

TWITTER SOCIAL MEDIA AUS: HOW FANFICTION IS RECREATING SOCIAL MEDIA

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34019/1983-8379.2025.v18.49564>

ABSTRACT: Fanfiction, a product of the fandom culture believed to have started in the 1960s with *Star Trek*, is a type of literature that is progressively entering academic discussions. This article chooses to focus on a special type of fanfiction, called Social Media AUs, which are fanfics set inside and told through the format of social media. The first part of the analysis shows how this type of fanfiction was being produced in the more traditional fanfiction spaces – virtual archives such as FanFiction.Net and Archive of Our Own (AO3) – and how writers chose to represent social media interaction. The second part discusses the shift from these archives to Twitter (X) and analyzes aspects that differentiate the Social Media AUs produced in the app: use of images, recreation of social media formats, practicality in reading, interactive tools and multimedia approach. To do this, actual examples of fanfics from AO3 and Twitter are used and authors such as Derecho (2006) and Vargas (2005) are brought to deepen the analysis. The results show that social media is indeed influencing new storytelling ways and that there is a significant interest in stories told entirely through social media format.

Keywords: Fanfiction; interactive literature; multimedia; social media; Twitter.

TWITTER SOCIAL MEDIA AUS: COMO AS FANFICS ESTÃO RECRIANDO REDES SOCIAIS

RESUMO: Fanfiction, um produto da cultura de fandom que se acredita ter começado na década de 1960 com *Star Trek*, é um tipo de literatura que está progressivamente entrando nas discussões acadêmicas. Este artigo opta por focar em um tipo especial de fanfic, as Social Media AUs, que são fanfics ambientadas e contadas através do formato de redes sociais. A primeira parte da análise mostra como esse tipo de fanfic estava sendo produzido nos espaços de fanfic mais tradicionais – arquivos virtuais como FanFiction.Net e Archive Of Our Own (AO3) – e como as escritoras escolheram representar a interação em redes sociais. A segunda parte discute a mudança desses arquivos para o Twitter (X) e analisa aspectos que diferenciam as Social Media AUs produzidas no aplicativo: uso de imagens, recriação de formatos de mídia social, praticidade na leitura, ferramentas interativas e abordagem multimídia. Para isso, exemplos reais de fanfics do AO3 e do Twitter são usados e autoras como Derecho (2006) e Vargas (2005) são trazidas para aprofundar a análise. Os resultados mostram que as mídias sociais estão influenciando novas formas de contar histórias e que há um interesse significativo em histórias contadas inteiramente no formato de redes sociais.

Palavras-chave: Fanfiction; literatura interativa; multimídia; redes sociais; Twitter.

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Introduction

The term fanfiction describes the literary genre of stories written by fans, which are based on sceneries, characters and plots previously developed in a fictional work, having no intention of copyright infringement or profit (Vargas, 2005). Due to their strong emotional bond with the originary work, fans go beyond the status of being just consumers and become writers of their own, appropriating the fictional universe and recreating it, remodeling it and even expanding it in their own writing (Padrão, 2007). This makes fanfiction a type of archontic literature, a term coined by Abigail Derecho, as fanfics consequently become part of the archive² of the source text while also enlarging it:

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 artifacts using those found objects, and deposit the newly made work back into the source text's archive. (2006, p. 64-65)

The most common type of fanfiction, and also the most studied in academia, is the one that takes inspiration from cultural-entertainment products, such as films, TV series, anime, books, mangas, comic books, video games, with the intention of broadening aspects of the source text – filling in gaps, developing relationships that are not part of the canon, proposing different outcomes than the original – or creating new plots by using the original characters, story world etc. However, fanfiction does not always have to start from other fiction: a popular fanfiction subgenre called RPF (Real Person Fiction) creates fictional stories based on real people, usually pop culture celebrities. As a reflection of the always changing fandom³ culture, fanfiction is always evolving, which makes it an interesting cultural subject to analyze.

The origin of fanfiction is a popular research topic, as it can be challenging to differentiate what fanfiction is from mere retellings of other stories. There are two arguments usually made when discussing the origin and nature of fanfiction: “(1) fan fiction originated several millennia ago, with myth stories, and continues today, encompassing works both by authors who identify themselves as fans and those who do not write from within fandoms” (Derecho, 2006, p 62). This first argument lacks preciseness in the sense that the definition is too broad, and authors like Shakespeare, for example, known for writing his own version of historical events or even borrowing the already existing plot of a story and retelling it in his own

² Derecho takes the idea of archive from Jacques Derrida.

