

**05**

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**How Young Adult Fiction  
Authors Are Changing Classic  
Fiction**



## INTRODUCTION

Young adult writers and fanfic authors have been reimagining classic narratives with bold storytelling, cultural investigations, and inclusive representations that speak to contemporary audiences. This work examines the development of undisclosed narratives and how they relate to George Landow's (6) reader-writer dynamics, especially in terms of fanfiction. Readers participate in the texts of fanfiction, adding to or changing the plots as it suits them. Landow's concept of the historical merging of reader and writer roles in the era of electronic writing is demonstrated by fanfiction which is regarded as a form of participatory culture. *Fanfictionists* use popular media texts as foundations for creating their own stories, thus revealing a kind of collaborative and interactive storytelling (Reißmann et al. 16). This interactivity blurs distinctions between authors and readers, allowing fans to actively participate in an authorized storyline. Therefore, they are capable of manipulating plots, reimagining characters or even inventing supplementary episodes based on their own fancies (Reißmann et al. 16).

The ability of young adult fiction authors and fanfiction writers to modify conventional stories demonstrates the interactive relationship between the writer and reader, as described by Landow. In the digital age, global authors and fanfiction writers have transformed traditional narratives by embracing participatory culture. They engage in collaborative storytelling and incorporate diverse representation, enabling





readers to actively participate and provide feedback in the creation and discussion of their stories.

How, then, do these *fanfictionists* work? Veerley Van Steenhuyse gave a very good example of this in her writing, entitled *Wordplay, mindplay: Fan fiction and Postclassical Narratology* (2014). She illustrated this with Naguabo's "The Mother of All Marriage Proposal" (2013). This short fanfiction employs quotation from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to provide a juxtaposition between the events in the narrative and those in the original text, namely during Mr. Darcy's initial proposal. This contrast introduces an additional layer to what is openly articulated in the fanfiction narrative. The fiction addresses a significant gap in the narrative universe of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. In Austen's novel, Elizabeth Bennet rejects Mr. Darcy's marriage proposal, accusing him of, among other faults, failing in gentlemanly conduct and arrogance. In Naguabo's fiction, it is stated that Mr. Darcy began to internalize Elizabeth's admonitions during a nightmare shortly after her rejection. In this scenario, the dreadful Caroline Bingley proposed marriage to him, as he witnessed Elizabeth kissing Mr. Wickham, his nemesis. Upon awakening and reflecting on his dream, he recognizes the validity of Elizabeth's reminders (Van Steenhuyse).

Readers-writers can employ a variety of source-texts as valuable resources. Throughout the history of storytelling, authors have consistently derived inspiration from pre-existing literature, folklore, and historical events. Stories are derived from historical accounts transmitted by ancestors, as well as comic books, manga, and





popular fiction legends. These stories transcend the limits of reading and writing, allowing us to delve into these worlds in a transformational manner. Participants in fanfiction communities, previously mentioned as readers-writers, employ similar techniques to delve into fictional realms and collaboratively craft these diverse narratives of longing alongside the original text.

The act of writing driven by desire, using a particular source-text, is not inherently a novel creative process. However, it has gained more visibility due to the increased availability of source-texts and unauthorized or related adaptations of these texts. According to theorist John Fiske, reader-writers perceive texts solely as an object to be utilized, enjoyed, and then discarded. He asserts that the enjoyment comes from both the ability and the act of creating significance from available resources, as well as the feeling that these significances belong to us rather than to others (Fiske 99-101).

Essentially, the desire that the reader-writer experiences involves utilizing their dreams and aspirations, and projecting them onto the source-text and into the apparent gaps of the text. Desire motivates the reader-writer to produce texts that satisfy their needs, in a manner that the source-texts do not. Contemporary authors of young adult fiction have been shaped by the convenient availability of artistic works, repositories of fan-created stories, online forum discussions, and the dissemination of their own works, which have all contributed to the development of their writing style and advancement in their careers. The pre-career writing and exploration of creative





sources have significantly influenced their writing methods and creative processes in their repertoires.

