History play: critical and creative engagement with Shakespeare's tetralogies in transformative fanworks

Kavita Mudan Finn

To cite this article: Kavita Mudan Finn (2016): History play: critical and creative engagement with Shakespeare's tetralogies in transformative fanworks, Shakespeare

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17450918.2016.1150339

Published online: 16 Mar 2016.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data
History play: critical and creative engagement with Shakespeare’s
tetralogies in transformative fanworks

Kavita Mudan Finn
Independent Scholar

**ABSTRACT**
Many academic discussions of fanworks – also called transformative works – tend to make a clear distinction between “texts” valued by fans (e.g. film and television) and those with greater cultural capital (e.g. Shakespeare and Austen) that in many ways ignores the complexity and heterogeneity of fandom itself. This article argues that fanfiction based on Shakespeare’s plays offers an alternate form of creative engagement and interpretation that mimics the interplay between producers and consumers of texts during the period in which Shakespeare was writing. Using the small and relatively insular fandom devoted to the English history plays, I consider fan authors’ approaches to female characters in particular, and related issues of gender and sexuality, as a test case for studying fanfiction not just as a creative response to Shakespeare, but also as a critical lens through which marginalised groups can engage with the plays.

**KEYWORDS**
Gender studies; history plays; medieval; historiography; social media; fan studies

In June 2012, as part of the BBC’s filmed adaptation of Shakespeare’s second history tetralogy titled *The Hollow Crown*, Rupert Goold directed Ben Whishaw as Richard II opposite Rory Kinnear as Henry Bolingbroke. Later that year, two fans on the social networking site Tumblr spliced together clips from Goold’s *Richard II* and reworked them into music videos, both featuring songs by popular female artists. The first, set to Taylor Swift’s “We Are Never Getting Back Together”, tells a love story from Henry’s perspective, casting Richard as the boy with whom he is never getting back together “like, ever” (Riley). The second features Tata Young’s “Sexy, Naughty, Bitchy” over Whishaw’s most flamboyant moments, thereby not only coding him as feminine, but subversively, transgressively feminine (rootingformephistopheles, “THIS IS THE REASON”). Both videos draw on the homoeroticism highlighted throughout Goold’s production, and although meant to be humorous, nonetheless present an alternate reading of Shakespeare’s text, one that foregrounds its own engagement with the ambiguous relationship between gender, sexuality and political power (see Rackin and Howard 137–59; Menon 35–67; Frost, “A Kyng”; Brown). Furthermore, they make certain assumptions about the source material without which the humour does not function; not only does one need to be aware that the clips are from a production of *Richard II* – because there is no spoken dialogue in either video – one also needs to match the song lyrics to certain *fannish* tropes surrounding the play, most notably the suggestion of a romantic relationship between Richard and Henry.
Many recent studies have illustrated the complexities of early modern reader and audience engagement with historical poetry, prose and drama. As the sixteenth century progressed in England, according to D.R. Woolf, the traditional medieval chronicle gave way to a “much-changed marketplace for history”, one that appealed to a wider audience (Woolf 8). For instance, church sermons often included historical anecdotes, historical *exempla* (particularly from Greek and Roman sources) were among the primary tools for moral and political instruction, and the understanding of contemporary politics depended as much on knowledge of history – classical and recent alike – as it did on any sort of overarching political theory. The collection of historical poetry *A Mirror for Magistrates*, first printed in 1559 and appearing in seven editions and six reissues before 1621, was a runaway bestseller whose initial purpose, Scott Lucas has argued, “was to shape readers’ responses to current and ongoing political acts of their time, and their method was the creation of topically applicable historical exempla” (Lucas 3). The last two decades of the sixteenth century, furthermore, saw the meteoric rise of the early modern history play, popularised by writers as diverse as Thomas Lodge, Michael Drayton, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Heywood, George Peele and, of course, William Shakespeare, and which formed a reliable draw for audiences both in London and on tour (see Grant and Ravelhofer; Walsh). Although modern scholarly study of Shakespeare in many ways mimics this kind of cultural engagement and the two often intersect, my contention here is that the closest modern analogue is in fact a niche audience that brings to these plays not only analysis, but the sort of *emotional*, affective response that Thomas Nashe evokes when he describes “tens of thousands of spectators” weeping at the death of John Talbot in a 1592 production of *Henry VI, Part I* – the same response that drove Shakespeare’s contemporary poets Samuel Daniel and Michael Drayton to extrapolate further in printed verse upon what Shakespeare had written for the stage (Nashe, sig. H2r). I am speaking of Shakespeare fans.

**Shakespeare and fan studies**

Early academic discussions of fanworks usually distinguished between “texts” valued by fans (e.g. film and television) and those with greater cultural capital (e.g. Shakespeare and Austen), although more recent studies have argued that the boundaries are more permeable (see Pugh, *Democratic Genre*). In his first book engaging with fan studies, *Textual Poachers* (1992), Henry Jenkins asks rhetorically whether the “close attention, careful rereading, intense discussion, even the decipherment of texts in foreign or archaic languages” that fans of *Star Trek* employ would be more socially acceptable if applied – as indeed they are in academia – to the works of William Shakespeare (54). This perceived dichotomy between “appropriate” and “inappropriate” outlets for emotional engagement with texts is itself a formulation of Pierre Bourdieu’s distinction between the *pure gaze* – drawing on specialist knowledge and impartial analysis – and the *popular aesthetic*, which pursues the “continuity between art and life” and applies the same, admittedly biased, standards to both (Bourdieu 4). I will be focusing primarily on written fanworks for the purposes of this article, although the videos with which I began were both created by fans who also write fanfiction and thus reflect many of the same interpretative choices.

