I'm done explaining why fanfic is okay.

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I'm done explaining why fanfic is okay.

by Aja

Edit, March 20, 2012: This post has been updated with new additions to the list as well as more details regarding current listings. To understand the background context to this post, it may be helpful to read this post. (Or maybe this one.) Okay, rant is go.

Dear Author of the Week,

You think fanfic is a personal affront to the many hours you've spent carefully crafting your characters. You think fanfic is "immoral and illegal." You think fanfiction is just plagiarism. You think fanfiction is cheating. You think fanfic is for people who are too stupid/lazy/unimaginative to write stories of their own. You think there are exceptions for people who write published derivative works as part of a brand or franchise, because they're clearly only doing it because they have to. You're personally traumatized by the idea that someone else could look at your characters and decide that you did it wrong and they need to fix it/add original characters to your universe/send your characters to the moon/Japan/their hometown. You think all fanfic is basically porn. You're revolted by the very idea that fic writers think what they do is legitimate.

We get it.

Congratulations! You've just summarily dismissed as criminal, immoral, and unimaginative each of the following Pulitzer Prize-winning writers and works:

- Jane Smiley's novel A Thousand Acres, a modernized AU (Alternate Universe) retelling of King Lear and winner of the 1992 Pulitzer Prize for Literature. King Lear is itself a hybrid of multiple folk and fairy tales.

- Rodgers & Hammerstein's Tony-Award-winning South Pacific, which Crossed-over several stories from James Michener's Tales of the South Pacific and is the only musical to win the Pulitzer Prize that is based on *another* work that also won a Pulitzer.

- Geraldine Brooks' March, a parallel retelling of Little Women (from the point of view of an off-screen character) and winner of the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for literature.

- Stephen Sondheim's Sunday In the Park with George, which is half-original fic, half-RPF (real
person fiction) based on the artist Georges Seurat, and winner of the 1984 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

- Michael Chabon, who wrote and published *The Final Solution*, an unabashed piece of Sherlock Holmes fanfiction set in World War II, 2 years after winning the Pulitzer for *Kavalier and Clay*.

- Jonathan Larsen's *Rent*, winner of the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, which is an AU fanfic of Puccini's *La Boheme* (much like the movie *Moulin Rouge*, an AU hybrid crossover fanfic of *La Boheme* and *La Traviata*). (Puccini's opera is itself fanfic of Henry Murger's novel, *Scenes de la vie Boheme*.)

- John Corigliano, 2001 Pulitzer-Prize winner for Music, who wrote the opera *Ghosts of Versailles*, a postmodern fantasy RPF/fanfic crossover AU about Pierre Beaumarchais and the characters from his play *La Mère coupable*. Those characters were previously fanficked twice over, in two separate operatic masterpieces: Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, both based on the other 2 Figaro plays by Beaumarchais.

- Amy Lowell, winner of the 1926 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for her volume *What's O'Clock*, whose celebrated poem "The Sisters" not only praises the sisterhood of female poets, but enacts fictional conversations with the poets Sappho, Elizabeth Barret Browning, and Emily Dickinson in a delightful example of poetic RPF.


- How about another? Nobel laureate J.M. Coetzee's novel *Foe*, fanfic which uses the narrative of *Robin Crusoe* to explore issues of power and colonialism.

But those are just rare exceptions, you say.

Have some more!

- Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a fanfic parallel narrative of *Jane Eyre*

- John Guare's decorated play *Six Degrees of Separation*, RPF of real-life con artist David Hampton and a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize

- Tony Award-winning *My Fair Lady*, a fix-it fic of Shaw's *Pygmalion* (itself a fanfic of Greek mythology) which changed the ending. In the joint published scripts of Pygmalion and that great musical, Alan Jay Lerner wrote, "I have omitted the sequel [to the play] because in it Shaw explains how Eliza ends not with Higgins but with Freddy and--Shaw and Heaven forgive me!--I am not certain he is right." (pandarus notes that *Pretty Woman* is also a modern AU retelling of *My Fair Lady*, right down to the scene at the races.)


- The American Western classic *The Magnificent Seven*, an Americanized retelling of Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*. Reworking the plot of a story in a completely different setting,
with completely different characters? That's also considered Alternate Universe fanfic.

- Kurosawa's film *Yojimbo* is a retelling of Dashiell Hammett's novel *Red Harvest*, with one scene additionally lifted directly from Hammett's novel *The Glass Key*. Taking a hard-boiled crime novel plot set in America and turning it into a Japanese Samurai AU? Fanfic.

- *Yojimbo* was in turn adapted into the classic spaghetti western *Fistful of Dollars* (AU fic), which was later re-spun into Robert Rodriguez's *Desperado* (Remix fanfic).

- Kurosawa also created Shakespearean fanfic, in the classic films *Ran* and *Throne of Blood*, retellings of *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. Shakespeare in Japan? AU fic.

- The silent film masterpiece *Greed*, based on Frank Norris's *McTeague*, which was later turned into an opera by William Bolcom and Robert Altman. Do adaptations count as fanfic? Yes, if they substantially recontextualize the storyline (for example, by putting it into song or changing the ending), or if they add to the story with original material that wasn't in the original.

- Literally hundreds of published works of Jane Austen fan fiction, including, but not limited to:
  - the classic 90's satire *Clueless* (a modernization of *Emma*)
  - the recent BBC hit *Lost in Austen*, a Pride & Prejudice AU with a time-traveling *Mary Sue*
  - *Bridget Jones Diary*, the modern retelling of Pride & Prejudice that single-handedly invented "chick lit"
  - *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies*. Need I say more?
  - "Pride and Prometheus," John Kessel's acclaimed short story that mixes characters from Pride & Prejudice and Frankenstein. Let me just repeat that. The 2009 Hugo-Award Winner for Best Novelette is crossover AU fic.

