MED5109
Digital Cultures

Research Portfolio

Research Diary

Topic 1: Memes

meme

/miːm/ ◀))

noun

1. an element of a culture or system of behaviour passed from one individual to another by imitation or other non-genetic means.

2. an image, video, piece of text, etc., typically humorous in nature, that is copied and spread rapidly by Internet users, often with slight variations.

With the spread of the internet, 'memes' have become a widespread phenomenon of humour, that is often very difficult to explain to people who are not fairly heavily involved in internet culture. Some memes are general to the internet, such as rage comics, whereas others are much more website specific, such as the 'inappropriate audition song meme' on Tumblr.

Some memes can also be classified as a type of 'satire', as they are designed to make fun of people in positions of power. Börzsei (2013; 22-3) states that "Internet memes seem to be the digital age political cartoons, with infinitely extended participation," due to the fact that "people often turn to popular culture and humour to find answers to societal dilemmas" and because "their nature and virality made Internet memes a fitting genre to express opinions, encourage participation, and stand up for a cause." Milner (2013; 2359) agrees with this stance, saying; "The predominant purpose of image memes on these sites [reddit, Tumblr, and 4chan] is satirical humor for public commentary. Image memes can be quickly produced and shared, and therefore can agilely respond to diverse public events."

And while both political cartoons and memes "require knowledge if the viewer is to 'get it'' (Börzsei, 2013; 24), the audience that will see the memes are likely to have that knowledge or in some cases may be able to piece together the meaning of the specific meme used due to prior knowledge of memes in general.

During the 2016 US Presidential Debates, many memes were created mocking both Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump, so much so an article was written in the Daily Mail about it (see source for memes 3 and 4 in the appendix). This is an example of Milner's view that "by intertwining multimodal popular commentary with text-based discourse, participants were able to creatively engage the debate. In this way, image memes are a populist means to express public perspectives, even when those perspectives are diverse," (2013; 2360).

In other words, by using recognisable memes that appeal to audiences of popular culture and are easy to replicate, memes are a "way of communication" (Börzsei, 2013; 3) that allows people of different opinions to openly debate and discuss without – as can often happen on the internet – it devolving into rudeness. Memes also "allow instant reaction and encourages virality, so people can comment on the most current issues, events and people" near instantly (ibid; 21), therefore they are produced and circulated when they are most relevant, which is particularly useful as they often "'tell the news': sites like Memegenerator reveal that, to this day, the most popular memes at any given time will likely cover important news" (ibid; 22), such as during the presidential debates, people were 'liveblogging' (i.e. posting on sites like Tumblr blow-by-blow accounts of what was occurring on-screen), often using memes to express their opinion of what a candidate has just said.

I think, therefore, it would be interesting to do a discourse and/or content analysis of these memes, looking firstly at quantitative data of the topic of the memes (i.e. Ms Clinton or Trump) and whether the memes is supporting or mocking them, and then analysing what the memes say about public opinion of the two candidates.

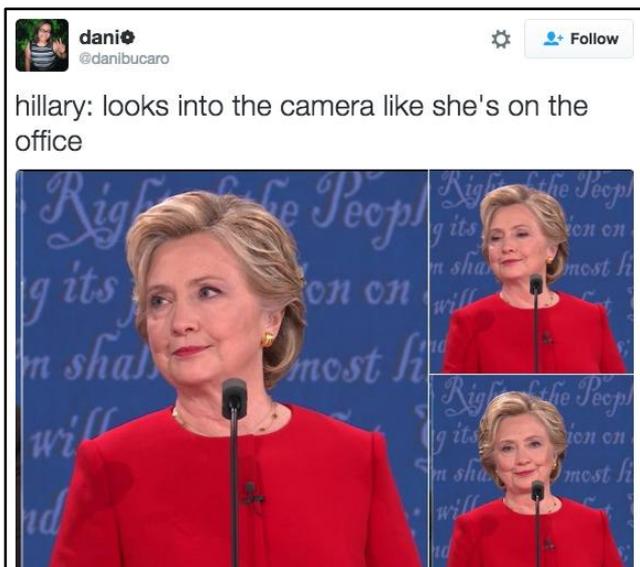**Appendix: Examples of Presidential Debate memes**

Meme 1

Meme 2

when u laughing at hillary and donald arguing on #debatenight 🎙 but then u remember that one of these two is our next president

Meme 3

Hillary Clinton ✓
@HillaryClinton

Follow

When Donald Trump says he has a "winning temperament." #debatenight 🎙

Meme 4

dani ⬡
@danibucaro

Follow

hillary: looks into the camera like she's on the office

Meme 5

Sources

Meme definition:
https://www.google.co.uk/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=meme+definition&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&gfe_rd=cr&ei=wz9MWPi3Ounv8AfBzJmIAw

