

****INTRO MUSIC****

Sue: Hi and welcome to Women at Warp. Join us as a crew of four women Star Trek fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name is Sue and thanks for tuning in. Today the whole crew is here we have Andi.

Andi: Hi everyone!

Sue: Jarrah.

Jarrah: Hello!

Sue: And Grace.

Grace: Hey superfans, not really, casual listeners, how's it going?

Sue: And our very special guest Erica Massey.

Erica: Hey! I'm happy to be here.

Sue: So, Erica is a Ph.D. student in English and studies Star Trek fanfiction. So, that's what we're here to talk about today.

Erica: Yup, it should be exciting.

Andi: So, wait, you study Star Trek fan fiction as like your academic study?

Erica: So, I'm a 20th and 21st century literature Ph.D. student technically, however I do specialize in fan works, and fandom. My dissertation will be about fan works as relevant sources of literature, and currently it looks like Star Trek will be the focus of that dissertation.

Andi: That's awesome!

Erica: I think so. My research is very entertaining anyway.

Grace: You are living a dream there.

Erica: I really am.

****laughter****

Sue: So, we have our usual little bits of housekeeping to go over before we get to our main topic which are our Patreon. First of all Patreon is a platform that basically instead of a Kickstarter which is a one time donation, allows you to make a regular contribution, anywhere from \$1 to as much as you want to give to help us out in keeping the show going. And that helps us to buy new equipment, and to promote the show, and to publish our new blog, which is our other piece of housekeeping. But first if you'd like to contribute you can go over to <https://www.patreon.com/womenatwarp> . And one of our new patron rewards is to watch

along episodes with us, so you can get some live commentary on episodes like “Sub Rosa” [TNG Season 7, Ep. 14].

Grace: Which is an experience, let me tell you.

Sue: And as I mentioned we launched our blog in January, we're currently publishing one original post every week, as well as a crosspost or review from from a member of the crew, and our next Patreon goal is to get that up to two original posts per week so you can check out our blog over on the Web site at <http://www.womenatwarp.com/> .

Grace: And get excited.

Sue: It's been absolutely awesome so far.

Grace: Yeah. I'm blown away right now.

Jarrah: Yeah, for sure. And if you have a post you want to contribute, we've had a ton of pitches, but we still are absolutely interested in hearing from you, or if you have something you've written elsewhere that you think would be good to reshare on our blog then flip us a note, too. You can find all their contribution information on our site, <http://www.womenatwarp.com/> .

Sue: Awesome, so, today we're going to be talking about fan fiction, of course, but the topic is so big we knew we had to split it up, and in the future we're planning to do more episodes, but today we're talking about, I guess what we can call pre-Internet fanfiction.

Grace: Proto-fiction, if you will.

laughter

Sue: And the approximate date range here is until 1990, which is the year that Alt Star Trek Creative, the newsgroup was founded. Of course, we're going to be talking mostly about fanzines, which you know existed past 1990, of course so there might be some overlap, but in general we're going to be talking about 1966 to 1989, today.

Grace: The badlands of the fanfic era. The primordial fix, if you will.

Sue: I personally think this time period is really interesting, because it was so much more difficult to find and distribute this content. You know, you either saw an ad in the back of a magazine, like you might see an ad in Starlog of all places for a fanzine, or you'd come across them at conventions, and sort of stumble upon this community that existed. And it's, you know, when I was a kid getting into fanfic it was so much easier to just type it, Google didn't exist, Alta Vista and find full web sites on pairings.

Erica: Right, and well and from you know an academic standpoint and that actually makes it very difficult to study, because there aren't any you know online archives that you can go look at. You actually have to find people that have print copies of you know these original work, which you know thankfully at least people going to conventions usually you know they'll have access to that, and so then they can contact me and you know arduously scanned some you know copies in of like an original GRUP or something and send to me. But it definitely makes researching it very tricky and sometimes incredibly frustrating.

Grace: And the act of making that must have been very difficult, also, the fact that a lot of these zines would have been printed at home, written at home. produced at home. It definitely would have been a major labor of love to get all that done.

Erica: Yeah, and it was a significant effort to bring together people who were illustrating them, and writing for them because often they weren't you know in the same place, so people would have to find a way to get their artistic representations that accompanied poetry, or articles to the person printing it. So, there was a significant amount of work you know, primarily done by women, to get these things published. That's, I mean they had my respect, for sure.

Grace: Yeah, no kidding.

Jarrah: So Erica what made you want to look at fanfiction as an area of study?

Erica: So I actually, my interest started with fandom in general. I was looking at comic books, and I mean especially like within the current political climate, you get very interesting depictions historically of what was happening socially and politically from comic books, right. And so that was sort of my my "in". But, when I started doing more research online, in terms of comic book fandoms, I sort of needed to backtrack to figure out like how did fandom really begin. Specifically, how did fandom interactions begin, because I was I was kind of jumping into it in the middle of the river, right, and I needed to go back to the source. And pretty much universally that source was Star Trek. And I of course had been a huge fan as a kid because my parents raised me on Star Trek, so I at least had the necessary foundation.

