments* books also deal with evil alone. It is also important to note that Clare's fanfiction depiction of Draco has become quite a popular way to describe him in the fandom ("Cassandra Claire"). One of the most well-

known elements of this characterization is the clothing choice; Clare's Draco wears black leather pants. Likewise, Jace is regularly portrayed in black leather that is intended to aid him in battle. While Clare is credited with the creation of this depiction of Draco, it has become fanon and those not aware of the original creation will only see Jace as a copy of the fanon version of Draco. Other than these characterisations and the general idea behind the stories, there are very few similarities. Hermione loves Harry in *The Draco Trilogy* while Clary loves Jace (though she cannot have him) in *The Mortal Instruments* series.

It is possible to see some of Clare's history writing and reading fanfiction, a style of writing where "anything goes (Men can get pregnant! Why not?)" (Jamison 19), in the storyline of *The Mortal Instruments* in that she does not follow safe or traditional characterisations and is more willing to experiment. She is one of very few authors of young adult urban fantasy that writes homosexual main characters (Jace's best friend Alec Lightwood is in love with Jace, but ultimately ends up in a relationship with a warlock named Magnus Bane), which indicates her reliance on and preference for slashfic storylines (Dell'Antonia). While Clare did not simply publish her fanfiction with different character names, it is possible to see that she developed her writing skill and some of the characterisation of at least one of her current series from her experiences writing fanfiction.

Clare openly supports fanfiction that remains amateur and unpublished and allows readers to play within her world, though she does not read such fics herself (Clare "FAQ: About Cassie"), but she is also dedicated to improving traditional book sales. Her publishers praise Clare with inventing the "*City of Fallen Angels* treatment" (David Kaplan). This involves the inclusion of an actual letter between characters attached to the

back cover of the book. The letter is not available in digital copies so fans who wish to collect the letters must buy a physical copy of the book. Speaking as a former popular fanfiction author who has become an equally popular traditionally-published author, Clare suggests that those readers who would like to publish should write original fiction because publishers are more likely to accept original work over fanfiction (Clare "FAQ: About Requests"). Thus, Cassandra Clare exists as an author who has gained popularity in both the worlds of fanfiction and traditionally published fiction but chooses to avoid reading fanfiction and engaging with its authors, partly due to the issues she had as a fanfiction author and partly for legal reasons.

The Future of Publishing? Digital Self-Publication

At this point it is relevant to consider the publication industry both as it was, and as it exists now with the introduction of digital options for all authors. As mentioned in an earlier section, in 1980 Janice Radway suggested that "[t]he apparent increase in the romance's popularity may well be attributable to women's changing beliefs and needs. However, it is conceivable that it is equally a function of other factors as well … because the romance's recent success *also* coincides with important changes in book production, distribution, advertising, and marketing techniques" (20). This is true now of urban fantasy and paranormal romance, in that the way books are published is changing and incorporating more digital production -- sometimes digital-only or digital-first publications -- so that these books are increasingly popular, especially among women, as much for their ease of access as for their content. While Radway is talking about the publishing practices of Harlequin Enterprises and their subscriber system, we can see that some of the elements remain true today. First and foremost, Harlequin was and is able to produce cheaper paperback novels. Likewise, new novels can easily be published digitally, which makes them much cheaper to publish and purchase.

As with Radway's claim that Harlequin took advantage of new marketing and distribution techniques to directly reach their desired audience (23), the direct communication available to digital audiences through social media combined with the "suggested for you" features of online book sellers and book discussion groups like those seen in GoodReads have combined to increase sales. These elements are true for many different genres of books, but urban fantasy is definitely primed to reap the benefits of such elements due to its connection to women readers. While not all readers of urban fantasy are female, the majority of those active online are. Just as Radway suggests that

publishers of gothic novels in the 1960s capitalised on the fact that women typically do

most of the shopping for a household by placing their books in grocery and drug stores

(32), the publishers of ebooks are exploiting product placement. The popularity of

ereaders means that many readers have easy access to a multitude of digital texts at any

time. For a busy family woman, this means that she can download a new book during a

spare five minutes.

Ereaders also mean that women in particular can read whatever book they

choose, wherever they choose, without worrying that they will be embarrassed by the

cover of the book. Since many romance novels include images of half-naked men saving

women with heaving breasts and lovestruck expressions on their faces, reading the ebook

version of such a book means that not only will that image be hidden, but even the title

will be unknown by others. While the cover art of *Fifty Shades of Grey* is fairly

innocuous, for example, it title was relatively infamous. The availability of an electronic

version is one of the reasons it was read by so many women: they could read freely

without being judged (Williams; Grinberg). Ereaders have also had a positive influence

on the numbers of men reading genres that are female-dominated, like romance

("Romance Writers of America's 2005 Market Research"). This connection between

Radway's suggestions of innovation by Harlequin and the way that digital publication has

increased access to texts makes sense in that technology is always improving and

publishing companies learn to take advantage of those changes. What is different in this

situation, however, is the fact that many of the novels published, particularly in the genre

of urban fantasy, are not published by a publishing company, but by individual authors.

The ease with which ebooks can be published means that not only are female readers

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taking advantage of easy access to cheaper books, but female authors are also benefitting from access to control over the publishing structure.

As we saw earlier, people have been publishing digitally as long as we have had access to the technology. Early digital publications, however, were difficult, time-consuming, and expensive to produce. Near ubiquitous access to faster and cheaper technology has made it much easier for anyone to publish digital texts. Once the technology was made easier, book sellers made that technology accessible to independent authors, rather than restricting their book sales to publishing companies. The most successful in creating a banner specifically for authors to "self-publish" has been Amazon. Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) offers aspiring authors the opportunity to get books published without an agent or a traditional publisher. Authors simply need to sign up for the service, convert their manuscript to the correct file format (epub), upload it, and choose their pricing structure. Books are usually available on the Kindle store within twenty-four hours and authors can then advertise their books in earnest. KDP offers authors a free option with which they can control their potentially global publications through the ability to make changes at any time, to remove a work from the store, and to set or change the pricing structure (see Table 5.1). Through this last option authors can choose to earn as little as 35% or as much as 70% of the profits of the sale of their books. Some authors may choose to earn only 35% of the profits because this option allows them to charge much higher amounts which is an attractive option if the text is a technical book or some other text that could warrant such prices. Most authors choose to select the 35% option only for books they will sell at 99 cents and the 70% option for those books they wish to sell for $2.99.

Table 5.1

List Price Options for Amazon KDP Publishing (CAD)	Minimum Price ($)	Maximum Price ($)
35% Royalty		
Less than or equal to 3MB	0.99	200.00
Greater than 3MB, less than 10MB	1.99	200.00
Greater than 10MB	2.99	200.00
70% Royalty	2.99	9.99

Information obtained from Amazon KDP "List Price Requirements." Last visited 11 April 2014.

While Amazon KDP is innovative, it is not the only source to which aspiring

authors can turn in order to digitally self-publish. In fact, many self-publishing advice

sites online suggest that no author should limit herself to just one online publisher in

order to reach readers who do not have a Kindle or use the Kindle app (Palmer;

Gaughran). For example, Jane Friedman points out that "[o]ne common strategy among

authors is to use Amazon Kindle Direct combined with Smashwords . . . You can

probably reach 95%+ of your market with that approach, if not 100%." Other major book

sellers, such as Barnes & Noble (Nook) or Chapters-Indigo (Kobo), also offer options for

independent authors to upload their completed novels to their online stores. Additionally,

Apple sells ebooks through its iBooks app and store and, until recently, Sony also had an

online store to accommodate users of their ereaders. The biggest differences between

these sellers are the pricing structures (see Tables 5.2 and 5.3). The one service that is

different is Smashwords in that it allows authors to upload multiple file formats of each

novel so that users can choose the format to match the device they prefer all from one

spot.

Table 5.2

List Price Options for Nook Publishing (USD)	Royalty
0.99-2.98	40%
2.99-9.99	65%
10.00-199.99	40%

Information obtained from Nook Publishing "Pricing and Payment Terms." Last visited 11 April 2014.

Table 5.3

List Price Options for Kobo Writing Life (CAD)	Royalty
1.99-12.99	70%
All other pricing options	45%

Information obtained from "Kobo Writing Life User Guide" (26).

Smashwords was started in 2008 by Mark and Lesleyann Coker after many failed attempts to get a soap opera novel published despite positive reviews from test readers ("About"). Publishers felt that there was no market for the genre so Coker started his own company to distribute digital copies. Smashwords is now "the world's largest distributor of indie ebooks" ("About"). Authors can distribute their works through most of the major retailers (Apple iBooks, Barnes & Noble, Sony, Kobo, and the Diesel eBook Store), as well as distribute digital copies through Smashwords itself. The pay structure at Smashwords is comparable to the other major distributors when calculating sales through those same distributors, but is higher for sales made through the Smashwords site itself (See Table 5.4). While sales through most retail distributers will earn the author 60% of the list price, 70.5% of net profits are earned on affiliate sales and 85% for Smashwords sales. For this reason alone it makes sense for independent authors to sign with Smashwords in addition to other retailers. Authors can also offer free samples of their works, controlling how much of the text readers have access to and allowing readers to "get hooked" on a book before buying. This form of sample-before-you-buy marketing helps to drive sales for many unknown, and therefore untested, authors.

