Digitally-Social Genre Fiction: citizen authors and the changing power dynamics of writing in digital, social spaces

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Abstract:

The growth of digitally social media has given rise to the citizen author, as an author who actively chooses to forgo the traditional publishing model and seeks instead to share their works among communities on social platforms. Taking into account the nature of the medium on which they write, they use genre fiction as a means to push the boundaries of what is expected of a 'book' or narrative structure. This article shows that, by pushing back against the structure of the author-agent-publisher model, these authors engender communities around their writing and develop relationships directly with readers. These digital villages proliferate around genre writing in online spaces, creating a shifting power dynamic between the publishing industry and the writers who choose to work in these digital spaces, blurring the differential between 'high' and 'low' art and addressing the issues of gender in genre fiction.

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The rise of the Citizen Author, as an author who actively uses digital social

technology to bypass the gatekeeping mechanisms of the publishing industry, and their role in using social media as a place to write new works allows them to become better connected to a digital community of readers and writers[i]. In this article I scrutinise the connection between genre fictions, social platforms as a place to write, the citizen author, and how the use of genre by the citizen author alters power relationships in the industry. Genre and marginalised fictions have found a growing audience and stream of citizen authors online and in digitally social spaces. Often, these authors write within categories of genre fiction, such as science fiction, fan fiction, and subgenres of romance, to name a few. This article explores how citizen authors can develop as authors who write within a particular genre that has found rapid growth within digital social platforms, and how developing these relationships between readers and citizen authors alters the power dynamic in the discourse of the book.

The concept of genre repeatability provides a framework for the relationship between power and the authority to define a book or a genre. In order to more fully explore the connections between the citizen author, power relationships, and genre, I will be using the genres of science fiction and fan fiction. These genres were chosen due to their subversive nature that creates a push and pull in the power dynamic with the industry. Both science and fan fictions are considered less privileged than literary fiction[ii]. As such, they enable the writers in these genres to benefit from the invisibility within the industry that the genre provides, allowing more freedom when they do not need to appeal to the traditional gatekeepers.

I argue that science fiction and fan fictions are key to understanding how having fewer numbers of traditional publishers directly relates to the rise of the citizen authors who work across these genres in new digital social platforms within the global

village. Using new formats, including social media platforms, creates a sense of community around citizen authors and their works, which provides author-reader interactions and potential for commercialisation. The final section explores the rise of genre fiction as it relates to the citizen author, and how that challenges the traditional hierarchy of power in the agent-author-publisher industry model within the discourse.

How Genre Works in Discourse

According to Miller, the 'typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations'[iii] define the properties of a genre. The use of tropes, themes, terminology, etc., creates the frame of a particular genre through their repeated use. By situating an understanding of genre within the discourse of the book, its 'repeatable materiality'[iv] informs how a text gains its status as an object within a genre, how it is limited by the other objects around it, the domain in which it can circulate, and by what roles it can perform within those limitations imposed by the framework of a particular genre[v].

Genres, much like discourses, are not closed systems impervious to change. They do not have hard edges that define the outer limits of what can be included within them, and there are several different components that are used to define the generic properties of a text, which depend on the reader's perception and the text's acceptance into a literary cannon. Instead of prescribing to a set of guidelines as to what constitutes particular genres, this study uses what Rieder calls a 'fuzzy set'[vi] that includes elements across a range of characteristics where some texts may have all the characteristics and others only a few. However, this use of 'fuzzy set' identification of genre elements could be impossible to exhaust, lumping in texts with all or only one element that is identified with a particular genre. As such, the width of the fuzzy set will be tempered by structures that identify how a text gained its status within that

genre, how it interacts with those around it, the domain it inhabits, and what roles it can perform, enabling the breadth of study to provide a genre framework of a particular text.

Though it is useful to know what characteristics allow a text to be included within a genre in a particular slice of history, it is, perhaps, more important to understand which texts have been excluded from a genre classification and why. It is this point of exclusion where ruptures within the discourse occur that allow new genres to develop.