Grace: You had the proper upbringing, yes.

Erica: Yes, yes they raised me well. And so, I was able to, through some connections that I made online, naturally, I was able to get in touch with people who had been around for sort of the inception of the Star Trek fandom, who had again access to early copies of like Spockanalia or T-Negative that they didn't mind sharing with me, and it just it just sort of grew from there. I never actually intended to like make this my focus of study, but suddenly by the end of my first year as a Ph.D. student I had just this massive amount of information that was fascinating, and no one had ever really done much with before. So, I just kind of ran with it.

Grace: That's as good a way to start as any.

Erica: Yeah.

Grace: Very cool.

Sue: There are some things that if you don't read fanfic, you might not be familiar with it.

Grace: Because you're not in the know.

Sue: Right. And, the descriptions of stories generally include the relationship that's being focused on. And there's an abbreviation, so we'll use the infamous Kirk and Spock as our example and if we're describing a platonic relationship in the story the descriptor would be K&S, and if we're describing a romantic relationship it would be K/S, and that's actually where the term slash fiction, or slash fic came from. Which, I believe

started as a general representation of a romantic or sexual story, and has pretty much come to mean almost exclusively male/male romantic relationships.

Erica: Right. The distinction now is if you have a female/female relationship that is femslash.

Jarrah: Yeah, but you're right that it didn't always used to mean same sex.

Erica: Yeah, that has evolved.

Sue: Yeah, at the beginning of the term it meant any kind of sexual relationship.

Jarrah: One of the things I thought was really interesting when I was reading Camille Bacon-Smith's *Enterprising Women* [sic, full title is *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*], which is a cool academic book on women in early fandom, was that there seemed to be kind of a divide in the community about with some authors being worried that people writing any like sexual affection, and then particularly woman/woman or man/man would like disgrace the fanfic community. Did you encounter any of that sort of divide?

Erica: Oh, absolutely. The general consensus to me is that it was viewed as a very black and white issue. People either belonged to publications that encouraged having sexual articles, pictures, etc. or they denied it entirely, and that tended to be the case of individuals within the fandom as well. They either supported it or they thought that it was completely unacceptable, and even shameful for the fandom as a whole, and you know didn't appreciate that there were publications that were entirely dedicated, in fact, to you know more sexual stories and pictures like GRUP, and there was a lot of dissent within the fandom on how exactly to handle that, right, because there was quite a bit of a disagreement on what should and should not be published in terms of what would make the fandom look good or bad as a whole.

Andi: Was it all of the explicit material or anything that just wasn't heterosexual?

Erica: That's kind of a difficult question to answer, because for the most part there... So in the beginning before any of the Kirk and Spock slash became very well known, and there were a lot of self insert, written pieces where you know this woman, who anyone can identify with you know that as a woman, has a relationship usually with either Spock or Kirk. And originally they were just seen as like sort of silly, and didn't get any sort of respect that a lot of the more serious like articles and interviews and that sort of thing you got, but it was seen as as mostly harmless, right. Whereas, then it's my understanding, that when there became a degree of you know homosexual relationships that were being represented, especially between two of the main male characters, that is when dissent really started to grow. And that is when the focus became, we shouldn't be talking about you know these sexual, these explicit situations, and so it's it's difficult to say whether or not that you know entirely coincided with these non-heterosexual relationships, but previously again it was just seen as something kind of silly, but harmless. So, it's hard to determine, and I've spoken to different people who have different opinions, so I can't I can't really answer that entirely.

Jarrah: I'm curious about, do you think that the those attitudes have changed over time, because when we, I think largely think and talk about fan fiction today, of course there's a lot of non sexually explicit fanfiction, or non sexual fanfiction, but I think that the sexual fanfiction is generally like a lot more accepted, and even considered as like the stereotype of what fan fiction is. So, I wonder if people who may have objected to it at the time have changed their views at all, just kind of seeing that...

Grace: Seen the light!

Erica: So, I can say that that's definitely the case for some people, I gave a presentation at DragonCon last year in Atlanta, and I had two women who approached me afterward who actually admitted that when they first became part of the fandom they were people who did not at all support any kind of explicit sexual relationship between Kirk and Spock, they thought that it was this betrayal of the canon of the series, and they were very vocal against it, right, but they said that as times changed they realized that it wasn't actually the way that they felt personally, it was the influence of you know external forces. You know, being in the time that they were that were influencing their opinions, and in fact they both said that they are members of Archive of Our Own, AO₃, and have multiple saved bookmarks in their favorites of, you know, fic where Kirk and Spock are you know madly in love. So, I can say that at least a small subset, you know, that I've spoken to have certainly changed their mind. But, I think it's a lot more to do with like the socio-political situation in general being more accepting currently.