Table 5.4

Smashwords Pay Structure by Retailer	Royalty
Retail distribution partners (Kobo, Sony, etc.)	60% of author-set list price
Affiliate Sales (bloggers, publishers, etc.)	70.5% of net profit
Smashwords sales	85% of net sales

Information obtained from Smashwords "About." Last visited 28 April 2014.

Another way that Smashwords is innovating digital publication is through the trust the company places in its readers. All ebooks available for sale on Smashwords are DRM-free. Digital Rights Management (DRM) consists of a group of technologies that help protect intellectual property content from being copied or changed in anyway. Essentially, DRM content is locked content that can only be read or used by purchasing specific software or hardware. These technologies are the reason a reader can only read books purchased from Amazon on a Kindle or on the Kindle app, for example. It is also legally impossible to share DRM-protected content with others or even to create back-up copies of CDs and DVDs. The refusal of Smashwords to use DRM-protected content speaks to the company's focus on readers. By allowing readers to access DRM-free content, the company is stating that it trusts readers to be responsible with the copy they legitimately own of any specific intellectual property ("About").

Finally, Smashwords is very clear that publishing with the company will not guarantee success. Most of the major retailers who offer self-publishing options for authors tend to hide the amount of work required by authors to make a profit but Smashwords puts this information on its "About" page in the "Q&A with Mark Coker" section. Amazon states, quite excitedly, that "Amazon has created tools to help you publish your book, plus the rise of social networks and the internet itself opens up many worlds of opportunity for promotion. Seize the moment!" ("Tips for Merchandising").

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Meanwhile, when asked if publishing on Smashwords will sell a lot of books for an author, Coker answers with "[p]robably not," also telling any potential author that "the bulk of your sales will come as a direct result of your own marketing and promotion efforts. We provide you free tools to help you do this, but it'll be your hard work that makes sales happen" ("About"). This advice does not run counter to that given by retailers such as Amazon or Barnes & Noble, but it is more clearly stated and appears to come from the position of individuals who have experienced this work for themselves.

The options mentioned above are not the only digital publishing options for authors who wish to self-publish, but they are the most well-known, particularly in North America. However, Wattpad is growing in popularity, as are more regional digital publishing companies such as BookBaby, Author Solutions, and the all-Canadian FriesenPress. The growing number of such independent platforms for digital self-publication shows the increase in the popularity of this option among authors.

It appears that the indie and self-publishing industries have embraced fanfic and its authors. The Writer's Coffeeshop, best known for being the first to publish the *Fifty Shades* books (Morris), is just one of many indie publishers set up to cater to fanfic authors interested in moving their writing into a profic career. And while no one else is recommending authors publish their fanfic word-for-word, that is, with copyrighted material, Amazon has created a banner for just such a purpose. Kindle Worlds is an expansion of the Kindle self-publishing banner and offers fanfic writers the opportunity to make some money from their writing on approved worlds. As of May 2014, it is possible to write fanfic in as many as twenty-two copyrighted worlds with Kindle Worlds, including teen girl favourites *The Vampire Diaries* (2009 -) and *Pretty Little*

Liars (2010 -), as well as more traditionally male-centred worlds like *G.I. Joe* (1985 -),

and finally, the more canonically literary works of Kurt Vonnegut. Authors of original

fiction can also submit their work to Kindle Worlds for the fanfic treatment ("Worlds").

This opportunity offers an alternate source of readers and indicates that fanfiction, while

not mainstream, has become acceptable to a certain part of the publishing industry if

nothing else. Again though, we run into issues of exploiting fan labour and changing the

foundation of fanfiction. The concept of fanfiction has traditionally been based on its

status as amateur, free, and intended for the enjoyment of fans only. Kindle Worlds

represents a further attempt by a corporation to monetise fan works. This move both

changes our understanding of fanfiction as a genre and represents a problem for those

fans choosing to publish this way. Due to the nature of copyright laws, and in a similar

way to other authorised spin-off books, Amazon requires Kindle Worlds authors to give

up their rights to the novels they write, though they retain limited rights to new characters

they create. This stance can be seen as a way for a large corporation to take advantage of

fans (Jaffe), but it can also represent an understanding within the publishing industry that

fanfiction is a valuable resource for enjoyable stories based on the creations of others.

While fan sites like *fanfiction.net* and *Archive of Our Own* continue to provide a

source for fanfiction written as fanfiction with no initial intentions to publish and Kindle

Worlds offers a way to earn some income from fanfiction without changing the character

names, Wattpad offers an alternative to both. On this site, authors can upload their

material to be made available for free. In this way, fanfiction written as is can be made

available on a reputable site alongside such authors as Margaret Atwood, providing

legitimacy to the work while maintaining its status as fanfiction. This situation also offers

readers the opportunity to stumble upon fanfiction without going to an unfamiliar site dedicated to this form of writing. In fact, 7.5 million fanfiction stories were uploaded to Wattpad in 2013 ("2013"). In this way, many people who would not consider themselves the productive type of fan Larsen and Zubernis describe (18) are finding themselves enjoying more than a consumptive fan experience in that they are engaging with fan works rather than only reading official news stories or press releases.

Amanda Hocking, who writes young adult urban fantasy, is one of the authors who has made her success through digital self-publication. In April 2010 Hocking decided to put one of her novels up online through Amazon and Smashwords in order to make enough money for a trip. She hoped to sell some copies to friends and family but ended up selling as many as one hundred thousand copies of her different novels every month by January 2011 (Pilkington). The first novel she published, *My Blood Approves* (2010), is part of a trilogy that deals with vampires. This was followed by the first book in the *Trylle* trilogy, *Switched* (2010), that explores the world of changelings. Part of Hocking's success lies in the fact that she had multiple rejected novels sitting on her computer ready to be uploaded when demand increased. This meant that interested readers did not have to wait months or years for each new installment or even for new series.

Another element in her success, other than talent and self-promotion on social media, is that of setting her own pricing. By offering the first book in each series for 99 cents as a loss leader, she was able to increase the price of future installments to $2.99. While most novels published through a corporation sell for about ten dollars, Hocking was able to offer her readers similar material for much cheaper, while maintaining a

much higher percentage of the profits. As we saw above, selling a novel through Amazon at $2.99 pays out $2.09 (70%) for each copy and in November of 2011 Hocking joined Amazon's "Kindle Million Club" (Pilkington), meaning that she had sold more than one million copies. The work involved in digital self-publishing, however, proved too much for Hocking and she signed a contract with St. Martin's Press to publish her newest series (The *Watersong* series which began August 2012, and the current *Kanin Chronicles*), as well as produce paperback copies of her most popular series, the *Trylle* trilogy (Pilkington; Hocking).

Along with the benefits of no longer being responsible for cover art, technical errors, or editing, Hocking has also had more opportunities for adaptations of her work. There is a graphic novel of her *Hollows* (2013) series and Media Rights Capital optioned *Switched* in 2011 for a film adaptation (Hocking; Abrams). In fact, "[t]he [major film corporations] are keeping a close eye on digital bestseller lists and showing a willingness to pay traditional book-rights fees for digital titles" (Abrams) because of the popularity of books by authors like Hocking. This means that corporations in the entertainment industry are paying attention to digital self-publication, if tentatively. While they may not be willing to read through every self-published book available, literary representatives for film corporations and publishing houses are looking to Amazon, Smashwords, and Wattpad in hopes of finding another *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

Connie Suttle is an independent author working within urban fantasy who continues to maintain her self-publisher status. Suttle has published twenty-nine books since 2011 and, until recently, all of those books were digital editions only. Like Hocking, Suttle had the benefit of many finished (though unedited) manuscripts available

for distribution when beginning her publishing journey ("Self-Publishing"). As such, Suttle was able to release a book almost every month beginning with *Blood Wager* in July 2011, followed by *Blood Sense* (September 2011), *Blood Domination* (October 2011), and *Blood Royal* (November 2011). In this way, Suttle maintained her growing fanbase through a quick publication schedule which she continues to supplement with back stories on characters or excerpts from upcoming novels on her blog.

Unlike Hocking, Suttle has not been an immediate sensation so we cannot know if she would choose to sign a contract with a traditional publisher to alleviate some of the work that self-publishing requires. We can, however, look at her comments and suggest that, for now anyway, the benefits of self-publishing outweigh the negatives. Suttle recognises the many difficulties involved in self-publishing from "marketing, cover design, book giveaways, [and] advertising" to dealing with insecurity without "agents and publishers to back [authors] and encourage them when the road gets bumpy" ("Fact and Fiction"). The moderate success that Suttle has achieved has allowed her to deal with some of those difficulties through outsourcing her cover art, website design and maintenance, and copyediting and proofreading. She also maintains an online store as part of her website that sells t-shirts, posters and other collectables, along with autographed copies of many of her books. The ancillary sales are also outsourced but offer additional income around her brand. Additionally, Suttle has experience working within the publishing industry, on the distribution side of the equation if nothing else, having worked eleven years in a book store. This experience has allowed her some insight into the workings of the industry.