The methods employed by reader-writers to contribute to young adult fiction can be categorized as adaptation techniques, which can be referred to as “fanfiction methods or approaches”. These have gained popularity within fanfiction forums, where reader-writers first encountered them (Sidebottom 52). The methods mentioned are oppositional gazing, alternate universes, crossovers and mashups. The methods and their examples will be explained later in this writing.

#### **FANFICTION METHODS AS ADAPTATION**

Linda Hutcheon, an expert in literary adaptation theory, is not directly related to fanfiction. However, she does write about the nature of fanfiction and it is controversy in her book. According to her, plagiarism refers to unacknowledged borrowing; therefore, fanfiction methods are not considered legitimate forms of appropriation. She asserts that there is a distinction between desiring a story to never conclude and desiring to recount the same story in other ways repeatedly (Hutcheon 9). However, this assertion that fanfiction methods are solely a means of continuance is a mistaken idea. Despite her assertions, fanfiction methods have the ability to both extend and reiterate a story: this is the nature of fanfiction which is called “transformative”<sup>1</sup>. In addition, fanfiction methods are able to transfer the storyline to a different realm inhabited by well-known fictional places or people. They can eliminate undesirable scenes or even alter the outcome by rewriting the





conclusion. The potential is boundless. Fanfiction methods encompass techniques that serve as a means of adapting existing works.

The creative process works in a manner similar to folklore, establishing a close connection between the story and its audience. When the story is retold, it inevitably adapts to the perspective and interpretation of the new storyteller. The original narrative adapts and conforms to the new framework of its universe, tailored to the storyteller's preferences, and thereafter conveyed to a different audience. This is a spontaneous and customary manner of storytelling that has historically been associated with spoke narratives and folk tales, but is now seen as a novel approach in the modern era of writing.

Historically-inspired works may have characters or plot elements derived from historical events. However, without knowledge of the specific historical context it references, it remains just a narrative. The success and comprehension of a narrative might greatly depend on a knowledgeable audience, who can employ numerous methods of adaptation. Having familiarity with the original text enhances the reading experience and comprehension of related secondary texts. However, it is essential for secondary texts to be produced in a manner that appeals to both new and knowledgeable audiences, ensuring that they can both appreciate the narrative.

### **YOUNG ADULT FICTION AND FANFICTION**

Fanfiction has long been a part of literary culture, although it has not received the same level of recognition. It emerges in the early 1900s, originating from writing





communities and science fiction magazines. Initially, it remained relatively unknown, but with the advent of the digital age, it has gained momentum and become a very powerful force (Ford and Deja 37). In initial examination, fanfiction and the young adult fiction (YA) genre may not appear to be tightly intertwined. One is perceived as operating beyond the confines of conventional publishing, occupying this position outside concepts like intellectual property ownership and copyright. Meanwhile, the other has emerged as a rapidly expanding and powerful force in the publishing sector. Upon closer examination, the commonalities between the two genres become apparent. Both styles have a distinct ability to provide commentary on contemporary society, frequently addressing sensitive subjects such as racism, poverty, gender identity, sexuality, mental health, bullying, sexual assault, and religion (Reaves 25).

Fanfiction may delve into these topics in order to rectify, elaborate on, or simply revamp an original narrative or character, often enhancing the fictional universe to align more closely with contemporary social dynamics through alterations in races or genders, or by incorporating elements that mirror the concerns frequently addressed by readers and fans. Although these additions may not be published, they provide fans with the opportunity to selectively retain the elements of a tale that they want, while removing those they disagree with. For instance, fans of *Harry Potter* have made efforts to make Harry and Malfoy lovers instead of enemies. Therefore, it can be assumed that fans have authority over their own portrayal, utilizing a cherished





narrative realm as the foundation for narratives and personas that more accurately mirror their own identities.

Young adult fiction caters to its readers in a similar manner, closely connected to the desires and requirements of its adolescent audience. Similar to fanfiction, young adult literature fulfills certain requirements. So, what constitutes a requirement in creating fanfiction? A profound emotional connection to the underlying material is essential. Fans frequently acquire a profound attachment to characters and narratives, motivating them to investigate alternate narratives or character arcs that align with their personal experiences or aspirations. Vinney and Dill-Schackelford (2018) assert that fanfiction writers often explore the emotional dimensions of their preferred characters, frequently offering resolutions or narratives absent from the original texts (1).