Sue: Do you think the concern about how this would make fandom look had anything to do with the fact that fans knew that the creators were reading the zines, at least Spockanalia?

Erica: Yeah. So, what's interesting about the zines is that, especially some of the first ones, they were very well known within fandom, but also within you know creators of the original content, right. I mean, you had Roddenberry writing letters and doing interviews, and cast and crew writing letters and doing interviews for these zines, talking about them in interviews with larger press, and so when the original zines went from being less about just sort of surrounding material and articles and the occasional poem, and they started to branch out into fiction works and fan art that you know may or may not be a little racy.

Grace: Well, all art gets there eventually.

Erica: There became this concern of, well what if this very close relationship, this very friendly relationship that we have with the original content creators, what if they no longer want to be associated with us because we're doing things that are a little bit embarrassing, or a little bit not socially acceptable, right. Which again, was where this sudden disconnect occurred when, especially Kirk/Spock fic started to be produced in large quantities.

Sue: So, I mentioned it but I'll give a little bit of history on that zine, Spockanalia was the first all Star Trek fanzine, and according to fan lore, the first media fanzine. So, all based on a TV show, rather than any original content, and the first issue was in September 1969, and there were five issues over three years. And this was a zine that was more nonfiction, and it was stories and poems, articles, art, and letters that you know Roddenberry even called "required reading for every new writer and for anyone who makes decisions on show policy." And then, during threats of cancellation for the show, Roddenberry was using the existence of Spockanalia, and its popularity, as an example of the show's popularity nationwide in interviews to sort of you know bolster his bid for renewal.

Grace: Well why not!

Sue: Yeah!

Erica: Well it was a valuable resource of course.

Jarrah: So, Erica we touched on this a little bit but I'm wondering if you could maybe help shed a bit more light on the process of producing a fanzine, both in terms of like the technology or how they would distribute fanzines, but also if you know just say okay, so me like 12 years old I guess probably I would have been older if we're looking at theoretical past life me, but, like I got into fanfiction, reading fanfiction on the internet but just say I was 25, and I go to my first convention in the early 1970s or late 1960s, how do you find out about these fanzines, and possibly get to write for one of them?

Erica: So, it kind of depended on where you were located, because some of the publications that I found were literally so insular that it was just someone was you know printing it at their office where they worked as a secretary during the day, and were hoping they wouldn't get caught, you know.

Andi: I can't relate to that at all. *sarcasm*

Sue: I definitely never scanned anything and sent it to Jarrah at work, never. *sarcasm*

Erica: So, I mean some of them were very, I'm not going to say sloppily because that does them a disservice, but they were certainly not professionally made. They were essentially just you know typed up on whatever method you had, whether it was you know a typewriter or you know something slightly more advanced and pictures would be scanned often, and again some people were doing these within an office environment and they would only make like you know 50 copies, and that would that would be their run you know. Because it was very difficult again to connect with people in this way, so if you were in a small town and you were very reliant on whoever was in your town who you know enjoyed reading this sort of material. Some of the larger ones, they would actually you know take to a press, but again they had to gather articles, and so in larger cities you would have people who essentially would be responsible for you know, "I'm going to I'm going to make the art, and you know she is going to write this poem that will accompany it on the opposite page." And they would have someone then take this material all to a press, make multiple copies, bind it usually in whatever way was most cost effective, but there was there was a wide range of how these were produced, purely because there was no you know online method of spreading the word to potential readers. And eventually, that problem was somewhat solved by mailing lists for larger publications, where you would actually be able to sign up you know in print like you would for any other magazine right where you would mail in the little card, and then that would give them a good idea of, and of course this was done weeks in advance, so that then they would have an idea of how many they needed to print and so on and so forth. But, the the process, like I said I've spoken to a couple of different people and it varies significantly.

Jarrah: Yeah I have an awesome older fanzine called The Southern Star that is themed kind of around the Romulan Commander from "The Enterprise Incident" [TOS Season 3, Ep. 4] and Spock, and a bit of Kirk, and a lot of vampires, and werewolves...

Grace: Like you do, like you do...

Jarrah: I got it, and I immediately noticed like how tiny the print was, and there's a note that says basically like, "Sorry, we got twice as much material as we expected we were going to get for this, but we didn't have any more budget so we just like mimeographed it all at 50 percent the size."

laughter

Jarrah: Yeah, so, I mean definitely a lot of admiration for just the amount of work that went into coordinating and distributing things. I also, when I was reading *Enterprising Women* I noticed that there was some

discussion about how some groups didn't actually want their... They didn't always put together a zine, but just like sometimes just a circle to read each other's stories, or you know a small zine and they didn't want the mailing list to always be that big, because they were very concerned about anonymity even using pen names, because of this like, I mean if you can imagine people might feel like a bit self-conscious sharing they write fanfiction today, and how it would be so much different back then when it's was so much, such a smaller thing and when science fiction fandom didn't have the mainstream acceptance it does.