Inappropriate audition song meme explained:
http://memedocumentation.tumblr.com/post/111253461740/explained-inappropriate-audition-songs-meme

Meme 1: http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/2016-Election/ss/Presidential-Debate-Memes.htm

Meme 2: http://www.oddee.com/item_99833.aspx

Memes 3 and 4: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3809348/One-two-President-Web-users-make-fun-furious-debate-hilarious-memes-mock-Trump-having-sniffles.html

Meme 5: http://elitedaily.com/news/politics/clinton-trump-debate-memes/1624730/

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Börzsei, L (2013). Makes a Meme Instead: A Conscise History of Internet Memes. From the Selected Works of Linda Börzsei, available online: https://works.bepress.com/linda_borzsei/2/ [last accessed 10/12/16]

Topic 2: Remediation

There are many different ways that a media text can be remediated, as Bolter and Grusin (2000) outline. However, as Guins (2005) points out, they "urge that remediation be used as a process of refashioning rather then repair and/or replacement" (17). This is the category of remediation that film reboots fall into; reboots take an existing film and 'refashion' (read: update) using new technologies in order to bring in a new audience. However, this can run the risk of alienating the existing fanbase of the original film, therefore writers and directors of reboots must find ways to appeal to both the new and original audience.

"How do reboots appeal to the fans of the original film as well as new audiences?" In order to answer this research question, one would need to use textual analysis of a film and discourse analysis of audience reactions, to see what the director and/or writers do, and how the audience responds to their attempts to appeal.

A recent film reboot that came under fire was Ghostbusters (2016). Many fans of the original Ghostbusters (1984) and Ghostbusters II (1989) flocked to the new film's trailer on YouTube, 'disliking' it until it became the most disliked trailer on the site, as well as earning a spot on the '100 most disliked videos' list, where it currently sits at #10 with 1.03m dislikes despite largely positive reviews from critics. However as the list also includes hit songs such as Adele's Hello (#31), Uptown Funk by Mark Ronson feat. Bruno Mars (#46), and Zayn's Pillowtalk at #49, it would appear that "the haters gonna hate hate hate", to quote Taylor Swift's Shake It Off (#27); the people who dislike something are more likely to express it and appear as the 'vocal majority' even if they are in fact the minority.

Much of the reaction against the new Ghostbusters is "outrage not only that the beloved comedy was being remade, but that the lead characters' genders would be altered," (Shoard, 2016), which begs the question is the hate towards the film valid (i.e. is it actually a bad film) or is it simply

misogyny, based on the horrible inaccurate cliché that 'women aren't funny' (Burnett, 2014 discusses this in an article for The Guardian, as does Krefting, 2014).

However, there are many things in the trailer that should appeal to the original audience, such as the main theme from the original theme song (which is remixed by various popular artists throughout the film, such as Fall Out Boy feat. Missy Elliott), familiar iconic things such as the fire station, a Cadillac (albeit a hearse) as the vehicle, the suits and weapons (both updated), and perhaps most noticeably the reuse of the original ghosts, such as the Slimer and the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man. The original logo and slogan are also used, and in the actual film, there are cameos from the original main cast members; Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd (executive producer on the reboot and the only previous cast member whose appearance was revealed prior to the first screenings), Sigourney Weaver, Ernie Hudson and Annie Potts (Polowy, 2016). Therefore it would be interesting to look into what audiences say their reasons are for liking or disliking the film and it's trailer are, and how the film attempts to prevent dislike.

Appendix

Ghostbusters (2016) trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3ugHP-yZXw

Most disliked videos on YouTube (playlist):
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLirAqAtI_h2o1ism1dr5SbvB8Mf7Ve6Aa

Sources

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Shoard, C (2016). Ghostbusters trailer is most disliked in YouTube history. Online, The Guardian. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/may/02/ghostbusters-trailer-most-disliked-in-youtube-history [last accessed 10/12/16]

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Guins, R (2005). Blood and Black Gloves on Shiny Discs. In Schnieder, S and Williams, T (2005). Horror International. Detroit, Wayne State University Press.

Topic 3: Activism

The internet has been great for aiding ~~in~~ the spread of news about issues, protests, etc, as well as in the circulation of forms of activism like online petitions. One group that is particularly known for taking advantage of the internet to do good is Anonymous, an international network of activists or 'hacktivists'. The opinions of the group vary from 'freedom fighters' and 'digital Robin Hoods' to 'cyber terrorists', and they have been featured on Time magazine's 2012 list of the 100 Most Influential People in the World (Wikipedia).

