

“I Wrote My Way Out” Embodied Appropriation, Fan Fiction, and the Book of Esther

Esther Brownsmith, University of Dayton

Introduction: “Just You Wait”

When Lin-Manuel Miranda’s musical *Hamilton* became a pop culture phenomenon, it did so with a rather self-reflexive story. Miranda, the witty son of Puerto Ricans who moved to New York City, wrote his epic about Alexander Hamilton, a witty man who moved from the Caribbean to New York City. He even cast himself as Hamilton, and, when the cast chides Hamilton for “writing every second you’re alive” (“Non-Stop”), one may wonder if they are also describing the highly prolific Miranda. Yet Miranda’s own life is not even the chief inspiration for the musical. Rather, it masterfully weaves together three sets of influences: the mythos of America’s Founders (particularly as described by historian Ron Chernow), the music and culture of America’s Black and immigrant communities, and the genre of a Broadway musical. The result pays ample homage to all three sources, creating something greater than the sum of its parts.

In “‘I Put Myself Back in the Narrative’: *Hamilton* as Founders Fanfiction,” Jeremy Brett argues that the musical can best be understood as an example of fan fiction: a reimagining of source material in a new text that reflects the embodied identity of its author-fan. In *Hamilton*’s case, “Miranda’s fanfic interrogates the mythos of the American dream,” taking the white-centric myths of Founding Fathers and transplanting them into the bodies and traditions of America’s non-white populations (Brett 2023, 8). Even though *Hamilton* is a musical, rather than the prose that characterizes most of the millions of fan fiction works (“fics”) currently available online, it still embodies fan fiction’s core mechanic of transformation through supplementation. Nor is this strategy a new one; as several recent scholars have argued, ancient Christian and Jewish texts similarly participated in the creation of new works that expanded their canons, shifting themes and resolving tensions in the process.¹ This article will further those efforts by exploring how the fan fiction lens of “embodied appropriation”—the same kind of embodied appropriation that drew Miranda to retell the trajectory of a Caribbean immigrant—can be applied productively to biblical and parabiblical texts, using the book of Esther as a case study.

Yet despite the structural similarities between fan fiction and much “rewritten scripture,” there are also non-trivial differences.² One central distinction revolves

¹ Scholarly examinations of the parallels between fan fiction and ancient texts have only begun to blossom in the past few years, though cf. Meredith Warren’s “My OTP: Harry Potter Fanfiction and the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha” (2006) for the earliest investigation. Recent articles include Monika Amsler, “The Making of Hanina Ben Dosa: Fan Fiction in the Babylonian Talmud” (2019), Tom de Bruin, “Nostalgia, Novelty, and the Subversion of Authority in ‘The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs’” (2019), Nicholas A. Elder, “Joseph and Aseneth: An Entertaining Tale” (2020), Kasper Bro Larsen, “Fan Fiction and Early Christian Apocrypha: Comparing Hypertextual Practices” (2019), and Kristine Toft Rosland, “Reading the ‘Apocryphon of John’ as Genesis Fan Fiction” (2019).

² For a discussion (and critique) of “rewritten scripture,” see especially Molly Zahn’s work, e.g. *Genres of Rewriting in Second Temple Judaism* (2020).

around authorship. Fan fiction is a “democratic genre,”³ and the demographics of modern fan fiction readers and writers are predominantly non-male and non-straight, a tendency that explains the frequency with which fan fiction challenges norms of gender and sexuality.⁴ In contrast, literacy was likely an elite privilege in the ancient world—one that frequently excluded marginalized genders.⁵ But while concrete evidence for female or queer authorship of early Jewish texts is scant, these texts did reflect a different embodied and marginalized identity: Jewish identity. Whether they lived in diaspora or in a strip of Levantine land controlled by a string of foreign empires, Jews wrote from the margins of ancient Mediterranean and West Asian culture.