Erica: Right. Well, and it can even be dangerous for some people, depending again on where they were located. I spoke to one woman who said that she was living in Montana at the time period in which she was a significant fan and contributor at least with her very again insular community. And they would have meetings around, I think she said like once a month, but they were like very secretive, and I'm talking like Mafia secretive.

****laughter****

Erica: Because they were genuinely concerned for their safety, because they were writing explicit homosexual works, which in Montana during that time period would not just be frowned upon, but you know taking probably violently depending on who encountered it, right.

Grace: Right.

Erica: So, and of course again she said you know when we did it because we were sort of, and actually a lot of the members of her little community were part of the LGBTQ community, and that was sort of their outlet, and so they themselves were very apprehensive about meeting in groups, right, but they said that they did it anyway, because they loved the fandom and that it was this way for them to express themselves that they hadn't encountered before, but yeah you're absolutely right that, in a lot of cases, and again what makes my research difficult, is that you know you don't have a physical record, and even you know a physical record, much less an online record of how many countless, probably hundreds, of little tiny meetings like that occurred in which people were bringing these creative influences to the fandom.

Andi: And, see, I thought I was a dedicated fic reader reading like every day, but actually going to somebody's house and like reading it out loud to each other that is next level. Very impressive.

Erica: Right. Yeah I have a lot of respect for my my predecessors.

Sue: I want to jump back real quick to the sheer amount of work involved. I have several fanzines from the early TNG years, so, this is you know towards the end when the technology for this was pretty much as good as it was going to get, but there are several zines in which people were just going out and finding articles, and reviews on the actor's past performances. So, there was someone who went and like sat in front of a microfiche at a library for hours on end, to get this information to photocopy it for this zine.

Erica: Talk about dedication.

Sue: Yeah and you flip through it and you can absolutely see that people just printed out their finished product project, or typed it up and sent it to whoever was going to put this together because every other page is in a different font, it's all formatted differently, you know, but it feels so like special because of how organic it is in that way.

Erica: Yeah, yeah for sure.

Andi: Fandom will find a way.

****laughter****

Grace: To fandom and ladies who want to read dirty Kirk/Spock stories.

****laughter****

Andi: Now, that's the other thing, like how much of this section, because I know now the fic writing community is overwhelmingly women.

Erica: Female, yes that's true.

Andi: And, it was at that time as well?

Erica: So, what's really interesting is that fandom in general was, and pretty much always has been and continues to this day to be very evenly split in terms of gender. However, men are primarily responsible for talking about canon, and as it exists, not trying to expand upon it, right, so they're the ones like if you're talking modern day, they're the ones that are like on Reddit streams talking about like Meta, right. Whereas, women don't feel as if the series is complete as is, right, they want more, and they believe that there is more, and this has always been the case. And so women are the hugely creative producers within fandom, they're the ones who are again, producing something that the canon does not give you, or I would even hazard to say something that the canon lacks, and they're trying to make up for that lack, and in doing so they're creating you know, whether it be art, or fiction, or poetry, they're creating something that supplements canon, right. And so in terms of creativity, it is and has always been overwhelmingly female at least in the Star Trek fandom, and I think that that says a little something considering that that is a theme that has continued, right. That women are creative, and powerful influences, right.

Andi: Yeah I heard once somebody break it down as men are the collectors and protectors of canon, so like you have...

Grace: Whether you asked for it or not.

Andi: Correct, exactly, that's kind of where I'm going here, but like you know men are the ones that will own every ship, and you know really dive deep into what's already there, and collect facts you know that sort of thing. And then women are the ones that are pushing the boundaries, which might be one of the reasons why there is sometimes a clash between the two types of fandom, and why we often hear the whole idea of "real fans". Like, right when I started First Time Trekking, I was actually surprised that I didn't get more gatekeeping than I did, because I was, I have never been the kind of fan that's going to remember everybody's name, or who's going to remember you know the stardate, I still don't understand star dates, you know, so every fan that goes into loving something, loves it in their own way, and values a different section of it. So, like for me Star Trek, I love Star Trek because of social justice and the characters that sort of thing. Other people love the hard Sci-Fi, and the ships, you know.

Erica: Yeah.

Andi: It's not a right or wrong, but I do sometimes see conflicts between those kinds of fandom. And I've always found it really interesting how gendered it tends to be.

Erica: Yeah. Well, and I think, and maybe this is overly optimistic of me, but I think at least in my experience I've found that fandom spaces are getting a lot better about bridging that gap and showing mutual respect, whether it be you know between a, more of an archivist kind of person, or someone who is creative and is making new material, right. So, kind of like you said you were surprised that there there were not as many gatekeepers, I was pleasantly surprised as well when I started to really get into this, particularly when I was trying to find people to talk to, though primarily the people I'm talking to are indeed women. Considering you know the constraints of my research.