"Can digital activism work in creating positive change?" with reports of Anonymous in traditional news media (i.e. newspapers and magazines) as the case study is a potential question, using content analysis to see how many newspapers articles say 'yes, Anonymous has been a catalyst for change' or 'no, they haven't'. As well as this, it would need a discourse analysis looking at how newspapers report about the group in general, i.e. positively ('Anonymous hasn't made much change but they're doing some good', 'they've made lots of change and are great') or negatively ('Anonymous hasn't made much change and their methods are questionable', 'they're terrorists who have done nothing but bad things and are dangerous').

Articles that may be interesting to look at include Freedom fighters or vandals? No consensus on Anonymous (Matt Krupnick for the Mercury News, 2011), From Anonymous to shuttered websites, the evolution of online protest (Adam Carter for CBC News 2012), Anonymous members arrested for hacking (2014, and other Daily Mail articles), and Anonymous Unmasked (Chris Parker for the Huffington Post, 2014). An article by David Kushner for The New Yorker (2014) titled The Masked Avengers: How Anonymous incited online vigilantism from Tunisia to Ferguson gives good detail into attacks by Anonymous and off-shoot group PLF, as well as an idea of what various news media thought of the groups and what members thought of each other.

Much research in Anonymous as a group has been conducted, for instance in Brian Knappenberger's 2012 documentary We Are Legion, and Anonymous: From the Lulz to Collective

Action by Gabriella Coleman (2011), in which she discusses how while some the group is focused on political activism, many are just members for the 'lulz', and even those for whom the former applies, not all of them are there to do good; "the whole of the Anonymous cannot simply be reduced to cyber-lynching, nor can the whole of Anonymous be reduced to the forms of politics I have examined here".

This links to the 2014 New Yorker article, which claims that prominent member Christopher Doyon was initially against the idea of joining recruiting Anonymous members to the PLF due to an incident in which one or several malicious users changed a link on the Epilepsy Foundation's website so that it triggered a series of flashing coloured lights instead of linking to a discussion board; he was, however, persuaded by the PLF's leader 'Commander Adama' who "argued that the malicious hackers were a minority within Anonymous, and that the collective might inspire powerful new forms of activism." As such, Anonymous is a particularly interesting case study for the question "Can digital activism work in creating positive change?" as there is a wide range of articles that argue both sides, a lot of research into the group itself, and actions by members of the group that can be used to prove both sides.

Appendix of Magazine and Newspaper Articles

Krupnic, M (2011). Freedom fighters or vandals? No consensus on Anonymous. Online, Mercury News. Available from: http://www.mercurynews.com/2011/08/15/freedom-fighters-or-vandals-no-consensus-on-anonymous/ [last accessed 11/12/16]

Carter, A (2012). From Anonymous to shuttered websites, the evolution of online protest. Online, CBC News. Available from: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/from-anonymous-to-shuttered-websites-the-evolution-of-online-protest-1.1134948 [last accessed 11/12/16]

Unknown Author (2014). Anonymous members arrested for hacking. Online, Daily Mail. Available from: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/aap/article-2635793/Anonymous-members-arrested-hacking.html [last accessed 11/12/16]

Parker, C (2014). Anonymous Unmasked. Online, Huffington Post. Available from: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/high-times/anonymous-unmasked_b_5065038.html   [last accessed 11/12/16]

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Research Report

In what ways does slash fiction represent gay romance, and how does this impact gay people in real life?

On the popular **microblogging** social media site Tumblr, there has been a recent surge in discussion around the impact of how '**mlm**' relationships are represented in fan fiction. However, when looking into existing research, it became apparent that much of academia on **slash fiction** revolves around why people read and write these stories from a psychoanalysis stance. Therefore, this essay will be aiming to bring together these two differing angles to answer the question 'how does slash fiction impact gay people?'

Representation is important in any medium, however problems can arise when that representation is doing more harm than good, which some would argue is what **fanfic** does. On the one hand, it works towards normalizing mlm relationships, influencing society as a generation of internet users becomes used to seeing prominent LGBT+ characters, encouraging them to question texts that don't have this representation as not being an accurate reflection of our diverse society.

On the other hand however, as one Tumblr user called centrumlumina found in her unofficial 2013 **AO3** census, the average fanfic participant is a white heterosexual female aged 25 years old, which lines up with similar surveys by destinationtoast on Tumblr (2013) and FFN Research (2011). The fact that this is the main demographic of fanfic consumers suggests that it is less about representing minority groups in order to normalize them as discussed above, and more about the readers and writers deriving pleasure from these specific pairings. As the average fic is about a **m/m** pairing, this raises questions about why straight women find stories about gay men more interesting than stories about heterosexual relationships or even lesbian relationships (which is discussed in many existing psychoanalytical articles on the topic), but is also causing concern for some mlm men as they are worried their relationships are becoming fetishised.