For this reason, I believe that fan fiction can provide a crucial model and lens for reading biblical and parabiblical texts—not just because the latter includes rewritten compositions, but because both are striving transformatively with their canons. This is certainly true in parabiblical texts like *Jubilees*, *Joseph and Aseneth*, and *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities*), but also within the Hebrew Bible itself. Chronicles creatively retells the narratives of Samuel-Kings; Daniel reimagines the Ugaritic hero Dan’el as an exiled Jew in Babylon. But in my upcoming monograph, *Queen of the Alternate Universe: The Book of Esther as Fan Fiction*, I focus on this process as it manifests in the book of Esther. Just as Hamilton reflects on mythic figures like Washington and Jefferson from a racially marginalized perspective, so does the book of Esther reflect on Mesopotamian deities—Ishtar/Esther and Marduk/Mordecai—through a diasporic Jewish lens. Indeed, it neatly mirrors *Hamilton* in its fusion of mythic characters with a minoritized culture, using a familiar genre.⁶

³ I borrow this term from Sheenagh Pugh’s *The Democratic Genre: Fan Fiction in a Literary Context* (2005).

⁴ In the most recent demographic survey from a popular fan fiction website, only 5.4% of respondents identified as cisgender males, and only 13.9% identified as straight. (Lauren Rouse and Mel Stanfill, “Fan Demographics on Archive of Our Own,” 2023) A major 2019 survey (“The Fansplaining Shipping Survey”) had similar results. Worth noting is the fact that this gender diversity is not mirrored by racial diversity, and the white-centric nature of fan fiction has been noted and critiqued by many; cf. Lothian and Stanfill, “An Archive of Whose Own?” (2021)

⁵ This is the standard view in scholarship; cf. studies like Karel van der Toorn’s *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (2007), which mentions women scribes in a single footnote, and William Schniedewind’s *The Finger of the Scribe* (2019), which does not mention them at all. However, recent scholars are beginning to push back on this assumption, e.g. Mika Ahuvia’s “Reimagining the Gender and Class Dynamics of Premodern Composition” (2023) and Hanna Tervanotko’s forthcoming “Gender and Imagined Authorship of Ancient Jewish Texts,” in *Unruly Books: Rethinking Ancient and Academic Imaginations of Religious Texts*. See also Candida Moss’s recent “The Secretary: Enslaved Workers, Stenography, and the Production of Early Christian Literature” (2023) which, though it does not focus on gender, underlines the elitist assumptions about authorship that have shaped classic scholarship.

⁶ One key difference is notable: where *Hamilton* largely follows the general plotline of Chernow’s American history, the book of Esther does not adapt a known storyline (*muthos*, in Ricoeur’s terms) from Mesopotamian texts. Nevertheless, in creating a new plot featuring existing characters, it resembles one of the most common fan fiction genres: the “Alternate Universe” (AU) story. The abundance of AU fan fiction demonstrates that modern fans are very interested in stories that transplant their beloved characters into different worlds, and the book of Daniel (featuring the Ugaritic sage Dan’el) may be another biblical example of it.

	<i>Hamilton</i>	<i>Esther</i>
Popular characters	Hamilton, Washington, Jefferson, etc. (American Founders)	Ishtar and Marduk (Mesopotamian deities)
Minoritized culture	Black and immigrant	Jewish
Familiar genre	Broadway musical	Court tale

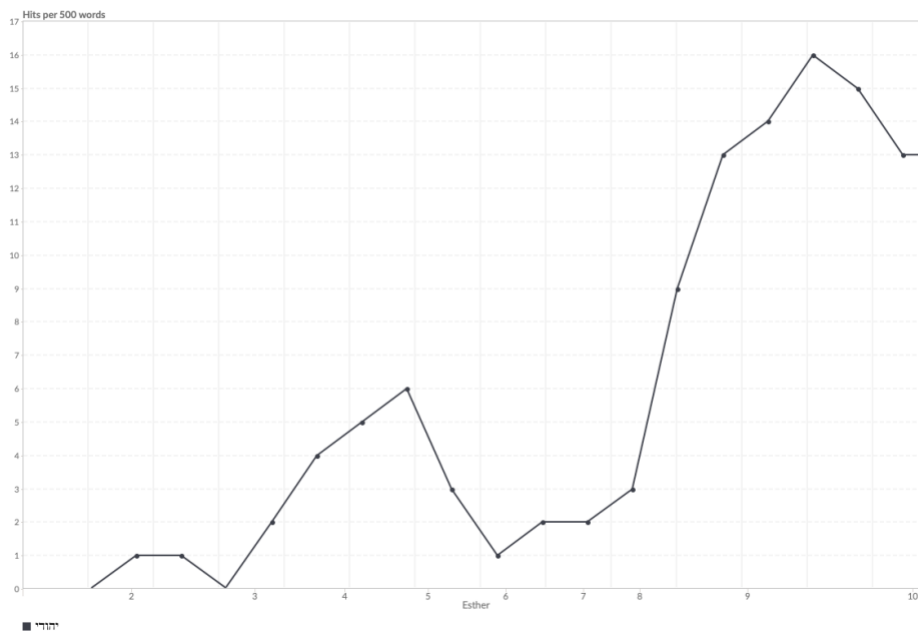
In the pages that follow, I will explore two main pieces of evidence: the mapped usage of the word “Jew” / *yehudi* throughout the book, and a close reading of the long-distance conversation between Esther and Mordecai in chapter four. Both sets of evidence point toward the text’s negotiation of its author’s identity as a diasporic Jew through textual creation—and, more specifically, through textual adaptation of existing characters from the mythos of the majority culture. By appropriating that culture’s characters to reflect the author’s embodied Jewish reality, the book of Esther offers an empowering vision for Jewish existence.⁷