The Point of Rupture, the Rise of Genre

In mapping the breadth of the discourse of the book this article focuses on the sites of inquiry where the citizen author disrupts this by using digital social technology to bypass the gatekeeping mechanisms associated with the traditional author-agent-publisher, publishing model. The new relationships that are created at the point of disruption become visible. Here we are able to see where power relationships come into play as a strategy that maintains the hierarchy within the current industry, as well as the emerging regularities, which help to develop new generic frameworks that the citizen authors appropriate in writing new works of fiction on social platforms.

In exploring these places of rupture, Broderick's definition of science fiction is also relevant to fan fiction, when he describes it as 'that species of storytelling native to a culture undergoing the epistemic changes implicated in the rise and suppression of technical-industrial modes of production, distribution, consumption and disposal'[vii]. The growth of digitally social technology and the low barriers of entry to the publishing process for the citizen author who wishes to use these new modes of 'production, distribution, consumption and disposal' in the global village

develops into a new way of writing and connecting in the digital age, that bypasses the traditional publishing industry and allows these traditionally marginalised genres to flourish.

Across digital social platforms, there are more genres and subgenres represented than there are within the traditional publishing model[viii]. This is due to the publishing industry having a series of gatekeepers in the form of agents, publishers, and marketers. Compared to the standard process of getting a text published via traditional publishers, which could take up to three years if it goes into hardback production first, and up to two or more years for straight to paperback editions, the connectivity of the global village, and social media platforms in particular, allows for nearly instantaneous sharing of work with a wider audience[ix].

Unlike the traditional publishing model, writing on digital social platforms has a low barrier of entry. This is coupled with the rise of the citizen author who uses new technologies to write and share works directly with the reader, often interacting with them in a user/reader-centred feedback loop based around their work. As such, the sites of inquiry where the citizen author is writing on digital social platforms highlights the rise in certain types of fictions that have traditionally been marginalised by the gatekeepers of the publishing industry. To address the questions around which genres do *not* come into being when there is a rupture in the discourse of the book, the focus here are the sites of inquiry where science fiction and fan fiction, both of which have found a niche market online in digitally social spaces, proliferates in the absence of more 'literary' fiction. Being outside the mainstream of literary fiction provides an element of freedom for the writers and citizen authors of both genres. This invisibility of being outside the gates of the industry allows them to be more malleable and wide-

reaching, leading to a large variety of texts that can be included in the fuzzy set of the genres.

A second site of inquiry is the place where fan fiction rises in the discourse of the book at the point of disruption. It is this genre which has come into its own as the 'advent of the internet has broadened it reach'[x]. Fan fiction often finds itself 'unauthorized but tolerated'[xi] as a subgenre of fiction that uses worlds, characters, themes, and other elements of a previously published work (any form of media such as print, audio, or video, etc.) to create additional storylines based around those works. Fan fiction thrives online due to its place in a shared community built around fandom of published works. Tushnet points out that such 'Creative fan cultures developed along with mass media entertainment over the course of the twentieth century'[xii]. A citizen author's access to, and connection within, the global village has enabled fan fiction to develop into a large, barely monetised facet of the publishing industry; one that succeeds most when the works are just below the radar of the wider industry and where the citizen authors have direct feedback to their readers.

The Citizen Author and Genre Fiction

There is a direct link between the new places where the citizen author chooses to write their works of fiction and the types of fiction that are embraced within those digital social spaces. The link between the 'vibrant subcultures', the citizen author, and the power play within the publishing industry is best explored through the genres of science and fan fictions, as they often do not pass the gatekeeping criteria of the industry and seek out other modes and places of expression, which find an outlet in digital social spaces. Here it is the connectivity among citizen authors and readers that 'represent a vibrant subculture, one that inspires passion among thousands of people

who find creative outlets in shared universes'[xiii]. The connected individuals care about their preferred genres, developing the cultures around those genres in an 'active, engaged and creative way'[xiv].

This engagement with the cultures and subcultures of science fiction and fan fiction manifests itself in the creation of texts that adhere to the generic frameworks approved of by the social constructs in which they are situated[xv] [xvi].Gatekeeping by the communities of readers and authors draws on previously developed tropes on what a book is, providing a lens through which they understand and categorise works of science and fan fictions according to the gatekeeping mechanisms of the traditional publishing industry. However, instead of simply being turned away, the citizen authors who embrace these new digital social places to write and share their works have the opportunity to enter into a dialogue with the readers in order to gain entry into the subculture.