More than a dozen years after the publication of *Textual Poachers*, Jenkins presented the following formulation on his blog in response to a critical review of his 2006 book *Convergence Culture* by law professor Randy Picker:

> Fan fiction extrapolates more broadly beyond what is explicitly stated in the text than do most conventional critical essays and may include the active appropriation and transformation of the characters as presented but even here, I would argue that the point of situating the characters in a different historical context, say, or in another genre is to show what makes these characters tick and how they might well remain the same (or be radically different) if they operated in another time and place. Fan fiction is speculative but that does not mean that it is not at its core interpretative. (Jenkins, “Fan Fiction”)

Before considering Shakespeare-based fanfiction in detail, it seems advisable to provide some general background information and define some terms up front. Fanfiction, also known within fan communities as *fanfic* or, more simply, *fic*, has long been dismissed as “derivative” or “appropriative” in light
of its reliance on pre-existing – often copyrighted – material, and fan studies scholars have sought alternate terminology that does not automatically place these texts in a subordinate position. For instance, according to the definition posted on the website for the Organization for Transformative Works, a non-profit group formed to defend fans from charges of copyright infringement, a transformative work “takes something extant and turns it into something with a new purpose, sensibility, or mode of expression”. This blanket term includes both fanfiction and commercially produced adaptations and retellings without necessarily distinguishing between them. In 2006, Abigail Derecho coined the term “archontic literature” (after Derrida) with the following definition:

A literature that is archontic is a literature composed of texts that are archival in nature and that are impelled by the same archontic principle: that tendency toward enlargement and accretion that all archives possess. Archontic texts are not delimited properties with definite borders that can be transgressed. So all texts that build on a previously existing text are not lesser than the source text, and they do not violate the boundaries of the source text; rather, they only add to that text’s archive, becoming a part of the archive and expanding it. An archontic text allows, or even invites, writers to enter it, select specific items they find useful, make new artefacts using those found objects, and deposit the newly made work back into the source text’s archive. (Derecho 64–65)

Even Derecho admits, however, that the concept of archontic literature, like transformative work, may be too broad to effectively situate fanworks and fan authors in relation to the texts to which they are responding. This prompted Catherine Tosenberger to revise Derecho’s terminology from “archontic” to “recursive” literature.

In a textual sense, it marks a specific, and active relationship between texts; “recursive” implies interaction between texts in a way that “archontic” does not: while the metaphor of the archive is an excellent description of the fact that literature accumulates more literature and draws it to itself, I believe “recursion” is a better description of that process of accumulation. “Archontic” refers to a space, “recursive” refers to an action: given the choice, I prefer the term that contains the greater assumption of agency, of action, for the activities of fans. (Tosenberger 20)

This shift in perception from an ever-growing archive into which knowledge is poured to a circular conversation between authors and readers is small but significant, and it is in this context that the early modern period provides a useful analogue. Conversation – between fan authors, fan artists and those who consume their works – is the primary currency within fan communities (also called fandoms), whether conducted through in-person meetings at conventions or on the Internet in chatrooms or on blogging platforms such as Livejournal, Dreamwidth or Tumblr. Fan archives, whether for fiction or art, also contain apparatus for readers and viewers to leave comments on specific fanworks and leaving feedback is encouraged within the fandom, albeit with some caveats.¹

Recent scholarship on the use and abuse of “conversation” in early modern England has highlighted the role of textual and authorial conversations as a major component of early print culture (see Lesser and Robinson; Larson; Bennett). Writers were borrowing characters, interpretations and tropes from one another at least partly to appeal to certain niche audiences already familiar with that fanon, thus forming a similar recursive loop to fanfic writers today.

As Douglas Lanier remarks in his 2002 study Shakespeare and Popular Culture, one of the challenges of “Shakespop” (his term) is the widely held belief that it represents an unwillingness to deal with the challenges of sixteenth-century language and the complexities of the source text.

To appreciate Shakespop’s capacity for nuance, we need to be fully familiar with pop cultural conventions, for what seems simplistic is often ringing with subtle changes on pop formulae, not unlike Shakespeare’s variations on the generic conventions of early modern theatre. We should also recognize that Shakespop’s significance emerges primarily from its intertextuality, the specific, often complex encounter it stages between pop convention, Shakespeare, and the cultural interests for which they stand. (Lanier 99–100)

Scholars in fan studies have similarly highlighted the intertextuality of fanfiction as it balances adherence to the source material (canon) with authorial interpretation. Although there are examples, particularly in the past few years, of writers turning fanfiction into published fiction – Cassandra Clare and E.L. James being the most notorious – Anne Jamison makes the specific distinction in her 2013
study *Fic: Why Fanfiction is Taking Over the World* that “a work of fic might stand on its own as a story – it might be intelligible to readers unfamiliar with its source – but that’s not its point” (14). The intertextual conversation, she argues, is central to the very notion of fanfiction.

From a legal and practical standpoint, Shakespeare’s plays, Chaucer’s poetry, historical RPF (Real Person Fiction or stand-alone fanfiction about historical figures (not to be confused with fanfiction based on specific historical novels), classical mythology, and folk/fairy tales fall under public domain and are therefore not subject to the same threats of copyright infringement that challenge fans of film, television and popular books. Discussions of “literary” fandoms, therefore, remain primarily on the sidelines of fan studies, except for the general consensus among fans and those who study them that most canonical literature is in fact fanfiction in its broadest sense. Examples include readings of Virgil’s *Aeneid* as an unauthorised sequel to Homer’s *Iliad*, or the emphasis on Shakespeare as an adaptor of pre-existing texts, as well as more modern works such as Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), a retelling of *Jane Eyre*, or Geraldine Brooks’ Pulitzer Prize-winning *March* (2005), based on *Little Women*. A more fruitful line of enquiry, however, might be to extrapolate forward rather than backward, positioning contemporary fanfiction as a logical extension of the kind of interpretative cross-pollination between producers and consumers of texts that frequently occurred during the medieval and early modern periods but was eventually abandoned in favour of the Romantic model of individual inspiration and its commercial arm, copyright.

As Lanier makes clear, the perception of Shakespeare’s characters as extratextual beings existed at least as far back as John Boydell’s 1789 exhibition of engravings depicting characters “in their historical settings (not stage sets) and having an existence independent of those who played them” (Lanier 34). He also includes a brief discussion of Shakespeare fanfiction as an engagement with “Shakespeare through the lens of pop culture, because pop provides mass audiences widely shared models of plot construction, character, style, and ideology – in E.D. Hirsch’s term, a ‘cultured literacy’ – for making sense of narrative, canonical and popular” (85). However, given the parameters of his study, he only touches briefly on fanfiction and focuses primarily on commercially published works, such as John Fletcher’s *The Tamer Tam’d* (1611), a sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew*, or modern film adaptations such as *Forbidden Planet* (1956), which “transposes *The Tempest* into the conventions of 1950s space opera” (Lanier 90). This idea of characters as infinitely adaptable to different time periods, contexts, and scenarios is equally intrinsic to the writing of fanfiction – although fans engage closely with the universe of any given text that they are adapting, the primary draw for both authors and readers tends to be characters.