The concept of the young adult emerged in the twentieth century, having been historically unrecognized before that time. The existence of fanfiction is dependent on the existence of fans, just as the existence of young adult literature is dependent on the young adults. The genre originated from a necessity for writing targeted towards young adults that incorporates the perspective of young people, a convergence of point-of-view, narrative, and relatability to the real world.

### **OPPOSITIONAL GAZE**

The concept of the oppositional gaze was established by Bell Hooks, a well-known feminist novelist and cultural critic. This term refers to the act of resistance by







minority individuals against dominant standards and stereotypes. The concept of the oppositional gaze refers to the act of women of color looking back in a manner that questions the conventional way of perceiving and being perceived in relation to race, gender, and representation. Hooks argues that individuals who are marginalized, including Black women, can gain power and free themselves by adopting a critical perspective that challenges oppressive conventions and stereotypes (Sales and Muniz 101).

The apotheosis of the oppositional gaze can be found in fanfiction stories that subvert established roles, challenge the status quo or disregard its norms, and poke fun at popular ideologies. A prominent example is gender role reversals in BTS (Korean Boyband) fanfiction. Fanfiction depicting male members of BTS in nurturing or vulnerable ways subverts the conventional masculine paradigm prevalent in mainstream media. This facilitates a more nuanced discussion about masculinity and emotional expression, offering a counter-narrative to strict gender norms. The authors of fanfiction utilize their imagination to retell tales, characters, and relationships in ways that subvert prejudices, actively promote diversity, and offer people options by changing the plotlines of the stories. By participating in a form of counter-public, fans of oppositional gaze fanfiction have the chance to oppose and critique the prevailing ideas not only of the original media text but also of society at large.

An essential point supporting the presence of an oppositional gaze in fanfiction is its examination of gender and sexuality. Fanfiction has the ability to challenge and





subvert societal norms about gender, sexuality, and relationships by portraying characters that deviate from heteronormative and cisnormative standards. These fanfictions aim to question the prevailing narratives that uphold traditional and limited gender and sexual roles. They achieve this by providing diverse and inclusive portrayals of sex and gender that depart from the commonly accepted norms found in mainstream discourses. Alternatively, one could employ a technique that incorporates negative narrative from the primary sources, engaging with them through methods such as reinterpretation or continuation via fanfiction.

Meagan Spooner's *Sherwood* is an example of a piece with an oppositional gaze. The story retells Robin Hood after the death of Robin of Locksley when Lady Marian takes over as the new protagonist. In this novel, Marian mourns her beloved while grappling with societal norms and inequity; to save her people she dresses up like Robin Hood himself:

Masquerading as Robin... the idea was mad – madder than Will and his ghosts. Marian steadied her fingers and tucked the edge of Robin's cloak out of sight. Madness, then, she thought with a grin. And then, missing the feel of wool on her fingertips, she thought, Robin would love it. (185)

The literary style is emotionally compelling, engrossing readers in Marian's challenges and victories through evocative descriptions and plausible outcomes for her deeds. *Sherwood* explores themes of loss, identity, and social justice while putting a distinctive spin on the Robin Hood legend by concentrating on Lady Marian. Well-developed characters with depth of emotion and flashbacks, such as Marian, Guy of Gisborne, and





Robin, are included in the book. Strong emotions are evoked in readers by the writing style, creating a strong bond between them and the characters and the narrative.

### ALTERNATE UNIVERSE

The discussion of Alternate Universe (AU) must start from the term “canon,” as it forms the fundamental basis of AU. In fandom circles, the term “canon” refers to information that is conveyed to viewers through original content, such as a television show (Schott, 21-25). There are two categories of information that are not considered part of the official canon: the fanon and the uncanonical. The uncanonical refers to any content that is not considered part of the official canon. The definition of uncanonical varies depending on the writer and the specific tale. Bronwen Thomas stated that fanon refers to uncanonical material that has been widely recognized as canon within a certain fanbase. The information in question might differ across different segments of the fandom and typically pertains to minor details.