One of the biggest issues with self-publication is the perception of such authors by members of the publishing industry and the public. Many self-published authors have attempted publication through traditional means but suffered multiple rejections; for example, *Blood Wager* was rejected six times before Suttle decided to self-publish. Many of those rejected books have gone on to make money for their authors, though most are not as profitable as Hocking's novels. Suttle feels strongly that self-publishing is not about publishing junk fiction just for the sake of publishing and this is a sentiment many who publish digitally, either through a traditional publisher or not, share. Suttle complains that "[i]ndie authors are often viewed as being at the same level of appreciation as ax murderers. That we're just not smart enough – or good enough – to get published by traditional means" ("A Writer* Writes"). And, while these authors did not get published traditionally and have not been approached by publishers since beginning their publishing journeys, they are making money and sharing their stories with readers who appreciate them. The traditional publishing format requires a large percentage of the profits of every book sale to be shared among many; therefore, most large publishers are looking for the next blockbuster book (series) to recover losses from those titles that did not do as well as projected. The independent model, however, requires very little sharing of profits. As we saw above, self-published authors can receive seventy percent on every sale at $2.99 meaning that they make a great deal more per book, even at a cheaper price, than authors working within the traditional system. Self-published authors are also able to control the prices of their books, choose when to release, and change their publishing model as necessary. In fact, Connie Suttle recently signed on to Amazon's KDP Select program which limits the majority of her digital sales to Amazon but she, as both the

author and publisher, is able to explain to her readers in detail why she made this decision and how it will affect them. Essentially, Suttle has chosen this new program because her experience shows that Amazon treats independent authors better, through communication and promotion, than other online retailers ("Changes"). This change in digital publication is made easier for both Suttle and her readers by the fact that she has also begun publishing paperback copies of her novels through another Amazon self-publishing banner: CreateSpace. This publishing company assists authors, through free and/or paid options, with file conversion and uploading and hard copy publication by order. Again, the program supports independent authors while providing them with the opportunity to provide analog readers with access to their material.

While the experiences of Amanda Hocking and Connie Suttle are quite different in terms of the reception of their material and expected audience (young adult vs. adult), their reasons for self-publishing were the same: to get their stories read and make a little money. It is clear that the publishing industry has recognised the benefits of such authors in the restructuring of some aspects of the industry and willingness to accept that some of these authors will be profitable. Likewise, the academic community is also open to the possibilities available to authors through digital self-publication, if not in terms of academic publishing as the ongoing debate regarding open-access publishing shows (Basken; Bissonnette; Worlock), then definitely in terms of fiction. The University of Central Lancashire will begin offering an MA in digital self-publication in September 2014 that will offer students the opportunity to consider "production, marketing and the creation of ebooks" (Flood "First Self-Publishing MA"). The creation of such companies as Smashwords, Wattpad, and Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing and CreateSpace

shows that there is a need for such banners while the success of Amanda Hocking and her

subsequent contract with St. Martin's Press show that profitable publications can be

discovered among independent authors.

The Future of the Book? Changes to Content and Multimedia Options for Reading

While there have been many changes in the publishing industry to date and as it continues to incorporate new technologies, I am not suggesting we reject traditional publishing or close book stores in favour of ebooks or other digital writing. I do think that changes in technology have helped to create a situation that allows for experimentation. Some of this experimentation is found in the content of new novels. For example, stylistic elements of fanfiction such as the sharing the point of view of the main character and her love interest and a willingness to incorporate more LGBTQ characters perhaps due to the normalisation of slashfic in fanfiction have been incorporated into traditionally published works, urban fantasy in particular. Other experimentation is related to new digital technologies. As technology improves, the opportunity to incorporate more paratextual elements directly into novels increases. Both content-specific and technological experimentation offer opportunities for positive changes to novels, particularly novels within the genre of urban fantasy due to their constant engagement with the world of the real and the supernatural.

We are already seeing some of this content-specific experimentation crossing over to mainstream texts. For example, two commercially-published book series, Patricia Briggs' *Mercy Thompson* and Ilona Andrews' *Kate Daniels*, share many similarities that go beyond their inclusion in the genre of urban fantasy. Additionally, these two series share some stylistic elements common in fanfiction. Combined, these similarities indicate both a willingness to experiment within the genre of urban fantasy, and the move of fanfiction elements like those mentioned above into mainstream popular fiction. Both of these series represent the ways in which some urban fantasy novels are beginning to transgress genre dimensions, while simultaneously linking them to a style of writing

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commonly found in fanfiction. These two series have moved from urban fantasy through paranormal romance and are now approaching a hybrid that is both of these genres yet still neither.

Ilona Andrews published the seventh book in the *Kate Daniels* series in July 2014 and the world is further explored in multiple short stories, novellas, and other novels featuring characters other than Kate. Kate begins the series as a magic user who earns her living as a mercenary in a future alternate version of Atlanta in which magic and technology fight for control of the world – magic seems to be winning. The first book, *Magic Bites* (each title pairs the word "magic" with a present tense verb), introduces us to the character and the world by throwing Kate into a mystery and quest to determine her former legal guardian's murderer. In the process of solving this mystery Kate comes into close contact with high-ranking members of the three most powerful groups in town, all of whom have lost members: the Order of the Knights of Merciful Aid as both her guardian's former employers and the government organisation that provides her with the legal power to hunt down his killer; the shapeshifters known as the Pack; and the local vampire controllers, called the People. As the series progresses Kate must save her new friends over and over again while developing a relationship with the leader of the Pack (Curran), adopting a daughter, preparing for an oncoming final battle, and fighting for her place as the mate of the leader of the Pack.

Patricia Briggs' *Mercy Thompson* series, beginning with *Moon Called*, is not as much of a gritty detective story as the first *Kate Daniels* book. The protagonist, Mercy, is a Volkswagen mechanic who tries to keep to herself. She is also a walker which means she can shift form, but not like the werewolves with whom she was raised. She can shift

quickly and painlessly into a coyote. In Mercy's world the fae are the only magical

creatures who are known to the world, but others do exist. *Moon Called* throws Mercy

into the search and eventual need for revenge for the death by unknown forces of a young

werewolf she had recently taken under her wing. Mercy gets help in this endeavor from

the three organised groups of supernatural creatures in town: the vampires through her

friend Stefan; the fae through her friendship with Zee, who also acts as a sort of kindly

but unusual uncle-figure for Mercy; and finally through her connection to the werewolves

and the local pack's alpha: Adam, who is also Mercy's neighbour. As this series

progresses Mercy begins to discover that she has more powers than simple shapeshifting

abilities: she can speak with ghosts, sense magic use, and she discovers on her

honeymoon that she is in fact a daughter of Coyote the trickster. Meanwhile, she marries

Adam, becomes a step-mother to his daughter Jesse, and begins to learn and adjust to the

role of mate of the Alpha. Perhaps most interesting is that she actively works to change

roles within the pack, specifically, she helps the pack to welcome their first gay member

and is trying to allow women to gain positions within the pack not based solely on their

mate's position.

From John Clute and John Grant's *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* we know that urban

fantasy stories combine elements of fantasy and a non-fantastical world and that "the

[urban fantasy] is told from within, and, from the perspective of characters acting out

their roles" (n.p.). As previously stated, these books also usually make use of first-person

narration allowing the reader into the mind of the protagonist. For example, *Magic Bites*

begins with this paragraph: "I sat at a table in my shadowy kitchen, staring down a bottle

of Boone's Farm Hard Lemonade, when a magic fluctuation hit. My wards shivered and

died, leaving my home stripped of its defenses. The TV flared into life, unnaturally loud in the empty house" (1). In this first paragraph we see the first person narrative and the supernatural elements within a mundane world through the use of a recognizable brand contrasted with the crash of magic and magical wards. We are still unsure of the protagonist, but the paratext of both the cover and the blurb on the back prepares us for this voice to be that of Kate Daniels. And during the first sentence of the *Mercy Thompson* series -- "I didn't know he was a werewolf at first" (1) -- we find out that this world has werewolves and they are normal. Briggs also uses brands we recognise to place these supernatural elements within our own mundane world. In this case it is Mercy's line of work: fixing Volkswagen brand vehicles. Later we learn that she can handle herself in her coyote shape and that she works to have some physical power in her human form as well for she says "I'm in good shape, and I have a purple belt from the dojo just over the railroad track from my garage" (9-10). So, both of these series have satisfied the first three criteria of urban fantasy within the first few pages.

Some urban fantasy series become or are confused with paranormal romance, which is a sub-genre of romance. Paranormal romance also includes supernatural elements, often in a recognisably real world, but the main focus of the plot lies in the romantic relationship -- and there is usually only one relationship -- rather than on the hero's journey. Dana Percec suggests that romance fiction must follow quite strict criteria in order to maintain its popularity. She says this includes such elements as "[a] focus on the romantic relationship between a male and a female [and] [t]he plot must end happily with the conflict resolved in marriage, reunion, enduring partnership, and mutual satisfaction" (6). Combining the romance storyline with a hero's journey or a mystery is

definitely one way to add excitement, not to mention all of the difficulties and wonders involved in engaging in a relationship with a werewolf or other shapeshifter. The *Mercy Thompson* series indicates a potential romance plot much more obviously than the *Kate Daniels* series. At the end of *Moon Called* Mercy has been on a first date with Adam and as she describes their first kiss, we see a definite love interest for future novels: "When he drew away from me, I left my hand on his cheek, enjoying the faint scratchiness of his beard and the pounding of my heart. Silence grew between us, silence and something tentative and new" (305). They do, in fact, end up married and the plot of one entire book occurs on their honeymoon. While Mercy is obviously set up with Adam, Kate's eventual relationship with Curran is less obvious after the first book; in fact, she is sporadically dating a different man throughout the book. We cannot deny that these series develop strong paranormal romance elements as they progress, as evidenced by the marriage of Adam and Mercy as well as the recognition of Kate as Curran's mate within the Pack's judicial system.

