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Loremaking, Queerness, and Community: Fanfiction from Dante to MsKingBean89

Samantha Seaboldt

Fanfiction is far from a modern phenomenon. In fact, it has existed for centuries. It is a common belief that fanfiction is a new thing, that only the newest generation has it, or that it started in the 1980s with zines about Star Trek. This is incorrect; while fanfiction is more accessible now with the internet than it was in years past, and the 1980s and Star Trek were very big in the fanfiction world, they were far from the first. One early example is from around 400 BCE when Plato wrote his philosophical texts in which he talked to Socrates. Why is this fanfiction? Plato wrote about a fictionalized version of the man, possibly even after Socrates died. This means that all of Plato’s conversations with Socrates were fictional, making his writings real-person fanfiction (RPF), meaning that he was writing about real people in fictional situations. That is only one example of the many kinds of fanfiction, as fanfiction is a story using preexisting characters/people or worlds. A straightforward definition is “fan-authored texts which expand or reinvent worlds and characters from popular text” (Duggan, 704). A more in-depth definition is that fanfiction uses characters, people, or specific settings that someone else has created and placed into different settings, framings, situations, or stories. Examples could be putting the characters of Percy Jackson at Hogwarts, or in the case of real people, writing about a member of the band One Direction falling in love with a girl who is in the audience (there are many fanfictions of both these concepts).
Sometimes, the portrayals of characters seem almost completely unrelated to the world they originated from to best suit the new story. Some fanfictions change characters only slightly, while others completely change them to better fit the story that they are telling; some fix or solve plot holes, while others create situations that the characters may actually encounter or ones that they would never experience. There are even fanfictions about real people, often about celebrities or authors inserting themself into stories. These RPF stories take what they want from real people but change it to fit the author’s wants. A current popular RPF story is the *After* series by Anna Todd, originally published on Wattpad, where the main character, Harden Scott, is based on pop star Harry Styles. Todd writes Harden as an abusive partner attending Washington State University (WSU). Todd is seemingly only taking the aspects she finds interesting about Styles and creating a story around his likeness.

What really makes fanfiction unique is that anyone can write it, and in today’s modern age, just about anyone can read it, allowing fans from around the world to share stories and create communities around them. Fanfiction is simply fans creating stories with characters they already know but changing them, often to represent themselves and their communities. Many fanfictions explore how the story would change if the characters were gay, neurodivergent, trans, disabled, or just about anything under the sun. These fanfictions seemingly arise due to the lack of representation in popular media or due to the published authors failing to write diverse characters. Fanfiction also has a lot of its own language with terms that one never really sees outside of it. I have included a glossary of terms at the end of the paper to clear up any confusing language.
Dante’s Inferno: A Self-insert Bashing Crack-Fic

Now that we have context and a broad definition of fanfiction, we can look at how *The Inferno* by Dante Alighieri, published in 1314 (which was 710 years before the writing of this paper), is actually a fanfic itself. Dante was an Italian poet born in 1265, and he wrote many stories through which it was clear he was incredibly opinionated. He disliked many people, both real and fictional, and wanted everyone to know about it, so he wrote about all the people he disagreed with and disliked burning in Hell as a warning to not be like them. *The Inferno* is where you see all the souls in Hell, but Dante didn’t just write about Hell. He wrote *The Divine Comedy*, which is made up of three parts: *The Inferno, The Purgatorio, and The Paradiso*. The first part, and the most popular, is *The Inferno*, where Dante explores Hell and meets people throughout. It is the one we will be examining through the lens of fanfiction. The second part of the poem is Purgatorio, where Dante hikes up a mountain, symbolizing purgatory, and gets to talk to a bunch of different people. Then, the last part is called Paradiso, where he goes to Heaven and tells us readers all about it. He wrote the whole series throughout his life, only finishing shortly before his own death in 1321. Overall, *The Divine Comedy* is a world-renowned self-insert RPF fanfiction of the Bible where Dante himself gets to explore and meet people he hated and admired in the nine circles of Hell, then later Purgatory and Heaven.