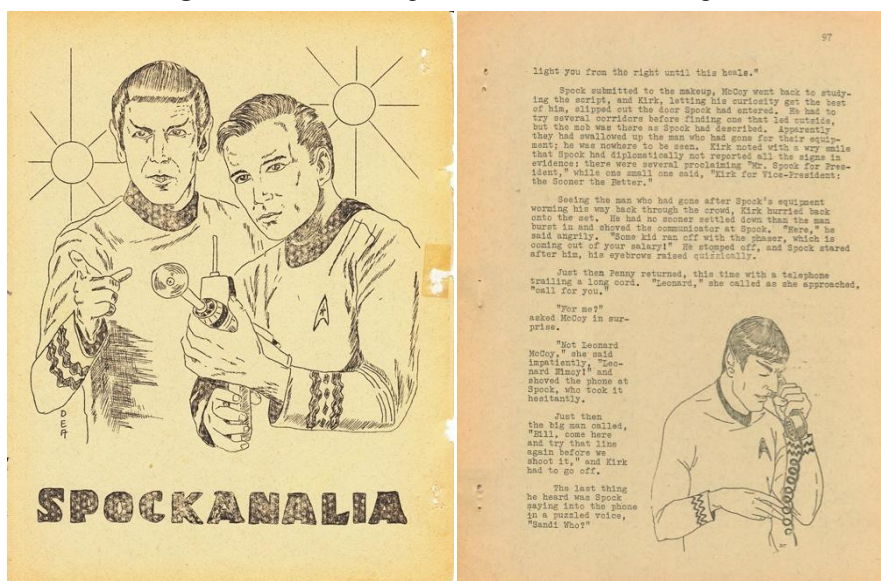
³ Fandom is defined as a group of enthusiastic fans of a cultural product or celebrity. They often have specific names: ARMY (fans of BTS), Swifties (Taylor Swift), Beyhive (Beyonce), Trekkies (*Star Trek*) etc.

version – *Romeo and Juliet* came from Arthur Brooke's proem *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet*, which is a translation and retelling of a Matteo Bandello's novella – would be considered fanfic writers. In this sense, fanfiction is not merely a work that is inspired by or retells other previous works, considering that literature already is, in its nature, a great thread of intertextuality, as was explored by authors like Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva.

The second argument says that "(2) fan fiction should be understood as a product of fan cultures, which began either in the late 1960s, with *Star Trek* fanzines, or, at the earliest, in the 1920s, with Austen and Holmes societies" (ibid). My understanding of the term aligns better with this view, although it can be a too narrow definition and exclude narratives from before the 20th century and the rise of fandom culture. However, an essential part of the process of fanfiction is for the writer to self-identify as a fan of the original work, not simply an admirer, and to share their new product with other self-proclaimed fans.

Taking into consideration that the boom of fanfiction happened in the middle of the 20th century, it is possible to analyze how the phenomenon as we know today came to be and what are the major changes it has gone through. Many scholars consider fanfiction to have begun in the 1960s, with the *Star Trek* fandom (Trekkies) and their fanzines⁴. The first *Star Trek* fanzine containing the fandom's fanfics was called *Spockanalia* (Figure 1) and it was published in 1967. *Spockanalia* and other physical fanzines were produced and sold by fans in science fiction conventions, such as Worldcon and World Fantasy Convention.

Figure 1 – A cover of *Spockanalia* and a fanfic fragment



Source: DC in the 80s (<https://www.dcinthe80s.com/2016/05/a-beginners-guide-to-fan-fiction.html>)

But the shift from physical fanfics to the virtual sphere, where fanfics now thrive, happened in 1998: with the increasing popularization of the internet, the first online fanfiction

⁴ A fanzine (blend of *fan* and *magazine*) is a non-professional and non-official publication produced by enthusiasts of a particular cultural phenomenon for the pleasure of others who share their interests.

archive was designed. FanFiction.Net was created by Xing Li and it was the major cause for the widespread use of fanfiction in the world. Anyone who claimed to be over 18 years old could register on the website and read or publish fanfics for free. It also was responsible for bringing writers and readers together in an innovative way: the readers could leave comments on fanfics, send each other private messages, add fanfics to their “favorites/bookmarks” space and even “follow” the authors, receiving email notifications every time the author updated the fanfic or when a new work was published. Therefore, the author-reader interaction is a key-part in the process of fanfiction.

For a considerable amount of time, fanfiction was restricted to these types of online archives and communities. After FanFiction.Net, many more came to provide different features and spread fanfiction on an even bigger scale, such as Spirit Fanfiction, Archive of Our Own, Quotev, Hyperfan and Wattpad. All of them shared significant similarities: fanfics were published in written format; readers would like and comment on the works and the platforms were free. However, there was a specific type of fanfic that evolved into a new format, and because of that had to adapt and be transferred into another platform: the Social Media AUs – stories that are told through the format of social media interactions. Hence, this work’s objective is to analyze this type of fanfiction (its narrative characteristics, multimedia and interactive format and evolution throughout the years) through different fanfic examples and understand how social media is influencing and modifying the way fanfiction is made.