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Literature Review

Why people read and write fic is one of the topics discussed by Mark Duffett in his book Understanding Fandom (2013), which offers a good base understanding of fandoms in general as well as discussing fanfic specifically. Chapter 6, 'Fan Practices,' discusses types of fic, why audiences participate in reading and writing fic, as well as outlining issues that both fans and creators of the original text have, giving an interesting insight into the opinions of audience members as well as industry members. Chapter 7, 'Fandom, Gender and Sexual Orientation,' while not specifically on fanfiction, talks about the 'obsessive **fangirl**' stereotype and how even male fans are "perceived as 'feminized and/or desexualized through their intimate engagements'" with fandom (p. 206). He also notes that this 'gender trouble' can be deliberate in some cases; "rejecting or adopting norms associated with gender can be a kind of strategic activity, designed to create an advantageous result," (ibid) particularly when fans are interacting with (i.e. meeting face-to-face or writing a letter to) their fandom 'hero' (such as an actor, director, author, or Duffett's example of musician).

Henry Jenkins covers a wide range of points on fan writing and slash fiction in his book Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture (2005). He takes the view that slash "may be fandom's most original contribution to the field of popular literature" (p. 193), but makes sure to provide a balanced view of the good and bad points of fanfic. He says that "slash… has many progressive elements" (p. 225), though there is a separation between society in each fic's 'universe' and the society we live in, which some fans are concerned about (p. 225-6), particularly in regards to sexual politics, misogyny ('bashing' of the female characters, particularly those who have had **canon** relations with either of the pairing characters), a scarcity of **wlw** fics or even a denial that wlw fans/characters exist, and – perhaps most surprising – homophobic elements (i.e. fan writers maintaining that the characters aren't gay, they just made an exception for each other,

linking to the idea of the author/reader positioning themselves as either of the characters in order to 'have' the other). Jenkins also discusses what fic is, types of fics, its implication on gender and sexuality, as well as noting that "fan writers are beginning to construct new narratives addressing [the concerns outlined above] and in the process, to redefine the slash genre in accordance with greater political awareness of sexual politics" (p. 226), and thus they are shifting towards a "political alignment with the gay community as they examine the implications of their own writing" (p. 227), as this essay will be doing.

In her essay Male Pair-Bonds and Female Desire in Fan Slash Writing (1998), Mirna Cicioni agrees with Jenkins that "although not all of [slash] is politically conscious, progressive, of feminist, it has considerable progressive potential because it 'provide[s] common terms within which a dialogue about the politics of sexuality may be conducted'" (p. 174). She states that slash stories are "not a discourse about homosexuality, but rather fantasies that articulate women's desires concerning relationships in which men are involved" (p. 154), also noting that the genre "has more subversive potential than [mainstream] romance fiction" (p. 175). She claims that the original texts, often aimed at male audiences, are "appropriated in order for notions of masculinity to be reconstructed and for women's desires to be at the same time expressed and displaced" (p. 159), linking to Duffett's claims that slash breaks traditional notions of gender and sexual expression. Cicioni discusses previous analyses by Russ (1985) and Penley (1992), saying she is "entirely convinced by [their] view that slash sex scenes reflect what some heterosexual women find arousing and what they would like to experience in sex with men" (p. 167). However, she goes on to say (p. 168) that she disagrees with their "identification of slash with porn," as she agrees with Longino's (1980) definition of porn as "sexual behaviour that is degrading or abusive to one or more of the participants in such a way as to endorse the degradation even if the person has chosen or consented to it" (Cicioni, 1998; 168; emphasis in original). While I may also agree that slashfic and porn have many differences, I disagree with this definition as I would argue

pornography itself is not inherently abusive or degrading, but rather the porn industry and society's view of sex workers creates the idea that 'porn = bad' for viewers and those participating in the scenes on-screen. Sex scenes in slashfic and porn are similar in some ways, namely that they both show two or more people participating in sexual activities, therefore I believe it may be helpful to compare the two when analysing the representation of how participants of fictional sex scenes are treated, even if the analysis is primarily looking at just slash.

Cornel Sandvoss references both Cicioni and Jenkins in his book Fans: The Mirror of Consumption (2005), explaining and expanding on many of their ideas, such as why audiences turn to fanfiction; "their activity is a response to their everyday life struggles and deprivations and the lack of opportunity to counter these within the dominant power system" (p. 26). This links to Cicioni's view that the authors and readers of fanfic have "a pessimistic unease about the institution of heterosexuality" (1998, p. 169), as the 'dominant power system' that enforces heterosexuality and its gender roles makes the women feel trapped in these roles. As Cicioni describes it, fanfiction is "a safety valve for the stress women experience in their daily lives and in their relationships with men" (ibid, p. 174), as well as for "the common and inevitable tension between the inner drives and cultural taboos" (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 78); in other words, fanfiction allows the participant to let off steam and/or ignore the 'real world' in which she is constrained by society, particularly with regards to her sexual autonomy, while allowing her to privately explore her sexuality without outside judgment.