In *The Inferno*, he creates his own version of Hell, containing nine levels that progressively get worse and worse as they go deeper. The sins being punished become more severe until he finally reaches Lucifer and exits Hell. This concept of Hell’s circles came from Dante’s own imagination and was a concept not previously seen. However,
he did not create the characters that populated this underworld. Dante wrote an entire book, *The Inferno*, on how different people he knew or had studied were burning in Hell, bashing numerous people, including popes, ancient heroes, and people that Dante simply disliked. As Dante adventures through Hell, he gets to meet and talk to the famous people of history (like Greek heroes), people he knew who died, and even some who were still alive (like the pope). Dante was an Italian who revered the Romans and did not like the Greeks, something that is clear with how many legendary Greek heroes were suffering in Hell. On top of that, while it may seem otherwise for how many members of the clergy are in Hell, Dante was Catholic. He disliked the way that the church was running and made it abundantly clear by putting multiple popes far down in the rings of Hell.

In the book, Dante gets to hang out with his favorite poet, Virgil, who gives him a tour of all of Hell. Virgil was the author of *The Aeneid* around 20BC, a famous Roman poem about how the fall of Troy led to the founding of Rome. This story was a continuation of the Iliad and Odyssey stories, making *The Aeneid* another fanfiction; it also takes a lot of story beats from the earlier epics. In true self-insert fashion, Virgil is there specifically for Dante and is giving him a tour since Dante’s old dead girlfriend, Beatrice, had asked him to. However, there is no evidence that Dante ever actually dated Beatrice; instead, he fell in love with her as a child and decided she was his muse. It is thought that they probably only met twice. By having Beatrice be the reason that he gets to explore Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, this story ends up being a kind of creepy fanfiction about how he wished he could be with her and that she cared about him enough to send Virgil. People tell Dante their stories throughout Hell until he gets
overwhelmed and passes out (which happens multiple times). This self-insert story is extremely cracky, with everyone wanting to tell Dante everything about themselves and the wish fulfillment of Virgil and Beatrice being there for him, making him the main character.

While it overall might just seem like Dante is bashing people - and that is a large part of the poem - there are also a lot of original ideas, such as the nine layers of Hell, as well as all the punishments within Hell. Each level has its own set of punishments and prisoners, getting both worse in punishment and the sin committed (it was written in the fourteenth century, so it is homophobic, xenophobic, sexist, etc) the farther down they go. Dante made an original creation in this crack story, and he used it to punish both real people he knew as well as fictional and mythological characters. Such as Odysseus being put in the eighth level of Hell and multiple popes that Dante didn’t like being put in various levels. The entirety of *The Inferno* is Dante getting a tour from his favorite poet to look at how all these people that Dante disliked for various reasons were suffering.

Some of the people who were put into Hell by Dante had churches built in their names to appeal to God to hopefully prevent themselves from actually going to Hell. This fanfiction, where Dante got to go and talk to people who inspired him and to those he disliked, had a real-world impact. The fact that a self-insert bashing fic made a real-world impact is amazing. The nine levels of Hell is still a concept that is being used today and is known throughout popular culture. It’s also far better to write out revenge than to commit to acting out of vengeance. People can write about worlds that they wish to see or exist in. Because of this fact, many fanfictions are queer as people seek out and create representation to connect with something that is often unseen in mainstream
media. People will connect and make communities around things shared, whether that be interests, sexualities, or, like Dante, grouping together to bash someone.

We can see that fanfiction is something that has been around for a long time, from Plato in the BCE times, Dante writing it over 700 years ago, Henry Fielding writing a Pamella bashing fic called Shamella in the eighteenth century, and the internet allowing for more fanfictions to get out to readers. There are thousands upon thousands of stories, and almost every part of pop culture has fanfiction of it, even things you wouldn’t assume, such as the video game Pac-Man having 89 fanfictions on AO3 (Archive of our own) as of June 5th, 2024. Fanfiction has been created in just about every kind of media, with art, stories, zines, and videos, to name a few. The internet allows for far more people to write what they want and get it out for the world to see. In 2024, there are three main fanfiction sites that people use: AO3, fanfiction.net, and Wattpad. However, in the early 2000s, with early internet access, there were instead lots of blogs and smaller fandom communities. On one of these sites, Cassandra Clare got her start.