Urban fantasy and paranormal romance novels, as with much genre fiction, tend to work in series. In fact, Susanne Gruss suggests that "generally speaking, romance readers are serial readers. Accordingly, the novels should . . . be read as one long saga, where the happy ending is constantly rejected for a new, unhappy beginning" (201). As such, the overall story arc must be considered just as much as that of the individual books. So, while the first books in both of these series can fairly safely be placed within the urban fantasy genre and other parts may be examples of paranormal romance, the overall story arc is something beyond both of those genres. While both women enter into committed heterosexual relationships with one man, in neither case does the relationship

take over the focus of the story. In both cases they have gone past the marriage resolution. At the same time, the love and support these women get from their partners throughout the series has helped them to accomplish more than they ever could have on their own. In both of these relationships the women have had to work to gain their equal status in their respective packs and Mercy regularly saves her partner Adam as well as her other friends, from multiple threats.

Stylistically, these two series share similarities with a great deal of fanfiction writing. First is the use of a first-person narrative. The use of first-person narration is popular in urban fantasy as a genre and in most fanfiction it "is designed to draw readers into the character" (Deborah Kaplan 141). It can also be used to indicate to the reader reasons a particular character may be deviating from the canon version (139). For example, the use of first-person narration in Cassandra Clare's *Draco Dormiens* offers an alternate understanding of the character motivation of Draco Malfoy, while also explaining why he would choose to keep the secret that he and Harry had not returned to their own bodies. Draco's inner monologue offers insight into his inner conflict and his understanding of the situation:

> Why had nobody noticed he wasn't Harry? Surely he couldn't be acting like Potter, he hated Potter, he couldn't act like him if he tried. He just looked like Harry, so everyone assumed he was Harry, and so they liked him. Not just Gryffindors, but Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws, students whose names Draco had never bothered to learn, came up and chatted with him easily. It was disorienting. What was more disorienting was that he liked it, it was as if in taking on Harry's appearance he had taken some part of Harry into himself, and he couldn't kill it or destroy it. It just sat there in his chest, making him do things like rescue Neville's toad, save Hermione from the Bludger and . . . and kiss Hermione. (18)

This passage shows Draco's conflict with his canon character and the character Claire has created for him. Through the first-person narration the transition from the canon version

of Draco to this new character who is kind to others and has a crush on Hermione is more realistic for fans of the *Harry Potter* series. By becoming Harry physically Draco is able to appreciate the joys of friendship and begin to embody some of the best traits of Harry long after they finally switch back.

In urban fantasy narratives, the first-person narration is often used in a very similar way to its use in fanfiction; instead of offering an easy transition from the canon version of a character to the fan-created version, however, first-person narration in urban fantasy offers an easy transition from the real version of the world to the supernatural-infused version of the world created by the author. Some urban fantasy novels, like C.E. Murphy's *Urban Shaman* series or Kat Richardson's *Greywalker* series, present a protagonist who is either unaware of the supernatural elements in her world or has no previous experience or interaction with such elements. In those series the reader is introduced to the rules of the world at the same time as the protagonist. In the cases of *Magic Bites* and *Moon Called* Kate and Mercy have always known about the supernatural elements that exist in their respective worlds, but their inner monologues still offer the reader running commentaries on those elements. As indicated by the passage quoted above from *Magic Bites*, Kate's first-person narration introduces us to her world and the ways in which it differs from our own instantly through her personal experience of a magic fluctuation. Additionally, first-person narration offers the protagonist "as a reader stand-in, a character through which a reader's attraction to [the protagonist's focus] can be realized" (Deborah Kaplan 141). In fanfiction this focus is often the (male) protagonist of the particular media product. In urban fantasy, it is the supernatural world that exists as the focus of the protagonist, though the character representing a love interest for the

protagonist can also be objectified for the reader through this style of narration. While first-person narration is not at all exclusive to either fanfiction or urban fantasy, it is a common element in both.

Another stylistic element that is common to both fanfiction and urban fantasy, and these two book series in particular, is that of alternating the dominant point of view throughout the first-person narration. This is particular to novels and fanfiction stories that feature a romantic relationship of some kind. Previous researchers have established that "two explicit narrators: one for each member of the romantic pairing . . . is common in fan fiction relationship-based stories, specifically those involving slash or other noncanon pairings" (Deborah Kaplan 139. See also Jenkins *Textual Poachers* 199). This trend is also appearing in some urban fantasy series. Particularly those, like the *Kate Daniels* and *Mercy Thompson* series, that introduce male love interests who become protagonists of almost equal value in terms of story development to the female protagonists around whom the stories revolve.

As both the *Kate Daniels* and *Mercy Thompson* series progress we get to experience events from the perspective of the male protagonists. For example, in the seventh *Mercy Thompson* book, *Frost Burned* (2013), Adam and most of the pack are kidnapped so there are periodic chapters that tell the story from his perspective while Mercy is trying to discover their location. This change in point of view is made less jarring by the discovery that Mercy and Adam, as Alpha mates and through the pack bonds, are able to communicate telepathically. Unfortunately, Mercy is still learning how to use these new skills, but the first full chapter of Adam's point of view is prefaced by Mercy accidentally jumping into Adam's mind. As such, Briggs is preparing the reader to

hear from Adam. While this supernatural connection enables the initial changing of perspective, it is the change in Adam's character and position in the plots that truly enables such a shift. Mercy's story has progressed to a point where Adam is her equal and an important part of her story, therefore he begins to warrant his own perspective in her novels.

The *Kate Daniels* series also includes a shift in perspective, but the extra-diegetic materials connected with this series are more interesting, especially in terms of making a connection to fanfiction. This series includes novels and novellas that expand upon the story as read in the novels featuring Kate through the presentation of Curran's perspective. These extra stories mimic a type of fanfiction that focuses on telling the story the fans already know but through the eyes of a different character, often a minor character or one created by the fan writer. Essentially, the Curran-based stories can be seen as fanfiction-style stories by one of the authors (Ilona Andrews is a pseudonym for Ilona and Andrew Gordon, the Curran stories are written by Andrew Gordon). These alternate perspectives indicate both a willingness to play with genre conventions and recognition that the relationships in these series are equal and should be presented as such.

Because these series are outside of both genre definitions, the main characters do not have to fulfill roles required by either. These women are no longer heroic loners, a common characteristic of many urban fantasy protagonists, they have complete families including pack members and adopted daughters. They are the new superwomen of popular fiction in that they can fight off seemingly any beast that attacks them while enjoying a happy and equal family life. Helen T. Bailie says that "what defines a hero in

the popular romance genre is his role as protector and savior which he either takes on or which is imposed on him and which he successfully fulfills" (144). While she is obviously talking about a male hero here, I think this statement applies to the female heroes of these books too. Both of these women become more powerful when they accept that other people need them and they also need other people. Kate says: "I've spent years making sure problems did not ram my door and tear my life apart. And it didn't work. So much time wasted. And what did I have to show for it, except the body count?" (253-254) and this is before she has a mate or adopted daughter or a responsibility to the Pack. Given the way these series transgress genre conventions, I suggest that the blurring of fantasy genre lines in the *Kate Daniels* and *Mercy Thompson* series empowers these female protagonists and offers them opportunities to fight regressive gender stereotypes.

Beyond the experimentation with genre conventions and character roles, we are also seeing many more authors who are publicly open to the concept of fanfiction or willing to admit that they do or have written fanfiction themselves. In these situations, there often seems to be an important divide for authors between books and other media products. For example, many authors who admit to currently writing fanfiction often admit only to fics written on television shows or films, but not books of other authors. Sometimes this is because they are concerned about the perception that they are attempting to "steal" or capitalise on the fanbase of another author. Other times it is because they share similar subject matter or a genre with that author and would like to avoid claims of plagiarism. It seems that, for these authors, writing fanfiction related to products in other media does not carry the same stigma as writing fanfiction based on other novels. One author for whom this is known to be true, though her fanfiction is

apparently unavailable, is S.E. Hinton. When she was in her late teens, S.E. Hinton

published *The Outsiders* (1967) to near instant success. Since then she has written and

published many other young adult novels. Lately, however, Hinton has made it known

that she also writes fanfiction for the television show *Supernatural*. Hinton is known to

be a fan of the show, having shared her experiences on set visiting with cast and crew,

and even appearing in an episode called "Slash Fiction" (uncredited, season 7, episode 6),

but most were not aware that she was also a fan writer until she tweeted to her followers:

"Took one of my [*Supernatural*] fanfics to read in writing group today. It was a big hit,

tho [sic] no one else watches the show" (Hinton "Took one"). Hinton has not made this

fic publicly available -- at least, not under her own name[10]. She does say that she has

shared this writing with the show's creator (Hinton "My fanfics"), so she does not seem

to be concerned about any legal ramifications. One of the biggest benefits of the

fanfiction community is that writers can remain anonymous as long as they choose to and

this is a very freeing concept for many, but especially for published authors who want to

experiment without the threat of losing their professional fanbase.