Jews (יהודים) in Esther: “I’m Just Like My Country”

My first study stems from my observation, while researching the final chapters of Esther, that the word “Jew” (יהודי) appeared remarkably often—virtually every verse at some points. When I made a graph of how often the word “Jew” appeared, whether singular or plural,⁸ this chart was the result.

⁷ That said, just as Hamilton’s idealized ethnic patchwork glossed over the realities of slavery, and just as modern fan fiction is diverse in sexuality but predominantly white, so does Esther’s Jewish triumph come at the cost of empathy for the non-Jews killed to achieve its “happy ending.” Paradigm-challenging on one front does not imply universal inclusion.

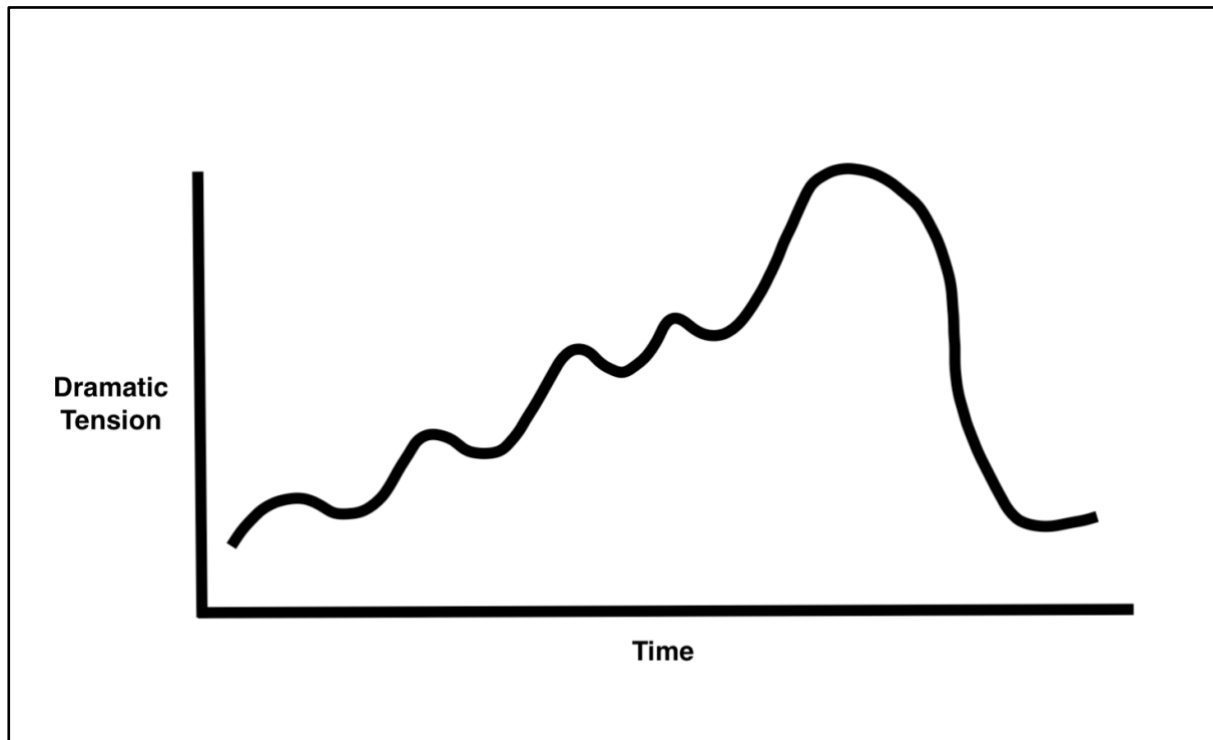
⁸ This graph is a search for “יהודי”; I also searched for “יהד” as a root, but there were only two more instances, both of them in preexisting “peaks” of the graph.