Methodology

This essay will use a combination of a discourse analysis of fanfics to find examples of potentially problematic aspects, and virtual ethnography to see what Tumblr users are saying about the topic.

This combination of methodologies should provide a well-rounded data source of audience's views on the subject, as well as giving examples of how fics can be seen as encouraging fetishization.

Creating a survey that asked people's opinions of fanfic (i.e. "do you think it is a good source of representation") would be one way to gauge whether people as a whole think slash is problematic or not, however only a small sample of fanfic audiences would likely answer the survey, which will potentially cause biased results if the respondents are all of similar age/fandom/interests/etc, which they are likely to be as the survey would be shared by peers on social media sites such as Tumblr. This is quite a big limitation and is why virtual ethnography will be the primary methodology. The posts that will be analysed under this are more likely to be spur of the moment, 'straight from the heart' responses as the OP will likely not have been prompted into creating the post by someone asking a question, and is therefore less likely to be led into giving a certain answer.

It is also important to note that the discourse analysis is mostly for finding examples of what audiences are talking about, and therefore could be read in different ways depending on the background of the reader, as suggested by Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding theory (1973). Therefore the reading that is being discussed of the fanfics may not be my personal reading as a consumer of fanfic, but rather an attempt to view the texts from the point of view of a mlm male based on people's opinions on Tumblr. If I had more time, words, and resources, I would conduct interviews with mlm men about their thoughts on fanfic as a source of representation, and therefore would be able to get a more accurate idea of how being mlm impacts their reading of the texts, and how the texts have impacted them as mlm.

Analysis

"We are not sinful; stop fetishizing us"
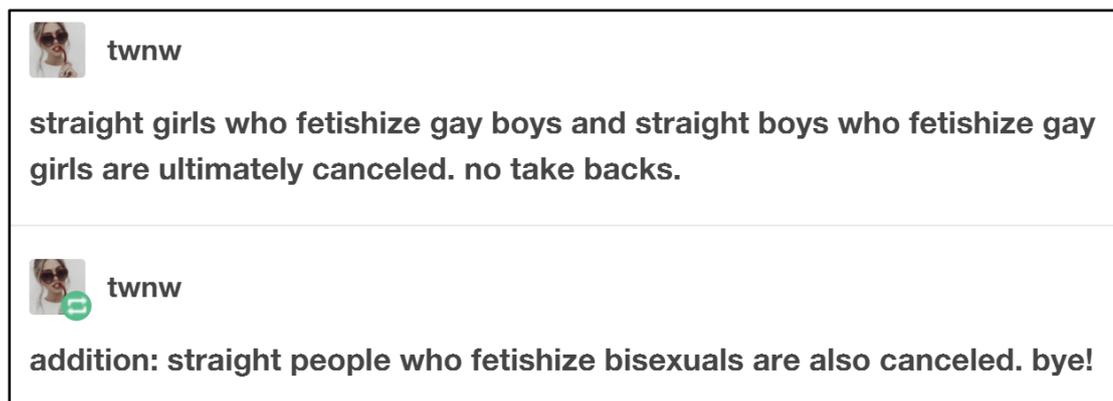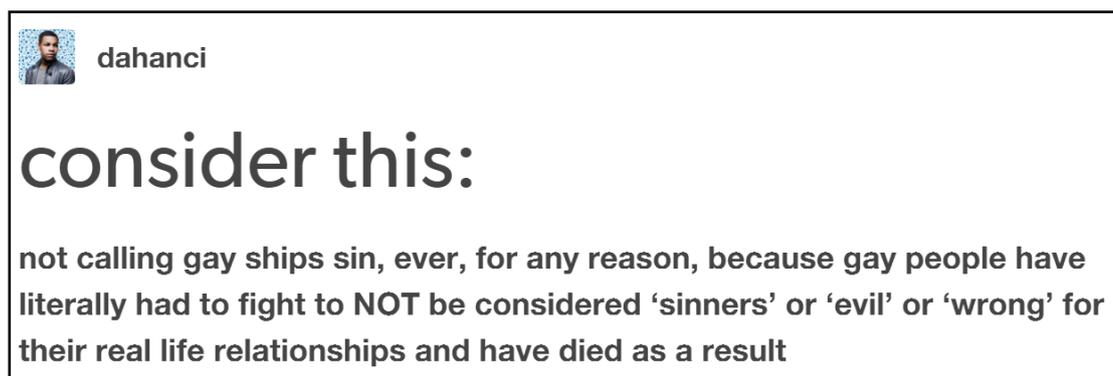

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Recently, the fetishization of mlm ships has been a topic of concern on Tumblr, with many

gay/mlm people asking for straight girls to stop shipping male characters together as they feel

that their relationships and/or their love is being reduced to nothing more than sex for the

voyeuristic pleasure for the female readers, particularly as many slash fans are in the habit of

calling these ships 'trash', etc. Due to a quirk of internet language, the use of hyperbolic language

such as calling oneself 'trash' for an object of fandom (i.e. "I am no. 1 Captain America Trash" is

a way of saying "I am Captain America's number 1 fan") is common in discussions between fans.