Shadowhunters; from fanfiction to multimillion books

Cassandra Clare is an author who has sold over 50 million books since her first published book, *City of Bones*, came out in March of 2007. This was the start of *The Mortal Instruments* series, along with many others in the Shadowhunters universe. This is valuable because Cassandra Clare and *City of Bones* started in the world of fanfiction. *City of Bones* began as Harry Potter fanfiction. Fanfiction isn’t just badly written porn, as some people think. Instead, it can lead to extreme success, and it can allow for the representation of groups often unnoticed. This success can even allow for
more representation in pop culture. Before talking about the impact Clare has made, it’s crucial to learn where she started.

Clare got her start on fanfiction websites like LiveJournal, now considered outdated and rarely used (Clare’s last post to the site was back in 2012, talking about an update for her publishing). Her fanfictions (especially her series called Draco Veritas) gained major popularity, drawing in a dedicated fanbase who were quick to buy her published work to show their support to someone just like them. Clare was a success story for the masses; she was able to make it big. While there is sometimes fear of copyright issues with fanfictions being monetized, Clare didn’t plagiarize in her published works. Clare was banned from fanfiction.net for not citing quotes from others in her work, but there has been no crossovers of this into her published work where she created a new story by meshing together some of her fanfictions with new ideas. The fanfiction specifically used were The Draco Trilogy, a Draco and Ginny pairing, as well as The Mortal Instruments (which became the title of the published series), and a Ron/Ginny incest story. That’s not to say she just copied her original work; she made a new story with the characteristics and ideas she had made for her fanfiction. Many of the stories she wrote were only related to their canon counterpart in name, with the characters’ personalities and story arcs being entirely created by Clare and other fans.

Her book, City of Bones, has spawned a huge series of books in the Shadowhunter series, a movie, and a television show. The movie was vastly unsuccessful: “not only was it a critical failure, but a box office flop as well, with $95.3 million made to its budget of $60 million” (Stern). The movie only has a critic rating of thirteen percent on Rotten Tomatoes and an audience score of 58 percent. The show
was far more successful. It was nominated and won multiple awards, and it built a larger
audience than average for the channel Freeform. Not only that, but the series is ongoing
even though it started 17 years ago. The series has over fifty million copies sold and
has been translated into over twenty languages. This indicates that fanfiction can be
successful. It has been historically with Dante and presently with Clare. People don’t
always use it to make money or be well known, though, as we will discuss in the
Marauders section. However, for those who measure success monetarily, Clare is one
of the best examples.

*City of Bones* is a book starring Clary Fairchild (a chosen one), a seemingly
ordinary girl who finds herself pulled into a magical world full of demons, fae,
werewolves, vampires, and so many more. As Clary learns more about this magical
world, she finds that her mother knows all about it and has actively hidden it from her.
Forcing Clary to handle her mother being kidnapped, with only help coming from people
that she has just met. In all honesty, she does not handle it well. Clary is forced to deal
with her entire world shifting and even her own parents not being who she thought they
were. Clare created a whole new world with its own rules and dynamics when she was
offered her publishing deal. Nonetheless, there are some aspects that are still very
clearly connected with Harry Potter, or even just her original fanfictions. An obvious one
is the main villain Valentine, who is all about the purity of the shadowhunters and all
who follow him are branded with a symbol to show their loyalty; they are called the
Circle. This is very similar to Voldemort (the main villain of Harry Potter), who brands his
followers, the Death Eaters, with a tattoo. This marks them as loyal to him and his
causes, his causes which are all about blood purity of the magical community. The
majority of the events within *The Mortal Instruments* differ from both Harry Potter and the fanfiction Clare wrote, with only a few things staying the same, specifically the falcon story Jace tells Clary, which comes from her Draco trilogy. Now, this isn’t a rip-off or plagiarism, as everything is changed beyond basic character types, and the only instance of something being transferred between works is a few small instances between the fanfiction Clare wrote to her published story. But these similarities and characteristics are still there, and they show a connection between the two series, something that can go unnoticed if you don’t know the origins of the story. That’s not the only connection between the two, but most are more nods to the original and her fanfiction roots as they become their own thing.