     A lesser known author, R.J. Anderson, admits to continuing to write fanfiction

after publishing her professional fiction. Unlike Hinton, Anderson continues to write

fanfiction under her professional name. She says: "the fandoms in which I participate are

not about me. When I participate in a fan community, I'm not there as a creator, I'm just

another fan . . . There's no reason anybody should pay more attention to my writing just

because I'm professionally published . . . In fact, there's no good reason for me to

mention that I'm a published author at all" (Anderson). This view of the fanfic

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[10] The use of pseudonyms online and for fanfiction is common and well-documented. Hiding one's identity
is an attempt to avoid both legal ramifications and shame for being associated with a publicly disliked
genre (Jenkins *Textual Poachers*; Zubernis and Larsen).

community allows Anderson to combine her writing life with her fan life apparently seamlessly. Unfortunately, this position is also one of a privilege of sorts. First of all, Anderson is not a very popular author. This position of published author with a small fanbase means that, while not appearing to be separate, her fan and professional fiction worlds are actually quite separate, a fact she mentions as playing into her decision to maintain both lives (Anderson). More importantly from her perspective, however, is the content of her fanfiction. Anderson says that she knows professional authors who use pseudonyms for their fanfic because "the content of their fanfic may well be of a more explicit or controversial nature than their published writing, and they don't want any personal or professional fallout from that" (Anderson). Anderson, on the other hand, writes very similar content in both her fanfic and profic. For this reason, she is unlikely to be required to take down her fanfic to appease parents of her young adult readers. This is a wonderful way to maintain both styles of writing for Anderson, but it does not allow for as much experimentation and criticism in her fanfiction.

Seanan McGuire, best known for her *October Daye* series (2009 -), admits to loving and writing fanfiction regularly. She posts her fanfiction on her LiveJournal account and links to it on Twitter ("Fanfic"). McGuire's fic concerns other media products almost exclusively. It is likely that this exclusion of the works of other authors relates to her position on fic written about her own worlds and characters. McGuire tells fans that she has notifications set up to tell her about fic based on her novels but she promises to delete them if fans promise not to push their writing on her because, she says, "[i]f I officially know about it, I officially have to ask you to take it down, because there's no way to prove I didn't read it" if a similar idea turns up in canon ("Seanan

Loves Her Some Fanfic"). So we see that authors like McGuire appreciate and are open to the idea of fanfiction, though they are also still wary of copyright rules. Most are not willing to risk losing their livelihood over fanfic, but are also quite willing to look the other way. In fact, McGuire admits to being curious and quite interested in fic based in her worlds: "I want fanfic to thrive forever and forever, and keep producing amazing stuff for me to read. And the day the very last [*October Daye*] book is published, I am doing a huge fanfic websearch, diving into some archives, and reading myself sick" ("Seanan Loves Her Some Fanfic"). This acceptance of fan works offers new opportunities for writers of both fan and original fiction.

Beyond the content opportunities offered by fanfiction, however, are the experiments that digital technology opens up to authors in general. Many have tried to marry traditional texts with digital elements, some more successfully than others. For example, the first self-published ebook, called *The Plant*, was offered by Stephen King in 2000 as a serial story for download. Readers could download the new entries for free, but he asked that you pay at least $1 for the work (Ascharya). This experiment failed, though it is unclear whether it failed because King stopped writing the story or because fans were not interested, but that same year King came out with the "first book by a major writer to be published solely as a digital offering" (Ascharya). The novella, "Riding the Bullet," was hugely successful with "[o]ver 400,000 copies . . . sold within the first 24 hours" (King) and showed that digital publication could be a viable and successful mode for publishers. Since then, King has changed his stance on digital publication a little. While he was very interested in experimenting with the new medium in its early days and continues to be interested in ebooks, he has also chosen to retain the digital rights to his

2013 novel *Joyland* in order to support his independent publisher (Hard Case) and the other authors under their banner (Ascharya). While his decision may appear to run counter to an interest in digital publication, it is also partly influenced by his interest in publishing this pulp-style crime novel under a pulp banner, making the medium just as important as the content for King.

While King's experimentation with digital self-publication was revolutionary in terms of self-publication, the use of digital, and in anticipation of such crowdfunding models as those on Kickstarter, Patreon, and IndieGoGo, he was still very traditional in form. The text of *The Plant* was downloadable as documents with no real innovation in terms of mode; in fact, King made it clear that the work was in progress and may never be finished (very much like fanfiction in general). Authors since then have tried to incorporate other media in their narratives to push the boundaries of novels as a medium in light of new digital opportunities and near constant internet access. Anthony E. Zuiker, in partnership with Duane Swierczynski, produced what they, on the cover of the book, call "the first DIGI-NOVEL" with *Level 26: Dark Origins* (the first in a trilogy 2009, 2010, 2011). Zuiker, best known for creating the television show *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2000 -), combined his interest in televisual horror and crime with a novel within the same genres. Spread throughout the texts of the *Level 26* books are codes to access video clips that continue the story or expand upon some element of it. While it is possible to read the story and enjoy it as a book only, the videos enrich the story overall. Zuicker and his collaborators went on to expand this idea with apps on devices like the iPad to better combine the videos with the text. These texts and the apps associated with them are experimental, but it would be more impressive if they were combined within an

actual ebook instead of requiring a separate application to run both media in concert.

Regardless, this trilogy shows that authors continue to experiment with the opportunities

digital texts provide.

Perhaps inspired by Stephen King's early forays into digital publication, or

perhaps frustrated by a lack of professional attention to his work like many other self-

published authors, J.C. Hutchins began publishing his *7th Son* trilogy as a free podcast in

2006. Listeners were treated to his story for free so that he could get the story out there

and his fanbase grew as the story progressed (Bolton). In 2009 St. Martin's Press

published *7th Son: Descent* but Hutchins chose to keep the podcasts and pdf copies of the

text available online for free. In fact, it is still possible to access these versions of the

texts on his website (jchutchins.net/free), along with many other works of his. Also in

2009 Hutchins and game developer Jordan Weisman created *Personal Effects: Dark Art*.

This is a transmedia text that tells the story of Zachary Taylor's quest to determine the

truth behind his mysterious patient, Martin Grace, and the murders of which he has been

accused. In doing this, Zach asks for help from his brother, parkour expert Lucas, and his

gaming, blogging, computer-expert, and newspaper-researcher girlfriend, Rachael. The

novel itself comes with various papers, copies of photographs, identification cards, and

paperwork all meant to simulate the personal effects of Martin Grace or other items

collected during Zach's investigation. Additionally, the book has Zach's phone number

on the cover, allowing the reader to call and listen to various phone messages mentioned

throughout the story. Finally, many websites are revealed allowing the reader to surf for

more information related to the story; chief among these sites are Rachael's

pixelvixen707 gaming blog, the website for The Brinkvale Asylum where Zach works,

and a link to the *New York Journal-Ledger*, the fictional paper that covers many of the stories mentioned in the novel and is Rachael's place of employment. Unfortunately, all of the websites to which the reader is directed throughout the course of the novel have been deactived. While these removals may suggest that electronic fiction is inherently nonviable, the transient nature of the digital elements (all of which can, however, be found on the Internet Archive as cached pages) mirrors instead digital gaming culture. Additionally, the fleeting nature of such texts also encourages readers to buy and experience such novels within a specific time frame in order to maximise their engagement and enjoyment.

Hutchins and Weisman's book takes the idea behind the *Level 26* books and expands it. *Personal Effects* marries other media with traditional publishing (there is an ebook version but it does not come with the "personal effects" included in the front sleeve of the hard cover, nor are there links directly to the websites embedded in the text), thereby introducing transmedia storytelling to traditional texts. Interestingly, part of the appeal of this transmedia work lies in the connection between real and fictional. All of the extra elements of the text are intended to further the story but also to connect the story with the world of the real. Hutchins continues to work on transmedia texts while also experimenting with a post-apocalyptic and loosely urban fantasy digital-only serial novel (*The 33* 2013 -). At the same time, Hutchins engages with his fans and has also included links to a fan-created spin off anthology of his *7th Son* series called *Obsidian* (2008). The interest in experimenting with traditional storytelling combined with his support of fan products, places Hutchins in a position to make changes within the publishing industry.

Experimentation in traditional publishing that is content specific or related to technology is connected to fan practices. The examples listed above make a case for fans changing the professional by pushing boundaries of style, characterisation, and overall concept of the novel itself.

Gendered Genres: Women's Writing

Both urban fantasy and fanfiction are essentially gendered forms of writing. As mentioned in earlier sections, most readers and writers are, at the moment anyway, female. This adds an extra connection between the two genres, but it also means that we cannot ignore gender in an examination of either. Judith Butler who writes about the idea of compulsory heterosexuality where all people are assumed heterosexual as that is considered the norm in society. Similarly, gender is conditioned such that "gender does not necessarily follow from sex, and desire, or sexuality generally, does not seem to follow from gender" (Butler 328). In this way Butler is suggesting that gender is not natural but is, in fact, a construction of culture. She further states that, "[i]f the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity" (329). From this perspective Butler suggests that drag helps to reveal the constructedness of gender through imitation.