However, this can cause problems depending on the context of what the fan is calling themself 'trash' for. Tumblr user 99cc00 talks bout this in a lengthy rant titled 'a simple guide for straighties';

- if you call a gay couple sin: it's homophobic. why? because gay people were killed for years for being sinners. its not fucking rocket science
- if you call a gay couple 'disgusting; or 'trash' or 'disgusting trash' or call yourself 'trash' or 'disgusting' or 'disgusting trash' for liking it: its homophobic. why?? because youre implying that by liking a gay couple youre bad! youre implying that couples are dirty and nothing more!

"but i do the same for straight couples!"
and i dont fucking care. different words have different effects depending on the subject. dont act like its not some brand spanking new concept because we both know its not
(All mistakes and emphasis in original)

<u>Female desire, gender trouble, and heterosexualisation</u>

As mentioned in the introduction, the vast majority of fic is written and read by (usually heterosexual and cisgender) women. Thus, as Jenkins acknowledges: "Both fan and academic writers characterize slash as a projection of female sexual fantasies, desires, and experiences onto the male bodies of the series characters" (2005, 197). This leads to the first way in which slash fiction impacts mlm people in real life; because of who primarily reads and writes slash, they are "not discourses about homosexuality, but rather fantasies that articulate women's desires concerning their relationships in which men are involved" (i.e. their hetero relationships) (Cicioni, 1998; 154), which causes fics to blur the lines of gender roles and can even "heterosexualise" (ibid, p. 173) the 'supposed-to-be-gay' relationships they portray.

It must be acknowledged here that the breaking of gender roles that can occur in fics is not inherently a bad thing; on the contrary, "the representation of men discovering their own capacity for openness and tenderness" (ibid, p. 161) and other typically 'feminine' traits is one of the ways that makes slash "a genre about the limitations of traditional masculinity and about reconfiguring male identity" (Jenkins, 2005; p. 196). As our society's view of what masculinity should be can be toxic, media texts that show an alternative of what masculinity could be should in fact be

considered progressive. However, as the primary audience is women (who may feel second-hand effects of masculinity but not experience first-hand what it's like to have these ideals thrust upon them), this does not make slash progressive as it's by and for women who incorporate their usually already formed ideals of a man, and therefore it has little to no influence in this regard on the audience.

The heterosexualisation of the gay couple portrayed in a fic happens via one of the men being described as having 'masculine' traits, and the other as having 'feminine' traits, both usually via physical descriptors but also in their mannerisms and characterization. Obviously, a male character being described with 'masculine' traits isn't exactly strange, but the 'feminization' of male characters – usually the one who 'bottoms' in the relationship – suggests that one must be submissive, weaker, and 'feminine' to enjoy bottoming, causing problems when this reflects back to society.

> *"This polarization of the [male] partne*rs into one who is rational and dominant and one who *is emotional and submissive"* – in other words, one who fills the 'male' role and one who fills the 'female' role in the relationship – *"has been criticized in very strong terms in letterzine* discussions as totally inconsistent not only with the original characterizations, but also with *the basic notion of slash as a fantasy involving two equal partners"* (Cicioni, 1998; 173)

This quote from Cicioni ~~obviously~~ causes problems as it suggests that heterosexual partners are fundamentally and unavoidably 'unequal', but also highlights that many fans dislike '**OOC**' writing such as this because they want their **ship** to be portrayed as consistent with the original text and not twisted to fit into heteronormative ideals.

Slash as political texts and 'good' fans

"Slash fans charge that most stories ignore the political dimensions of sexual preference" (Jenkins, 2005; 226). In other words, most slash fics refrain from being political, which may be due to readers wanting an 'escape' from reality. However, problems then arise when readers/writers don't acknowledge that fantasy – such as slash – doesn't exist in a vacuum isolated from society, and instead reflects people's ideals and beliefs and like any other media text can have an impact on those who read it by introducing new and different ideas and points of view. Duffett (2013) looks at both sides of the argument:

> *"Critics of slash argue that it… isolates characters from the real issue of the gay lifestyle…* The counterargument is that as a dramatic genre, slash has no duty to accurately reflect gay male experience. It is, after all, fantasy *fiction which makes no claims to represent he truth."* (p. 177)

However, I would argue that all media texts – including slash and other genres of fic – do have a 'duty' to provide fair and accurate representations of the characters, even if the fics aren't about gay political issues such as AIDS, etc. but instead just show alternative lifestyles and things that don't fit into the 'norm' without demonizing them.