Some of these connections are simple such as how normal non-magical people are called mundanes or more often mundies, inspired by muggles in Harry Potter. Clary started as Ginny and is still a feisty redhead. Simon (the childhood best friend) has a crush on Clary and is a dark-haired boy wearing glasses (Harry Potter). Jace (the main love interest) started as Draco, or more accurately, the fanon version of Draco. Often called “leather pants Draco”. Basically, making the character forgivable of past offensives, snarky, and leather-wearing. Luke (Clary’s father figure) started as Sirius Black, a father-like figure who can turn into a dog at will. Now the main romantic relationship in the book is the ship of Clary and Jace, which is unsurprising as Clare’s main fanfictions were all Ginny/Draco stories. Now, that wasn’t the only ship she wrote for; she also wrote a fanfiction called *Mortal Instruments* (the same name that the published series has, only without the ‘the’), which was a Ginny/Ron story. This was a ‘weasleycest’ story where the main romantic pairing were related, in this case, siblings.
There are all types of people in the fanfiction community. These people will write kinks they are interested in, such as incest, to see how people will react to it. Often, these types of taboo kinks are not meant to be taken to real life and are written almost entirely for the illicit thrill of it all. Unfortunately (in my opinion), this incest aspect also carried over into the published books when Valentine (the villain) revealed that Clary and Jace are siblings at the end of *City of Bones*. The series later retcons the incest by divulging that they are not actually related, but there is still incest present, as the person Clary tries to rebound with is her actual brother.

Clary and Jace are the main ship in this story, the OTP really, and it is clear from their first interaction that as the story progresses, they get closer, even sharing a kiss. The books continue to keep them as the main couple even though it takes until book three for it to be revealed that they are unrelated. But they are not the only important couple. One of the main couples in *The Mortal Instruments* is Malec: the pairing of Alec Lightwood (Jace’s best friend who is in the closet) and Magnus Bane (an immortal bisexual warlock). A decent portion of the series, in between dodging the implications of possible siblings being attracted to one another, is Alec coming out of his shell (and the closet) and starting a relationship with Magnus. This is a great source of representation, as this book came out in 2007 and showed a mostly functional and happy queer couple. Gay marriage wasn’t even legalized until eight years after the book was published. “Her books featured gay characters who weren’t just cannon fodder or comic relief” (Miller). In queer communities, it is a common (ironic) joke to make that all queer characters die at the start or are made fun of. The series avoids the “kill the gays trope” and instead shows us a couple growing together and dealing with insecurities but working it out in
the end. The Freeform TV adaptation of the book showed a healthy gay couple in 2016, which, for me, was the first time I had seen LGBTQ representation where the characters were more than 2D stereotypes. The show even went on to confirm that the character Rafael (a vampire side character) was asexual and, overall is a good source of queer fantasy. It makes sure to show these identities in multiple formats (the book, movie, and show) and not sweep them under the rug. While Dante shows a way to get back at people or take out frustration with his bashing fic, Clare created representation for people to see themselves in.