1. Social Media AUs

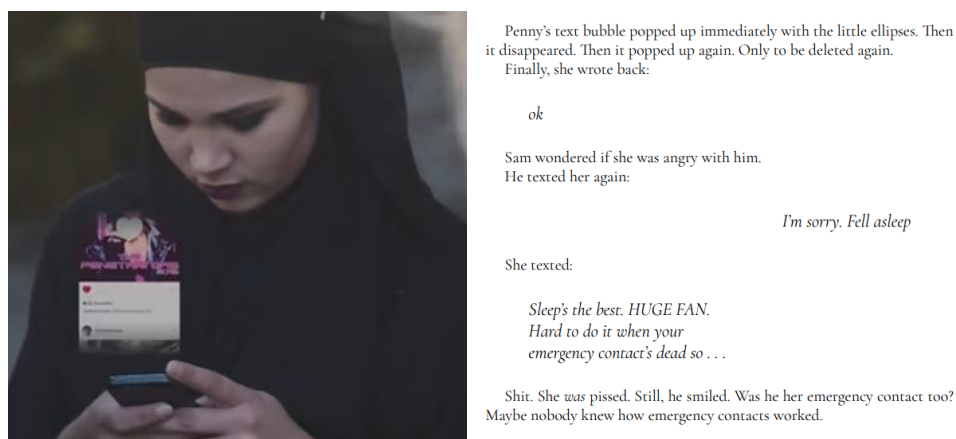
Among the many types of fanfictions, there is what we call Alternate Universe (AU). This genre encompasses fan stories that are set in a different story world (universe) than the originary one. For example, if a person decides to make a *Harry Potter* fanfic, but set the plot in our universe, with the characters going to a normal non-fantasy school, this would be considered an Alternate Universe fanfic; similarly, if we take the *Harry Potter* characters and place them in a different fictional universe, such as the *Star Wars* one, this is a deviation of the source text, and, therefore, an AU. That means that anything outside of the original universe of a work, in fanfiction, is considered an AU. In all fanfiction websites previously referred, there are multiple Alternate Universe tags⁵: College AU, Time travel AU, Fantasy AU, High School AU, Mafia AU, Modern AU and so on.

One famous tag is called Social Media AU, which basically means the story is set inside and told through social media. With the rapid spread of social media in our lives, it becomes almost impossible to set a story without some kind of social media influence or interaction. Nowadays, films and TV series often have scenes in which the character’s phone or computer is shown (Figure 2), with group chats or social media profiles being key parts of the storyline. Even some books, in the more recent days, had to adapt to show online conversations (Figure

⁵ A fanfic tag is a keyword used to describe characteristics of a certain story, so that the reader can search for it by using the tag. In the website Archive of Our Own, for example, you can find tags such as: angst, alternate universe, romance, family, fluff, comedy, enemies to lovers etc.

2) or social media interaction; if previously writers had to fragment the narration to include letters, journal entries, telegrams and newspaper pieces in epistolary novels, now they also have to figure out how to include text messages and virtual interaction into the writing. This was one of the obstacles faced in online fanfiction archives: how to make Social Media AUs look like real social media interaction?

Figure 2 – Social media in *Skam* (2015) and texting in *Emergency Contact* (2018)



Source: *Skam* (2015) and *Emergency Contact* (2018)

To illustrate how social media was being represented in traditional fanfiction – that is, the written fanfics from online archives – I bring three examples taken from the website Archive of Our Own (AO3). The first one, from 2014, is a fanfic called *technical difficulties*, in which Captain America gets famous on Twitter:

Bucky sets him up with a twitter and a Facebook and warns him off Tumblr – he gets one anyway. He likes looking at the drawings. His username is CaptainAmerica1920 and absolutely no one believes he's the real Captain America because, according to one user, *the symbol of American freedom and patriotism doesn't use Comic Sans*.

“I'm posting it on twitter,” Steve admits quietly, pressing send just as Bucky twists around, already scrabbling to get his phone out of his pocket.

we all think bucky is a hipster. what do u think? #outfitoftheday (user ‘idekman’ in Archive Of Our Own, 2014)

The narrator describes what the character sees and does on social media, while social media posts and comments are represented using italic font. Even though this structure works and we are able to differentiate narration from social media commentary, it makes the story too long-winded, and it takes away the most important characteristics of social media: practicality and quickness. However, this is not the only way Social Media AUs have been written; here is another example from 2017 taken from a fanfic of the webcomic *Check Please!*, called *blowing up my phone*:

Kent Parson @kvparse
excuse me, Twitter World, if I could just have your attention for a second...

Kent Parson @kvparse
I think we need to talk about @ladygaga for a moment

Kent Parson @kvparse
when will ur fave ever.....