The rapid growth of Shakespeare adaptation studies since the publication of Lanier’s book in 2002 speaks to the popularity of transforming Shakespeare for modern audiences, whether in film, television, or print. Recently, for example, the Viking imprint of publisher Random House announced the Hogarth Series of Shakespeare-based novels from famous novelists such as Anne Tyler, Jeanette Winterson, Gillian Flynn, and Margaret Atwood whose publication would coincide with the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death in 2016. The television series *Sons of Anarchy* re-imagines the story of *Hamlet* in the context of a motorcycle gang, while Toni Morrison offers a radical re-envisioning of *Othello* through the eyes of Desdemona and the near-invisible character of her mother’s maid, Barbary, in *Desdemona*, a play that first opened in Vienna in 2011 and most recently premiered in Los Angeles in October 2015. On a smaller scale, a variety of crowdfunded web series on YouTube provide social media-based retellings of comedies and tragedies alike, such as *Nothing Much to Do* (*Much Ado About Nothing*), *Kate the Cursed* (*Taming of the Shrew*), *Lovely Little Losers* (*Love’s Labours Lost*), and *Jules and Monty* (*Romeo and Juliet*), among others (see Shaelit for a full list). In contrast to these adaptations, the not-for-profit fanfiction “published” on the Internet remains primarily within the fan community, thus suggesting an awareness of different audiences and differing authorial motivations. Other than Lanier’s brief inclusion in *Shakespeare and Popular Culture*, the most in-depth study of Shakespeare and fanfiction that I have found is a 2008 undergraduate thesis by Amelia Bitely. Three seminars at the Shakespeare Association of America conference have also engaged with the topic: “Approaches to Gender in Adaptations of Shakespeare” and
“Social Media Shakespeare” in 2013, as well as “Creative/Critical Approaches to Shakespeare” in 2014.³

In the case of Shakespeare, what, if anything, is the fundamental difference between fans rewriting plays on the Internet and the authors, filmmakers and television producers who do it for profit? Perhaps the difference lies not in the content or even in the perceived audience, but in the relationship between author and source text. Anna Wilson defines “fannish hermeneutics” as “a particular way of coming to know a text through love that includes an emotional engagement with a text and ‘active reading’ that involves imaginative labour and ‘talking back’ to the text” (Wilson 17). Her analysis is rooted in medieval devotional practice, which often encouraged readers to imagine themselves within biblical scenes, interacting with biblical figures – as seen, for example, in The Book of Margery Kempe, where Kempe has a vision of herself with the Virgin Mary, offering her comfort and a hot drink. Wilson compares this to a particular genre of fanfiction – the frequently derided self-insert protagonist nicknamed the “Mary Sue” – and while she is careful to distinguish between medieval and modern reading practices, she makes a convincing argument that scholars of both medieval culture and fan studies should pay attention to “the affectivity, identification, romantic or erotic investment, lack of respect for a text’s borders (manifesting in penetration, self-insertion, or invasion of the text), and above all the immaturity of this way of knowing” (Wilson 63).

This is not to say that professional adaptations of Shakespeare are not talking back to or emotionally invested in the texts they rewrite, but that they are doing so within a prescribed framework – a framework that garners considerably more respect from the reading and reviewing public. The “immaturity” Wilson partly credits for the affective resonance of fanfiction also leaves its producers vulnerable to public mockery. It is rare to find depictions of fan authors that do not dismiss them – in unself-consciously gendered terms – as young or middle-aged women who are wasting their time and who ought to know better. As such, attitudes toward professionally produced adaptations within the fandom are double-edged. It is not uncommon, for instance, to find text posts on Tumblr complaining that professionally produced fiction and other media do not fulfil the same emotional goals as fanfiction; in the Q&A session following a panel on fan spaces at the 2015 Popular Culture Association conference, for instance, one of the panelists commented that fanfiction, as a rule, contains greater diversity of perspective and more nuanced handling of sexuality than many pieces of published fiction. While treatment of these subjects is by no means perfect – there are screeds of criticism available for any given fandom, public domain or otherwise – the fact that they are being explored at all is worth taking into account.

Furthermore, the very mechanics of categorisation for fanfiction are manifestly different from those used for published fiction – instead of separating stories primarily by genre (mystery, romance, thriller, etc.), archives such as Fanfiction.net and Archive of Our Own allow users to search by character and romantic pairing and only secondarily by trope and genre. These archival choices, as well as tagging systems, summaries, author’s notes and other paratextual apparatus, offer a distinctly different reading experience from professionally published fiction. As the boundaries between published and unpublished fanworks continue to blur with the rise of self-publication and greater interaction between authors and readers through social media, however, it will become more difficult to distinguish between these two overlapping categories.

What I wish to explore here is the intersection of fan culture with not just Shakespeare, but with a subset of plays that have generally resisted integration into modern popular culture, especially in the USA: the eight plays comprising the two history “tetralogies”.⁴ Henry Jenkins’ description of fanfiction as both speculative and interpretative could easily apply to the poets and playwrights of the late sixteenth century as they took on historical subjects. The two parts of Henry IV, for instance, depict events from the early fifteenth century, but nobody would argue that the scenes in the Boar’s Head tavern or in Justice Shallow’s Gloucestershire are anything but purely Elizabethan – an argument borne out by the existence of The Merry Wives of Windsor, Shakespeare’s comedy spinoff starring the quasi-historical OC (original character) Sir John Falstaff. Indeed, Shakespeare acknowledges Falstaff’s popularity in the epilogue to Henry IV, Part II (1598), promising to continue the fat knight’s
story “unless already a be killed with your hard opinions” (28–29). Although the accuracy of the story cannot be fully verified and it appears for the first time in the eighteenth-century accounts of John Dennis and Nicholas Rowe, Shakespeare supposedly wrote *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at the behest of Queen Elizabeth, who “commanded him to continue it [Falstaff’s story] for one play more, and to show him in love” (Rowe 6). Shakespeare’s history plays, therefore, occupy a particular niche even within Shakespeare studies, balancing a variety of sources while also inspiring specific and direct responses from fellow playwrights, poets, and essayists, functioning in a similarly recursive way to contemporary fanworks.