Cassandra Clare wouldn’t have gotten to where she is now without fanfiction. Her books have made her millions and have been read by countless people. I know that her books have even helped some people, as I was one of the people it helped. Her stories were the first time I got to read a healthy gay romance, and they showed me that I wasn’t alone. While Clare wasn’t nearly the first or best person to showcase queer relationships, she did help open a door for many, showcasing a queer couple in a decent light in her books. Due to the immense popularity of her books, many people like myself were exposed to these queer stories. A part of why Clare’s representation is important is that she doesn’t just use stereotypes but makes actual well-rounded queer characters, which is especially important considering even with an increase in queer rep today, they can be “stereotypical and often [employ] repetitive and harmful tropes of LGBTQ people” (Llewellyn 2352). Clare is not alone in writing queer characters, but she is one of the people who made sure to show complex LGBTQ+ characters in her work. While these identities are often overlooked and stereotyped in pop culture, fandom is rather good at making representation. Fanfiction as a whole is rather intertwined with
the queer community, with many top ships being gay. People write their own representation when they don’t get it from mainstream pop culture.

On AO3, the top ten romantic ships of 2023 were all queer, all being a relationship between either men or nonbinary partners. In fact, “multiple research studies have established that online fandoms can be places of empowerment and agency for LGBTQ people” (Llewellyn 2350), as fanfiction lets people write anything they want with characters they already like. This allows for people to make their own representation, and communities can form around this “as fan fiction allows ‘people [to] share their fantasies, assert their identities, and negotiate change in their cultural environment’” (Duggan 705). Fanfiction is a great online space for queer people to find community and imagine a world where books and literature don’t have to exclude certain pairings for the sake of censorship and “respectability.” It permits people to explore their identity, using diverse relationship dynamics and tropes to show representation of the many queer identities and spectrums. Many fanfictions resist heteronormativity by focusing on more queer relationships that are only hinted at (or not even in) the canon source material.

The Harry Potter fandom has created many different queer couples, and they have become even more inclusive since The Mortal Instruments came out, which showed a healthy gay couple with Malec. Now, since 2007, there have been far more gay ships rising to popularity in both mainstream and smaller communities, such as the Harry Potter fandom sub-group known as the Marauders, where characters who are originally straight or not even referenced are made into representation. Malec was a
starting point for many queer people, showing them, it was okay to be gay and to write queer stories.

The Marauders fandom: Empowering Queer Stories

The Marauders fandom started from the Harry Potter fandom, with people writing about the generation before the events of the series. It is based in the time period when Harry Potter’s parents and friends went to school (they were the ones to make the Marauders map that appears in the third book, also where the name Marauders comes from).

The Marauders fandom is definitely intriguing; it has been around for a while, but it gained a lot of popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Part of this was seemingly a response to J. K. Rowling’s TERF (Trans-exclusive radical feminist) activity on Twitter. TERFs, and Rowling by association, are transphobic people who oppose the inclusion of transgender people in feminism, thinking they pose a threat to the rights of cisgender women. Her behavior has made many fans feel betrayed and upset, and they have decided to look for something else or, more accurately, make their own versions of her story. A version where people are accepted regardless of sexuality, race, and health. One of the common ways that fanfiction authors remedy this controversy is by making the Marauders characters trans or gay in their fanfiction, such as the popular ship Wolfstar.

One of the most popular ships of 2023 is Wolfstar, a ship from the Harry Potter franchise. Wolfstar is a pairing between Sirius Black and Remus Lupin (Remus is a werewolf, and Sirius is the name of a star in the Canis Major constellation leading to the name Wolfstar). The two characters are childhood friends who reunite in the third book.
The two remain as friends until Sirius Black dies at the end of the fifth book. Remus Lupin goes on to enter a relationship with Sirius’ first cousin, once removed, Nymphadora Tonks. This relationship is often considered odd as readers never see any of the development and are only told of it happening as a backdrop to the main story. The most debated of the issues with this pairing is the thirteen-year age gap and the potential that Remus most likely knew Tonks when she was very little.

With the canon relationship being something most readers either didn’t care about or actively disliked, it’s no surprise fanfiction authors decided upon a different pairing for the characters, specifically a different pairing for Lupin as he is a far more developed character than Tonks is and more complex relationship dynamics are shown between the Marauders. (Note that none of these characters have much development, and they are the best side characters in the canon material.)