The citizen author of a work of fan fiction will often read, participate, and finally post their creative works within approved fan fiction communities such as FanFiction.net and Wattpad, among others that are dedicated to more canon-specific digital repositories that focus on *Harry Potter*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and Jane Austen fan fiction, etc. Citizen authors writing science fiction often have more leeway in how they present and share their works due to the very nature of the freedoms granted to them by the genre, and the lack of a pre-existing structure and characters that fan fiction necessitates. Whereas an author of fan fiction is more likely to go unnoticed by the wider industry and post in a specific location in order to engage with their chosen communities and avoid the issues of copyright, the authors of science fiction can experiment with the way they write and share their work among

communities by posting across platforms with links from Twitter to Facebook, Wattpad to YouTube, and Oolipo.

Due to their status as subculture, science and fan fictions are particularly well placed for testing the boundaries of the gatekeeping mechanisms, within the industry and within the online communities. As such, they are able to push the limits of their genre in form and content by utilising the available platforms and creating new ones, developing works that have the potential to actively engage with the non-discursive elements of the political and socio-economic environments in which these statements exist. This allows the citizen authors to engender conversations around their writing, framing content in a way that creates tension in the wider discourse of the book and place it overlaps where it does, and potentially does not, overlap with the traditional publishing industry.

Building Communities in Genre Fiction

In science fiction, and, indeed, by the very nature of fan fiction, most authors of genre began as fans[xvii]. From their fandom, the citizen author has moved on to create new texts using digital social technology to share their works digitally with specific groups. It is this interaction within what Lindgren Leavenworth calls the 'affinity space'[xviii] that allows for a relationship to develop between the way a reader engages with a text and the citizen authors themselves.

Within fan fiction communities, citizen authors, readers, and the texts (both the original work and the derivative), play off one another in a feedback loop where the citizen author can get direct feedback on specific aspects of their work and the way it relates to the canonised original[xix]. This can help develop the text and citizen author in a way that will bring the work more in line with the expectations of the

community, the members of which have become a new form of supportive, democratic expert in the topic[xx] (McDonald, 2007).

Some social platforms, such as Wattpad provide inline comments (on the app) that serve to provide readers a way to feedback on specific lines of a text, and to encourage the use of the app version from their handheld device, promoting the digital platform as a mobile, social network. This feedback encourages an author by praising the text, giving guidance on making it better, or even suggesting places where it can be shared onward, expanding the role of the critic, by lessening the value of those who speak from those within the hierarchical publishing industry to those who are part of the citizen author's and the readers' community[xxi] (McDonald, 2007). The citizen author can take the feedback on board and can change the text if required and further develop the story based on direct interactions with their readers. This creates a 'relatively safe environment where ideas can be tested and debated'[xxii], which in turn, creates a more tightly knit community that will stand behind an author and happily share and promote their favourite works.

Much like in the dynamics of fan fiction, '[f]ans are integral to the way contemporary SF operates: numerous fan-created magazines, websites and conventions generate much of the energy on which the continuing vitality of the genre depends'[xxiii]. Unlike an fiction readers and writers, who usually stay out of the spotlight of the traditional publishing industry, or if they come into it, they alter their works to no longer be recognisably fan fiction, the fans and the citizen authors of science fiction who develop relationships are more likely to exist in real-world communities as well as online. Fans and authors will attend conventions and gatherings to share their affinity for the genre and particular works. This is seen in the long-standing World Science fiction Convention (WorldCon), which continues today,

and was first held in New York in 1939 and included writers, such as Ray Bradbury, and readers supporting relationships by recognising the role of the fans in this often side-lined genre.

Fans of science fiction and fan fiction alike take courage in the connectivity that social technology has given them. This allows them to 'speak from a position of collective identity, [and] to forge an alliance with a community of others'[xxiv]. This identity as part of a community not only fosters relationships between readers, writers, and genre-specific works, it also allows the separation between readers and writers to relax, enabling the rise of the citizen author, as a prosumer who is both familiar with their audience and willing to enter into a conversations with readers, making science fiction 'a community, not an elite'[xxv].