Andi: Although I will say, too, that when I first started, I didn't ever, and I very specifically because I'm used to being a woman on the Internet, very specifically did not have my name on it, and I did not have a gender on it. So, probably for the first year or so people kept assuming I was a guy, that might have had something to do with it. By the time that I was, you know, doing Women at Warp, and actually going onto podcasts, and people started knowing my name, and a little bit more about me personally, I started getting a little bit more. But, in general Trek fandom has been pretty open to me which I've always appreciated.

Jarrah: I think you mentioned something there in passing, Erica that's just important to highlight is this idea that like women are filling in what isn't there, and maybe that helps to explain part of the gaps and also maybe why men are more invested in upholding canon, like maybe not consciously, but it's easier to be satisfied with the canon when you like, you see yourself represented throughout it, in complex ways, you can find characters to resonate with, and I think that that goes back to a bit, the point about women writing this and particularly this whole question of, I hope I'm not getting too far ahead of us, but this whole question of why do straight women want to read or write slashfic, because I know a lot of people who have not interacted with the fic community, who make an assumption that it must be gay writers writing slashfic, which is actually not always the case.

Sue: We were actually having a, sorry we were having a discussion at Star Trek: Las Vegas this past year about fanfiction, and were asked exactly that question. Why would a straight woman want to read or write slashfic?

Jarrah: Well, actually the question started out with I believe, "Why can't gay fanfiction writers, just like make up their own pairings instead of changing the sexuality of the characters that are straight in canon?" So, first we had to correct that you know there's a lot of things in there, but one of the things is that actually it's not just queer authors who are writing slash fiction.

Erica: Yeah. Well, what's interesting about... So I obviously, you can't get like a solid percentage pie chart breakdown of you know historically who was writing what, you can get a better idea of that currently, and the latest statistics at least the most inclusive ones that I've found were from a Archive of Our Own census that occurred in December of 2013, and it essentially said that 45 percent of slash across the board, not just Star Trek, but any kind of male/male slash fanfiction, around 40 percent was written by heterosexual women. Then another 30 percent was written by pansexual or otherwise queer identifying women. Another 10 percent was written by lesbian women. And then the rest of the breakdown was all men who identified as straight, men who identified again as bi or otherwise queer, and then men who identified as homosexual. But, what is interesting is that there was only 5 percent of that entire pie chart was men who identified as homosexual. And so, primarily, and again this is this is currently I can't really speak for the past, but currently there is a) an overwhelming number of women, but b) the majority is indeed you know straight women was

with a very close second to that being bisexual or queer identifying women. And, there's a lot of reasons, this is a question that I'm still investigating, but there's a lot of reasons that I've been given, by both you know queer women which is a little easier to understand because, they're again sort of like you said making characters that they at least can identify with even if it's not a character that shares their gender, but if we're speaking specifically of heterosexual women writing slash, the two primary responses that I get from people when I ask about this is firstly, that there is a degree of freedom in writing two male characters because there are no constraints that they feel personally, right because they don't actually identify with either one of them, and so it allows them to be more creative in their writing. The other response that I tend to get is, and usually it's said with a little bit of derision, is that if these mass produced pieces of media had better female characters, perhaps they would write heterosexual relationships but unfortunately many people find that the most compelling relationships. the relationships that have the most back story and character development, are all between men. And so, it is it is easier, and even perhaps more logical, for people to choose to write relationships in that way. Now, you can't discount that there is often fetishisation occurring, like it is a problem, however, again I think that we are sort of as a whole fandom as a whole recognizing this and trying to combat it in a way that that people who are actually queer are able to take precedence over, be the voices that may overshadow them.

Andi: Yeah. Like I'm a queer woman who writes slashfic. And the second reason is the one that I would say, if somebody asked me like why, and I only want to write one ship, so... Like I've written one fic, so, there's not a lot of variety there, but the reason I'm writing that particular ship in that particular fic is because those were the characters that I liked the best. It didn't have anything to do with like oh I really want to see male/male, it was those were the two characters that I thought there was a story for.

Erica: Right, and I've actually done some research because I found that very compelling, and again it was probably the predominant answer that I received in talking to multiple people about this, but I went and I looked, again Archive of Our Own is so handy!

Andi: Yeah, you can search all of the ships.

Grace: It's a beautiful, beautiful wonderful thing.

Erica: The interface is incredibly user friendly. But, I went and I looked at some of the most popular ships currently that were male/male ships, slash ships, and what's interesting is that there's actually a large number of gender swapped, whether they're both women now in the story, or whether one of them is gender swapped so that one of them is a woman and one of them is a man making them a heterosexual couple, but people don't seem to discriminate between gender swapped fics, regardless of you know if both are swapped or if just one is swapped, and fics that keep them with their original gender. And, I think the reason for that is it's sort of what you're talking about, it's that they like the character and they don't particularly care, In many cases, what gender the character is they just think that there's a compelling reason for those characters to be together regardless, right. Which I think that's valid.