As of April 23rd, 2024, there are 4,442 fanfictions tagged with the relationship Remus Lupin/Nymphadora Tonks on AO3. In comparison to this canon ship, we have the fan-favorite ship of Sirius Black/Remus Lupin, which has 51,213 works. To put this into a little more perspective of the 501,793 Works tagged to be in the Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling fandom, 10.2% of all of them have Wolfstar tagged, compared to the .89% that the canon ship has.

The ship Wolfstar was the second most popular ship of 2023 on the entire AO3 website and is the second most popular ship of all the Harry Potter fanfictions, only beaten by the ship Harry Potter/Draco Malfoy, which is another gay non-canon ship. Another statistic of importance is that the top Harry Potter fanfiction on the site is a Marauders piece, specifically a Wolfstar story titled All the Young Dudes by
MsKingBean89, which details Remus Lupin’s and friends’ time at Hogwarts and beyond, which, as of April 23rd, 2024 has 13,873,695 hits (the number of times people have clicked onto the fanfiction).

But Wolfstar is only a portion of what the Marauders fandom is; for one, there are multiple subsections to this fanmade community. The Marauders are the main group, the main characters of the fandom, made up of James Potter (Prongs), Sirius Black (Padfoot), Remus Lupin (Moony), Peter Pettigrew (Wormtail), and sometimes Lily Evans. That is not the only group. There are also the Valkyries, the Gryffindor girls in the same year as the Marauders, a group made up of the characters Lily Evans, Marlene McKinnon, Mary MacDonald, and Dorcas Meadowes. Then there are the Slytherin Skittles, sometimes called the Royal Court, which is based on Sirius Black’s little brother’s potential friend group. This group consists of the characters Regulus Black, Barty Crouch Jr, Evan Rosier, Pandora (later on Lovegood, but as she has no known maiden name, she is often imagined to be twins with Evan), and Dorcas Medowes (her house is not confirmed, so she is apart of both groups). Another popular group is the Black family, made up of Bellatrix Lestrange née Black, Andromeda Tonks née Black, Narcissa Malfoy née Black, Sirius Black, and Regulus Black. In the canon books, we rarely get to actually see any of these groups, probably due to many of these characters being deceased by the time Harry Potter is at Hogwarts. By the end of the series only Narcissa and Andromeda are still alive. As many of the characters in the Marauders generation aren’t in the original text (due to being dead or not relevant), people can do almost whatever they want with them. So, they did, and they made representation for disabilities, race, and sexualities.
Almost all of the material in the fandom is fanmade, from the relationships like Wolfstar and how the characters interact to some of the characters’ Hogwarts houses to who their family is and who they are friends with. Almost nothing about the Marauders fandom is canon, but there are multiple things that the fandom has decided to be canon, even though there is literally no supporting evidence in the original text. They have created a fanon so detailed that sometimes people confuse it with being canon, such as Barty Crouch Jr being bipolar and Remus Lupin being dyslexic. Many adopt these (often queer) fanon due to their dislike of Rowling’s ideals.

Characters like Marilyn McKinnon, Dorcas Meadows, and Mary MacDonald were created almost entirely by the fans due to the lack of information given about the generation of wizards before the canon books began. McKinnon is spoken of four times across all seven books, mostly in passing comments about how she was another original member of the Order and that her entire family was killed one night by Death Eaters. Meadows is only mentioned once in the source material in the fifth book when Mad-Eye Moody tells Harry that she was a member of the original Order of the Phoenix and was personally killed by Voldemort. MacDonald is only mentioned in Snape’s memories in *The Deathly Hallows*, where it is implied that she is Lily’s friend. That is all the canon information we have on these characters.