It is the development of science fiction and fan fiction communities, and others like them, that allow the citizen author to write from within these locations, not from a 'position of weakness'[xxvi] as suggested by Jenkins, but from a position of growth and a new cultural identity rooted within a form of genre, manifested in the global village. As such, the citizen authors see no need to participate in the traditional publishing model when they can write, produce, sell, and get feedback on their works directly to an established audience.

The industry's relationship to science and fan fictions
In order to understand the publishing industry's relationship to the communities that are developing around the common interest of genre fictions, one must look at genres' past relationship to publishing. This includes examining the industry's distaste of genre fictions[xxvii], which become apparent in the lack of canonised works of science fiction that are embraced by the mainstream industry and the hidden nature of fan

fiction. Genre fiction is often considered as a pejorative term which brings to mind certain tropes that must be brought to bear in the text for it to live up to its genre. Krystal goes further to relate the format of genre writing to 'commercial' writing, meant to sell a particular style that the readers seek out, knowing what they will get[xxviii] when they pick up a work. This is a type of branding of a genre that allows the industry to dictate the output that reaches a wider audience of readers. However, the branding of science and fan fictions by the industry and its gatekeepers only works if control is maintained over the brand, or genres. The citizen author seeks to subvert the control of the brands of science and fan fictions that are approved and sold to the reading public, by finding new outlets and audiences in digital social spaces, where they can create a community with their readers.

If genre fictions exist somewhere in the fuzzy sets below literary fiction, then works of genre fiction written online endure a place one level below traditionally published genre fiction as fiction that is hidden away in the depths of the internet, in repositories, on social platforms, or actively avoiding the spotlight, in the case most fan fiction. The history of science fiction and fan fiction and their relationships to the publishing industry could have taken innumerable paths, as such, scholars disagree on the genesis of science fiction, but there is a clearer notion of when fan fiction developed.

Fan fiction, roughly defined as texts that have been written based on works from popular culture, came into its own with the emergence of science fiction fandom in the late sixties[xxix]. In the 70s, 80s, and early 90s, much fan fiction was written as zines and hard copies sent around via mailing lists and shared face to face[xxx xxxi xxxii]. However, coinciding with wider access to the internet and the global village, fan fiction surged as it moved online, enabling new forms of fan fiction reader and author

relationships. As fan fiction grew in the digital realm, it remained thoroughly embedded in the structures of the subculture which are based on staying out of the industry's way while trying not to draw the attention of the original writer or publisher as they enter into reader and fan communities.

Throughout the history of fan fiction the driving force has been about connectivity, and tapping into a feedback loop of a 'reader's active participation in meaning-making'[xxxiii]. However, an active feedback loop can be a double-edged sword where a publisher is concerned. While a traditional publisher might be pleased with the prospect of having access to a work that has a ready-made fan base, as in Wattpad works, there is often a saturation point for a work within a given audience. If billions of people have already read the work for free, the publisher is still gambling that enough more would be willing to now pay to read that work and to own for themselves. Publishers here would be tapping into the value of ownership of a particular work, based on the intrinsic value applied to the traditionally printed book as an item. This can already be seen in the sales of new editions of out of copyright texts.

Many of the stories written on Fanfiction.net and Wattpad are published as chapters or short stories that can be read together to make a complete work, which ads to develop an ongoing relationship between the authors and readers who return to read and comment on the serialised work. When Anna Todd published her work of One Direction fan fiction to Wattpad the first book had ninety-nine chapters. Each of these chapters was available for commentary on the Wattpad app, and many fans took advantage of this. In fact, Todd's editor at Simon & Schuster was quite careful to not over-edit the parts of Todd's work that the fans were particularly attached to[xxxiv].

On the other hand, the fans who so love the original work/band/cultural

phenomenon that gives rise to fan fiction often have an 'aggressive Doberman loyalty that is tinged with cultural paranoia'[xxxv] that comes from an extreme of ownership and privilege over a text that is both 'liberating and restrictive'[xxxvi]. This loyalty can raise its head when a citizen author makes the character/s in question act in ways, or be put in situations, that a reader considers out of character, where the balance between the canonised and fan fiction representations of the character cannot coincide peacefully for the fans[xxxvii]. This creates tension and ruptures between the readers and citizen authors who both feel ownership over the canonised text and how the new supplementary Fan fiction relates to it in a positive or negative way.