In urban fantasy we see female protagonists that are often quite proficient fighters, intelligent, beautiful, and single, though they also negotiate diverse relationships. For example, Rachel Morgan and Ivy Tamwood (Harrison's *The Hollows* series) run a private investigation service and regularly find themselves fighting demons, elves, fairies, vampires, werewolves, and even regular human men while maintaining dating lives that fail just as often as they succeed. Anita Blake also fights various supernatural beings while contracted (and later employed full time) by law enforcement agencies and attempting to work out her own relationship status (she begins the series opposed to pre-marital sex, but is currently engaged in a polyamorous relationship).

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Kalayna Price's *Grave Witch* novel includes one of the best representatives of the female

hero in the character of Alex(is) Craft, and the male heroine role in her love interest,

Falin Andrews. So the question with urban fantasy becomes: are these female

protagonist heroes performing drag? Or have they come to understand that gender is *all*

performance and are, therefore, performing the elements of traditional masculinity they

need or want in combination with those of traditional femininity that they also need,

want, or appreciate?

Likewise, fan groups online regularly question gender norms and the assumptions

in place as a result of heteronormativity. In fact, many of these groups go much further

than Butler in identifying many different genders and sexualities and "fic increasingly

offers a space where gender, like sexuality, is not an either/or phenomenon, and gender

and sexual dissent, even rebellion, has [sic] long been a part of fic's story" (Jamison 18).

The birth of movements against cissexism (i.e. heteronormism) come largely from online

groups often dedicated to feminism that have been adopted by many fan groups. This

adoption makes sense when one considers that these traditionally female-led groups have

incorporated Butler's ideas for decades in the creation of slashfic, changing the gender of

main characters (gender bending), or through the addition of a plethora of

gay/bi/female/trans and person-of-colour (POC) characters to existing worlds in their

fanfiction. Butler then reminds us that "there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses

or externalises nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a

fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there

would be no gender at all" (331). So then the question becomes: why are we even

questioning the gender roles played by the women in urban fantasy novels since there is

no "natural gender?" They simply are who they are. Those authors that come to urban fantasy from fanfiction have often already pushed gender boundaries so far that their professional fiction characters seem unusual for mainstream popular fiction. For example, as mentioned earlier, Cassandra Clare is one of very few urban fantasy young adult authors writing main characters who are not all heterosexual. The opportunities inherent in urban fantasy as a genre combined with the knowledge of many fanfiction authors of urban fantasy as a genre offer those authors a way to bring the innovation and love of storytelling they know in fanfiction to the mainstream.

Susan Bordo goes further to discuss women's bodies as sites of cultural conditioning. She suggests that cultural constructs work such that it is not just a text but also a "direct locus of social control" (Bordo 2362) following Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault's ideas. In this way "[t]he body . . . is a medium of culture" (2362). Bordo is particularly interested in how disorders linked with femininity, such as eating disorders and agoraphobia, are inexorably connected to the cultural construction of femininity. She suggests that such disorders are "virtually caricatured presentations of the ruling feminine mystique. The bodies of disordered women in this way offer themselves as an aggressively graphic text for the interpreter—a text that insists, actually demands, that it be read as a cultural statement, a statement about gender" (2365). From this position she goes on to talk about the construction of gender in culture. Bordo sees this construction as heavily dependent on image since the birth of film and television in the twentieth century. She states that:

> With the advent of movies and television, the rules for femininity have come to be culturally transmitted more and more through standardized visual images. As a result, femininity itself has come to be largely a matter of constructing . . . the appropriate surface presentation of the self . . . we learn the rules directly through bodily discourse: through images that tell us what clothes, body shape, facial expression, movements, and behavior are required. (Bordo 2366)

This focus on physical appearance and an exaggeration of current ideals of femininity is reinforced in the covers of many urban fantasy novels. Overwhelmingly, the covers of these novels written predominantly about women, for women, and including women protagonists feature women's bodies. For example, Kim Harrison's *Every Which Way But Dead* cover features one female leg in a knee-high high-heeled boot. There is also what appears to be a stone angel in the background and the edge of a cape hanging down from above, where we can assume the rest of this woman's body exists. This image, however, does not give us any indication of the title character or the plot of the novel (Harrison). The cover for Chloe Neill's *House Rules* features an entire body but no face as we are shown the backside of the main character Merit wearing tight black leather pants and a red tank top. Merit is standing with her head turned to the side, her hip thrust out, and holding her sword pointed down at the ground. Unfortunately, while this cover gives us an almost complete view of the protagonist, we still know nothing of her role in the novel. The purpose of this stance is not to highlight Merit's fighting abilities as the protector of her entire vampire house rather, her physical attributes (Neill). The images of women on such covers are not whole bodies engaged in some action relevant to the storyline. In fact, the covers often feature only parts of women's bodies—often torsos and/or legs—leather-clad, and perhaps holding some sort of weapon. While the inclusion of the weapon indicates strength of a sort, the isolation of specific body parts fractures the image of the protagonist until she does not exist as an individual, but as an object.

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Increasingly, however, fan art is taking these images – both visual and literary – and subverting and adapting them to better match fan interests and/or representations in fanfiction[11]. Additionally, authors who cross over from fanfiction to professional fiction tend to push for less sexist covers.

Bordo does not stop with women's bodies. She moves on, as did Butler, to a discussion of gender traits. Bordo sees that "even as young women today continue to be taught traditionally 'feminine' virtues . . . they must also learn to embody the 'masculine' language and values of [the professional] arena—self-control, determination, cool, emotional discipline, mastery, and so on" (2368). So here we see a suggestion that women must maintain their femininity while performing masculinity in order to succeed in a male-dominated world. Bordo suggests that Sigourney Weaver's character in *Aliens* (1986) represents the epitome of this as "the heroine's personality has been deliberately constructed . . . to embody traditional nurturant femininity alongside breathtaking macho prowess and control" (2368). Some would suggest that many urban fantasy protagonists are taken a step further such that the ability to nurture children is generally left out of their characters. Regardless, these protagonists do appear to perform masculinity in order to succeed in a traditionally male-dominated genre (fantasy) and role (warrior-hero). Her suggestion is that those who choose to fight tradition ultimately fail because "in this image-bedazzled culture, we find it increasingly difficult to discriminate between parodies and possibilities for the self. Explored as a possibility for the self, the 'androgynous' ideal ultimately exposes its internal contradiction and becomes a war that tears the subject in two" (Bordo 2369). I would suggest, however, that urban fantasy is

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[11] This trend is most obviously represented by searching the "book cover remakes" tag on tumblr (https://www.tumblr.com/tagged/book-cover-remake). But author Jim C. Hines has also recreated many fantasy and science fiction covers himself to showcase their absurdity (Hines).

working toward a solution that does not require androgyny but allows for different combinations of traditionally masculine and feminine aspects of gender. Urban fantasy creates a place where strong female heroes can maintain certain aspects of their femininity while embracing, and not just performing, some elements of traditional masculinity. This is accomplished through the situation created by the genre itself, being fantasy and incorporating supernatural characters which, by definition, allows (female) characters to be something more than their counterparts in reality -- to be "super" in fact.

These new elements of gender identification in urban fantasy are also related to the style of writing prevalent in the genre. Since the majority of the writing in this genre is done by women, it is relevant to consider women's writing as a whole. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar ask "does the Queen try to sound like the King, imitating his tone, his inflections, his phrasing, his point of view? Or does she 'talk back' to him in her own vocabulary, her own timbre, insisting on her own viewpoint?" (2024). This is an important question in any genre, but doubly important in a genre that involves women in traditionally masculine roles. We can ask if the characters are subverting gender roles, but it is equally important to consider the writing. Because "Western literary history is overwhelmingly male—or, more accurately, patriarchal" (Gilbert and Gubar 2025), it is necessary to consider the role women writers play in creating new ideas, genres, or styles. Gilbert and Gubar cite Juliet Mitchell, when speaking about Freud's theory of psychosexual development, as saying that "both a boy and a girl, 'as they learn to speak and live within society, want to take the father's . . . place, and *only the boy will one day be allowed to do so*'" (qtd in Gilbert and Gubar 2026). They suggest that women writers are stuck in this same situation whereby they wish to take the place of their fathers, or

precursors, but there is no actual place waiting for them. While professionally published urban fantasy and paranormal romance novels tend to be heacily influenced by female authors, this is not the case for most genres (Crisp). It is important to note that, while fanfiction is overflowing with female authors, most authors of officially authorised spin-off novels (such as those set in the *Star Wars* Expanded Universe or the world of the television show *Supernatural*), are also male. This is a confusing situation as such novels mimic a form of fanfiction in that they are further adventures of the characters set in the worlds of the source material; however, the authors who are published in this genre are often male, while amateurs remain overwhelmingly female. This situation points to an uneven gender divide between professional and amateur fiction authors. As a genre that includes a majority of female authors, urban fantasy offers an opportunity for changes to publishing as its popularity increases.

Interestingly, urban fantasy protagonists do often take on the role of the father. Kate Daniels fights her father's war while replacing her male mentor upon his death (Andrews); Mercedes Thompson becomes a mechanic like her male mentor and a mediator like her surrogate father (Briggs); and Alex Craft comes more fully into her role as Fae royalty inherited from her father as the series progresses (Price). Perhaps the women writers of these stories are enacting within their fictions that which they cannot in their own literary roles.