The appearances increase throughout the book, forming three ascending “peaks,” with a final descending slope at the end. I found this graph remarkably reminiscent of another graph that I’d seen elsewhere: the graph of dramatic tension in a good story.

In 1863, Gustav Freytag proposed a five-part structure for classic stories, which can be visually represented by a pyramid of dramatic tension that rises and then falls over time: exposition/introduction, rising action, climax, falling action/dénouement, and resolution/“catastrophe.” The tension starts near zero as we introduce the characters, then rises with an inciting incident. As new obstacles appear for the protagonists, tension rises, reaching an eventual narrative climax. After the climax comes the dénouement, to use Aristotle’s language from the *Art of Poetry*, in which the final plot threads are woven into a resolution. While Freytag’s stages form a symmetric pyramid, more recent versions have added two refinements: an asymmetry to the rise and fall, and a series of smaller peaks and troughs leading up to the final climax.⁹ The asymmetry reflects the fact that in most narratives, the climax occurs relatively close to the end of the story; the smaller peaks reflect the individual episodes of waxing and waning dramatic tension that take place throughout the rising action of the story. In short, the resulting image bears a close resemblance to the graph above.

⁹ For one recent example of this very common chart, cf. Gitner, *Multimedia Storytelling* (2015), 66. Cf. also Hart, *Storycraft*, for more detailed analysis and defense of the story arc, though he divides the chart into two: a smooth curve (2011, 25) to illustrate the overall shape, and an oscillating line to show the alternating “hope, mystery, and suspense on the curve of rising action” (33).



In Freytag’s modified chart, the progression of time is fairly straightforward (at least, in a linear story like the book of Esther), but the meaning of “dramatic tension” may be less obvious. Marc LeBlanc discusses this: “The mathematical model of drama imagines that dramatic tension is a kind of quantity that can accumulate and discharge, increase or decrease as time passes. [...] What is dramatic tension then? It’s our level of *emotional* investment in the story’s conflict: the sense of concern, apprehension, and urgency with which we await the story’s outcome.”¹⁰ Tension is ultimately a measure of affective engagement.

Turning back to the book of Esther, scholars have proposed numerous schematics for simplifying and representing the plot of the story. Most do not resemble this chart. For instance, the scenes that many scholars regard as the dramatic climax of the book—Esther’s appearance before Ahasuerus and her dinner party denouncement of Haman—are represented on this graph by a relative trough, whereas the graph’s peak is what many would call the denouement; Haman has been defeated and the victory of Esther and Mordecai is certain.

Thus, instead of proposing yet another narrative division of the text, I would argue that these peaks represent those moments when the story’s scope and stakes broaden to include all Jews, not just Esther and Mordecai—and “all Jews,” of course, also includes the writer and the original readers. The first small peak is when Mordecai is introduced as a Jew, establishing the story’s relevance to its audience. The second peak contains two scenes: Mordecai’s conflict with Haman, and Mordecai’s impassioned dialogue with Esther. Both establish the impacts of Mordecai’s decree on Jews as a whole. As for the third, largest peak, it comprises chapters 8 and 9, in which the new decree is issued and the Jews triumph over their enemies. Last comes the denouement—the final short chapter of Esther, which mentions the Jews only once in its discussion of Mordecai’s kindness to them.

¹⁰ LeBlanc, “Tools for Creating Dramatic Game Dynamics” (2005, 443), emphasis in original.