An example of this kind of response can be seen in the repetition and dissemination of certain tropes in relation to specific historical characters. In *Henry VI Part II* (c. 1590), for instance, Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester, makes an anachronistic appearance as the rival to Queen Margaret, a thematically effective juxtaposition repeated and expanded upon in Michael Drayton’s verse collection *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, first published in 1597 and then in successive editions every year until 1603. The *Heroicall Epistles* apply the model of Ovid’s *Heroides* – a series of imagined love letters written by mythological characters – to English history, and it can easily be argued that Drayton draws as closely on Shakespeare’s two tetralogies as he does on the chronicle sources available to him. The modern-day writers, professional and otherwise, who experiment with Shakespeare’s histories are thus following in a long tradition. After all, the history plays are themselves crafted from the *canon* – a term appropriated from literary canon to refer to the specific fandom’s source material – of Edward Hall, Raphael Holinshed, John Stow and other chroniclers. Eleanor’s appearance in *2 Henry VI*, therefore, can be seen as an early modern example of *fanon*: an event “created by the fan community in a particular fandom and repeated pervasively throughout” (Hellekson and Busse 9). That Drayton and his contemporary Samuel Daniel were what we would now consider “fans” of Shakespeare seems a reasonable assumption based on their extensive use of material from his works in their poetry – indeed, Drayton makes an explicit reference to the *Rape of Lucrece* in his 1594 poem *Matilda* that, despite the speaker’s negative attitude to the subject matter, presents the poem itself in a positive light. Although he does not mention Shakespeare by name in the *Heroicall Epistles*, his account of Margaret of Anjou contains and indeed highlights a number of elements that only appear in *2 Henry VI* (see Finn, *Last Plantagenet*, 117–24). The emphasis on character as both the primary method of categorisation and as the main draw for readers – most of the historical figures Drayton includes in the *Heroicall Epistles* previously appeared either onstage or in other works of historical poetry – also aligns fanfiction more closely with popular history in the early modern period.

Further complicating the canon/fanon issue where history plays and fanfiction are concerned are the actual historical events and figures being depicted. If we assume Shakespeare’s plays, with their many instances of dramatic licence, to be the primary canon from which fanfiction authors are working, the historical record occupies an ambiguous place and authors negotiate this relationship in different ways. Part of this negotiation depends on the specific fan audience – a piece of fanfiction written for an organised exchange requires a balance between the original canon, a prompt provided by the intended recipient, and the author’s own interpretative angle, while an author writing for the fandom in general might use a different approach (see Turk; Hellekson). In the annual Yuletide fanfiction exchange, dedicated to small fandoms, for instance, there are distinct categories for history plays written by Shakespeare, Marlowe and Webster that exist alongside categories of historical RPF, delineated by time period, as well as works of modern historical fiction by Philippa Gregory, Dorothy Dunnett, Anya Seton, Sharon Kay Penman and others. Despite this archival compartmentalisation, Yuletide authors often move seamlessly between these categories, and – as will be discussed in detail later – it is not surprising to find elements from historical-but-not Shakespearean sources in Shakespeare fanfiction and vice versa.

A notable aspect of fandom in general and Shakespeare fandom in particular is that its members predominantly identify as female or genderqueer. Abigail Derecho, taking the long view from the seventeenth century to the twenty-first, codes fanworks as an act of subversion by a disempowered
author and uses commercially published examples alongside fanfiction to illustrate the particular affinity between women writers and this genre (Derecho 63). This parallels the association between women and historical fiction overall – along with the novelists listed earlier, Georgette Heyer’s *My Lord John* (1975) and Josephine Tey’s *The Daughter of Time* (1951) explicitly use Shakespeare’s plays (*1 and 2 Henry IV* and *Richard III*) as points of departure for their approaches to John of Lancaster and Richard of Gloucester, respectively (see Wallace; Cooper and Short).

Leaving aside for now the implications of a community of mostly women reworking one of the bastions of English literary canon, the small but prolific corner of the Internet devoted to Shakespeare’s histories also contains stories focused on female characters – in many cases, women who do not appear in the plays themselves, but were historically present for the events that occurred. This reverse engineering allows the writer to broaden the world of the play to include what Shakespeare did not, while maintaining – arguably – the play’s own integrity. Alongside these are the typical fandom explorations of gender-swapping, alternate universes (setting the events of the plays in different time periods) and homoeroticism (*slash fiction*), all of which interrogate both Elizabethan and modern gender norms in new and interesting ways.

Perhaps owing to necessary economies of doubling or just to streamline already complex plotlines, early modern history plays usually include a limited number of female parts. As such, many women who were historically present, and who appear in chronicle or non-dramatic sources such as *A Mirror for Magistrates*, are either briefly mentioned and do not appear or are absent altogether. Feminist critics have often found the histories frustrating in their perceived lack of female agency (see Rackin and Howard; Levine), so what can a discussion of *creative* engagement tell us about female readers and their relationship with Shakespearean canon? If, as Sheenagh Pugh notes, “people wrote fanfiction because they wanted either ‘more of’ their source material or ‘more from’ it”, it is worth considering fanfiction based on Shakespeare’s histories as a legitimate discourse generated by engagement with the plays’ own gender politics (Pugh, “Democratic Genre”). While fanfiction responding to other plays also demonstrates similar tendencies, what is striking about the fan community surrounding the histories is the willingness of fan writers to enlarge or indeed create new roles for women within plays that have largely resisted such incursions.

**The first tetralogy**

Fan authors writing about women in the history plays seek to provide them with motivation and agency, limited as it may be by circumstance. In this motivation, they are not far removed from writers of published historical fiction, biographers, and even academics. “Game of Roses” by Feste, for instance, filters the events of the *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III* through the eyes of Queen Elizabeth, who is warned early in the story by her father

> Learn to conceal that cleverness of yours. Keep it with you as your second dearest treasure, after your virtue. Never let it go. But play the innocent and play the ignorant, and you shall wind men around your finger like a skein of thread around a spindle. At least until you find a man who is cleverer even than you. And then beware, Elizabeth, because that man will do you no good at all.