These elements are widely accepted and embraced by fans. When used in fanfiction, they indicate the writer’s skill and familiarity with the community (Thomas 2). The writer demonstrates a deep understanding of the fandom by utilizing material that is exclusive to a certain subset of fans and treating it as if it were officially canonical. Due to this technique, fanon occupies a unique position between canon and non-canon, being seen as canon by the fanbase but not by the official canon-holders.

AU fanfiction is a platform where fans can creatively adapt tales and other preferences in various creative forms. These stories often deviate from the original





source materials, allowing writers to explore different settings, characters, or plotlines. By incorporating themes such as superhuman abilities, alternate historical events, or fantastical realms, fanfiction writers have the opportunity to bring these aspects into their interpretations of canonical stories. As an illustration of this kind of fanfiction set in AUs, well-liked fanfiction often involves taking characters from the present day and placing them in the past, for instance, having modern characters experience life in the Victorian era. In this category of AU fanfiction, writers have free rein to imagine how characters would act under different social norms, technologies, or settings, thus giving the readers a new but recognizable perspective on their traits.

*Fitzwilliam Darcy Rock Star* is a story written by Heather Lynn Rigaud which takes pride in presenting one-of-a-kind adaptations of Jane Austen’s famous character Fitzwilliam Darcy. In this story line, Darcy is moved from Regency era England to present day America where he becomes a musician and a member of a band:

Fitzwilliam Darcy (thoughtful): “I hope the band will continue to expand our style and our talents. For me, it is all about the music. That is why I’m here. My job is to make music, and the rest of it – the fans and the videos and the money – they’re nice but they are not what matters.

Ten years from now I want us to be able to look back and be proud of our work and not say, ‘Oh, that was just a phase or a trend.’ I want our work to have lasting value. That is what I am trying to do.” (41).

It offers a distinctive perspective on the present music industry as observed within this fanfiction alternate universe. Unlike the majority of adaptations set in the Regency time, this version has the protagonist grappling with popularity, relationships, and





personal growth via self-exploration, all while experiencing his wildest dreams on stage.

Authors like Rigaud applied alternate universes within fanfiction to creatively transform existing texts by examining them in ways that deviate from the original intentions of their writers. These modifications frequently result in the emergence of new perspectives or innovative creations that adopt well-known characters and storylines. Rigaud presents a breaking away from conventional hierarchical dynamics between authors and readers by providing a highly interactive approach. In this approach, fans actively participate in writing about Darcy, treating him as if he were a superstar, similar to contemporary rock stars. The updated setting provides a captivating interpretation that offers fresh perspectives on the classic narrative, allowing people to rediscover their appreciation for it.

The purpose of alternate universes in fanfiction, like the ones utilized by Rigaud, is to artistically blend and rework pre-established narratives based on Landow's theory of hypertexts, which merges conventional printed material with parts of cybertext. This implies that fans are expected to not only passively consume the content that has been delivered to them, but also actively engage with it by interpreting and expanding upon the narrative structure. They provide opportunities for the creation of transformative works that allow individuals to explore different timelines or dimensions connected to the stories, while preserving the fundamental aspects of the original narrative. Consequently, she grants her readers the authority to





alter some aspects of the storyline, enabling them to introduce their own modifications and deviations as needed. Heather Lynn Rigaud's *Fitzwilliam Darcy Rock Star* shows that fanfiction has the ability to modify characters and narratives, allowing them to be reimagined in different settings.

## CROSSOVERS

The crossover fanfiction genre is the mix up of two or more fictional realms, franchises or narratives through interconnecting characters. This category of fanfiction often brings together individuals from different realities that would never meet, cooperate or fight in any other situation apart from their own stories. What crossovers do is incorporate elements from various sources, showing us things we have never seen before with the people and places we are already familiar with. It helps us to imagine beyond what one canon can offer because there are infinite canons.