What this graph shows, then, is that the book of Esther is *not* necessarily a symmetric chiasm, as claimed by many¹¹; it is a rags-to-riches story, to use the story arc term popularized by Kurt Vonnegut, in which the central character's fortunes start low and end high¹²—*if* by “central character,” we mean the Jewish people. Whether they actually constitute a technical character is a question for a narratologist, which I am not; my point here is simply to show that *the emotional investment of the story*, which starts low and peaks in the penultimate chapters, *is centered around love for the Jews*. The author cares passionately about the fortunes of the Jewish people—and expects the readers to care, too. The emotional investment around Jewishness is bodily and personal. And while other scholars, such as Andre LaCocque, have already pointed out “the story’s emphasis on the Jewish people and their fate,” this graph provides concrete evidence of that emotional investment. (2007, 21)

A recent monograph by Brit Kelley may explain that identity-linked emotional investment. In *Loving Fanfiction*, Kelley examines fan fiction as a process of “emotioned literacy”: a textual practice embedded in emotion and bodily feelings. Emotioned literacy stems from rich and layered emotions: the emotional bonds to family and community, the emotions of intense parasocial relationships to fictional characters or celebrities, and the emotional connections between a writer and their eager readers. For instance, Kelley describes how one fan fiction writer’s relationship with her source text is “doubly emotioned,” combining her own love for WWE wrestlers with the fannish wrestling passion she learned from her father and brothers. (2001, 133)

In particular, this double love expresses itself in that writer’s use of so-called “Mary Sue” characters, original female characters who parallel the author herself, and therefore allow her to create stories that center strong, sexually confident Filipina women. In other words, she writes about a fusion of herself and the object of her love: the author’s bodily identity finds positive expression through emotioned literacy. (As the introduction to this paper suggested, *Hamilton*’s eponymous protagonist could be viewed through a similar lens.) At the end of their discussion of this writer, Kelley summarizes that the “emotions here aren’t simple ‘feelings,’ but rather a system of meaning making. Those emotions are part of a complex system of literary practices.” (150) Then they quote Laura Micciche: “To speak of emotion as performative is to foreground the idea that emotions are enacted and embodied in the social world” (Micciche 2007, 1, quoted by Kelley 2021, 150). Emotioned literacy is a way of *performing emotion* through the practice of writing, thereby reifying that emotion.

This framework of emotioned literacy grows out of observations about fan fiction, but it works surprisingly well as an explanation for the role of the Jewish people in the book of Esther. The author’s narrative is a performance of emotion, an embodiment of the author’s own Jewish identity. While fan fiction is hardly the only possible venue for such self-expression, its unique characteristics as a transformative genre written by emotionally engaged “fans” make it a particularly useful framework for affective analysis.

¹¹ Cf. Tomasino (“Interpreting Esther from the Inside Out”) for a recent review of these efforts, e.g. by Yahuda Radday, Michael V. Fox, Sandra Beth Berg, and Jon D. Levenson.

¹² Cf. Reagan et al, “The Emotional Arcs of Stories Are Dominated by Six Basic Shapes.”

An Antinomy of Contact: “There You Are, An Ocean Away”

The idea of “emotioned literacy” also resonates strongly with Michael Millner’s *Fever Reading: Affect and Reading Badly in the Early American Public Sphere* (2012). In order to understand “reading badly”—both in the sense of “bad” literature and “bad” reading practices, as seen with texts like pornography and religious tracts—Millner relies on William Reddy’s concept of “emotives,” or verbalized emotions. An emotive translates, evaluates, and navigates the emotions that bring it about. Millner even mentions fan fiction briefly in his conclusion as an example of modern “reading badly,” and he maintains his argument throughout that the emotive practice of reading badly is actually a crucial process in which readers “translate, evaluate, and navigate” various demands, including bodily desires and the depersonalizing abstraction of the modern sphere. Therefore, we might offer “emotive reading” as a counterpart to “emotioned literacy;” both terms emphasize the complex process of negotiation and embodiment involved in texts often dismissed as “bad literature.” The main difference is that Millner focuses on the consumption of these texts, where Kelley focuses on their production.

In this context, my second piece of biblical evidence shifts from a broad-scale overview of the Esther story to an example of one specific scene: chapter 4, one of the “narrative peaks” of my chart, in which Esther and Mordecai discuss how Esther can save the Jewish people. The scene starts with a standard sequence of actions: responding to Haman’s decree, Mordecai tears his clothes and puts on sackcloth and ashes (4:1). But then he does something that is entirely unparalleled in standard “sackcloth and ashes” narrative texts: he “wails a great and bitter wail.” This twice-used verbal root, *קָרַע*, has strong auditory connotations; it is a verbal cry, “loud and bitter,” and in combination with the visceral substances of sackcloth and ashes, it evokes a tangible, palpable, full-body mourning, concretely situated in the space of the citadel.