- Speaking of *Pride & Prejudice*, Andrew Davies' much-admired script for the 1995 BBC masterpiece included a certain notorious bit of fanservice known to all Austen fans as "the lake scene." You will note that this scene appeared nowhere in the source text. Filling in scenes the author left out of the original work? Not only is that fanfic, but over at the largest Austen fandom fic archive, there is an entire subcategory of fanfiction devoted to doing exactly what Davies did when he had Mr Darcy strip down and go for a swim.

- Roger Zelazny's *A Night in the Lonesome October*, a fantasy RPF of Jack the Ripper. See also: *Time After Time* (film), *From Hell* (the comic and film), "A Toy for Juliette" (the short story by Oscar-Winner Robert Bloch) and its fanfic tag by sci-fi legend Harlan Ellison, "The Prowler in the City at the Edge of the World," among so many others.

- Speaking of serial killers, Jeffrey Dahmer's life has directly inspired multiple writers, including Joyce Carol Oates' novel *Zombie*. Most directly RPF is Hart Fisher's comic book series about Dahmer's killings. The families of Dahmer's victims attempted to sue Fisher for exploitation, but the courts found that "name or likeness" laws did not apply to fiction written about people who were deceased. (Note that I am not comparing Fisher to fans who write for love; I am noting only that he was essentially writing RPF.)

- Stephen Marlowe's acclaimed novel *The Lighthouse at the End of the World* is an AU RPF/fanfic crossover of Edger Allen Poe and Auguste Dupin.

- John Gardner's classic novel *Grendel* is a retelling of *Beowulf* from the perspective of the monster, much like the many fics that tell stories from the antagonist's POV.
Other drastically varying fanfictions of the Phantom of the Opera include the blockbuster Andrew Lloyd Webber musical; *Phantom*, another musical by Frank Wildhorn; the novel *Phantom* by Susan Kay, which builds on the original to create a complicated backstory; the dubious novel *Phantom of Manhattan*; the classic Lon Chaney silent film; and of course, the equally dubious sequel to the aforementioned ALW musical.


How about some Homerian fanfic! James Joyce's masterpiece *Ulysses.* W.H. Auden's poem, "The Shield of Achilles." Tennyson's "Ulysses." Christopher Logue's poetic retelling of the Iliad, *War Music. Firebrand* by Marion Zimmer Bradley. *Inside the Walls of Troy,* a YA novel by Clemence MacLaren. *Homer's Daughter* by Robert Graves. Margaret Atwood's *Penelopiad* fanfics the Odyssey from Penelope's POV, and the brilliant Coen Brothers film *O, Brother, Where Art Thou* transports Ulysses to America, turns him into a convict, and turns the Odyssey into a trip across the Depression-Era South. But, as charamel says, "Why stick to the present day? I seem to recall Aeschylus writing a 'missing scene' from the Iliad, Euripides writing fix-it fic of Helen's entire backstory. Virgil turning a minor character into a massive Gary-Stu, and don't get me started on Ovid's Heroides..." oneiriad adds, "Ancient Greek author Lucian of Samosata deserves to be among the Homerian fanficcers - among other things, his "Dialogues of the Gods" are just full of awesome missing scenes from Greek mythology :-)")

As multiple commenters have pointed out, the Aeneid is a fanfic of the Iliad by the original Homerian fanboy Virgil, starring Aeneas as a Gary Stu who founds Rome. The Aeneid itself has been fanficced in *Black Ships* by Jo Graham and *Lavinia* by Ursula LeGuin, as well as David Gemmell's *Troy* trilogy, based on the Iliad and drawing from the Aeneid. gehayi adds, "This particular piece of fanfic was written over a period of ten years--from 29 to 19 B.C.E. It has been around for more than two thousand years. People have studied it, read it and considered it a work of genius for almost that entire length of time. Do NOT underestimate the staying power of fanfic." redex also throws in “Cassandra by Christa Wolf, a stream-of-consciousness Mary-Sue Cassandra!POV feminist retelling of the Iliad taking the Aeniad as canon.” And missdirector adds: Of course, we can't forget the extremely famous first published self-insert RPF fanfic, Dante's *Divine Comedy* ("And then I met Virgil and we became BEST FRIENDS...") :D

verowyn points out that “Various plays by French classic authors Racine and Corneille are fanfics of Greek mythology and plays by Euripides, Aeschylus and Sophocles. *Les Mouches* by Jean-Paul Sartre is also fanfic about *Electra. La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu* (The Trojan war will not take place) by Giraudoux is fanfic about Homer again. Jean de la Fontaine's *Fables* are fanfic of Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* And valentinite adds that Plato's *Symposium* is “cracked-out RPS as teaching tool. And still relevant, almost two and a half millennia later.”