Sex on Legs in Six Inch Heels by Tessa Crowley – a **Drarry** fic in which Draco Malfoy is portrayed as "an androgynous fashionista" – is an example of a fic that does this in regards to the feminization of characters via **androgyneity** and '**cross-dressing'**. Set after the last Harry Potter book (but disregarding the epilogue), Harry works as an Auror and is asked to persuade renowned curse-breaker Draco to aid the Ministry for Magic in solving a case. Harry is surprised when he finds Draco wearing Muggle women's clothes, including 6-inch Prada heels. The following conversation occurs when Harry questions him about his outfit:

> [Draco:] "What's wrong with my outfit?"
> Harry soured. "It's so – feminine."
> "And what's so offensive about femininity?"
> "Nothing! That's not what I meant," he said. "It's just that you are a bloke, Malfoy."

He rolled his eyes. "Well-spotted," he replied, before turning his back again. Click-click, several inches to the right. Harry suppressed the urge to punch him. "Your veiled sexism is duly noted, however."

"What? Oh, come off it, Malfoy, I'm not sexist."

"Not overtly, maybe." Click-click, about a foot away. "But I have a sneaking suspicion that if I were a woman wearing a three-piece suit, you wouldn't be so huffy about it. If a woman wears men's clothes, no one bats an eye – but if a man wears heels, society fucking crumbles. Why would a man want to be more like a woman, after all?"

Harry opened his mouth to reply, but shut it quite abruptly.

Click-click, a few more feet away.

"There's nothing wrong with being feminine because there's nothing wrong with being a woman," Malfoy continued, though most of his attention was now on the floor, where he was click-clicking. "I like the way I dress. If I didn't, I wouldn't dress this way."

As the fic is written from Harry's point of view, it could be argued that this is only included by Crowley in order for her to separate herself from his mindset that 'man in woman's clothes = bad,' though it may also be to normalize this idea to readers who were previously of the same mindset as Harry. This is an example of what Penley (in Hills, 2002) calls "'good' fans" who "show a strongly psychoanalytic understanding of the relation of the unconscious to everyday life," (p. 102).

In stark contrast to Penley's 'good' fans, Cicioni claims that fans don't want to read or write about gay politics. She quotes a fan author who believes that the "avoidance of gay politics [is] due to implicit homophobia" (1998; 169):

"What bothers me is a vague suspicion that there are a whole lot of other writers who find homosexuality sort of icky. After all, homosexuality is being… queer, isn't it? And queers are effeminate and they *have nasty diseases from doing gross things, don't they? And out boys* would never do things like that, would they? (The Hatstand Express #16, referenced in ibid).

And while Cicioni maintains that "although the majority of slash texts avoid specifically gay issues, most slash fans are opposed to discrimination and homophobia," (ibid, p. 175), this is, frankly, debatable, as it's one thing to say that one is against homophobia, but another thing entirely to avoid unconsciously or inadvertently being homophobic, particularly if one is not well-versed in what can classify as 'subconscious homophobia', which is why people such as 99cc00 are trying

(albeit understandably not in the most friendly way) to educate people on why, for instance, calling a gay ship 'trash' or 'sinful' has different connotations to calling a het ship these things.

Conclusion

This essay has discussed some of the ways in which mlm couples are represented in slashfic, and, by using examples of posts by Tumblr users, has touched upon how this can – and does – affect mlm people in real life. One thing that must be noted, is what Jenkins (2005; 227) calls fic's "progressive potential", in that when written well with accurate representations of mlm relationships and gay politics, slash can bring its readers and writers "into a political alignment with the gay community as they examine the implications of their own writing."

Further research into this topic would include expanding upon the points that have already been made in this essay, particularly into "dom/sub roles and negative feminization," as I would like to explore where this trope came from (Japanese **yaoi** anime) and the effect of that. Looking specifically at the 'mpreg' subgenre of slash may also bring some interesting conclusions about feminization of characters and therefore the heterosexualisation of the pairing, and as statistical data collection and analysis has already been done by people such as snowgall (2015) on LiveJournal, this would be a do-able research topic.