Yet in the scene that follows, that palpability is heavily mediated. Esther and Mordecai engage in an impassioned conversation, but they never actually see each other; every message is communicated back and forth by Hathach, a eunuch who serves Esther. Nevertheless, their communications are physically embodied; Esther sends Mordecai new clothing, and in response, Mordecai sends back a written copy of Haman’s decree. Esther counters by referring to her absence of physical contact with the king, and when Mordecai convinces her to act anyway, she instructs him and all the Jews of the city to fast for three days in preparation—once again a bodily action, whether or not there was implicit prayer accompanying it. In short, Mordecai and Esther are participating in this conversation from a fully embodied perspective, even as they speak to each other from entirely different spaces.

Returning to *Fever Reading*, Millner borrows Michael Warner’s work on public spheres to describe pornographic literature as an antinomy, a tension between two conflicting states. He notes that in obscene literature, “readers are repeatedly addressed as abstract and embodied;” they are unconnected to the author and subjects of the texts, yet their bodily reactions are overtly evoked (Millner 2012, 89). I quote Millner at length because of its relevance:

[O]bscene texts allowed their readers—indeed, even taught their readers—to participate in a modern public sphere while simultaneously navigating its alienating demands for self-abstraction and their own desires for an intimacy associated with embodiment and affect. An approach that focuses on navigation and evaluation through emotion seems necessary to the development not only

of a better understanding of obscene literature and the antebellum public sphere, but also of a better understanding of our modern public sensorium. (2012, 95) Though the book of Esther is far from obscene literature, and the concept of the abstract public sphere was not present in the same way, I see the same “navigation and evaluation through emotion” at work in this passage.

Esther and Mordecai are two Jews, bound by kinship, investing their full identities and bodies into their communication, despite the distance between them. The exact same could be said of the author and readers of the text of Esther, albeit with a broader definition of kinship. The author has created a book redolent with sound and sight, taste and touch, and done so as a gift to readers that they would never meet. In other words, the antinomic interaction between Esther and Mordecai enables readers to reflect on their own relationship with the text, with their Jewish identity, and with their own ethical obligations to their people, balanced between distance and embodiment.

With the mention of a gift economy, I again return to Kelley and the model of fan fiction. One notable difference between Kelley and Millner’s studies is that Millner focuses on past texts and their impact on readers, while Kelley examines present texts and their authors, who can be interviewed and examined in depth. With this distinction, we see one of the key potential benefits of applying fan fiction studies to ancient texts: the ability to establish similarities between modern and ancient transformative texts, and therefore to hypothesize similarities in the processes that resulted in those texts, bringing in qualitative and quantitative ethnographic data that is simply unavailable for ancient authors.

In this particular case, the comparison with fan fiction gives us a possible motive for why the ancient Jewish author would choose to write a Jewish story whose central characters are borrowed from Mesopotamian culture. The authors that Kelley examines are engaged in emotioned literacy: the process of writing that stems from their emotional and bodily identity, including their deep love for the source material. But as fan fiction scholars have said from the beginning, love is not the only emotion that fuels fan fiction authorship. For instance, Henry Jenkins described the dueling emotions of “fascination” and “frustration,” noting that frustration is what often fuels authors to go in and write a new text, instead of simply rereading an old one. Those fan authors thus become “active participants in the construction and circulation of textual meanings.” (2013, 24) The corpus of Mesopotamian literature about Ishtar and Marduk was broad and pervasive; just as Israelite biblical texts reimagined Canaanite myths like the triumph over the chaotic sea, so did the author of Esther reimagine the Mesopotamian characters of their broader social sphere. And just as the fan author I mentioned earlier wrote about a Filipina protagonist like herself, so did the author of Esther project their¹³ own embodiment into the text through characters like Esther and Mordecai.

Conclusions: “The World Turned Upside Down”

¹³ Unlike scholars like Hillel Millgram, I do not think that the centrality of a female character indicates that a woman was clearly its author. But when I look at the book’s nuanced depiction of female characters, and consider the comparison with modern fan fiction, a predominantly female-written genre, I am also unwilling to dismiss the possibility entirely. We simply do not have enough evidence either way.