la_mariane notes: “Lots of very famous writers wrote fanfic based on Molière's *The Misanthrope.* Marmontel wrote *Le Misanthrope corrigé* (The Misanthrope cured). Courteline wrote *Alcest's Conversation.* Rampal wrote *Célimène and the Cardinal.* And let's nor forget
Biblical fanfiction is everywhere: the novel & film *Ben-Hur*, the film *Last Temptation of Christ*, and the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* are all RPF about the life of Jesus Christ and the people in his life. Want Disney!fic with your Gospels? Try *The Small One*. Or take the absurdist version: *Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal*, by acclaimed writer Christopher Moore, in which Christ has a lifelong best friend named Biff who has a crush on Mary Magdalene, aka "Maggie." Prefer modern AU New Testament fanfic? In the musical *Godspell*, Jesus appears in modern-day New York City. In Terrence McNally's *Corpus Christi*, Christ and his disciples are all gay men living in the 90's. In *The Messiah of Morris Avenue* by Tony Hendra, Christ comes back as an Irish-Hispanic Catholic living in the U.S. Jesus isn't the only one to be fanficed: take *The Acts of Paul and Theckla*, a second-century Mary-Sue fic based around the New Testament character Paul. Or the acclaimed album *Dig, Lazarus, Dig!!!* (yes, with three exclamation marks) by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, which is unabashed *filk* about the second life of Lazarus. And if you're feeling ironic, there's vocal anti-fanfic writer Anne Rice's *Christ The Lord* series.

Or how about the Old Testament! The original God fanboy, Milton, wrote *Paradise Lost* "to justify the ways of God to man." (and made Satan the original *Draco in Leather Pants* in the process.) Glen Duncan followed suit with *I, Lucifer*. Anita Daimant's *The Red Tent* is fanfic of Dinah from the Old Testament.

Pulitzer-nominee Lee Blessing's play *Fortinbras*, about the events that happen immediately after *Hamlet*. Pure fanfic.

Orson Welles' *Chimes at Midnight*, directed by and starring Orson Welles, which is based on the Falstaff storyline of Shakespeare's *Henriad*. Another fanatic about Falstaff is the Verdi opera, *Falstaff*, which is based on *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. (*The Merry Wives of Windsor* is itself spin-off fic written by Shakespeare in order to build on the popularity of his character Falstaff from the *Henry* plays.)

The BBC's "Shakespeare Retold" series, including a retelling of *Much Ado About Nothing* set in modern-day broadcasting, and a revamp of *Macbeth* where the three witches appear to Macbeth in the form of "supernatural binmen." Then there's *A Tempest* by Aime Cesaire, a post-colonialist response to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Teen-comedy films *Ten Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man*, satirical riffs on *Taming of the Shrew* and *Twelfth Night*, respectively. There's *O*, the modern-day retelling of *Othello*, and another *Shrew* remix, Cole Porter's operetta, *Kiss Me Kate*. For another helping of irony: *Weird Tales From Shakespeare*, edited by anti-fanfic author Katherine Kerr. Season 1 of *"Slings And Arrows"* is a clever clever metatextual modern *Hamlet* AU (Hamlet= Geoffrey, King Hamlet = Oliver etc etc) whilst Season 2 does the same thing with 'Macbeth' and Season 3 with 'Lear'. (- via pandarus) Then there's Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead*, a postmodern fanfic of *Hamlet*, and that other Tom Stoppard work, the Oscar winner for Best Picture and RPF fanfic *Shakespeare in Love*.

And what about Shakespeare himself? Of all his body of known work, only 2 of his plays were not readily cobbled together or lifted directly from previously existing sources. It's a popular thing to call Shakespeare a plagiarist; what he was, more accurately, was a writer of excellent fanfic. *All's Well That Ends Well* was fanficed straight out of Boccacio's *Decameron*. *Cymbeline* was hodpodged together from the Decameron, Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Geoffrey of Monmouth, while *The Merchant of Venice* was a veritable mixed source gumbo.
Oh, hell, let's just give *The Decameron* its own bullet point for being such "an irresistible source" text from which great writers wrote great fanfic. That's okay, though, because Boccaccio stole the plots of all his stories from other sources too. Are you noticing a pattern yet?

Where were we? Right, Shakespeare. *As You Like It* was stolen from Thomas Lodge. *Apollonius of Tyre* by Anonymous provided the source plots of *Pericles, Twelfth Night*, and part of *The Comedy of Errors*. Plautus provided the other part, and also graciously loaned Shakespeare, centuries after his death, *many of his stock plot and character tropes*. *Measure for Measure* comes from an Italian novel by Cinthio, and an English play by George Whetstone that, lol, is *also* based on Cinthio. *Merry Wives of Windsor, Much Ado About Nothing* was adapted from another Italian story; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* lifts plot tropes from Ovid and Apuleius.

Then there's Shakespeare, master of Historical RPF (real person fiction). Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* gave us the source plots of Macbeth, King Lear, and most of his English histories. The Roman tragedies he took from Plutarch.

Historical RPF is one of the broadest and most common forms of fanfiction, and people have been writing it for profit for years. Even if the pre-existing canon (source work) is real life and real history, it's *still* fanfiction. And no one wrote it more transformatively than the Bard.

*gwendolynflight* contributes: “If you want more on the early modern front, you have...the entire War of the Theaters, in which Ben Jonson, John Marston, and a host of others wrote RPF plays about each other. We could move on to the Restoration, during which Poet Laureate John Dryden remixed two or three of Shakespeare's plays, and tried to get a musical version of *Paradise Lost* off the ground (that one didn't quite make it). In the same period, Nahum Tate rewrote *King Lear* with a happy ending, Cordelia/Edmund OTP (and the play was performed with that ending for centuries).”

Tom Stoppard writes fanfiction frequently: *Travesties* is an RPF-crossover parody of *The Importance of Being Ernest*; and *The Real Inspector Hound* parodies murder mysteries in general and *The Mousetrap* specifically. Stoppard's drama *The Invention of Love* is literally Historical AU RPF--A. E. Housman/Moses Jackson slash.