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Appendix
Figure 1
Original post available from: http://polysamory.co.vu/post/152583953786/every-time-a-straight-person-has-a-gay-ship-and [last accessed 09/12/16]

Figure 2
Original post available from:
https://that-regular-chick.tumblr.com/post/153962565044/twnw-twnw-straight-girls-who-fetishize-gay [last accessed 09/12/16]

Figure 3:
Original post is no longer available due to the blog being deleted. The writer of the post is now at http://dahanci.tumblr.com

Glossary
Androgyneity – as defined by Babylon's free dictionary; "condition of having both male and female characteristics with neither being dominant." Draco, for instance, is portrayed as androgynous as he is male but chooses to wear 'female' clothing.
AO3 – abbreviation of Archive Of Our Own, a popular site for posting and reading fanfic on.

Canon – 'truths' from the original text, i.e. it is canon that Harry Potter has a lightning bolt shaped scar on his forehead.
Cis – short for 'cisgender' – a person who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth based on their genitals.
Cross-dressing – when a man wears a dress, skirt, or other 'woman's' clothing and (to a much lesser extent as the fic quote discusses) vice versa. Can cause problems as it can be seen as a negative thing (as Harry initially sees it in the quote) and also can be done in a transphobic manner, i.e. portraying a transwoman as simply a man in a dress. It also brings up the argument that 'clothes are just bits of fabric and don't have gender' and one's assigned gender (i.e. boy, girl) should not have an effect of what they are and aren't 'allowed' to wear by society. This is indicated by the use of single quotation marks.

Drarry – the Draco/Harry **ship name**.

Fan fiction (aka fic, fanfic, slashfic, slash fiction) – stories written by fans on characters/people in fandom canon. Slashfic refers specifically to mlm fanfic; the wlw equivalent is femslash or 'saffic' (from joining Sapphic and fiction).
Fangirl/boy – a (sometimes derogatory) term for someone who is a fan, usually who participates in their fandom heavily and is very knowledgeable about the original text.
Fanon – what is accepted as 'truth' by (usually a majority of) fans, i.e. Hermione Granger is often depicted as black (this originated due to the book description of her hair, and became canon as the actresses of her and her daughter in the original performances of Harry Potter and the Cursed Child are black/mixed race).

Het/hetero – short for heterosexual; 'straight'.

M/M – describing a male/male pairing. Female equivalent is f/f.
Microblogging – small posts that may include text, images, video, audio, etc. made on sites such as Tumblr and Twitter, though the former does allow longer posts that can be hidden under a 'read more' button.

'mlm' – abbreviated from 'man loves man' or 'men (who) love men', used as a descriptor for fanfics and gay men.

Mpreg – in which a (usually cisgender) male get pregnant due to circumstances usually explained in the fic, though it may not be if the fic is short and occurs post-pregnancy. One of the more unusual alternate universe tropes that fanfic has produced, it '**squicks**' a lot of people and others find it very transphobic, as instead of explaining the pregnancy as 'they were assigned female at birth but identify as a male but haven't had gender reassignment surgery yet and so still have a uterus', it's explained in other ways (such as in Harry Potter, the reason is often simply 'magic').

OOC – 'out of character'. When the characterization of a character in a fic deviates from how they are characterized in canon.

OP – abbreviation of original poster. The first person to make a post or start a comment thread.

OTP – abbreviation of 'one true pairing'. A fan's favourite ship, e.g. "Mavin is my OTP! I love them so much, they have such great chemistry!" Can be adapted for poly relationships by changing the 'P' to a number (i.e. OT3), and by understanding the fandom context someone may be able to differentiate between which ship is being discussed. For instance, people in the Rooster Teeth/Achievement Hunter fandom understand 'OT6' as Geoff/Jack/Michael/Gavin/Ray/Ryan, though due to 'canon changes' (these are real people who work for a company that makes videos on YouTube, which Ray left to become a full-time Twitch streamer and was replaced by Jeremy), newer fans are likely to swap out Ray for Jeremy, and may even not know who 'Ray' is.

Pairing – two characters that have been 'shipped' together in a relationship.

Ship (noun) – derived from 'relationship', another phrase for pairing, though 'ship' is more polyamorous friendly.

Ship (verb) – when one thinks two (or more) characters would work well in a relationship. The act of 'shipping' is participating in the community of that ship, whether this be reading/writing fanfic, creating/enjoying fanart, or simply discussing the ship with others online or face-to-face.

Ship name – a name for a ship, often derived from combining the characters names, e.g. Drarry (Draco/Harry), Mavindseg (Michael/Gavin/Lindsay/Meg)

Slash – (see fan fiction). Originated from Kirk/Spock (K/S) fanfic where the two characters are separated by a forward slash. Much fanfic still uses this (for instance in AO3 tags so that readers can search for fics with specific pairings), though 'ship names' are also popular.

Squick – when someone is 'squicked' by something, they are 'grossed out' by it. A term that has somewhat fallen out of use that is handy for differentiating between 'grossed out' and 'triggered', which is a far more serious issue.

Yaoi – Japanese 'bl' (boy's love) genre that is known for explicitly fetishizing mlm.