Obviously, crossover fanfiction means writing a story including characters from different tales; for instance, having Sherlock Holmes teaming up with Dracula to solve some mystery. By using subjects such as these, authors can explore how famous characters relate to each other when they come from universes apart, as well creating new types of stories that will captivate readers' minds by mixing fear, suspense and detective genres together. Another example could be a crossover fanfiction work that combines characters from other popular fictional universes, such as Harry Potter and Star Wars, in a grand adventure that spans both the realm of sorcery and the cosmos. The crossover genre combines aspects of science fiction and fantasy, offering viewers





and readers a unique and captivating tale that brings together two ordinary yet remarkable imaginative realms.

There are many fanfiction stories written by young writers on sites such as AO3 and fanfiction.net about crossovers that have not been published legally. Some of these writings combine several canons, for example, Grovehove's *The Battle of Jericho* (series) combines three fandoms, namely Teen Wolf/MCU/The Sentinel. This fanfiction was chosen as an example due to its high rating and recommendations from several readers. Although this story is written based on a series rather than a classic story, this fanfiction is a good example of the crossover subgenre. The plot of this story follows the Sheriff of Beacon Hills being summoned to the Spirit Plain by a troubled Sentinel. Since the death of his loving wife, he has largely neglected his Guide talents. The individual adamantly rejects the notion that the peculiar gentleman who has his shirt wrapped around his head and emits a radiant blue light from his chest is indeed the appointed guardian that is meant for him. The individual in question is Tony Stark, who is the abducted and assumed deceased Chief Executive Officer of the most technologically advanced armaments corporation globally. Below is a fragment of the story taken from the first series, *The Walls of Jericho*:

It didn't take the Sheriff long to understand where he was. Stiles didn't just get his smarts from his Mom, in fact when it came to leaps of logical intuition then the kid definitely took after his old man. He hadn't been elected Sheriff because he looked pretty in that damn uniform. (No one looked pretty in that damn uniform. If he had the budget they would all have been wearing leathers years ago. But he couldn't convince the Mayor of that!) As County Sheriff, he had the best clear up and reduced crime rates for the last twenty years (Opalescentgold 3).





Stark? Stark? For a second the Sheriff was stunned into immobility. He knew that face, everyone on the blasted planet knew that face. Stark, Tony Stark, Anthony Edward Stark, lost months ago after that clusterfuck in Afghanistan. If nothing else, this unexpected trip to the Spirit Plain meant he would be able to aid this poor bastard. John stubbornly refused to think about any other implications of why he was the one dragged into the situation. That Tony Stark could be his ... No, Nope, so not going there, at all. Ever (Opalescentgold 3).

The first paragraph shows the character named Stiles, who is a character from the *Teen Wolf* fandom. Stiles is one of the main characters from the series who was introduced in the fanfiction story *The Walls of the Jericho*, along with Tony Stark (the second paragraph). Stark himself is the pillar character of the Iron Man and The Avengers film series. The two examples depict the characteristics of crossover fanfiction, which mixes more than one fandom into the same story.

## MASHUPS

Mashup stories offer a creative means of combining elements from multiple narratives to create a new and unique story. In the realm of music, a mashup refers to a composition that seamlessly combines fragments from two or more songs into a single, uninterrupted work. However, mashup encompasses a wider range of creative expressions beyond music, including literature, visual arts, and more. Mashup stories are a widely embraced notion in the realm of storytelling, wherein characters, places, or even plotlines from distinct works are amalgamated to create a narrative that is both unique and captivating. The act of creating remixes and reimagining pre-existing content can allow authors to produce narratives that might otherwise be out of reach, as well as challenge conventional storytelling devices.







Peter Clines' work, *The Eerie Adventures of The Lycanthrope Robinson Crusoe*, is an adaptation of Daniel Defoe's renowned narrative. The inclusion of a lycanthrope or werewolf in Robinson Crusoe's story leads to a blending of terror and adventure, occurring after he becomes stranded on a deserted island while in pursuit of treasure. Clines explores themes of isolation, persistence, and obscurity by incorporating a supernatural element into a specific setting.