Many critical engagements with the *Henry VI* (Rackin; Rackin and Howard; Liebler and Shea) plays dismiss Elizabeth’s cleverness and rhetorical power, particularly when compared to Joan of Arc, Margaret of Anjou, and Richard of Gloucester, but more recent studies (Levine; Meyer; Finn, *Last Plantagenet*) have argued that her methods are merely subtler. She is the centrepiece of one of the few comic scenes in the notoriously bloody *Henry VI, Part III*, a scene whose stichomythic structure recurs twice in *Richard III* – 1.2 between Richard and Lady Anne, and 4.4 between him and Elizabeth – and once in *Henry VI, Part I* – between a youthful Margaret and the Earl (later Duke) of Suffolk, William de la Pole – thus linking these three women as rhetorically powerful, at least within certain parameters. “The Booke of Oure Foundresses”, a satirical story by the_alchemist, re-imagines the (historical) multiple founding of Queens’ College Cambridge by Margaret of Anjou (1448),
Elizabeth Woodville (1465) and Anne Neville (1484) as “Margaret tries to go off on a dirty weekend with Suffolk but ends up accidentally founding a college instead”. The story itself begins with a faux-academic introduction that deplores the material as “most indecent” and explains the discovery of a manuscript behind a cupboard in the College, not unlike the historical discovery of the Winchester manuscript of Malory’s Morte D’Arthur, or the many fictional counterparts that introduce the Gothic novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. the_alchemist takes the materiality of the text one step further by including, with the account of Margaret’s dirty weekend in Cambridge, marginalia attributed to the two other queens in the form of Terry Pratchett-esque footnotes. The verbal power of the women in the first tetralogy – who function as repositories of historical “truth” in contrast to the constant male rewriting of the past to support Yorkist and Lancastrian claims to the throne – is therefore extended in these “missing scenes” (what Lanier calls either “extrapolated” or “interpolated” narrative) where the historical record reasserts itself into the universe of the plays (Lanier 83; see Finn, Last Plantagenet, 145–72). Another, more straightforward, interpolated narrative can be found in lareinenoire’s “Circles in the Water”, which follows the Duchess of York through the three parts of Henry VI and speculates on what she might have been doing prior to her charged appearances in Richard III.

Margaret of Anjou is one of only a few characters in Shakespearean canon, male or female, to appear in four plays, so it is perhaps unsurprising that she is a popular choice for professional and fan authors alike, in portrayals ranging from staged adaptations of the tetralogy such as Michael Sexton’s Margaret: A Tyger’s Heart (2011; see Smith) to several fan writers’ requests for Margaret-centric fanfiction – requests that they refer to as “traditional” because they have been used multiple times across different exchanges.

Margaret and Suffolk and their action-packed sexy plotting (as I have called it for the past two years, The Adventures of Unscrupulous Frenchwomen With Swords And Their Devoted, Almost-As-Unscrupulous Boyfriends). (kerrypolka, “Histories Signup”)

SHE IS MY FAVORITE ALL THE TIME, from her scheming ambitious youthful ascendency in the court to her beautiful broken bloodthirsty battle leadership (gosh is that a lot of alliteration). I love that she’s this inexhaustible force right to the bitter end, and the VI has always really been her play to me – her arc, her galvanic desires, her high-tragedy rise-and-fall. (marketchippie)

In both of these cases (the first from ThisEngland’s annual histories fanfiction exchange, the second from Yuletide), fans are requesting stories about Margaret that not only function as missing scenes from the plays themselves, but also AU or Alternate Universe stories, where the action of the plays is transplanted to a different setting, thereby potentially giving the female characters more agency than they possess within the play’s original universe. “Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos” by gileonnen explores what might have happened if Shakespeare’s false sorceries were in fact real magic, and roots the quarrel between Eleanor and Margaret in 2 Henry VI in a darker and bloodier place wholly out of reach of the men in the play. Similarly, modern AUs such as kerrypolka’s “These few days’ wonder”, set in 1930s Hollywood, or lareinenoire’s “Drama Queens”, where Margaret is an aspiring actress in contemporary New York, shift the power dynamic between Margaret, Eleanor and the men surrounding them in ways that allow for the possibility of compromise rather than Shakespeare’s bloody debacle.

A longer and more involved story of gileonnen’s, “For Truth, For Duty, and For Loyalty”, similarly transforms Richard III into a space opera from the point of view of two of Richard’s henchmen, one of whom, Catesby, is in this universe a woman. The futuristic setting allows the play’s gender stratification to break down; what in Shakespeare’s text is a masculine enclave surrounding Richard, in contrast to the mourning queens who oppose him, becomes more muddled and permeable. The story’s protagonists are not shaping events, but are nonetheless intimately aware of them and present an alternate perspective that calls into question Shakespeare’s assertion that the ending is a happy one. More recently, the discovery in 2012 of the historical Richard’s remains (complete with scoliosis) beneath a car park in Leicester has ushered in a new era of popularity for Shakespeare’s bloody villain, including high-profile productions featuring popular actors Benedict Cumberbatch and
Martin Freeman. Indeed, there are certain tropes that can be clearly linked to specific productions, and there have been influxes of new fans into certain fandoms as a result of those productions, whose approaches and reading preferences do not always coincide with the prevailing fandom culture. Thus far, this has been more readily apparent in fandoms related to the second tetralogy, so I will consider it briefly later on, but a comprehensive discussion is beyond the scope of this article.

Fan authors and performers operate along similar lines, up to a point; for instance, Lady Anne in Richard III, much like Ophelia in Hamlet, makes a series of compelling and frustratingly brief appearances throughout the play before dying offstage (see Miner). Just as performers and directors are faced with the task of interpreting her words and silences when Richard attempts to seduce her over the body of her dead father-in-law (or husband, depending on the director), fan authors consider the many and varied motivations that might drive her to accept him. In Laurence Olivier’s 1955 film version of Richard III, he interpolates dialogue from elsewhere to split Act 1, Scene 2 into two discrete sections and deliberately isolates Anne in the second half. With her hair unbound and wearing a revealing satin dress, Claire Bloom’s Anne speaks barely half of her allotted lines, her willpower steamrolled by Olivier’s relentless seduction. Although the scene as it appears in the Quarto and Folio versions includes a contingent of guards and several monks who witness the entire exchange between Richard and Anne, most modern productions stage the scene with just the two main characters to increase its intimacy and raise the stakes.  