The Power Dynamic between Genre and the Publishing Industry

For all the religious devotion and loyalty to works of science fiction and fan fiction, genre fictions have had a tenuous relationship with the traditional publishing industry for as long as their generic frameworks have existed within the discourse[xxxviii]. The push and pull power relationship that developed around genres is linked to publishers seeking, at different moments in the current slice of history, to harness the rise of genre, gatekeeping the industry, and its distinction between 'high' and 'low' art. As a dynamic framework within the discourse of the book, genres such as science and fan fictions shift and alter their boundaries as fashions and tastes in the market change, and are particularly well-placed to take advantage of the rise of the citizen author and access to the global village. As such, the publishing industry must seek out new ways to tap into the communities where new works are being written, read, and shared.

Genres fictions are works that are 'born to sell'[xxxix], and exist just below the level of canonised literary fiction. It is this placement as 'less than' literary fiction that allows genre fictions such as Science and Fan fictions to become a disruptive force in

the publishing industry through the widespread use of social technology, access to the global village, and the rise of the citizen author. Genre fictions, instead of sustaining the status quo of the industry's business model of author-agent-publisher-reader and helping the entirety of the model to embrace new technologies and grow as a whole, are causing a rupture from the bottom up. What Christensen notes regarding innovation across many industries can be applied to publishing where the incumbent leaders are aggressively moving forward in ways that sustain innovation (such as eBooks and websites) and work with the established customer base (in this case bookshops and later Amazon)[xl]. They are unable to think downward and seek out alternative ways to engage with new readers and writers due to being wrapped up in their own structures of gatekeeping mechanisms and drive to profit. Without these pressures, the citizen authors who write within genres are able to embrace new technologies and test new ways of writing, reading, and reaching potential readers in ways that can 'topple the incumbent industry leaders'[xli].

Gatekeeping and Harnessing Genres as a Means of Power

When publishers recognised the monetary value of the readers and writers of science fiction and began to publish these authors in traditional formats, the number of pulp magazines fell from twenty-three in 1957 to just six by 1960[xlii]. One aspect of the rise of the publishing industry's interest in science fiction is the jump in the visibility of fans of the genre across media, which became apparent with the emergence of an 'organised media fan culture […of] the late 1960s'[xliii] which formed to put pressure on a television network to return the genre television series *Star Trek* to the air. The rise of media as an extension of man to connect with one another in an online space gave fans and writers of science fiction a visible presence and powerful voice that

publishers sought to harness.

It was during this period that there was a shift from the authors who wrote for pulp magazines and then published books, to authors within the wider industry to publish books that were accepted into the 'literary' canon and included elements of science fiction. Authors such as Kurt Vonnegut and Vladimar Nabokov wrote science fiction into their books after they had become well-known for lauded literary, and canonised, publications. The publishing industry moved to take advantage of this and today we see a mixing of the literary and the science fiction in works from well-respected authors such as Margaret Atwood, Haruki Murakami, and David Mitchell, among many others. As a result of this harnessing of science fiction into the traditional format accepted by the gatekeepers of the industry, there has been a decline in publishers who specifically print science fiction works, with Publishers Global listing only eight dedicated publishers in the United Kingdom[xliv] .

The acceptance of some tropes of science fiction into the literary publishing canon has seen the current industry work to provide readers of science fiction with books that bridge the gap between 'high' and 'low' art while still privileging works of literary fiction. With a bottom line to answer to, publishers seek to pull some of the lighter science fiction into the mainstream literary fiction segment, as Nielsen reports that in 2015 general fiction accounted for 10 per cent of sales of paperbacks, 4.7 percent of hardbacks and 19.7 percent of e-book and app sales, while science fiction/fantasy/horror only sold 2 percent, 1.1 percent, and 6.9 percent, respectively[xlv]. In fact, over 2015 sales of science fiction and general fiction titles by traditional publishers saw a one percent decrease[xlvi], while other genres such as romance, crime fiction, and erotica grew from eight to thirty-seven percent. This is likely due to sales of major books, *Grey* and *The Girl on the Train*, as well as to the high numbers sales

of self-published works in the romance (nearly 400,000), mystery (nearly 100,00), and thriller (nearly 150,000) genres[xlvii].