Since there’s so little mentioned of these characters, fans have added a lot to what makes up these characters. One common theme in fanfictions is that McKinnon was a close childhood friend of James Potter as well as Peter Pettigrew and that all three of them grew up together. It was also decided by fans that she might have been the first person that Peter Pettigrew killed as an initiation into the Death Eaters.
McKinnon is often written as a hyperactive (often ADHD), quidditch fanatic, Gryffindor, and often has an enemies-to-lovers or friends-to-lovers trope with Dorcas Meadows. Meadows is almost always a black woman and is normally seen as a level-headed quidditch player, often a Slytherin who was horrified when her friends started to become Death Eaters. She is often written to be a half-blood who doesn’t believe in blood supremacy. Another thing made up entirely by fans is the reason why Meadows was specifically killed by Voldemort, due to her being such a powerful enemy. Fans have also given her a tragic love story by deciding Meadows and McKinnon were deeply in love with each other, and when she found out that her lover had been killed, she lost her mind. Another common headcanon was that after Marilyn died, Meadows never smiled until the killing curse came her way. Lastly, MacDonald is canonically a Gryffindor who was friends with Lily, and she was a muggle-born. Yet she is another character whose race is fanonly black, and authors will often be called out if she is written as white. She is often written as a strong and loyal woman and a good friend of all the other Gryffindors, but she hid out during the war, knowing that she would be a target due to her being muggle-born. Almost the entire fandom only has two potential paths that Mary went down after the first war: either she (or occasionally Dumbledore) obliviate herself to forget all about magic and the friends she lost, or she lived on in the muggle world, sometimes staying in contact with Remus, but overall avoiding the magical world.

While making new stories about what happened to the characters is very common, there are many more that develop characters’ canon backstories. As mentioned before, the Marauders fandom is adding diversity to the wizarding world. J.K. Rowling didn’t do much in terms of diversity, but people like to be able to see
themselves in the media they read and interact with, so it’s no surprise that when we had characters who are just mentioned once or twice, people started to create backstories that look similar to their own. Especially with Rowling having transphobic views, a lot of people have found comfort in rewriting her characters to be trans; as of June 5th, 2024, there are 1,690 fanfictions that specify the character Regulus Black to be trans. In many fanfictions, Lily Evans and Peter Pettigrew are both plus size characters. Sirius and Regulus Black are often victims of severe abuse, being pitted against one another from a young age. The Black brothers are also commonly written as Korean instead of just white Europeans. James Potter is often considered Desi Indian, and as mentioned before, Dorcas Meadows and Mary McDonald are almost always black. When they’re not represented as black, a lot of people find it to be race-erasing. This is really interesting, considering Mary McDonald is only mentioned in the original text as a friend of Lily, and Dorcas, in her one appearance in the movies (a photograph in the fifth movie), is shown as a white woman. The Harry Potter fandom community has gone so far as to rewrite some characters’ traits to be more inclusive. There is even diversity for neurodiversity and disability with many stories taking on ideas such as Regulus Black being autistic, Sirius Black, Marilyn McKinnon and James Potter having ADHD, James Potter and Barty Crouch Jr as bipolar, and Remus Lupin dealing with dyslexia to name a few.

Another form of diversity is with the relationships such as Wolfstar, or Dorcas and Marilyn, neither of which are even remotely considered to be canon, but they are almost always fanon. The LGBTQ+ community is represented across the characters, with very few characters being written as straight. We have already discussed Wolfstar, but there
are many more. While Sirius and Remus are the main ship of many stories, most other couples are not as set in stone. Even when James Potter and Lily Evans are together (which is the canon ship Jily) they are normally both considered to be queer. James is normally pansexual, and Lily is often written to be bisexual, and sometimes they are both polyamorous. In the stories where James and Lily aren’t together, James is normally with Regulus Black (who is almost always a gay trans man), while Lily is often in a relationship with Mary MacDonald or Pandora. Not that these are always the ships, but they are certainly the most common ones. Peter Pettigrew is often written as asexual, or the so-called “straight best friend” compared to the gay best friend that is prevalent in popular culture. The lack of representation in mainstream literature often causes fanfiction authors to reverse the potentially harmful stereotypes such as “gay best friend” or “kill the gays” tropes. None of these characters are canonically queer, but the fandom has rewritten them to be far more inclusive. Much of this is to the original creators’ (JK Rowlings) dismay as multiple characters have been reframed to be trans, something that she is openly bigoted about.