Kent Parson @kvparse
I'm still not Over It

Alexei Tater M. @amashkov7
@kvparse It's been a week since Super Bowl we get it you can stop now

Alexei Tater M. @amashkov7
@kvparse Every day is "Lady Gaga is soooo great" & "I wish Lady Gaga loved me back" (user 'granteares' in Archive Of Our Own, 2017)

Differently from the first example, this one is closer to what an actual social media interaction looks like. There is no need to narrate the act of posting a tweet, as this is shown through the characters' Twitter usernames – the bold one representing the person that posted and the underlined usernames the ones who were tagged in the post or replied to. A similar 2017 *Check Please!* Social Media AU, called *if this isn't nice, I don't know what is*, shows private conversations in Twitter's Direct Messages, and uses a similar structure to represent the feed interaction and differentiate the people in the dialogue:

Direct Messages

@bibliobaker He is seriously flirting with you.
@LegitKentParson nah, he's just nice, we worked well at the charity auction
@bibliobaker No, he really is definitely flirting, and you look like you're having a good time too. (user 'marswithghosts' in Archive Of Our Own, 2017)

Every time the characters are having a chat conversation, the dialogue starts with 'Direct Messages' to indicate to the reader what type of interaction they are having, distinguishing public posts from private messages. These three examples show how social media is usually represented in written fanfiction, by narrating what the character does on the internet or transcribing a post/message using fictional usernames for each character. The innovation from this pattern came when writers were no longer satisfied with this rigid structure and wanted to make social media interaction as realistic and practical as possible. This is how the Social Media AUs migrated to Twitter⁶ and adapted into a more visual and multimedia format.

⁶ Although Twitter is now called X, I choose to use the previous name since the genre of Social Media AUs became popular in the app before the name exchange.

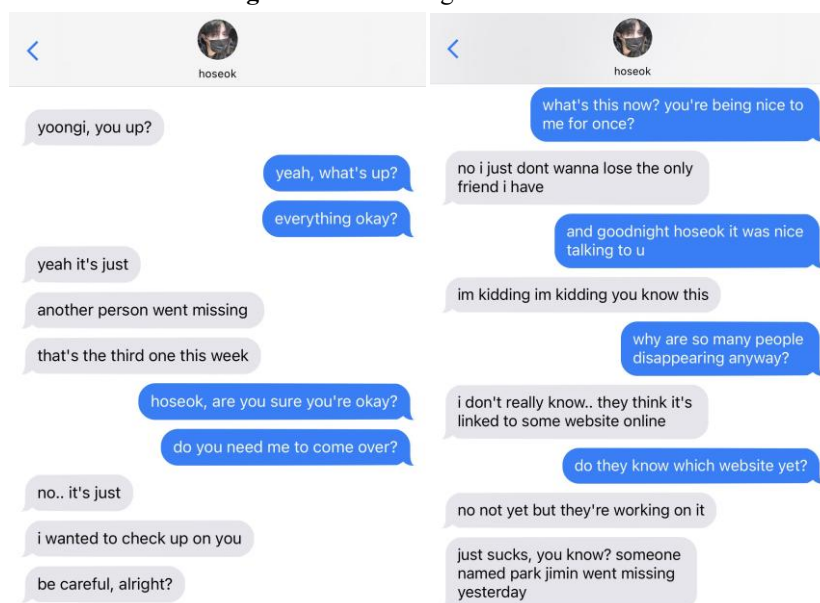
2. Twitter Social Media Aus

It is not possible to define the beginning of Twitter Social Media AUs. Although fanfiction is becoming a popular research topic, this specific type of fanfic writing is still not so explored and studied in academic works, and it would take a highly advanced searching tool to track down the first occurrence in the app. However, it is important to understand what makes Twitter Social Media AUs so different from the previous examples taken out of Archive of Our Own. For that, the method of analysis will take these five aspects into consideration: the use of images, the perfect recreation of social media formats, the practicality in reading, the reader-story interactive tools and the multimedia approach.

Taking that into account, this article will focus on analyzing different cases of Twitter Social Media AUs, starting with the 2018 phenomenon that was *Outcast* – a BTS⁷ horror interactive Twitter fanfic that trended at number one worldwide at the time of its release and gathered more than 300,000 readers. The chapters were published by author @flirtaus between January 3 and January 8, and the AU consisted mostly of text message interactions and occasional screenshots of Twitter posts or Google searches. The story follows Yoongi and Hoseok playing an online game in which they control characters (other BTS members) through text messages with a mysterious phone number. The following images (Figure 3) show the beginning of *Outcast*, which starts with a conversation between the two friends about how another person went missing recently:

⁷ BTS, an acronym of *Bangtan Sonyeondan*, is a K-pop (Korean pop) group in activity since 2013. It is formed by Kim Namjoon, Kim Seokjin, Min Yoongi, Jung Hoseok, Park Jimin, Kim Taehyung and Jeon Jungkook.