Jarrah: Yeah for sure. I mean I think there is sort of a little bit of an interesting, contra... I don't know if it's a contradiction, but you know I would argue that writing slashfic and distributing slashfic especially in the pre-Internet era, was like an inherently political act because it spreads acceptance, and even if that is not the intent. And in *Enterprising Women* Camille Bacon-Smith wrote, "Fanziners don't gather in each other's homes and in hotels around the country to march on the male heterosexual bastions and demand their rightful place. They come together for mutual healing, for protecting from the outside, and to ponder the most pressing questions in their lives - Who am I? What do I really want? Why can't I have it? Why does life

hurt so much?" So I thought that that was sort of an interesting way of looking at this whole, I guess it's like the personal is political that may not be the reason that you're writing it that the the outcome is political.

Sue: It brings to mind, too, the idea that we just talk about in media in that there especially you know for talking about the original series, the majority of the main characters are men. The overwhelming majority of the main characters are men. So, there is always a character for, or almost always a character, for a male audience member to identify with who is the same gender, whereas, women growing up with this kind of media are often identifying with male characters, instead of the one or two women on the show.

Grace: Who may or may not have actual personalities.

Sue: Right.

Jarrah: Right.

Sue: So, there are, especially we hear from a lot of women who grew up with TOS who identify with Spock in particular, as sort of being like the fish out of water, right, which I'm sure a lot of us can identify with, but, and I think that's that's coming into play too in fanfic. And Leslie Fish who is a folk artist said, "It's the only way we can be one and have the other." So, if you're identifying with one of the characters and then having relationship with another, but they both happened to be male, there's still like a self insert into that story. And she also said, "Our culture so thoroughly denigrates the personalities of women that women can't imagine themselves as heroic characters unless they imagine themselves as male."

Erica: And, I think, I mean it was a problem then and I think it's still a problem now, within specifically the Sci-Fi genre, where women are not used as multi-dimensional characters, they're used as sort of these tools within male homosocial bonds. And so, you have female characters that are not compelling as characters because they're, even if it's it's not like a malicious intentional thing by the writer, they aren't being given, you know, their own storyline, their own growth. They're just, they're being used in terms of this, and again it's supposed to be a homosocial relationship for these men to become you know better friends, and to bond, and you know all of these you know bro kind of things. However, in doing that the creators are unintentionally creating this very compelling backstory, this very compelling reason for these these characters to be together. And like you're saying, the women are going to relate like as human beings more to that relationship than they are to something that is very shallow and pithy at most, right, when you have these female characters that are usually introduced very quickly as a romantic interest, right.

Sue: So, I want to talk about GRUP.

Erica: Oh, yay!

laughter

Sue: And you threw out the title a couple of times before, GRUP is a fanzine it lasted six issues, from 73 to 78, and the title is of course a reference to the episode Miri [TOS SEason 1, Ep. 11] in which grownups are "grups". Yeah it is included in its third issue, in 1974, the first published, and that's important, Kirk/Spock story called "A Fragment Out of Time."

Erica: Yes, and that also had the very first published, important distinction, piece of explicit fan art, as well, though admittedly I have I have a scan of it and it's very hard to tell what's happening to in it. The artist, and

in fact the writer of "A Fragment Out of Time" both had to come back the following issue and clarify that yes indeed this is what's happening, and not only in the story and in the picture, because they were both incredibly vague and and very like poetic in terms of the story, so it was kind of difficult, like you could you could read it as a multitude of different interpretations, right. But yes, so that is a very important thing to note, because they were, and it happened in the same issue you had the first published explicit fan art, and the first published explicit fan story.

Sue: And published as such an important distinction there because before this, there were stories and art distributed among friends, and I don't have any information on the first art, maybe you do, Erica, but the first story is presumed to be "The Ring of Shoshern" by Jennifer Guttridge, and approximately did it in 67 or 68.

Erica: Yes and, believe me I have tried, to figure out exactly when that was and to get a copy of it, but I have not been able to actually get a copy of it, I've only heard word of mouth what it was about, and so yeah if anyone wants to hook me up with that let me know.

****laughter****

Grace: Putting out the call to our listeners.

Erica: But, no I would agree, assuming that it is 1967 or 1968 it predates any published slash content, so for now I'd say, yeah, that's accurate. As for fan art, I was able to speak to a couple people who again had these more like very insular like only 12, 13 people were involved, they would print like 20 copies of an issue and they didn't even have a name for their issue, but I've found smaller publications like that, that were making fan art, and I wouldn't necessarily say explicit, but risque poetry about Kirk and Spock that predates that. Again I haven't been able to find any actual copies or scans though.