While addressing this issue of intimacy, fan authors are given an additional opportunity that performers do not have – namely the chance to supplement the existing dialogue with internal narration. “Wooded and Won” by snakeling offers a counterpoint to Act 1, Scene 2 from Anne’s perspective that emphasises her helplessness against Richard, while other stories focus on the scene’s erotic subtext. One of these is “Timorous Dreams” by Assimbya, which creates a consensual (at least for some time) masochistic relationship between Richard and Anne. “Fan writers”, according to Deborah Kaplan, “create texts that rely on the interplay between knowledge of the source text and knowledge of the fandom”, and in the case of Shakespeare fandom, this knowledge frequently includes critical as well as creative discourse (Kaplan 136). In “Timorous Dreams”, Anne likens herself to Cassandra and Tecmessa, two parallels that do not explicitly appear in Shakespeare’s text, but which point to an awareness of the critical tradition linking Richard’s courtship of Anne to several different scenes in Greek and Roman tragedy, particularly that of Seneca (see Brooks; Stapleton; Goodland, 135–53). Further complicating discussions of Lady Anne within the fandom is the critically panned but nonetheless popular 2013 BBC/Starz miniseries The White Queen (based on novels by Philippa Gregory), which featured a romantic subplot between Richard of Gloucester and Lady Anne Neville. That these two fanbases overlap is hardly surprising, and the continued scholarly and popular interest in all things Richard III may succeed in producing a more nuanced portrait of a highly divisive king and the women who surrounded him.

The second tetralogy

Comparatively speaking, the women’s roles in the second tetralogy are smaller and less impressive than the juggernaut that is Margaret, but there are several who have gained a foothold in the fandom. Kate Percy, Hotspur’s long-suffering wife in 1 Henry IV, is usually acknowledged even in stories where she does not appear, owing to the space Shakespeare devotes to their relationship in the play. This is not always the case when dealing with canonical relationships and suggests the particular draw of Shakespeare’s interpretation, which has also proven popular with critics. Kate and Hotspur are also a popular choice for modern AUs such as kerrypolka’s “Quot estis in convivio”, which preserves Shakespeare’s setting of an Eastcheap pub but recasts the Percy rebellion as a hostile twenty-first-century bank takeover, thus allowing Kate to intervene with Hotspur as she cannot in the play. The two are often depicted in triangular relationships with other characters in the play, usually Prince Hal or Douglas, thus mimicking the conflict in the play between “tilt[ing] with lips” and “cracked crowns” that ultimately gets Hotspur killed (2.4.89, 90).
With her brief appearances and haunting speeches, the Queen in Richard II has occupied a peculiar place in writers’ minds since the play was written. Historically, she was six years old when she and Richard married as part of an unpopular Anglo-French peace treaty in 1396 and was returned to France after his death. Shakespeare is ambiguous about her age, lacing her speeches with ominous metaphors and lending her voice to a chorus of doubt surrounding Richard’s kingship. In the 1609 preface to Samuel Daniel’s unfinished narrative poem The Civil Wars, compulsively revised and republished in successive editions beginning in 1595, he begs the Countess of Pembroke’s pardon for “not suiting [Isabel’s] passions to her years” – although he does not specifically mention Shakespeare, the scene in Book II of the poem where Isabel appears is clearly based on Act 4, Scene 2 of Richard II (Daniel, sig. A3). Present-day fanfiction writers take a similarly loose approach, ranging from the solemn and dreamy child of speak_me_fair’s “Mine Earthly Joy” to the (very) adult Isabel of Oshun’s “Je ne regrette rien”, who is well aware of Richard’s physical relationship with his minions, as is often implied in productions of the play that do not cut her interactions with them entirely.

The ambiguity surrounding the queen’s age (and the fact that she is not explicitly named in Richard II) might also suggest that Shakespeare is conflating both of Richard’s historical wives – Anne of Bohemia (d. 1392) and Isabella of Valois – into a single character. Within the fandom, there is a whole genre of stories devoted to “pre-can on” Richard II, which consider what might have brought Richard to the point at which Shakespeare’s play begins, and in these stories – examples include angevin2’s “Four Universes Where It (Mostly) Worked Out” and Commodorified’s “O Thou My Lovely Boy”, among others – Anne plays a major role, as does Robert de Vere (d. 1392), a royal favourite from earlier in Richard’s reign. Although neither is ever mentioned in Richard II, extrapolation from biographical and source studies suggests that Richard mourned both losses for the rest of his life, even after his second marriage. His relationship with Anne has become sufficiently established in fanon that it now appears in story prompts as well as the stories themselves:

If writing Richard II fic, please do not ignore the importance of Anne in Richard’s life, whether dead or living. If he is married at said point to Isabel, make sure to feature her, either in canon!age form or in older!form as prescribed by said play (I am very flexible on this as I consider both descriptions canon). (speak_me_fair, “Histories Signup”)

Much like the juxtaposition of Eleanor of Gloucester and Margaret of Anjou or acknowledging Kate Percy’s existence, it is an accepted trope to include some reference to Anne of Bohemia in stories about Richard II, just as it is equally accepted and even assumed that Richard is either bisexual or homosexual. This is not a surprising interpretation of the character – Richard II has significant parallels with Christopher Marlowe’s more explicitly homoerotic Tragedy of King Edward II (c. 1592) – and many productions have foregrounded the play’s complex gender politics, while the role of Richard has attracted a number of queer-identified actors, including Derek Jacobi, Ian McKellen and Fiona Shaw. More recently, the 2007–2008 RSC histories cycle directed by Michael Boyd opened with Jonathan Slinger’s Richard II wearing an Elizabeth I wig and white pancake makeup that he symbolically removed during the deposition scene, while Gregory Doran’s 2013 production starring David Tennant included a significant homoerotic relationship between Richard and the Duke of Aumerle, played by Oliver Rix. The Hollow Crown film version discussed at the beginning of this article also features a queer Richard, particularly evident in his scenes with the minions and his interactions with Henry Bolingbroke. The equally prevalent fanon that Richard has multiple partners – or, as the maker of the “Sexy, Naughty, Bitchy” video explained in a subsequent email, that he is “sleeping with everyone” – allows the women in his life to play a larger role than they otherwise might (rootingformephistopheles, “I’m the one”). Richard’s fluid sexuality transcends any production-specific fanon that an author may choose to rely on, whether physical characteristics (Tennant’s infamous hair extensions), symbolic fixations (Goold and Whishaw’s Christological imagery), or romantic pairings, and can be found in both canon-period fanfiction and stories set in alternate universes (see Frost, ‘My Gay Apparel’).
Crossovers – a subset of alternate universe fanfiction where the world of a particular play intersects with a completely different text, early modern or modern – also provide an opportunity for sophisticated textual exegesis. “Gimmers and Devices” by Tracey Pennington, for example, tries to reconcile what appear to be irreconcilable interpretative differences between Shakespeare’s Richard II and a contemporary anonymous play Thomas of Woodstock through the use of an alternate universe with clockpunk elements. Extrapolating from the theories of Roger Bacon, the story revolves around “brassheads”, a sort of fourteenth-century automaton, and after a long and complicated plotline involving mistaken identities, conspiracies and several Shakespearean plot twists, manages to arrive at a happy ending, something even Shakespeare could not manage. The protagonist is the Duchess of Gloucester, whose role in the plays is restricted to giving her husband good advice that he ignores in Woodstock, and providing exposition in the form of a grieving speech to John of Gaunt in Richard II. In this alternate universe, her knowledge of the new technology saves the day for nearly everyone in the play, including Richard himself. Similarly, “Vasty Heights” by Lilliburlero casts Hotspur as the eponymous character in the Middle English alliterative poem Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and addresses issues of masculinity, honour and sexual fidelity that are suggested but not greatly explored in 1 Henry IV before providing a bittersweet rather than tragic ending for Hotspur and Kate.