**Fanfiction Today**

Yet another amazing thing about fanfiction is that it can generate more fanfiction, creating even more stories. On the website AO3 there are currently 17,664 fanfictions of the Shadowhunters series by Cassandra Clare. There are even 149 fanfics tagged with La Divina Commedia | The Divine Comedy - Dante Alighieri. But there are countless stories and books that use Dante’s creation of the nine layers of Hell as either setting or facts within their world. There is even fanfiction based on characters that originated from
other fanfictions, such as the 253 works tagged with the character Grant Chapman, who was created by MsKingBean89 in her marauders fanfiction *All the Young Dudes*.

Fanfiction can be used to create representation for groups that often go unnoticed or even ignored. Giving fans the ability to share the characters in ways they think fit, whether that be by making characters queer, neurodivergent, disabled, or really anything. These stories allow people to find communities and identities to learn that they are not alone, all while getting to read about and explore characters and worlds they love.
Glossary: my own definitions unless otherwise specified

- **Canon** - the source material, the things that are from the original creator, and copyright owners. Such as how the canon of Harry Potter is only the official books and movies. Stories written by fans fall outside of the canon.

- **Fanon** - Things that fans have decided to be canon while not actually canon they are normally agreed upon inside of fandoms.

- **Fandom** - the fan group of a work, the community that forms around it. (this word can be traced back to 1903 by the Oxford English Dictionary)

- **AU** - Alternate Universe, deviates from the canon for that piece of media. Can be set in an entirely different world, or the same world but with different situations being used. Some common AUs are high school or coffee shop settings.

- **Self-insert** - This is when one puts themselves into the story or world they are writing. One example is in Dante’s Inferno the main character is literally Dante. Simply the author of the story being a character in the story.

- **POV** - Point of view

- **Ship** - A pairing (usually romantic or sexual) of two or more characters. (traced back to 1996 by the Oxford English Dictionary)

- **OTP** - One true pairing, normally used to express what ships individuals prefer.

- **AO3** - Archive of our own, a popular fanfiction site where anyone can publish any work, they write for anyone to read. [https://archiveofourown.org/](https://archiveofourown.org/)

- **Wattpad** - A popular fanfiction site, much like AO3 but often seen as having lesser fanfictions to the fans. [https://www.wattpad.com/](https://www.wattpad.com/)
- fanfiction.net - Another popular site but is considered far older and therefore less people use it. [https://www.fanfiction.net/](https://www.fanfiction.net/)

- Crossover - A story with one or more fandoms involved. Crossovers can be when two originally unrelated worlds are both in the same piece. An example is the fanfiction Crimson Rivers which is a story using Harry Potter characters in the world of *the Hunger Games*. Or it can be characters from different works interacting with one another

- / - A slash indicates a romantic or sexual relationship. Seen as *character A/character B*

- & - An ampersand is used to show an interaction between two or more characters, often platonic or familial. Seen as character A & character B

- Bashing - Pointing out flaws, making a character the worst versions of themselves. These stories will sometimes just show how awful these characters are, or they sometimes put them through Hell for their actions as well.

- Crack fic - a story that would make almost no sense, scenarios that would never happen. Decisions or scenarios that only work with the understanding that you can't take it seriously. Basically, a fanfiction that is made to be ridiculous.

- Hits - A feature of AO3 that shows the number of times the story has been accessed, “If two visits in a row come from the same IP address, only the first one is registered. [and] Moving between chapters in a work will only register one hit in total, not one hit per chapter.” ([Archive of our own beta](https://archiveofourown.org/)

- Dead Dove Do Not Eat - An Arrested Development reference that became a tag warning for dark and disturbing material, if you see this be prepared for anything.
These stories can have almost anything ranging from incest, cannibalism, torture, assault, rape, and many more.

- Kill the Gays - A common trope in pop culture where the gay character is the first or one of the only ones to die. Effectively being able to say there is representation but killing them off almost immediately.
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