Reimagining classic literary works such as Robinson Crusoe requires developing mashup stories, which are narratives that mix or transform current stories to make something completely new and different. Writers like Clines offer readers another way to see the old tale so that it could be investigated anew from outside its usual approach (approaches that scholars usually apply, such as postcolonial, conversion-narrative, economics and so on). Clines goes deep into thoughts about change, duality, and human beings' basic instincts through turning the story of Robinson Crusoe into a werewolf story:

I was born on the last day of the full moon in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, tho' not of that country, my father being a foreigner who had fled the Prince-Archbishopric of Bremen and settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off his trade, lived afterwards at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson and from whom I was called Robinson Kreisszahn. By the usual corruption of words in England we are now called, nay we call ourselves, and write, our name Crusoe (Defoe et al. 8).

The paragraph above is the opening paragraph of the story *The Eerie Adventures of The Lycanthrope Robinson Crusoe*. It states that the name of main character in this story is





Robinson Kreisszahn, which later became Crusoe due to word changes. Compared to canon, the name of the main character is similar. However, the most distinguishing difference will be shown later in the next paragraph:

The moon rose and the mantle of the beast came upon me. When this happens, my flesh is burned with unseen fire and great aches and pains fill my limbs and jaw. The world is as if seen thru a lens darken'd with smoke, and heard as if a heavy woolen blanket wrapt round my head. Yet always I have no more freedom than a helpless passenger on a storm-wrack'd ship with a mad captain, and that captain is the beast. I could see the wise men as they discust my change and the beast before them, but their words were but noise, and to my intoxicated mind they look'd like good, succulent meat does to a starv'd man. I could remember they did feed the beast a young lamb, but also prickt its flesh and pluckt its fur and sketch'd it for their scrolls (Defoe et al. 18).

The quote shows that Robinson Crusoe has another form ,which is Lycan or a kind of werewolf that changes during the full moon. When he changes, he usually loses his mind and does not recognize himself or the people around him. Lycans also have the same nature as animals, which is to hunt animals and eat them.

This shows the mashup techniques in the writing of this story. This can be seen in the new attributes given to Robinson's character. The attribute in question is another form of Robinson besides human, namely Lycan. Although the novel does not abandon the theme of adventure, it successfully shows the "renewal" of the main character by transforming him into Lycan. Thus, the author successfully combines new elements to create new genres and works with unique stories.

When genres are merged together, not only does it increase interest and suspense in the plot, but it also offers an opportunity for exploring the interface





between classic literature and present-day storytelling approaches. *The Eerie Adventures of the Lycanthrope Robinson Crusoe* thus reveals what mashup techniques can do to rejuvenate familiar stories by mixing them with unusual genres or concepts.

## CONCLUSION

Fanfiction technique refers to the systematic approaches employed by reader-writers while modifying and reinterpreting pre-existing literary works. These approaches are frequently employed in the creation of young adult fiction due to their experimental nature. The young adult novel genre challenges traditional conventions and pushes the boundaries in terms of genres, adaptations and inventiveness, hence surpassing conventional requirements for adaptation. Therefore, fanfiction techniques such as oppositional gazing, alternate universes, crossovers and mashups can be employed individually or in conjunction with other creative methods to generate distinctive storylines. Such narratives enable authors to customize their stories by adopting fresh tales within a specified framework. Young adult fiction promotes innovation, leading to the emergence of novel approaches in literature across several genres.

The genre of young adult novels has always been able to grab readers' attention and defy conventions in literature as well as genre rules. There is no way around this; we simply have to explore narratives through familiar settings or characters. As readers these narratives have become thoroughly embedded into our minds and they have influenced us more deeply than even we know ourselves. Every reader reconstructs





their own text-image inside their head despite the fact that there are underlying texts available for understanding them as their authors intended. It is the interaction between the reader and the text, rather than the intrinsic qualities of the text itself or the author, that establishes a personal dialogue between the two parties. Hence it is not uncommon for readers to get ideas from books they read together with their own experiences so that this desire can feed back into their own stories.





## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Tushnet (2014) contends that fan works merit protection under fair use due to their tendency to critique or comment on the original works, so conforming to the transformative use criterion (21).

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