Figure 3 – First images of *Outcast*



Source: @flirtaus in X (<https://x.com/flirtaus/status/1312783079531044864>)⁸

As every Twitter Social Media AU, *Outcast* is told in the format of a thread (a sequence of tweets made by one user, with each tweet being connected to one another). The pictures above show that writers of this type of AU publish images (with readable text) to tell the story, and do not usually use Twitter's text function as the narrating tool. The picture (at times a chat, social media profile or post screenshot) can be accompanied by a small caption, but the plot is focused on the image itself. For this particular *Outcast* example, the caption of the tweet said "hoseok texts yoongi about the recent missing case". The caption here functions as a contextualization tool, yet it is not essential to the plot, since we can infer from the images that Hoseok (whose name is at the top of the chat and has the left side of messages) sent a message to Yoongi (has the right side of messages and whose point of view we follow) about how "another person went missing".

It is interesting to notice, as well, how loyal the format of the "fake" chat is to the original one. This is a much closer recreation of how social media actually works, in comparison to the transcribed Archive of Our Own examples. Many writers will use specific apps to create these fictional conversations and social media profiles, such as MemeiMessage, Yazzy, Fake Tweets, iFake Message and InstaPrank. Although this visual format entails a certain level of online literacy – that is, automatically understanding the type of interactions that appear by their format, what is a private conversation, what is a public tweet – the readers are accustomed with the lack of detailed narration in Social Media AUs. Hence, there is no need to reinforce which character is speaking, since readers can immediately tell the difference between left (gray) and right (colored) messages, excluding the need for a narrator to describe the change in speaker

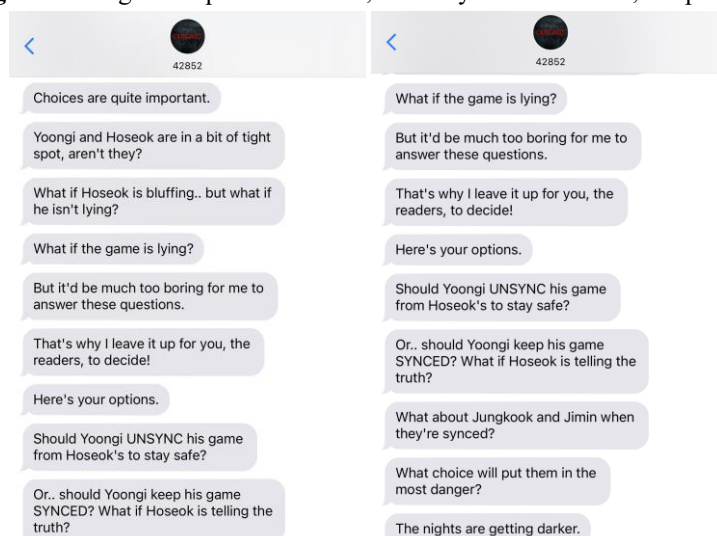
⁸ The original *Outcast* thread from 2018 has been deleted from Twitter, so I use the "revamped" version from 2020 uploaded by the author. The 2018 version can still be found on Wattpad.

(texter). Thus, this visual format is able to bring the practicality of social media into the narrative flow.

The fourth aspect aforementioned – the reader-story interactive tools – is a characteristic mostly restricted to Twitter Social Media AUs. Interactivity between writer and reader has always been an essential of fanfiction culture, mainly happening through the comment sections on the different websites available. As pointed out by Maria Vargas, “interactivity is one of the fundamental elements of fandom and is expressed in the practice of fanfiction through an author-reader relationship much closer than that exercised outside the virtual world”, as “the author receives constant feedback from their work” (2015, p. 43). However, Twitter Social Media AUs take it one step further, since the readers are now interacting directly with the story and its continuity. This is done through two instruments: the Twitter polls and the “quoting” feature.

Occasionally, writers will request their readers’ contribution on how the plot will develop by giving them options in Twitter voting polls. This is a type of interactivity that gives the reader a sense of responsibility and co-authorship, considering that their choices will affect the narrative. In *Outcast*, the author used the function of polls to determine important shifts in the story (Figure 4), and this caused a lot of online commotion as fans would make theories on which option to pick and discuss arguments until the next update was posted. According to Billboard, the first night’s poll was voted by 14,000 Twitter users, whereas the second night’s poll received 134,000 votes and the third night’s poll got 366,000 votes (Kelley, 2018).