Andi: When I'm thinking about like you doing all of this academic research and it's practically like archaeology, trying to find all of these primary source documents from the late 60s, can you imagine being in the late 60s and sitting down and being like okay Kirk and Spock, and like writing it out and not realizing that you're actually going to be a part of history, and someday somebody is going to be writing their dissertation on your, you know, fanfic you wrote. And it makes me think about like 50 years from now people are going to be like so Tumblr in 2017 era, really was dominated... And like writing these amazing you know academic papers about fandom the way it is now.

Grace: You have to wonder you really do.

Erica: Though I do envy whoever is doing that in the future a little bit, because they will have the opposite problem.

****laughter****

Andi: Yeah, they will have too much.

Erica: So much archived material online easily searchable at their fingertips.

Jarrah: But, I mean I guess on the plus side is that you know because the stuff isn't available online it forces you to go out and actually talk to the people who created this stuff, whereas you know no one's going to be able to figure out who like SleepingTARDIS-32 on Tumblr was, and I think that's an important part and we

talked a bit about that but we're also planning on doing a future episode where we have a bit of like an intergenerational discussion of fic authors.

Erica: That will be fascinating, yeah. But, yeah I've definitely made contact with people who I never would have, you know, otherwise. And it's strange because I've actually built a pretty good online relationships with people who are like older than my parents, and that's a little odd for me because then you know I bring up oh yeah I was talking to you know Karen the other day and she's you know retired and lives in Florida and I'm you know I'm a 25 year old Ph.D. student. And so it gives you like a very diverse range of interactions that you definitely wouldn't get just from purely looking at online archive. So, there is a very like human dimension of this, and you get their stories, too. Because unlike us where we have the ability to just you know post something online out in the ether without really putting a lot of effort into it, I mean obviously there is effort but not like physical like production effort in terms of you know printing it...

Grace: There's not as much of an intensive commitment to it.

Erica: Right, whereas a lot of the people that I speak to who were involved in the inception of these zines, you know, they were trying to again like print out their 25 copies like at the end of the workday and then you know go pick up their kid from school and honey don't sit on the manuscripts and you know like, you get these very wonderful stories, and sometimes kind of heartbreaking stories, in the case of people who had to you know hide their fandom involvement because of where they were located that you just don't get in an entirely digital world like we have now.

Sue: When I started out in fanfic I was probably too young to be in fanfic and it was, it was in the digital age, but there were still listservs, and smaller insulated groups, and it was certainly multigenerational, though, one in particular that I'm thinking about, and several of the women that I have met through fanfiction have become very dear friends to me and mentors in some way, and I think the fact that there aren't as many of those smaller groups, or those listservs around anymore is kind of sad. I mean there are circles that form, but it's it doesn't feel the same to me when you just go to AO₃ and start searching for stories.

Andi: Yeah, I would say that AO₃ doesn't foster that, but Tumblr does.

Erica: Tumblr definitely does.

Andi: Yeah, because I have at least two or three people that when I'm finished with the chapter they are reading it for me, and there is definitely a community, it's just probably not as, I don't know, intimate as maybe yours was, but I do think that that still is happening in just a different form.

Sue: Yeah this is definitely what I'm thinking about was through email, and it was you know real names and locations and people mailed each other things, this was like before the Internet was terrifying, you know. But, Jarrah. you had mentioned earlier, too, I think off off mic that there was a whole section in *Enterprising Women* about how women would mentor each other into this fanfic community.

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean there was a discussion of the author of the book herself when she started doing her research, this was in I think the 80s, late 80s, so she was, it might have been early 90s, but she was you know consuming some of the same content, and actually it was for sure 90s, sorry, so, but the author herself talks about you know connecting with some people and having them take her to conventions and show her the tables where they sell the zines and pointing out like this one is a good one, this one is all about this relationship, and this was some of what you know I was talking about before about certain people would be

less comfortable with the sexual content, so I remember she was saying the person who took her in the first place was disapproving of the sexual zines and would sort of point out like oh these are the ones you want to pay attention to, and don't pay attention to those ones. So, there was that aspect and then maybe you would get invited to like a living room zine making session or something like that.

Grace: Wow.

Andi: I'd hate to have that woman take a look at like lists of tags on AO₃.

Jarrah: But, I mean it's still some of that still happens today, but I think you're right, Sue, there's definitely less of that direct mentorship, but certainly you know when I've been to conventions I've been very grateful for you know if it's my first convention, for that friendly person who spots me looking around being totally terrified, and being like here's the thing is you have to check out, here's my tips for you know make sure you have comfy shoes and don't forget your water bottle, and that kind of thing. And so there is still some of that stuff happening.

Grace: Yeah, nerd girls got to look out for each other.

Jarrah: Yeah!

Sue: And the thing that happened to me with this listserv was like it wasn't just mentoring in fandom, it was like I'm having a work related crisis and I don't know what to do next in my life, can you get on the phone for an hour? Like it was that sort of thing that happened with these relationships, and I feel like it was just, I hit it at the right time that it became really special.