With the growth of a newly connected global audience and the decline in traditional publishers taking on works of science fiction[xlviii], the numbers of citizen authors being turned away from the author-agent-publisher model to publication increases. The citizen authors who are part of the community developed around this genre choose to remove themselves from the traditional model to write their works directly to an audience of peers, an activity that becomes more obvious when looking at the various subgenres of science fiction. In bypassing the traditional gatekeeping mechanisms in place within the industry, the citizen authors take advantage of social technologies to share their works and to provide them with a feedback loop from readers. This shift towards writers developing communities of reading, writing, and feedback echoes the wider cultural movement that sees crowd input take on a more central role in everything from science and maths[xlix] problems, to funding ideas and startups with Kickstarter, and forming unique publishing models, such as Unbound, that rely on readers voting with their monetary contributions in order to see a manuscript be brought to print.

In the current publishing, climate the practice manifests itself as a changing power dynamic whereby the citizen author uses digital social technologies such as Wattpad, Twitter, Facebook, Medium, etc. to create a dialogue around their work, in a way that publishers struggle to facilitate beyond a marketing platform.

Though science fiction has been partially subsumed into the mainstream in an attempt by the industry to harness the power connected to its readers and the very nature of the way the genre lends itself to experimental styles of publication, fan fiction, for the most part, stays below the eye of the publishing industry. One of the

reasons that fan fiction is left out of traditional publisher's plans is that it is part of a gift economy where it predominately resides on the internet and is produced and consumed with no cost[1]. As such, fandom 'becomes a participatory culture which transforms the experience of media consumption into the production of new texts, indeed of a new culture and a new community'[li] within the global village. With fan fiction having its readers and writers so entrenched together in their community, a publisher can be met with stiff resistance if they stepped in and tried to assert power and authority over a fan community and its works, as has been explored in the boycotting of Todd's Wattpad *After* novels.

This is not to say that publishers haven't tried to step in and change the power dynamics between fan fiction and publishers. As Lothian notes in his study on online fandom:

> While media corporations remain attached to the notions of hierarchy and property that subcultural fandom and digital reproduction often bypass, fans' archontic production has been looked on by corporations less as dangerous piracy than as a resource to be exploited – 'user-generated content' that enables the selling of advertising space.[lii]

Many readers also have mixed reactions to the short-lived (2007-2008) site FanLib[1], which was set up as an industry approved 'for-profit' web repository for fan fiction, which worked to form collaborations with publishers and media partners based on fan writing.

More recently, Kindle Worlds was developed as a way to monetise and control

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[1] This site is accessible only via web captures at:
http://web.archive.org/web/20071012160343/http://www.fanlib.com/cms.do?page=faq.html

the works of fans by becoming 'the first commercial publishing platform that enables any writer to write stories based on a range of original works and characters and earn royalties for doing so'[liii]. Kindle Worlds licences particular works and franchises, and in doing so allows the fan fiction writer to keep the copyright to their own characters, and elements of the worlds they create, but the World Licensor (owner of the original work) gains copyright to the extensions of copyrighted characters. The trade-off for writers is the ability to get paid for their works on a monthly royalty scheme. However, the author is limited to staying in one world, and the World Licensor has the right to use anything the writer creates. By tempting the authors who write fan fiction in un-approved channels, Amazon is offering to control and exploit their fan creations in exchange for payment and a modicum of recognition.

As platforms such as Kindle Worlds continues to grow, buying the rights to different World Licensors so does the misconception of publishers who seek to monetise this growing faction of the global community. While many publishers now actively search digital writing platforms and social media sites, they often seek to find works that have big numbers of reads that can be taken, cleaned up, and published[liv], and do not take into account the potential of a writer beyond the work or works they have shared in the community already. Some publishers have begun to move beyond simply taking what has been written on digital social platforms and publishing them in a traditional format, and are instead actively seeking writers within the digital social spaces and working with them to develop new writing, not necessarily based on fan fiction.