Figure 4 – Night two poll of *Outcast*, voted by more than 134,000 people⁹

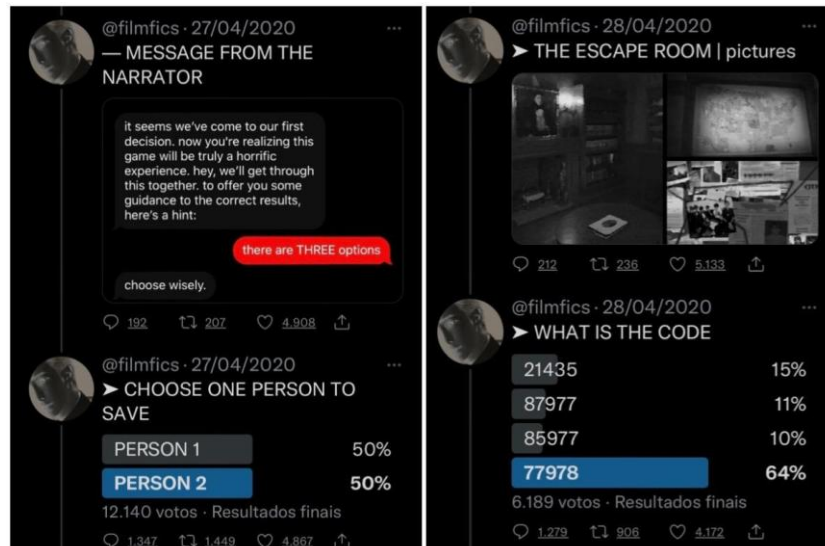


Source: @flirtaus in X (<https://x.com/flirtaus/status/1312783079531044864>)

⁹ The results of the poll were: 92,863 people voted to leave Yoongi and Hoseok’s games synced, while 41,721 chose to unsync the characters’ games.

The poll function does not appear in all Twitter Social Media AUs, but after *Outcast* it definitely became more popular. A famous *Outcast* successor was the also horror BTS AU called *The Silent One* (Figure 5), by user @filmfics in 2020.

Figure 5 – Pictures and polls from *The Silent One*

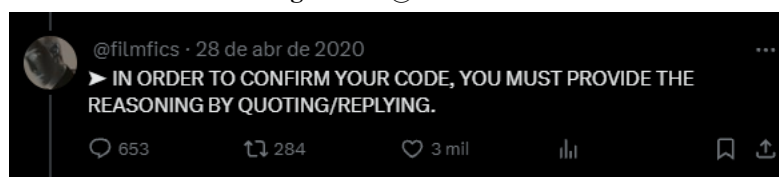


Source: @filmfics in X (<https://x.com/filmfics/status/1254863020938969089>)

This AU, however, had a creative multimedia storytelling approach, since the story is told through the typical chat format, but with additional audios, pictures of scenarios, written narration parts and the reader polls, all being equally essential to the narrative. The role of the reader was also more prominent in *The Silent One*, as some polls demanded the resolution of enigmas left in the pictures or audios. In this sense, Twitter Social Media AUs that propose challenges to the reader can also be considered a type of ergodic literature, in which “nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text” (Aarseth, 1997, p. 2).

Similarly, the “quoting” function of Twitter became the way readers would express their reactions to each fanfic update. Instead of comments (commonly used in the fanfiction website archives), writers on Twitter often prefer that the readers quote their posts, because commenting on a thread of tweets can disarrange it – the phrase “Quote tweet, don't reply!” has become popular among the Twitter Social Media AUs community for that reason. When quoting, a user is sharing that post with their own followers, and this brings more exposure to the story and, consequently, more potential readers. In the case of interactive fanfics, readers can discuss their theories and reasons on what to do in the voting polls through the quotes and visualize other readers' points of view. The author @filmfics even asked the readers to justify their poll pick through the quotes (Figure 6):

Figure 6 – @filmfics tweet



Source: @filmfics in X (<https://x.com/filmfics/status/1255232113256824832>)

Although both examples brought are about horror interactive stories, the Twitter Social Media AUs can belong to many different genres, such as comedy (crack fics¹⁰), romance or drama. The romance ones tend to be the most recurring type, as writers can explore their favorite ships¹¹ through the stories and share it with their fellow shippers. In this specific case of Social Media AUs, the two shipped characters are inserted in social media and the relationship develops mostly through the internet. Expanding outside the idea of only direct messages, these fanfics often present other types of online interaction to build the narrative, such as Twitter posts, Instagram posts, YouTube videos, Snapchat and Instagram stories etc.

To exemplify this mixture of different social media represented in the story, I bring another BTS Twitter fanfic (Figure 7) by @meowjimi posted in 2019.

Figure 7 – Jikook/Kookmin fanfic



Source: @meowjimi in X (<https://x.com/meowjimi/status/1122359017756430337>)

This fanfic creates an Alternate Universe where members Jimin and Jungkook are not part of BTS and, instead, work respectively as a youtuber and an idol (solo artist in K-pop). The fanfic lacks a title, but the description given by the author says “jikook/kookmin au where

¹⁰ A fanfic intended to be humorous, often absurd and ridiculous.