The only history play that seems to have resisted the incursion of extratextual female characters is Henry V, which features four women: Princess Catherine, her lady-in-waiting Alice, and her unnamed mother (historically Isabeau of Bavaria), as well as a brief appearance by Mistress Quickly from the two parts of Henry IV. Catherine and Alice are introduced in Act 3, Scene 4, while the queen of France – as infamous in French and Burgundian sources as Margaret of Anjou was in English ones – is reduced to a few ceremonial speeches in the final scene (see Gibbons; Adams). Recent critical readings of the courtship dialogue between Henry and Catherine focus on its subtext of linguistic conquest rather than its potential for flirtation or real affection, and performances have reflected that trend – in the 2007–2008 RSC cycle, for instance, the encounter was highly choreographed and tense, in sharp contrast to Kenneth Branagh’s 1989 film version where he romanced his then-wife Emma Thompson’s Catherine with a distinct lack of irony (see Eggert 51–99). Henry’s primary emotional connections are with other men, and his fans – like those of James T. Kirk and Mr Spock on the original Star Trek – often choose to pair him romantically with one of those men in a genre known as slash (after a naming convention, e.g. Kirk/Spock).

Although the majority of Richard II fanfiction also falls into this category, slash fiction about Henry V takes a different approach. While Richard’s fans talk about their “sad gay diva king”, fans of slash pairings involving Henry V praise his leadership and devotion to duty, often at the expense of personal emotion (rootingformepistopheltes, “I’m the one”; Hyarrowen, “Henry V/French Herald”). What is clear from this particular niche fandom is that the bonds Henry forms – at least those he makes as king – are ones that exclude women. Stories about Prince Hal in the Henry IV plays follow a trajectory closer to Richard II’s (a resemblance that Henry IV himself remarks upon more than once), but the corner of fandom devoted to his incarnation as Henry – a role whose raison d’être is to oppose the dissolute Hal – romanticises the homosocial bonds he makes. For instance, in stories where Henry survives the illness that historically killed him in 1422, Catherine becomes an obstacle to a perceived homosexual union and usually succumbs to a plot-convenient illness – a trope known jokingly in fandom as “Mysterious Wife Plague” – thereby freeing Henry to be with the man of his choice (Fanlore).

Stories such as theficklepickle’s “Hearts’-Ease” and Hyarrowen’s “The View from Byzantium” focus instead on a long-term romantic relationship between Henry and the French herald Montjoy, with whom he shares several brief but charged exchanges prior to, during and after the battle of Agincourt. These fans regard Branagh’s 1989 film, rather than the play on which it is based, as their chosen canon. Similarly, recent fan responses to the Hollow Crown adaptation of Henry V include crossovers with other films starring Tom Hiddleston such as Marvel’s Thor (2011, interestingly also directed by Kenneth Branagh) and Guillermo del Toro’s Crimson Peak (2015). Why Henry
V in particular seems to inspire fanworks based on specific productions is not immediately apparent, but may be connected to the play’s performance history. Much like Richard III, it is often performed on its own and is regarded as a star vehicle for the actor playing the title role – one can only assume that when the Hollow Crown version of Richard III is released, there will be a similar Cumberbatch-inspired infusion of new fans and interpretations into that fandom.

Although this is by no means an exhaustive overview of the large and multivalent fandom devoted to Shakespeare’s history plays – let alone Shakespeare’s plays in general – with it, I hope to pinpoint certain trends within that fandom, particularly in its treatment of gender and sexuality. To return briefly to Sheenagh Pugh’s theory of what fanfiction writers want from the texts they reinvent – either “more of” or “more from” them – I would argue that the writers tackling Shakespeare’s histories within the fan community are seeking both. Few, if any, are engaging with these texts because they are innately dissatisfied with them; rather, what draws them to Shakespeare’s particular treatment of history is its potentiality. As five-act plays intended for a specific audience, performance space, and group of actors, there are certain limitations built into the medium that fanfiction writers – and to a lesser extent professional adaptors of Shakespeare – simply do not face. Modern directors and performers will sometimes make nods to these extratextual potentialities by changing settings (c.f. Richard Loncraine’s proto-Fascist Richard III, filmed in 1995 with Sir Ian McKellen in the title role) or integrating non-speaking roles (c.f. Michael Boyd’s use of silent ghosts throughout the first tetralogy, rather than restricting them to Richard III). Professional adaptations of Shakespeare, whatever form they take, have more freedom than theatrical performances, but are nonetheless bound by certain expectations, whether from publishers or producers. Fan authors, on the other hand, are free to interpret, alter and reinvent the text in whatever way they choose. Furthermore, there is a substantial overlap between fan authors who adapt Shakespeare and those who study Shakespeare either as students or as academics, even more so than can be found in professional adaptations, which tend to be left to established novelists or screenwriters. The freedom afforded by writing fanfiction under a pseudonym allows these writers to move between creative and critical approaches to their chosen texts and experiment with those texts in ways that are not necessarily possible in a traditional academic environment. Rather than asking, as Mary Beth Rose did in her seminal article, “Where are the mothers in Shakespeare?” and providing an explanation for their absence, fan authors imagine who those mothers might have been, what they could have said, and whether their presence could have changed the nature and outcome of any given play. It may not answer any burning theoretical questions, but it demonstrates a different kind of engagement with Shakespeare’s text, one that I believe deserves further exploration.