*jonquil* informs us that Tom Stoppard *also* wrote the play *On the Razzle*, which is a retelling of Johann Nestroy's *Einen Jux will er sich machen*, which, according to Wikipedia, “previously was adapted twice by Thornton Wilder. The first 1938 version, entitled *The Merchant of Yonkers*, was faithful to the original material, but the second 1955 version, renamed *The Matchmaker*, expanded the previously secondary role of Dolly Gallagher Levi, who later became the heroine of the Jerry Herman musical hit, *Hello, Dolly!*. Nestroy's play itself was adapted from John Oxenford's play *A Day Well Spent* (1835). Jonquil adds: “Reworking. It's what authors do.”

Greg Maguire's entire literary career; or, if *Wicked* is too commercial for you -- for *Wizard of Oz* fanfic, look no further than Geoff Ryman's acclaimed retelling *Was*, of which the wiki article reports, "Teresa Nielsen Hayden has compared the novel to fanfic, saying that the only difference is that Brooks, Alcott, and publisher Viking Press are "dreadfully respectable."

Or take Charlie Smalls' classic musical theatre celebration of black urban life, *The Wiz*. Is it really illegal and immoral if Diana Ross, Lena Horne, Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder, and
Quincy Jones are all involved?

- How about Alice in Wonderland? SyFy's recent AU feminist modernization in which Alice is a judo instructor, and Tim Burton's recent follow-up film in which Alice returns to Underland - both of these are unequivocally fan fiction in all but name, as are Jeff Noon's Automated Alice and Frank Beddor's Looking Glass Wars.

- Then there's the hundreds of times and ways Richard Connell's classic short story "The Most Dangerous Game" has been Remixed, revamped, parodied, and remade by popular culture, in everything from radio plays to the Onion.

- Or the thousands of retellings and reimaginings of the Faust Legend.

- Or the Robin Hood legend.

- Or the legend of Monkey / Journey to the West.

- Dorian, Will Self's 20th C. AU riff on Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray. smallbeer points out, 'It is graphic, violent, and was also widely praised. It particularly pleases me in this instance because of Wilde's line from his own preface, "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book."

- Let's not forget the various murder mystery series where Oscar Wilde, Jane Austen, Jane Austen's characters, Abigail Adams, Mozart, Louisa Mae Alcott, Beau Brummel, a string of Vintage film stars, The Algonquin Round Table, and Eleanor Roosevelt all fight crime, to name just a sampling.

- For another remarkable bit of RPF, consider the Whitman Authorized Editions for Girls, which monkey5s brought to the list. In these vintage mysteries, famous Hollywood actresses are sent on various mysterious adventures reminiscent of Nancy Drew. Wikipedia notes, "it is as though the famous actress has stepped into an alternate reality in which she is an ordinary person." The link above has summaries of all the novels, which include Ginger Rogers and the Riddle of the Scarlet Cloak, and Judy Garland and the Hoodoo Costume. Personally, I'd shell out for a copy of Dorothy Lamour and the Haunted Lighthouse.

- The wonderful Disney films The Great Mouse Detective, a pastiche of Sherlock Holmes based on the Basil of Baker St. children's book series, and Oliver and Company, a retelling of Oliver Twist. See also The Muppet Christmas Carol and Muppet Treasure Island. Turning the characters into lovable animals? Fanfic.

- In fact, nearly all Disney animated films are fanfic: The Jungle Book, a retelling of Rudyard Kipling; Robin Hood, where the animals sing and dance to folk songs penned by Roger Miller and Johnny Mercer; the films Hunchback of Notre Dame and The Black Cauldron are both significant departures from their literary sources; Pocohontas is historical RPF; and, as mentioned later in this post, all the classic Disney fairy tales are fanfiction, most recently The Princess & the Frog, a modernized historical AU fanfic adding all-new characters and themes and relocating the setting to America.

- Philip Jose Farmer's Hugo-winning Riverworld series is time-travelling AU Historical RPF fanfic.

- Georgette Heyer's The Spanish Bride is historical RPF based on the autobiography of Harry
Q. kaisers_minion writes, “when I read this I thought immediately of A Thousand and One Nights, which spawned not only derivative works but spinoffs: Aladdin, Sinbad the Sailor, and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.”

Neil Gaiman's Sandman, virtually published fanfiction of the original series, reworked and remastered. Alan Moore's The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen - published fantasy AU crossover fanfiction and RPF. See also Alan Moore's Watchmen, in which a character is reading a book based on a song from Bertold Brecht/Kurt Weill's Three Penny Opera, itself an AU modernized retelling of The Beggar's Opera. Or take the highly acclaimed graphic novel It's a Bird, autobiographical Superman fanfic.

The classic F.W. Murnau film Nosferatu, which was later re-envisioned in a completely unauthorized remake by Werner Herzog, and even later, made into an RPF fanatic AU in the Oscar-winning Shadow of the Vampire, a fic *about* the making of Nosferatu.

Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical Cats is a fanfic of T.S. Eliot's Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats.

Michael Cunningham's The Hours, a modernized reworking of Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway.

Robert Altman's acclaimed Gosford Park, which features Jeremy Northam as Ivor Novello, darling of music halls and cinema in Edwardian England. The songs Northam sings during the film's centerpiece were actually written by Novello. This example of RPF is also certainly the only one in history to feature three knights (Alan Bates, Michael Gambon, Derek Jacobi) and three dames (Eileen Atkins, Helen Mirren, and Maggie Smith) as part of its narrative. Can you really call fanfiction illegitimate when you're involving British Royalty? ;)

Numerous adaptations of Huckleberry Finn, including Nancy Rawles' My Jim, fanfic told from the perspective of Jim's enslaved wife Sadie, Finn by John Clinch, fic about Huck's father; several anime adaptations, and my personal favorite, Big River, the Tony-winning Best Musical of 1984, with a folk score by Roger Miller.