¹¹ A ship (shortened from relationship) refers to a fictional or canon pairing in pop culture. Shipping is highly common in fandom culture, and shippers often create ship names: Delena (Damon and Elena from *The Vampire Diaries*), Larry (Louis and Harry from One Direction), Reylo (Rey and Kylo from *Star Wars*) etc.

youtuber jimin copies idol jungkook's instagram posts", with "jikook/kookmin" being the ship name between the pairing. The fanfic goes back and forth between different types of interactions: Jimin talks with his other YouTube friends Seokjin and Hoseok (members of BTS) through a private group chat; the characters make Twitter and Instagram public posts, which are always followed by fan comments; Jimin and Jungkook, after indirectly flirting through posts and public comments, romantically interact through private messages; and there are even fictional YouTube videos published by the characters.

The presence of these fan accounts (Figure 8) is a common occurrence in Twitter Social Media AUs that have their main characters as celebrities. In the case of this Jikook/Kookmin AU, it offers verisimilitude to the story – considering that the main characters are public figures with admirers – and the fans even function as characters that contribute to the narrative with their inputs. The combination of verbal and non-verbal elements provides a mimetic and realistic view into fandom culture, as the fictional fans have usernames and profile pictures matching with their respective idols and they use typical slangs from "stan¹² culture", as well as an excessive amount of caps lock.

Figure 8 – posts from Jimin and Jungkook's fans in the AU



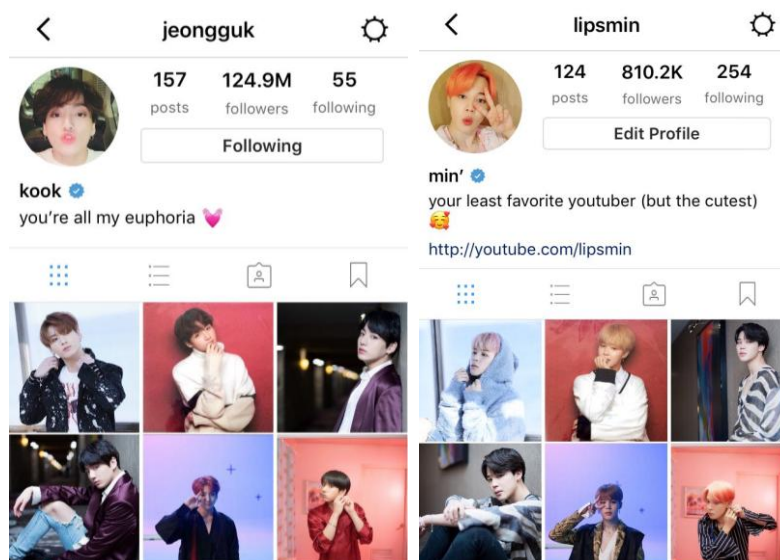
Source: @meowjimi in X (<https://x.com/meowjimi/status/1122359017756430337>)

Another common appearance in the Twitter Social Media AUs is the creation of fictional profiles for the characters (Figure 9), usually from Twitter or Instagram. These profiles help in giving more information about the characters' lives and personalities, and the amount of care in detail by the authors does not go unnoticed: usernames, verification symbol (in the case of famous characters), profile picture that matches the character's personality, number of followers and following, biography description and the pictures posted. All these elements,

¹² Stan is used to describe the extreme devotion of overzealous fans to a celebrity or fictional character.

taken directly from how a social media profile is, make the creation of this virtual Alternate Universe more realistic:

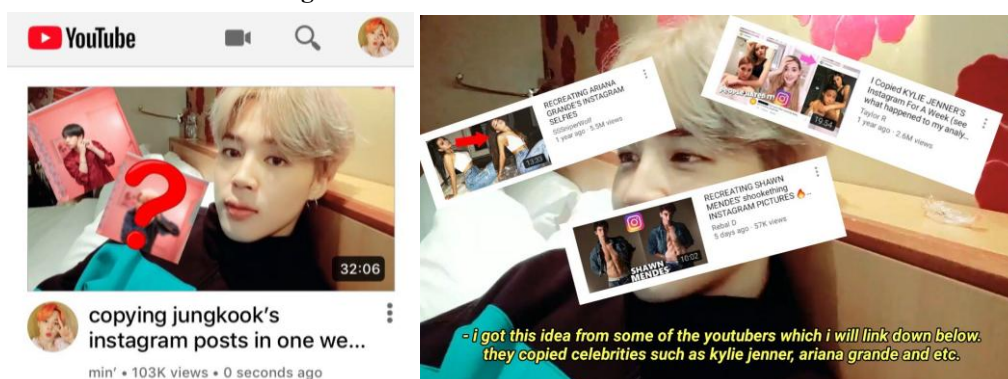
Figure 9 – characters’ Instagram profiles



Source: @meowjimi in X (<https://x.com/meowjimi/status/1122359017756430337>)

