

The Written Word: Lorelei's Random Babblings

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Fanfic Writer Lorelei Tells All!

Surfing by the Anime Turnpike, you can find a whole section devoted to links to more than a hundred pages filled with fan fiction. Ranma, Sailor Moon, Dragonball, Yu Yu Hakusho, Gundam Wing (just to name a few) stories and epics are constantly being added, revised, posted and archived. You can read stories that follow up on a series or a fic that focuses on specific characters and their relationships. Or you can download epics that introduce new personalities and integrate them into an existing series. And you can even read your fill if you are more interested in the risqué "lemons" that can range Yu Yu Hakusho from pure smut-fics which involve nothing more than... say Ranma and Akane jumping into bed for no apparent reason to more alternative pairings such as Ryouga and Ranma. So many choices, so little time. Why are there so many fan-fics out there? And what exactly is out there anyway?

First, you have to look at fanfictions and why people write them in the first place. Fanfics are stories written by a fan. Fanfics do not necessarily have to be about anime either, since there is a great number of fic writers for TV series. But, for the sake of space, time and attention span, we'll focus on Anime/Manga fic writers. For some, these stories explain certain events in an anime that was never really touched upon during the series. For example, in the Dragon Ball universe, you find that King Vegeta and Bulma suddenly appear in the Z series as a "married" couple and have children. How did that happen? A fan then takes that particular little mystery and tries to explain it through a fanfic. Sometimes the explanation works, sometimes it doesn't. Just like any kind of writing, it really depends on the craftsmanship -- there are fanfics that are wonderfully written, with a fully formed plotline and with well developed characters, while others are not quite so well done.

Then there are the fans that just can't get enough. Though the series has ended, the writer just can't bear to let it end that way (or so soon). So new story arcs are created, sometimes with new characters, or better explorations of existing characters' personalities. Or sometimes, the fic writer just happens to get a particular inspiration from a scene, a phrase, or a look -- the writer's mind goes berserk, with more scenes going through his mind. That one scene could lead to a lemon fic that explores a more sexual/emotional relationship between two characters. Little things like that can grab

hold of an otaku's mind, and before you know it, he's in front of the computer, pounding away into the wee hours of the night. There really isn't any one reason why a fan writes fanfics, they just do. And think of it as a tribute to the series' creator that the particular anime had so tweaked a fanfic writer's imagination that he was driven to write more about it.

RG VedaNow, onto the different kinds of fanfics that breed on the net. It's very hard to make distinct boundaries between fics, since they usually crossover from one "type" to another. But for clarity's sake, I'll explain my personal little guide. (This is purely my point of view, so don't think everything I say here is canon). There are the types that can fit into any time frame of a particular series -- we'll call those types the "Original Flavor" fics. The characters interact the same way they do in the series, and the fic only creates another story arc. For example, there are the Yu-Yu Hakushofics that create new battle scenes between the existing "bad-guy" characters and the heroes of the anime/manga. The characters might develop a bit more, but almost always in the prescribed way the creator had meant them to be. Then there are the "New Arc" fics, where new characters are introduced, existing characters take on new aspects of personality that were never really explored in the series. These New Arc storylines could also be about a particular character that was introduced earlier in the series, then disappears later on. Take the Future Trunks (Mirai Trunks, from Dragonball Z) storylines that are archived in numerous pages; after he had accomplished his tasks in the past -- namely preventing Son Goku's death and warning the rest of the group about the terrible destruction that #16 and #17 androids had wreaked in his future, he climbs back into his time machine and disappears. What happened to Mirai Trunks after that? Fic writers who were intrigued by this character and his mysterious background write stories that explore his other adventures. New arcs could also be explorations of character interaction -- but in a way that deviates from the series creator's original intent. There are a great deal of fics out there that touch upon the relationship between Hiei and Kurama from Yu Yu Hakusho. Some writers read into these two characters' relationships as something more than friendship, that there is an attraction between the two (or at the very least, in Kurama's part) that borders (and usually falls into) a romantic relationship. The same could be said with Ranma/Akanefics where they finally accept (or reject) their engagement. There are the "Crossovers" where characters from one series is integrated into another. But this is a hard section to classify since Crossovers can, well, crossover (grin) into a New Arc. Last, but definitely not least, are the Lemons, which can range from "pure sex, no plot" to more well crafted fics that integrate sex as a necessary part of the plot and of characterization. Lemon fics can range from the heterosexual to homosexual encounters, the usual one on one to the orgiastic. It's entirely up the writer's imagination (and goodness, what imagination it is!)

Confused yet? Good, because I sure am. It's unbelievably hard to classify Yu Yu Hakusho fics under headings since it is entirely up to the writer to develop (or not) the characters according to their particular plotline. The boundaries between these "types" are so fluid that they usually spill over from one to another. Yet, there are several things that make a fic readable, in case you decide to write one. One, Spell check. It's always nice to read a fic that has little or no spelling errors. If the spell checker doesn't pick it up, get another reader to go through it and find mistakes. No one is perfect; goodness knows I'm one of the worst offenders of the English language, so make sure you spell check. Then there is grammar. Keep your tenses the same, and keep your sentences relatively simple. A one sentence paragraph that stretches for twenty lines would give anyone a headache. Run-ons could be used for stylistic purposes -- like a breathless monologue or something, but don't do it too often. Next, make sure that your fic can be read by someone unfamiliar with the series and can still understand what is going on and why these characters are acting in that particular way.

There, end of lecture. If you are interested in looking at more fanfics, check out the Anime Turnpike, which has a list of tons and tons of links to pages. Have fun, surf safely, and comments on my spelling and grammar can be sent to my address (lt-bassi@uchicago.edu). Ja!