One such publisher was the short-lived Big Bang Press (2013-October 2016), based in the UK and USA, which began with a Kickstarter campaign to raise "funds to publish three original novels by popular writers of fanfiction"[lv]. The Kickstarter

was a success and the Big Bang Press traditionally published print and eBook versions of three novels, all of which fitted into the genres that their authors had been writing fan fiction within: *A Hero at the End of the World* and *Savage Creatures*, both science fiction/fantasy works, and *Juniper Lane*, and LGBT novel. Big Bang Press closed its doors after having published these three works, when independent sales were no longer cost-efficient[lvi]. It represents a publisher who steps outside of the expected monetisation of the community of readers and writers of genre fiction and shows how innovation on their part can lead to new voices being brought into the mainstream, harnessing the growth of this segment.

The growth of the global community around genre fiction gives the citizen authors who write works based on cultural phenomenon an outlet for their writing, which still remains hidden in plain sight from most publishers and canonised authors alike. The aforementioned Kindle Worlds platform is seeking to build a bridge between the large, and largely untapped potential of the digital fan fiction community and its prolific citizen authors in a way that both appeases the canonised author, by having in place gatekeeping mechanisms, and the citizen author, in creating a royalty scheme for the work published. Creating a new economy around the citizen authors and the genre communities in which they operate, further blurs the lines between the canonised and the citizen author, which is pointed out by George R. R. Martin when he says, "'copyrights are ultimately all that separates" writers who can live off their work and those who can't'[lvii]. This mindset furthers an 'us' and 'them' dynamic that can be linked to the perception of 'high' and 'low' art and the use of digital technology.

Blurring the 'High' / 'Low' Literature Differential

The power relationship developed between the genres of science fiction and fan fictions creates strategies of power in the discourse where the citizen authors choose to strike out on their own, using digital social technology to write and share their works and develop a dialogue directly with their readers, while the industry seeks to harness that power by using gatekeeping mechanisms as a way to present traditional publication as a desirable objective for any author. If the publishing industry cannot harness the rise of the citizen author and genre fictions, they 'must be represented as "other," must be held at a distance so that fannish [or sub-genre] taste does not pollute sanctioned culture'[lviii].

The industry relies on repetitions of tropes and recognisable features to define a genre, but genres are not stable and react to the culture in which they are derived as a social construct[lix]. The very act of labelling a subset of literature as a 'genre' positions a text in the discourse and influences how it will be received and embraced by the readers. Generic labels are often provided by the industry as a way to direct 'how it will be printed, where it will be sold, and by whom it is most likely to be read'[lx]. It is the ability to label genre that the rise of the citizen author questions and challenges by taking back the term and applying it to modes of writing and texts that outliers, well beyond what the traditional industry would acknowledge as publishable.

In his book on the history of science fiction, Roberts discusses the 'ghettoisation' of the genre, and how the literary establishment and publishing industry privileges almost any other genre over that of science fiction[lxi]. The same, or worse, can be said of works of fan fiction written in subculture communities online. One reason this hierarchy is in place is highlighted by Jenkins when he writes that the '[citizen authors'] transgression of bourgeois taste and disruption of dominant cultural hierarchies insures that their preferences are seen as abnormal and threatening by

those who have a vested interest in the maintenance of these standards'[lxii]. The ghettoisation of the works that disrupt the current publishing model pushes the citizen authors and readers into a closer relationship, as they find refuge in the global village. Ghettoisation and growth of genres does not happen in a vacuum and other media formats echo these changes with the development of genre-specific television (top-down), YouTube channels (peer sharing), and website and dedicated social spaces (bottom up).

The growth of digital technology has expanded the readership of genre fictions by making the ghettoised texts more mainstream due to the physical invisibility of the digital book[lxiii][lxiv]. Reading genre texts with a low cultural currency on a tablet, phone, or on a reader's personal handheld device, removes the book cover, allowing a reader to be simply reading without worrying about the judgement of others. The equalising anonymity of the internet, where readers and citizen authors can share as much or as little about themselves as they choose, helps to close the differential between 'high' and 'low' texts; not because the industry and readership believes these differences no longer exist longer exist, but because the readers and citizen authors now have the choice of whether or not they develop relationships with these texts in a fashion that is sanctioned by, and visible to, the industry itself, or if they join the global village outwith the traditional publishing model.

As the dynamic framework of genres shifts within the discourse of the book, the power may begin to migrate away from the traditional publishing model, and instead move to the citizen authors who choose to work within these genres, taking advantage of new digital social technology to push the definition of a book in new directions. As they move towards the edges of genre, 'more prestige accrues to

violating these boundaries than to conforming to them […] where every work constructs its own unique genre[lxv]'.