Boris Akunin's postmodern AU hybrid of Crime and Punishment, F. M.

Pat Barker's Booker Prize-winning Regeneration trilogy, which is largely RPF about WWI soldiers, poets, and doctors, including Wilfred Owen and others.

Stephen Sondheim's groundbreaking and devastating musical Assassins, historical RPF about U.S. presidential assassins.

Jasper Fforde's Thursday Next series, which starts with Jane Eyre and moves on to fanfic of various great works of literature in turn. (Fforde, ironically, is anti-fanfic.)

Tracy Chevalier's novel Girl with a Pearl Earring and Susan Vreeland's novel The Girl in Hyacinth Blue, and the 2 Vermeer paintings they are fictions about, real and imaginary.

Neil Gaiman's 2004 Hugo-Award-winning Sherlock Holmes/Lovecraft crossover fanfic, "A Study in Emerald," and his Lovecraft fanfic, "I, Cthulhu," Lovecraft, incidentally, supported and encouraged fanfiction of his works. Gaiman also claims to have derived his novel

- the Weezer album *Pinkerton* and the Tony Award-winning D.H. Hwang play *M Butterfly*, both fanfic of the Puccini opera *Madame Butterfly*. wombat1138 adds, “The musical *Miss Saigon* is arguably another fanfic adapation of Puccini's opera-- but Puccini based his opera on a one-act play by David Belasco, which was in turn an unauthorized adaptation of a story/anecdote(?) by John Luther Long; Long’s story itself seems to've been RPF.”

- Speaking of *Pinkerton*, the album, there's also the friggin' huge series of science fiction novels that are fanfictions of iconic rock albums. The series, 33 ⅓, contains over 83 novels as of this year.

- On the subject of opera, verowyn adds: “Wagner's opera *Der Ring des Nibelungen* is fanfic of the *Poetic Edda*, the *Volsunga Saga* and the *Nibelungenlied*, which are in turn fanfics of one another or fanfic of earlier Indo-Germanic mythology. Wagner's *Parsifal* is fanfic of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzifal*, which is fanfic of Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval ou le Conte du Graal* which is fanfic of Wace's *Brut*, which is fanfic of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britaniae*. (Those medieval guys were so much into fanfic! :D) --and Terry Gilliam's film *The Fisherking* is AU fanfic of all the previous Percival material.”

- Tim Powers' award-winning *Drawing of the Dark* also lifts The Fisher King out of Arthurian legend, and literally every novel he has written since 1987, including several award winners, is a work of historical RPF.

- Stephen Fry has written two published works of fanfiction: *The Star's Tennis Balls*, which he notes, quote, "is a straight steal, virtually identical in all but period and style to Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo,*" and *Making History*, an AU RPF about Adolph Hitler. (-via willowbell.)

- hundreds upon hundreds of Sherlock Holmes riffs, continuations, crossovers, spinoffs, and remixes, including *Young Sherlock* by Stephen Spielberg, the 1988 *Without a Clue*, starring Michael Caine and Ben Kingsley in a remix where Watson is actually the crime-solver; the Guy Ritchie film, and most recently the BBC Modern AU "Sherlock"; also, most notably, the tale of Arsène Lupin, the gentlemen thief created by Maurice Leblanc as a character for Sherlock Holmes to do battle with in "Arsène Lupin versus Herlock Sholmes" and many other books. 50 years later, Boileau-Narcejac would publish five more books based on the Lupin IP, official fanfic of what was already fanfic. The Lupin mythos has spawned countless movies, the most recent in 2004. In 1967 Kazuhiko Kato, a Japanese manga writer, began Lupin III, the story of Lupin's grandson and his gang of thieves: i.e. fanfic of fanfic of fanfic. It was also hugely popular, with the original series running for 5 years and spawning three cartoon series, six movies. and twenty video games. (Thanks to flidgetjerome for this info.)

- The sections of RPF in Neal Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon*, with fictional conversations between Alan Turing and fellow 20th-century scientists, and the even broader RPF in The Baroque Trilogy, in which slashes multiple scientists with each other.


- Michel Tournier's novel *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique* (Friday), which won the
prestigious Grand prix du roman de l'Académie Française, is fanfiction of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

- The winner of the 1992 Campbell Award for best novel, *Buddy Holly is Alive and Well on Ganymede* by Bradley Denton is sci-fi RPF that tells us what happens when supernatural events herald the second coming of the crooner himself. (- via [realolacola](https://twitter.com/realolacola))


- [sinful_teddy](https://twitter.com/sinful_teddy) points out that “a huge amount of Doctor Who episodes are historical RPF.”

- Victor Hugo's masterpiece *Les Miserables* has been adapted into at least 50 films and television miniseries, some of which are modern Aus, 5 radio plays, 1 legendary musical, 6 plays, 2 games, 2 animated series, and 3 manga / anime series, including *Shoujo Cosette*. It has also spawned 3 sequels: *Cosette* by Laura Kalpakian, and *Cosette* and *Marius* by François Cérèsà, which retocon a huge chunk of the novel, bring Javert back from the dead, and fashion him into a hero. Descendants of Hugo tried to have the novels banned, claiming that they "breached the moral rights of the author." The courts, however, sided with Cérèsà.

- *Mister Pip* by Lloyd Jones, a Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Best Book and a finalist for the Man Booker Prize, is original fic remixed with *Great Expectations*. (- via [redex](https://twitter.com/redex)) And let's not forget the thousands of remixes and remakes of *A Christmas Carol*, including the aforementioned Muppet retelling, and Bill Murray's modern AU *Scrooged*.