Since the advent of feminist and queer criticism into Shakespeare studies, it has become more acceptable to consider not just Shakespeare’s own texts, but the reworkings and adaptations that have accrued over the years as a sort of paratext composed of responses, both those being made to Shakespeare and, looking backward, those he was making to texts that preceded him. By considering fanfiction as another popular response to Shakespeare, we can nudge him yet further off his pedestal and interact with his plays as his original audience would have done – in conversation.

Notes
1. An upcoming issue of The Journal of Fandom Studies focuses on ethics in fan studies and will include a detailed discussion of feedback protocols and practices within different fandoms, but for the purposes of this article it is generally assumed that feedback should be positive unless the author has specifically requested constructive criticism. Fanfiction generally undergoes an editing process prior to being uploaded to an archive and most fan authors have what is known as a beta-reader, who serves as sounding board, a source of constructive feedback and copy-editor. Again, this kind of relationship is characteristic of the collaborative nature of fanwork creation.
2. Although not yet in print, there is an upcoming special issue of Transformative Works & Cultures edited by Ika Willis that will focus on classical (Greek and Roman) fandoms. These range from works of literature like Homer’s Iliad and Virgil’s Aeneid to historical figures such as Plato, Socrates and Marcus Tullius Cicero.

4. There are fandoms devoted to Shakespeare’s Greek and Roman plays and to more popular single plays such as *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, but these are beyond the scope of this article and I hope to discuss them elsewhere. Although *King John* is also placed in the “Histories” category of the First Folio, it has garnered less attention in the fandom at the time of this writing, with only two stories on AO3 (see angevin2, “Damn Near”). Lanier mentions Gus Van Sant’s 1991 film *My Own Private Idaho* (loosely based on *1 Henry IV*) as an example of a film that uses “Shakespearean motifs for specific effects” (88), but does not discuss it in detail.

5. Individual editions of *England’s Heroicall Epistles* appeared in 1597 (STC 7193) and 1598 (STC 7194); with *Idea* in 1599 (STC 7195), 1600 (STC 7196), and 1602 (STC 7197); and from 1603 onward with Drayton’s collected works. For a detailed discussion of the textual relationship between Eleanor Cobham and Margaret of Anjou, see Finn, “Tragedy”.

6. The speaker, Matilda, is complaining that poets have ignored her in favour of other historical women, including Lucrece, “of whom proud Rome hath boasted long / Lately reui’d to lie another age” (Drayton, *Matilda*, sig. B2r). The reference several lines later to Lucrece “acting her passions on our stately stage” highlights both the poem’s own theatricality and Shakespeare’s association with the London theatre circles (sig. B2r). Unlike the surrounding references to Samuel Daniel, Thomas Churchyard and Thomas Lodge, Drayton does not embed any backhanded compliments into his description.

7. Gregory has written novels focused on the Tudor era and on the Wars of the Roses; Penman’s 1988 novel *The Sunne in Splendour* is a popular account of the life of Richard III that takes a staunchly anti-Shakespearean view of his character; and Seton’s *Katherine* (1954) depicts the love affair between John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford. Dunnett is an outlier because her *Lymond Chronicles* and *House of Niccolò* series feature original characters with brief appearances by historical figures.

8. In its simplest form, a fanfiction gift exchange is an organised framework within which participants write and request works of fanfiction based on specific prompts. Yuletide 2015, for instance, had 1857 participants, each of whom signed up to write and receive a piece of fanfiction of no fewer than 1000 words. Prompts are publicly available and anyone (including writers not officially participating) can write stories based on any given prompt. Assigned stories must be submitted by December 20, the collection (published on Archive of Our Own) opens at midnight GMT on December 25, and authors are revealed at midnight GMT on New Year’s Eve. By the official conclusion of the 2015 exchange, there were 2592 works of fanfiction in the collection in 1592 different fandoms. Statistics taken from the official Yuletide administrator (yuletide_admin) blog on Livejournal.

9. A commercially published example of an author using elements of *Richard III* in space opera is Lois McMaster Bujold’s *Vorkosigan* saga, where a major character with a physical deformity frequently quotes and references the play. See Taylor in *Shakespearean Echoes* for a detailed analysis of Shakespearean elements in Bujold. To add a further layer of meta-fiction to the mix, Bujold’s universe includes references to several apocryphal Shakespeare plays, one of which, *Tam Lin*, was written as a work of fanfiction by speculative fiction author Jo Walton and performed at a fan convention.

10. The 1983 BBC film directed by Jane Howell is a notable exception to this trend; Ron Cook’s Richard and Zoé Wanamaker’s Anne perform the entire scene while the guards and monks look on. Olivier includes them in the first half of the scene, but not the second.

11. *Thomas of Woodstock* survives only in British Library MS Egerton 1994, and the final leaf of the manuscript is missing, thus concluding the play in the middle of the final scene. Because the play concerns earlier events in the reign of Richard II, Anne of Bohemia is a character and dies in Act 4, Scene 3, precipitating the final, climactic battle between Richard and his uncles.

12. There are a handful of *Henry V* stories that focus on the characters of Fluellen and Gower, Welsh and Irish soldier in the English army who are generally regarded as comic relief, but who critics have frequently highlighted as vehicles for a potential anti-war message that runs counter to Henry’s own set-piece speeches. Although there have been a number of stand-alone stage productions of *Richard II*, several of which have been filmed, its fandom does not appear to share the same production-specific tendencies.

References


rootingformephistopheles. “I’m the one who made that one Richard II crack fanvid”. Message to Kavita Finn. 17 Feb 2013. Email.


**Archives and Fan Communities**

*Archive of Our Own*, [http://archiveofourown.org](http://archiveofourown.org)
*ThisEngland* (Fiction and discussion of Shakespeare’s histories), [http://thisengland.livejournal.com](http://thisengland.livejournal.com)
*Bard_Slash* (Shakespeare Slash Fiction), [http://bard-slash.livejournal.com](http://bard-slash.livejournal.com)
*The_Phrensies* (Shakespeare Alternate Universe Fiction), [http://the_phrensies.livejournal.com](http://the_phrensies.livejournal.com)
*Henry_Herald* (Henry V/Montjoy Slash Fiction), [http://henry_herald.livejournal.com](http://henry_herald.livejournal.com)
*Yuletide Annual Fanfiction Exchange* (Small Fandoms, including Shakespeare’s plays, Historical RPF, and modern historical novels, among many others) [https://archiveofourown.org/collections/yuletide](https://archiveofourown.org/collections/yuletide)