It is not only the publishers who seek to exploit the rise of genre fiction and its relation to the citizen author and the concept of high and low literature. The authors of fan fictions are beginning to insist that their work be accepted more widely in the digital sphere and in the traditional publishing model as well, causing a disruption where new groups have formed. The Organization for Transformative Works (OTW) is one such group that was created as a non-profit, fan-activist organisation to help writers push back against their 'position of weakness'[lxvi], pitted against the top-down power and suppression of the wider media and cultural industries. The OTW believes 'that fanworks are transformative and that transformative works are legitimate'[lxvii]. With this in mind, they established the *Transformative Works and Cultures Journal*, to legitimise the study of fan writing through its relationship to academia, and have developed a fan archive which currently holds more than 2,881,000 works across 24,110 fandoms[lxviii]. Though OTW is not actively trying to change the law of copyright, they are raising awareness of fan fiction, a move which some fan fiction authors see as 'dangerously exposing their subculture and forcing the hand the copyright holders'[lxix].

The place where fan fiction resides in relation to copyright is unclear at best, and the nature of the texts and the disruptive modes of writing of the citizen authors challenges the industry's hold on copyrights of 'popular narratives'[lxx]. Some works, like Todd's *After* and James' *50 Shades* series, were fan works which had overtly recognisable names and attributes of their fandoms altered by publishers to consider them original works and monetise them. As a result, some fans felt that 'James had taken advantage of the fan community'[lxxi]. Authors such as J.K. Rowling support fan

fiction of their works (with the exception of erotica), while Neil Gaimen and Stephenie Meyer have no qualms with fans using their characters or worlds as long as they don't commercialise it, but canonised authors George R. R. Martin, Diana Galbadon, and Orson Scott Card are vehemently against any use of their published writing in, even non-commercial, fan fiction.

The Gender Differences in Genre Fiction and the Power Relationships Involved
Within genres, there are gender biases at work that influence the power dynamic within each subculture. Jenkins writes about fans' gendered reception of a work and in the writing of fan fiction, concluding that females involved with fan fiction get more invested in the world and the relationships built around it, while males focuses more on the process and the movement of the narrative[lxxii]. 'Authorship, publication, copyright, and paid writing [is thought of] as masculinized, commercialized, and "legitimate," and fan fiction, the "gift economy," and hobbies as feminized, free labors of love, that either reject or must fight for elusive (and undefined) legitimacy'[lxxiii].

In actively avoiding the traditional publishing model the citizen author subverts the idea of 'legitimacy' as linked to paid authorship and ownership of copyright – masculine traits – by using the digital social technology available to them to write directly within the global village for an audience of readers who may also serve as a feedback loop. In doing so, the power dynamic of the publishing industry shifts away from the agents and publishers and moves to the readers and the citizen authors of genre fictions, and the platforms on which these works are shared.

Crisp, from Tor Books, identified that of 503 book submissions across science fiction genres and subgenres for traditional publication in 2013, only thirty-two

percent have been from female authors[lxxiv]. On the contrary, the citizen author is more likely to be female and in touch with technological advances and have access to the global village. As such, the proliferation of the citizen author has grown along with the prominence and prevalence of genre fiction. Looking at the male to female ratio of social media use highlights that the number of female users parallels the rise of citizen authors within the most popular genres. Research into the demographics of FanFiction.net has shown that of those who self-identify their gender (10% of English speaking users), seventy-eight percent identify as female and twenty-two as male[lxxv]. Other major social media sites, with the exception of Twitter, report user gender ratios of over fifty percent female.

The rise of the citizen author and its relationship to the gender balance of social media and genre fictions highlights how the shifting of power dynamics within the publishing industry are being pushed through by those who are most often considered involved in the 'gift economy'. By actively bypassing the gatekeepers of the publishing industry, which prints predominately male-genre authors, the citizen authors are using innovative ways to reach their audience directly and in large numbers. Whether in science fiction or in more specifically fan fiction, it is the connectivity and community that is developed around texts that are written and shared by citizen authors in a digital social setting that creates relationships within the global village that help to delimitate the framework of the genres, alters the power dynamic in the industry, and provides a place of development within the discourse of the book.

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