- George M Fraser's *Flashman*, a character lifted from Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) and given a life of his own. (- via [handslive](https://twitter.com/handslive))

- Michael Frayn's play *Copenhagen*, historical RPF

- David Cronenberg's film *Naked Lunch*, which is a crossover of William S. Burroughs' novel *Naked Lunch* and Burroughs' own biography, making it half fanfic, half-RPF. (- via [verushka70](https://twitter.com/verushka70))

- All of the works mentioned here.

- Literally thousands upon thousands of modern reworkings of fairy tales and folk tales, including Jean Cocteau's film masterpiece *La Belle & La Bete*, Sondheim's postmodern musical theatre classic *Into the Woods*, nearly every animated Disney film ever, and all of Angela Carter's feminist fantasy anthology *The Bloody Chamber*. And when you expand the folklore into the realm of mythology, the reworkings are virtually endless.

- Orson Scott Card, who hates fanfiction, has not only written Asimov fanfic (as well as Old Testament fanfic) himself, but done so in the most hilariously hypocritical way imaginable. [ryvenna](https://twitter.com/ryvenna) sums it up better than I ever could, while [@chudleycannons](https://twitter.com/chudleycannons) contributes the link to Card's defense of his own fanfiction as being inherently superior to everybody else's fanfiction. (Skip to page 268 for maximum ego-inflation). **ETA:** Now it seems Card has taken his vitriolic self-loathing one step further, by writing very, very dubious fanfic (even though he crusades against fanfic) of *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*---and razing the plot of the former in order to continue his much-documented and well-known crusade against homosexuality. (Look, I don't care how amazing Ender's Game is: at some point, taking this
guy seriously whenever he starts to rant about morality, be it literary or social, just becomes an insult to everyone's intelligence.)

- Novelist sarahahoyt notes that “Half of my published books -- Shakespeare. The Musketeer Mysteries-- could be called fanfic,” and then adds, “I've got more fan mail for some of my Austen work than for my published books. Which one has the greater reach? I'd be unable to say.”

- via la_rainette: When Vincent Van Gogh's brother Theo sent him reproductions of Millet's paintings, Van Gogh created his own pieces of fanart, directly fashioned after Millet's paintings.

"They are not copies," Van Gogh told Theo, "but translations into another language".

But, you say, fanfic operates totally outside of the consent of the original authors. The only way someone can profit from fanfiction is if they wait until the author or subject is dead!

Oh, really? Have some examples of professional works written outside the consent of the original authors and/or subjects, while the subjects are still very much alive and/or the original author's works are still very much under copyright:

- Jules Verne, the original Poe fanboy, published a sequel to Poe's Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym called An Antarctic Mystery while Poe was still very much alive.

- The 2008 Oscar Winner for Best Picture, The Departed, Martin Scorsese's liberal remixing of the movies Infernal Affairs & Infernal Affairs II.

- The Wind Done Gone, Alice Randall's bestselling parallel novel to Gone with the Wind and the most-cited example of fanfiction being upheld in court, was deemed an acceptable example of “parody” under U.S. Copyright law despite being a serious literary work. (Another work of published fanfiction from the same timeframe, Lo's Diary, Nabokov's Lolita told from Lo's POV, split royalties with the Nabokov estate.)

- Tina Fey's Saturday Night Live sketches of Sarah Palin are a great example of successful RPF (as well as parody) created while the subject is still alive and well.

- The Oscar-nominated film Being John Malkovich, postmodern RPF of John Malkovich that wound up starring John Malkovich as himself.

- Poppy Z Brite's published novelette Plastic Jesus is a barely-concealed RPS about John Lennon & Paul McCartney. Though the character names are changed, Brite acknowledges the work is Beatles slash in her author's note.

- Mark Danielewski's fictitious interviews with multiple real, living celebrities in the experimental masterpiece House of Leaves

- Harold & Kumar's character of Neil Patrick Harris--which was scripted without any actual connection to the actual NPH, who came onto the project only after he heard about the part.

- Cleolinda Jones' published books, Movies in 15 Minutes and More Movies in 15 Minutes are
published parodies of movies under current copyright.

- *Fortsættelse følger (To be continued)* is a published collection of short story sequels to famous Danish literary works, a number of which are still in copyright. *Berlinerluft (Berlin air)* by Madeline Rundsten is a newly published sequel to the still in copyright classic *Hærværk (Vandalism)* by Tom Kristensen. (via [oneiriad](https://oneiriad.com).)

- via [weatherby](https://weatherby.com), "the hilarious existence of a published Henry Rollins/Glenn Danzig RPS comic book." From the promo copy: *As the real-life Rollins says, quoted on the back cover, “Has Glenn seen this? Trust me, he would not be impressed.”*

- **Remixing.** Period.

(Note: parody, remixes, and fanfiction all operate under the same exception to copyright law: the "fair use" clause.)

- Neil Gaiman's published Chronicles of Narnia fanfic, "The Problem of Susan." The works of C.S. Lewis are still very much under copyright.

But, you insist, real authors and publishers would never give their blessing to fanfiction--the only way it could ever occur is without the author's permission!