An additional issue with women's popular writing is that, as Yvonne Tasker suggests, "those forms perceived as 'for women' remained on the cultural trash heap at the same time as forms broadly seen to be 'for men' became objects of study within the academy" (232). So, even as women writers increase in number, the study of popular

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fiction considered to be "for women" is ignored by mainstream popular culture studies. Feminists, Tasker suggests, have come to recognise the potential in popular fiction for strong characters and for activism. However, Tasker also suggests that "[t]he desire for a feminist popular culture is in part a guilty one, associated as it is with indulgence and escapism" (235). This is the biggest problem with the study of these genres of literature: they are regarded as mere escapism, but they represent such a huge part of popular fiction and culture that they cannot be ignored. The influence (or potential influence from an activist perspective of feminism) urban fantasy and fanfic wield is not to be overlooked. Not only should we consider why people appreciate these types of popular fiction, but also what they are reinforcing or creating as the case may be. Urban fantasy creates a new space within which strong female heroes can flourish. Joanna Russ agrees that the study of women's popular fiction is lacking. She suggests that it is "as if female erotic fantasies were *per se* the lowest depth to which literature could sink" (Russ 46). But Tasker suggests that some feminist writers have chosen crime writing and the detective novel in order to enact gender subversion. These texts closely mimic the more traditional and masculine samples of the genre but there are some notable differences. For example, "[t]he texts of feminist crime writing are informed by a strong tradition of autobiographical writing within feminist and women's fiction. Within this the first person narration and the diary form have come to have a special significance, offering a route into the persona through a narrative of self-discovery" (Tasker 234).

Essentially in these stories, "[the] desire to make the personal central to crime fiction arises not only from a feminist input, but from the difficulties associated with placing the figure of 'woman' in the role of investigator. The position of ambiguity that

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the hero often occupies in detective fictions, the problematising of his status, cannot be simply or easily translated into a comparable portrayal of the figure of the heroine. The heroine already carries radically different connotations" (Tasker 235). As suggested by Gilbert and Gubar, women writers have no precursors to replace, just as there is no precedent for female detectives or heroes. Although there is now a long line of previous female authors, particularly in fantasy, for urban fantasy authors to look to for inspiration. Tasker suggests that feminists are looking for ways to promote feminism through popular works, while subverting from within. At first glance this may not appear to be successful as there is often a return to the status quo at the end of these stories, though the status quo itself is changing; we still have a strong (often stronger), independent female (as opposed to a dominant male character) in control of the story. In many ways then, this attempt at action through popular fiction is an effective tool. Tasker discusses feminist works "masquerading" as popular fictions. Crime writing offers a way to "subvert a genre that is both masculine and reactionary, and to provide 'strong positive heroines' that offer themselves as figures of identification for the radical reader" (232).

In order for the protagonists to complete the quest and vanquish the dragon, as it were, they are required to take on roles that have traditionally been ascribed to men. It is not that the writers can see no other way out than to present their characters in drag; rather, it is that we, as a society, read those aspects as masculine because that is what we have been conditioned to believe. Kalayna Price's Alex Craft is part of a new generation of urban fantasy female protagonists who embodies both traditionally feminine and traditionally masculine traits. Unfortunately, it is the male characters in this genre that are slower to catch up to new gender roles. Many of the male characters are still written with

possessive character traits and they still maintain many elements of the role of the hero, even though they are not the main character or the saviour of the story. Again, *Grave Witch* offers a small exception to this in that Falin seeks a relationship with Alex. He needs her to see him as more than just a warm body while Alex avoids love entirely—though she does seem to enjoy the idea of being the object of affection of two men, even as she fears and rejects such a position (Price).

Margery Hourihan adds to Frye's description of the hero discussed earlier by suggesting that the role's "mode is domination—of the environment, of his enemies, of his friends, of women, and of his own emotions, his own 'weaknesses'. To many readers his certainty is enormously attractive because it reinforces established views of the way the world is" (Hourihan 58). This is where many urban fantasy protagonists differ from the traditional hero. While she may not allow other characters to see her emotions, the protagonist gives the reader this privileged information through the first person narrative. Hourihan goes on to cite Ursula Le Guin as suggesting that

> heroes are traditionally male and the hero myth inscribes male dominance
> and the primacy of male enterprises. Stories about female warriors such as
> Boadicea and Joan of Arc may appear to be exceptions but in most
> retellings of their exploits they are little more than honorary men who
> undertake male enterprises in a male context and display 'male' qualities:
> courage, single-minded devotion to a goal, stoicism, self-confidence,
> certitude, extroversion, aggression. Heroism is gendered. (Hourihan 68)

While this may be the traditional role, this has changed within urban fantasy. As an example of this change, I look at Kalayna Price's *Grave Witch*, the first installment in the *Alex Craft* series.

Alex(is) fills the traditional hero role in that she is essentially an orphan as she has been cut off from her family for most of her life and she has a power most do not have: the ability to raise shades of the dead—basically she can talk to the dead. Alex's power

involves an ability to reach the soul of the dead and reanimate it with her own power in order to speak with or allow others to speak with the dead. Sometimes the soul is difficult to reach or will take more of Alex's power than she is able to give. And, as in the following passage, sometimes others have placed a spell on the dead that can steal elements of Alex's power. In what can be seen as an early trial of the hero, Alex risks her life to rescue the soul of an unknown victim: "My power swept deeper faster, both recoiling from the spell's touch and pursuing the soul. I reached the innermost base of her being and filled it with everything I had, every ounce of power. The soul sprang from the body, and I collapsed to my knees" (Price ch.12 11 of 18).

Alex also shows strength without mercy when she attacks Ashen, a man who was helping a slaver to try to enslave her; without mercy "I reached like a specter, my power seeping through the seams of his shields. . . . My power was already there. Pouring into him. Diving into his being. Searching for my heat. For the life force he'd stolen. Ashen yelped and began running . . . I grabbed hold of his core with my power, and the dead body stopped, fell forward" (Price ch. 21 6 of 12). It is only after this happens that she feels any concern for what she has done: "I killed him? I swallowed. No, he was already dead. Or sort of dead" (Price ch. 21 6 of 12). She is not given much time to consider this action as she must, almost immediately, rescue Falin from the endless dance. The endless dance is an enchantment that will cause any who fall to its lively fiddle music to continuously dance, unaware of the passage of time, until the strings of the fiddle finally break. When Falin gets caught in the dance Alex must save him: "The fiddler's back was to me, but I could see the frail and brittle strings. I unsheathed my dagger and surged forward. I swiped the blade over the strings, and in my grave-sight, the strings crumbled"

(Price ch. 21 10,11 of 12). In these two actions we see Alex as the hero for she must fight without emotion or mercy and she must save her companion from peril.

At this time we also get a first glimpse of Falin in the role traditionally filled by a heroine as he is finally weakened and must be rescued by Alex, instead of helping her to get away. Immediately after she rescues him, however, Falin again reminds us that he is not wholly the heroine, and regains his status as a physically and sexually-viable male by carrying Alex down a flight of stairs as they make their escape and then proceeding to make love to Alex. In this way the status quo is restored as the female hero is not able to maintain her heroism alone and the male heroine is effectively returned to his role of traditional masculinity.

Ultimately though, Alex fills the role of the hero through the final battle, during which she is fatally wounded while both main male characters, Death and Falin, watch helplessly. Alex realises that she must fight by herself: "I looked around. Falin and Death were both stuck outside the circle. Roy still struggled with Rianna. The ghosts were bound. I was the only one left" (Price ch. 28 9 of 19). As Alex lays dying, however, she is again helped by the men, who just moments before were completely helpless themselves, but it is another woman who actually saves her life. This other woman, Rianna, has a much larger role in the subsequent novels as a sidekick-type character for Alex which is foreshadowed by the scene where her "cool magic pumped into [Alex], dulled the searing pain to an ache … [and] when she pulled back, only a memory of the pain remained" (Price ch.28 17 of 19). Alex saves the world and Rianna then saves Alex from a hero's death.

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In addition to the actual action of the novel, the main characters are described in ways that can indicate their roles within the novel. In particular, Alex is not described physically, other than that she is tall and that she must be fairly pretty as "Falin made a half-choked sound" when she changes her clothes in front of him (Price ch.7 24 of 28). This lack of Alex's physical description is partly because the novel is written in first person narrative. As Joanna Russ says: "The woman who knows beyond a doubt that she is beautiful exists aplenty in male novelists' imaginations; I have yet to find her in women's books or women's memoirs of life" (Russ 111-112). Additionally, however, being the hero means that Alex is described by her deeds more than her physical appearance. The physical aspect of her being is really only mentioned when her various scrapes and bruises are described after some aspect of action in the story.

Falin, on the other hand, is described as handsome and desirable. Through Alex's eyes we see that Falin's "damp hair hung loose over his shoulders. The blond strands had seeped moisture into his oxford, which was unbuttoned and gave [her] a clear view of his chest. [She] couldn't tell if the skin over his cut muscles was as smooth as it looked or if he had fine blond hair, but [she] could imagine [her] hands sliding from his chest to his abs and finding out" (Price ch. 13 16 of17). This places Falin as the (sexual) object of Alex's gaze. He has become objectified in the way that Laura Mulvey suggests women are on film screens (Mulvey). While this objectification through the act of looking may place Falin in a role traditionally held by women, the way in which he is described reaffirms his masculinity. He has "cut muscles" and "abs" that Alex would enjoy exploring, positioning him as masculine. Later in the novel, however, Falin is described standing in the kitchen wearing "his jeans and those ridiculous rubber gloves" (Price

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ch.23 6 of 15), and when Alex joins him he "strip[s] off the rubber gloves and drop[s] them on the counter before wrenching open the stove. He pull[s] out a plate stacked with pancakes and set[s] them on the bar" (Price ch.23 7 of 15). He has now become the domesticated partner Alex has avoided her entire life. Falin is viewed throughout the novel as strong and capable, but there are a few moments, such as this one, when he fully embodies the role traditionally filled by a female heroine.