Lastly, authors often opt to use a multimedia approach, as was shown in *The Silent One*. However, in a fanfic such as this one, where the characters are public figures, urges the need to use a “multi social media” approach, mimicking the way celebrities use multiple social media to communicate with fans and how fans go back and forth between different apps for their idols’ updates. In this fanfic by @meowjimi, Jimin is a youtuber and his videos are part of the central plot. What the author does to insert these fictional videos in the narrative is taking screenshots from real livestreams done by BTS Jimin and creating a “video” inserted in the fanfic’s Alternate Universe, where he explains the reasons for copying Jungkook’s Instagram posts. This is done through the creation of a video thumbnail and subtitles, imitating how YouTube functions and how youtubers usually participate in popular trends created by other youtubers. Thus, the story is told using four different apps: Messages, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Figure 9 – Jimin’s fictional YouTube video



Source: @meowjimi in X (<https://x.com/meowjimi/status/1122359017756430337>)

There is a reason why Social Media AUs exploring ships are highly popular in Twitter fandoms. Similarly to the way the internet has been impacting how narratives are presented (in written or visual media), relationships have also been significantly affected by the online world. According to the Stanford University project called HCMST (How Couples Meet and Stay Together), meeting online has become the most popular way US couples connect (Rosenfeld, 2018), presenting an exponential growth since the 2000s. While it is true that some films, TV series and books have, in the last years, made an effort to represent online dating, none have done it more faithfully than the Twitter Social Media AUs, with stories that are completely immersed in the virtual sphere. Therefore, fanfiction has always been closely intertwined with the evolution of internet culture, and as social media and its uses evolve, writers use creative solutions to adapt fanfiction and produce innovative stories.

Final considerations

Media researcher Marie-Laure Ryan asks an important question in her text *Will new media produce new narratives?* (2004). More than twenty years later, we can attest that new media from the 21st century have completely expanded the possibilities of storytelling, challenging traditional narrative formats. In the case of Twitter Social Media AUs, elements like the use of images that replicate social media interactions, the practicality in reading, the interactivity derived from polls and “quoting” and the multimedia approach have shown that “the impact of digitality on narrative is not a matter of developing a new logic but, rather, a matter of finding the right fit between the medium and the form and substance of the narrative content” (Ryan, 2004, p. 356). The form of narrative may change, but the need for storytelling historically has and will survive any possible transformations in media:

If we look back at the history of narrative, we can see it has survived the transition from orality to writing, from manuscript to print, from book to multimedia, and from the stage to moving pictures. Each of these technological innovations has liberated new narrative energies and exploited new possibilities. Given its well-demonstrated resiliency, narrative should easily weather the

digital revolution. But I may be asking the wrong question. The survival of narrative does not depend on its ability to adapt itself to new media; narrative has been around so long that it has little to fear from computers. Rather, it is the future of new media as a form of entertainment that depends on their ability to develop their own forms of narrativity. (Ryan, 2004, p. 356)

If Twitter Social Media AUs have shown us something, it is that social media, rather than decreasing the interest of its users in reading narratives, actually has managed to be a new space for fanfic writers to develop innovative ways of storytelling. It has also shown a growing interest in stories set and told through social media format. Although it is unfortunate how scarce is the academic bibliography about this type of fanfiction, and how it can often be seen as a “minor literature”, it is important to keep track of the genre’s evolution, as it brings never seen aspects to fanfiction and storytelling as a whole. As pointed out by Vivian Lam, even though the online world is so prominent in our lives, it is the Social Media AUs that give space to narratives representing our day-to-day online interactions:

In many respects, reading SMAUs feel much like looking at a stranger’s phone over their shoulder – and this voyeuristic quality reflects how we connect with others in a hyperconnected world. The significance of the minute behaviors of online life we take for granted are given full consideration when we’re invited to witness events as bystanders (or amateur NSA agents) – there’s an assumed subconscious truth in the text messages we delete before sending, the thought patterns traced by our Google search histories, the pictures we don’t share on our camera roll. In the things we don’t say out loud and the things we are too afraid to ask for. Though we are not granted the confessional quality of first-person narratives or the physical immediacy of film, we are granted a glimpse into something much more private – intimacy and distance held in tenuous harmony. (Lam, 2021)

Finally, my goal with this work was to emphasize how social media and especially fangirls (as young women are undoubtedly the majority in the fanfiction community) have valuable and revolutionary literature to offer to academic discussions, illustrating how the modern world is constantly reinventing narratives, even inside Twitter. Therefore, the “SMAUs are an embodiment of how social media could not only be the next frontier of collaborative multimedia storytelling, but also how platforms can be wielded to cultivate prosocial creation and consumption of art” (Lam, 2021).

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Data de submissão: 25/07/2025

Data de aceite: 01/09/2025