Not true! Have some examples of fanfiction sanctioned by industry professionals and/or the original authors themselves--and in some cases, written by the original authors:

- Edgar Wright not only [tweeted](https://twitter.com/edgarwright/status/652102982879734784) that "Me and @simonpegg once wrote some Nicholas Angel and Danny Buttermanslash fiction. It was called HOT FUZZ…(applause)" -- about their buddy cop film, but then, after proudly linking to existing examples of Hot Fuzz slash, he, Simon, and Nick Frost went on to [write their own Twitter slashfic](https://twitter.com/TweetFics/status/652102982879734784). (You can [read it all here](https://twitter.com/TweetFics/status/652102982879734784).)

- Naomi Novik's fictional crossover of her character Temeraire with [Jaime from Song of Ice & Fire](https://www.tor.com/collections/song-of-ice-and-fire/jaime-lannister/).

- Author Laurie King not only acknowledges that her Mary Russell books are Sherlock Holmes fanfic, but to celebrate the release of the most recent additions to the series, she [hosted a fanfic contest](https://kinglaurie.com/2014/11/03/mary-russell-fanfiction-contest) inviting fans to write fic featuring her characters.


- Eric Flint's 1632 series, which he has opened up to fanfic authors in continuances that "**involve hundreds of contributors and dozens of authors.**" This is a perfect example of conglomerative fanfic becoming part of the canon upon which it is based.

- The Star Trek Strange New Worlds anthologies, which are explicitly fanfic contests restricted to amateur authors and sanctioned by the Star Trek franchise.
The new Firefly movie, *Browncoats: Redemption*, a completely not-for-profit film created without authorization from the franchise—though Joss Whedon has endorsed it. (via weatherby)

The independently produced, commercially released Dungeons & Dragon film *The_Gamers:_Dorkness_Rising*, which began its life as an independent fan production but which was ultimately sanctioned and supported by Wizards of the Coast, which owns the D&D franchise.

GayCity, a men's health and literature website, recently asked contributors to submit slash fic for an upcoming professional anthology. Though they didn't say it in so many words, their list of examples is clearly fanfiction:

- How could gay influences have changed the outcome of the Russian revolution?
- Was Mrs. Anna really there to tutor the King of Siam’s children, or was she a lesbian secret agent?
- Did ‘Jack’ kill the giant out of self-defense, or was their relationship somehow more complex?

At Second Glance is seeking previously unpublished stories that tell a tale from another viewpoint. Either historical or fictional characters are acceptable and feel free to take creative liberties.

For last year’s NanoWrimo pep talk, Mercedes Lackey, who once was virulently against fanfic, openly encouraged participants to write fanfiction in order to inspire them, and added: “Just as an example, go have a look at all the Star Trek, Star Wars, and game-based books there are out there. If you reduce things to principles, most of those are fanfiction---fanfiction commissioned by and given the blessing of the publisher, and produced by professionals, yes, but still fanfiction.” The full text of her letter to writers is in the link. (- via dramatae).

Laura Antonio, author of the erotic BDSM series *The Marketplace*, held an open call from her fans for an anthology of fanfiction based on her books. In her call for submissions, she writes, "Yes, you can write a Marketplace story – and this is your chance to really push the limits! Use any character, any setting.... Brush up on existing characters or create your own. Fit the story to what already exists or imagine a sort of alternative universe to my alternative universe.... Care to slash characters you thought should have hooked up?... Especially welcome are stories depicting queer characters, male bottoms, female tops, persons of different orientation/gender and anything that shows something I haven't written about."

TV show writers. Anon writes, “Generally, in order to apply for a position writing for a tv show, especially an established series, you have to write up an episode on your own, showing you understand and can convey the general tone of the show, important plot and backstory points, and the feel and voices of the characters. In essence, they require a canon one-shot fanfic from you.”

silviakundera writes, "I am actually the proud owner of an authorized & published One Tree Hill Brooke/Lucas, implied Peyton/Nathan novel that I bought at fucking Borders. And it's 'real' fanfic, man. It's a pairing-centric fix-it that does a shippy re-write on Season 2. for the
author's preferred couples. It's exactly what I'd expect to bookmark on delicious when I'm in the mood for het. The only difference between this and a 50k Sheldon/Penny fanfic is that:
- one of these is on my bookshelf & someone got paid for it;
- one is on my computer & someone did it for love."

**Sara Donati's use of Diana Gabaldon's characters in her book Into the Wilderness.**
Quotes Donati in [this interview](#), "I said, "Well, I've got this injured boy over here and Nathaniel is looking for a doctor. Can I have Claire?" I was completely joking. And Diana said, "Sure. I'll send her over." So her characters show up briefly in my storyline."

That, my dear Ms. Author of the Week, is what is known as Crossover fanfic.

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Dear AotW. Fanfic is not about you. Fanfic is not about you. Fanfic is not about you.

I know you hate to hear it, dear AotW, but the story is not defined by the barriers you place around it. The moment you gave it to us, those walls broke. You may hate the fact people are imagining more to your story than what you put there. But if I were you, I'd be grateful that I got the chance to create a story that has a culture around it, a story that people want to keep talking about, reworking, remixing, living in, fantasizing about, thinking about, writing about. To quote Originalaudience on the post in question, "Nobody is forgetting that you created the characters. The existence of fanfiction really means that nobody is forgetting the characters you created."

We get that you think fanfic is illegal. It's not; it's currently non-explicitly protected by the fair use clause of the U.S. copyright law; we've been over this. Ad nauseum. For about thirty years now. That argument is old, and in the meantime people are moving into their fourth decade of writing Star Trek fiction. Or new, revolutionary, earth-shattering novels with fanfic at their root.