At this moment in the novel Falin is frustrated with Alex for not discussing her feelings with him and for rejecting him when he sees himself as "'not just a warm body'" (Price ch.22 23 of 23) for her enjoyment, but also as a romantic partner. Essentially, he wants more emotionally from Alex while she remains emotionally unavailable, as the hero of the story is expected to. The traditional male hero, as Margery Hourihan states, "typically avoids any significant sexual involvement for such a relationship would compromise his dedication to his mission, and one of the attributes of maleness, as defined by the story, is a contempt for such involvement, a preference for the sublimation provided by action and male bonding" (68). In this case, we have the male character desiring a relationship while the female hero avoids such situations, not because they leave her free to complete her "mission," but because they could weaken her emotionally. This issue of emotions and relationships representing a way to weaken the female protagonist, or being used as a weapon against her is common throughout urban fantasy. Kate Daniels, for example, recognises that "[f]or [her] casual sex [is] an oxymoron. Sex place[s] [her] in a position of vulnerability and there [is] nothing casual about that" (Andrews 179). This vulnerability is a result of letting her guard down around a partner who could be as strong or stronger than she is, but sex also offers her enemies a way to

learn more about her and her weaknesses. It is in these moments of performed traditional femininity in *Grave Witch* that Falin is truly free to be a male heroine in this novel. Price has made it possible for him to remain wholly masculine while embodying a traditionally feminine role. This subverts the gender dichotomy usually present in quest narratives and opens the door for discussions of the naturalization of gender. Why do we consider the description of Falin with rubber gloves cooking in the kitchen as feminine? This is not the image we expect of the strong male lead in fiction as film, television, and literature often only use this characterization of men in comedic settings, just as drag is seen as entertaining on stage, but is traditionally not considered normal in reality.

The rest of the novel, however, works to remind the audience that Falin is very masculine and capable of protecting Alex. Falin regularly saves Alex, carries her out of chaotic scenes, and withholds information from her for her own protection. For this reason we can wonder when is Falin performing? If he is performing femininity, then it must be in order to allow Alex to perform the role of hero. If Falin is performing masculinity, then it must be to see him as a viable heterosexual partner for Alex.

Through this example we can see that the female protagonist in urban fantasy often embodies many elements of the traditional hero, including strength, courage, and honour, but she also maintains elements of the traditionally feminine rules. She requires saving at times; she is scared, self-conscious, and emotional (if only in her inner monologue). I suggest that rather than performing the male gender for her role as hero, the typical urban fantasy protagonist maintains elements of femininity while incorporating masculinity so that she creates a new not-so-easily-gendered hero -- a female hero.

Conclusion

   Fanfiction, like most genre fiction, is no longer a secret that readers and writers keep from everyone else. Author Seanan McGuire (who also writes under the name Mira Grant) admits to writing fanfiction and is well-known for this activity as well as for remixes of the work of other authors and a number of other fan activities, among them award-winning filk[12] (McGuire "Music and Filk"). She reminds us that, like genre fiction, "[f]anfic is successful . . . because it gives us something familiar to hold onto the second we walk through the door . . . [readers] know so much because it was handed to them by our shared cultural base in the original series" (McGuire "Geek vs. Geek"). This shared knowledge allows fanfic writers the opportunity to develop skills in writing dialogue, action scenes, or new characters in an existing world. All of these skills are easily transferable to genre writing, particularly the genre of urban fantasy. One of the benefits of writing fanfiction is that world building is generally not required (though writers are free to expand the world or place characters in a new world), and this is also true of urban fantasy. While most urban fantasy narratives have different rules for their worlds or their monsters, many of those rules are similar (vampires drink blood, werewolves are part of a pack, etc.) and the world itself is often similar (all stories set in Seattle will share similar elements, for example). Since urban fantasy stories are set in the real world, authors do not have to create a completely new space as they would if writing straight fantasy. Rather, urban fantasy authors can make changes to the world they already know, just as fanfiction authors can make changes to the shared knowledge of the world in the source material.

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[12] Filk is a type of fan song that has its roots in folk music and science fiction/fantasy conventions. This style of music pairs fandom-related lyrics (usually) with music – originally this was folk music, but has been expanded to include many other styles (Jenkins *Textual Poachers*).

Just as the general public has been made aware of fanfiction through the popularity of books like *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the publishing industry has also taken notice of the popularity of fanfiction. As noted earlier, corporations like Amazon have made it much easier for indie authors to publish their work digitally. While this would, at one time, have been considered vanity publishing, it has been transformed for many (though not all) into a way to control the entire process. Some authors have gained enough popularity to warrant a contract with a publishing house, but still refuse to publish traditionally (like Connie Suttle) or else they negotiate a contract that allows them to continue offering certain works for free or digitally only so that they can maintain control over certain elements (like J.C. Hutchins). Still other quite popular authors regularly experiment with different methods of publication (like Stephen King). More telling, however, of the notice being paid to the popularity of fanfiction by the publication industry is the case of Kindle Worlds, the banner that publishes fanfiction as fanfiction – unlike *Fifty Shades* which had any connection to *Twilight* removed before publication. Cases like these show that the publication industry has recognised that fanfiction is not something that can be ignored.

The nature of digital texts is that extra-textual elements are implicit in these texts often beyond those identified by Genette. Elements such as hyperlinks built into ebooks or fanfiction sites regularly present the reader with the opportunity to go outside of the original text while still within the storyworld. This added mediated element of digital texts changes the engagement readers have with the material. Likewise, directly connecting to authors both during and after the writing process allows readers a different understanding of the story based on comments made by the individual author about her

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writing and in the context of her life experiences. This connection also offers fans the opportunity to ask authors their intentions and to identify connections for them. The creation of online personas for characters like that of Charley Davidson, further mediates the reading process by offering readers an additional understanding of the story elements and the character of Charley. Finally, readers of fanfiction are very similar to readers of a specific genre in that they always read the text in terms of the external media context. With fic, this context often includes the source material, fanon creations, the historical context of fanfiction itself, previous works by the fanfiction author in question, and potentially information regarding the actual actors or authors involved in the creation of the source material. With urban fantasy, the external context is most obvious in knowledge of the genre conventions as a whole, often for both urban fantasy and paranormal romance, but also includes previous works by the author in question, and increasingly, (similar) texts in other media. For example, many of these book series are being adapted for other media (Charlaine Harris' *Sookie Stackhouse* series (2001-2013) became HBO's *True Blood* (2008-2014); Rachel Caine's *Morganville* (2006-) series is being adapted as a YouTube series), but many of these novels also incorporate knowledge of other media into their material. Kevin Hearne's *Iron Druid Chronicles* features two main characters who regularly discuss popular television shows and films as part of their regular conversation, but knowledge of the popular media under discussion increases the understanding of plot elements.

Obviously urban fantasy is not the only genre within which fanfiction authors can work if they choose to self-publish, but it is poised for this movement due to its focus on material already popular for many fanfiction authors and the preponderance of female

authors and readers in the genre. Urban fantasy offers a safe place for women fanfiction authors to bring their challenging characters and material due, in part, to the combination of real life settings with supernatural elements in a female-driven genre. Likewise, the rise of digital self-publication offers the opportunity for already digital authors of fanfiction to transfer their writing to a new venue. The fact that fanfiction as a mode of writing has grown as a digital form of writing and amateur publishing means that fanfic authors are poised to take advantage of the medium, especially given their existing experience with the mode and its specific challenges. In particular, fanfiction authors are prepared for the transient nature of digital fiction as well as the lack of a tangible product. Additionally, however, they are also prepared for the elements of hypermediacy such material presents. As such, the ease of digital self-publication combined with the experiences of fanfiction authors creates a situation within the genre of urban fantasy that could revolutionise the publishing industry. The influx of digitally published urban fantasy novels by independent authors speaks to the changes in the way books are published and discovered, but the potential connection to fanfiction and its ability to challenge boundaries by some of these authors also suggests the genre will be a space for changes to characters.

Urban fantasy and fanfiction offer an opportunity for traditionally unheard voices to be revealed. The ability to self-publish cheaply and easily -- as well as virtually anonymously -- appeals to many who have regularly been sidelined or rejected for publication because they are seen as writing fantasy "chick-lit," or their main characters are not mainstream representations, or simply because they carry the stigma of fanfiction. Urban fantasy can be a revolutionary genre particularly due to a symbiotic relationship

between fans and traditionally published fiction in addition to the adoption of some

elements of self-publishing. This relationship can be revealed through the inclusion of

such elements as the gender bending of characters and their traditional roles. There is a

willingness in both fanfiction and urban fantasy to construct alternatives to traditional

roles and, when combined with the freedom and control offered by self-publishing and

the culture surrounding that act, there is an opportunity to change traditional publishing.

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