Andi: And that's the Picard/Crusher fandom right?

Sue: Yes it is.

Andi: I'm not at all surprised that they are so supportive and wonderful.

Jarrah: This also just reminded me of this, so Grace and I were both at GeekGirlCon a couple of years ago when there was a great panel called Geek Elders Speak...

Grace: It was a fantastic panel.

Jarrah: That's a lot of these original authors and talking about how much that was even more important in a time when you couldn't always count on, not that you can today but even less, on to say your male relatives supporting you doing this, and one of the women on the panel told a story about a woman whose husband tried to have her committed for going to conventions, and that she basically was able to flee her abusive marriage with the help of these friends that she had made through conventions and fiction writing. So, it's really you know you can really see how much of a lifeline that would have been when you know you couldn't just take it for granted that it's something you could safely do like you can to an extent a greater extent now.

Erica: Right, well and I think that that's important in terms of where Tumblr comes into the dynamic currently, because there's still very much relationships like that, and perhaps I misspoke before when I said that you can't find it in the digital age, because you can on Tumblr. Because, I know that there are at least in the fandoms to which I currently belong there are you know the people that are kind of known as like the fandom

mom, right, on Tumblr, and they aren't just the mom in terms of like oh come child let me tell you about canon or something like that.

Grace: Let me tell you of the days of the elder Internet...

Erica: But it's also like you know I'm confused about my sexuality, and I don't think my parents are going to say me can you talk me through this. Or, you know I'm leaving for college and I'm really anxious because I'm going to be somewhere where I've never been before, and like how do I handle this? You know, and so it's the same kind of real life issues where you have this person who is you know older and more knowledgeable than you have the connection of fandom to inspire trust, right. Which I think is a really cool thing that regardless of if you're in the Star Trek fandom or you know Avengers fandom you're going to find someone like that, which is pretty neat.

Grace: Fandom is amazing like that.

Erica: Yeah fandom's great.

Sue: So, I have like two more facts that I want to make sure to throw out and then we'll see if there's anything we haven't talked about that anybody else wants to bring up. But I just want to mention that the first all Kirk/Spock anthology fanzine was called Thrust, yes, you heard me correctly. The first episode was in 1978 and it had a pretty explicit cover sort of done in like a stained glass kind of aesthetic.

Erica: Yes it was considered highly blasphemous, I love it.

Sue: It's kind of amazing. Google it, I encourage you. But, by the year 2000 there had been over 500 Kirk/Spock zines published, not stories, zines.

Erica: Zines, yeah.

Grace: That's a lot of committed fans.

Sue: Astounding, yeah.

Erica: And granted a lot of those probably didn't have more of than like one or two runs, but that's still an amazing amount of dedication.

Grace: It really is.

Sue: Do we have any final thoughts or questions or things from anyone else?

Andi: Final thought is that fanfiction is awesome.

Grace: Final thought fanfiction is nothing to sniff at, unless you're like sniff it for a good fic then sniff away, by all means.

Erica: I mean like the whole point of my thesis is that fanfiction you know rather than being derided as something less than canon right, that we should appreciate it because it has this really vivid awesome

history of creativity. Especially, you know by women who historically haven't been appreciated for that kind of creativity. And so I think it's a very socially relevant form of literature and we should respect it as such.

Sue: Absolutely.

Grace: Respect the fans, and their art.

Sue: This has been absolutely fantastic. Erica, if people want to reach out to you is there somewhere online they can find you like Twitter?

Erica: No, I'm very behind, but they can certainly email me, especially if anybody has some some helpful copies of early zines that they would like to share, you can email me at ericamassey@rocketmail.com

Sue: Fantastic! And, Andi, where can people find you online?

Andi: Easiest place is Twitter, <https://twitter.com/FirstTimeTrek> where I'm live tweeting through my first time through Star Trek.

Sue: Grace?

Grace: You can find me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BonecrusherJenk> and also my personally favorite zine archive tool Barnard College actually has a pretty comprehensive list of places to look into on their website, so look that up.

Sue: Jarrah?

Jarrah: You can find me on tumblr at <http://trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com/> and also on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/jarrahpenguin> and I also may have some really really poorly written 13 to 15 year old Law and Order fanfiction hiding somewhere on fanfiction.net

Grace: I think we've all got something hidden in that dark recesses of the internet.

Sue: Well, I'm Sue, and you can find me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/spaltor>. And if you do some creative searching you can find my terrible, terrible poorly written 13 to 15 year old fanfiction over on <http://www.trekiverse.org/>, because I'm the old one. And if you want to contact the show you can reach Women at Warp on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/WomenAtWarp> on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/womenatwarp/> by email at crew@womenatwarp.com or over on our website <http://www.womenatwarp.com/> Thanks for joining us!

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