We get that you think fanfic is a stepping stone to being published. You're wrong. Fanfiction is not a set of training wheels, not some shameful awkward thing you do before you grow up and learn the ~true meaning~ of being a ~real writer.~ Fanfic is brilliant, beautiful, faithful to canon, critical & powerful, hysterically funny, iconic, full of love, subtle, diverse, poetic, adorable, epic, subversive, heartbreaking, progressive, self-aware, political, sharp, inventive, smart, satirical, incredibly complex, feminist, read by thousands of people, redemptive, and transformative on a scale that's hard to describe.

Fanfiction becomes an independent collective experience for the people who write it. And it is written by some of the most incredibly talented people on the internet. Fanfic writers are bestselling and acclaimed professional authors. They are agents and editors. They are network television executive producers. They are New York Times journalists. They are Supreme Court clerks. They are PHDs and experts in their fields.

All of us are still writing fanfic. None of us need training wheels or stepping stones.

We get it. You hate fanfic. We don't care. We don't have to. Fanfic belongs to the tradition of reinvention and reinterpretation that each of the creators listed above has freely, fully participated in.

And as of this moment, I'm one author who is too busy participating to stop and explain it to you one more time.

Sincerely,
Note: It is absolutely not my intention to make the claim that anything with the least resemblance to something else is fanfiction. All of the works in this post have been deliberately sourced from pre-existing sources, with the intention of changing those sources, or adding to / expanding them in some way.

Nor am I claiming that professional published works have the same goals and intentions as fanwork, or that they are exactly synonymous; rather, the purpose of this list is to show that in every single instance above, the action and the result, the practice of writing and the story produced are both identical to the act of producing fanfic. There is no difference.

And that, in a nutshell, is why fanfic is okay.

A Brief Glossary of Terms:

- Fanfic, aka "fic" or "fanfiction": When someone writes a story based on someone else's story, or based on an existing event or person in history, while still leaving the source recognizable in their own work.

- Fanart: same thing but with pretty pictures instead of pretty words.

- **Canon**: the inspiration source for the new work.

- **AU (Alternate Universe)**: When one or more elements of a story's plot, characters, or settings are altered, but the story itself remains recognizable as being linked back to the original source material, e.g. "Shakespeare on the moon" or "Twilight with space vampires."

- **Crossover, or X-over**: fanwork that brings characters from one source text into another setting from another source text. Comics do this all the time; tv franchises do too, like David Caruso appearing as the same character on all the CSI shows, Cheers characters appearing on Frasier, etc. (Usually those stories are within the same universe; other examples of characters from outside the same universes crossing over would be Freddy v/s Jason or Alien v/s Predator. And, well, everything here.

- **Fix-it fic**: this is fiction that attempts to fix something the fan feels that the original canon got wrong. A published example of this would be *My Fair Lady* “fixing” the ending of *Pygmalion*; in fandom, the most widespread example is the many, many fics that pretend the Harry Potter series epilogue didn't exist.

- **Mary Sue** (or Gary Stu). An original character (female; the male versions are known as Gary Stus) who is often inserted into fan fiction to interact with characters. A typical Mary Sue is unidimensionally perfect: too kind, popular, talented, lucky, smart, and beautiful to be realistic. The term Mary Sue originated in fandom, but can be found throughout original fiction as well. My two favorite examples of a Mary Sue/Gary Stu are found in Jean Auel's *Clan of the Cave Bear* and Pat Conroy's *Lords of Discipline*.

- **RPF (Real Person Fiction)**. Stories about real people, e.g. The Tudors, *The Other Boleyn Girl*, Real Housewives of New Jersey (sort of), *The Queen*, *The King's Speech*, *Apollo 13*, *Ray*, *Charlie Wilson's War*, *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, *The Iliad*, all of the Shakespeare histories and most of the tragedies, etc. etc. etc.

RPF is a mildly controversial form of fanfiction, but in terms of narratives throughout history, it's basically the most common type of storytelling there is.
- **RPS (Real Person Slash):** slash involving real people, e.g. the RPS between Harvey Milk/Scott Smith in the film *Milk*.

- **Slash.** Basically, fanwork that focuses on queer relationships, usually the ones the source text never got around to telling us about. But it's okay! We figured it out anyway. :)

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1. For breakdowns of the legal status of fanfiction in the U.S, please see the legal section of [this FAQ](#) from The Organization for Transformative Works; Kate Nepveu's [brief summary of case law concerning fanfiction](#); and [this listing of legal articles](#), or [this listing of legal articles](#), on the subject of fanfiction.

2. For more defenses and explications of fanfiction and fan culture, see: [Fanfiction is Not thought Crime](#); [The Anti-Fanfic Bingo Card #1](#) and [Anti-FF Bingo discussion](#); [Fandom & charity work](#); [Cory Doctorow: In Praise of Fanfic](#); [The Ecstasy of Influence](#); Rebecca Tushnet's take on [Transformativeness](#); and finally Lev Grossman's fabulous Time Magazine cover article, "How Harry Potter Became the Boy Who Lived Forever."

3. If you're looking for a list of pro authors who've come out in favor of fanfic and support their own fans writing it, please see [This fantastic list](#) as a starting point, and feel free to update it with your own information about authors who support fanfiction. Also, I would like to ask that you please consider supporting the authors on this list by buying their works and letting them know how much you appreciate their support of and participation in fannish spaces and endeavours.

**ETA, 5/7/10:** AotW has issued follow-up posts [here](#), which prompted a response from me (permalinked [here](#)).

You do not have to ask to link to this post, cite it, or include it in any of your own discussions of fanfiction. It is designed to be used as a resource. Please feel free to contribute updates to it at any time. Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this post and shared suggestions and corrections. Thank you all, and thanks everyone for reading!

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[Please drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!]