My discussion so far has not even touched upon the plethora of literary techniques used in the book of Esther—hyperbole, peripety, and irony, among others—in combination with its often sensual evocation of physical embodiment. Kenneth Craig’s *Reading Esther: A Case for the Literary Carnivalesque* (1995) discusses many of these features as he examines Esther through the lens of Bakhtin’s carnival, which highlights the presence of elements like dramatic extremes and sudden reversals. These elements invite emotional responses from readers, encouraging them to join the author in affective solidarity about the dire plight and ultimate triumph of the Jewish people. Just as Millner argues about 19th-century pornography, these literary techniques are not merely “cheap tricks” to ensnare unwitting readers through an appeal to the so-called “lower” instincts. Rather, they are an authorial choice to invite readers, through their negotiation of the antinomy of embodiment and distance, to reconsider their own personal identities as diaspora Jews.

In fact, let me make this point explicit: Diaspora Judaism was characterized by a tension between the earlier scriptural canon, which elevated the Jerusalem Temple as a central concern, and the undeniable physical reality of that Temple’s absence. With its tension between evoked physical *presence* and communication across *distance*, the book of Esther allowed its writer and readers to negotiate this antinomy and model a practice of faithfulness to their identity. In his own examination of Esther via Bakhtin, André LaCocque summarized this phenomenon: “the consciousness of space has been sharpened by the Jewish diasporic experience of having been transplanted to foreign countries.” (2007, 24)

As a concluding note, I want to shift to a concept central to affect theory: the idea of emotions as *stickiness*, as articulated by Sara Ahmed. Ahmed explains that “emotions can move through the movement or circulation of objects. Such objects become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension.” (2014, 11) Stickiness is an appropriately tangible metaphor for the way that emotions become associated with objects and “travel” through those objects from one person to another. Moreover, love is one of the stickiest emotions in fan fiction writing; the love invested by an author as she crafts a story then sticks to that story as it encounters readers, who perform that love through positive reviews and recommendations to fellow fans.

The book of Esther also functions as an emotionally sticky object. As I have argued, its author writes from an embodied, personal perspective, such that their Jewish identity is imbricated with the story they tell. In turn, one can only imagine its original readers as they delighted in a tale about Ishtar and Marduk standing up for Jewish identity and flourishing. But one does not have to imagine very hard, given the rich literary and cultural heritage of Purim, which has inspired riotous celebrations for at least two millennia. From the Talmudic injunction to drink heavily to modern-day Purim spiels parodying *Hamilton*, the book of Esther has invited its readers to engage in embodied action, immersing themselves in the feelings of celebration and Jewish pride. Although this later reception is not the focus of my scholarship, it stands as a testament to just how powerfully the book’s author made it “sticky” with their own feelings of love for the Jewish people.

Now to conclude. There is a great deal of work still to be done on applying fan fiction theory to ancient texts like the book of Esther; this is a field still in its nascency. But as I hope my argument has shown, the application of fan fiction theory can lead biblical scholarship in new and generative directions. In this particular case, a fan fiction lens has allowed us to illuminate a key narrative

trajectory in the book, and it has pointed out the antinomy between embodiment and distance that helped make chapter 4 so resonant to its Jewish readers.

There is, of course, a key difference between biblical literature and texts like *Hamilton* or modern fan fiction: we can delve into the personal identities of modern authors with far more precision than the speculation that necessarily characterizes ancient composition.¹⁴ But the difference goes even deeper, for our interest in individual authors and their psyches is itself an anachronistic projection from the modern world. As Sonja Ammann summarizes, “the modern idea of the author as a single producer of a unified, unchangeable text, claiming its intellectual property and controlling its meaning, is foreign to the worlds of the biblical texts and does not fit ancient dynamics of text production.” (2022, 2) Michel Foucault’s idea of an “author function” is more appropriate, but not without its own flaws.¹⁵ Yet, to quote Melanie Köhlmoos’s recent essay, “irrespective of whether an author or narrator uses the first person ‘I,’ the author is necessarily a feature of all biblical texts. To query the ‘I’ and its intention is an interpretive process that *the texts themselves* invite the reader to undertake” (2022, 88, emphasis in original). Speculation about the personal psychological profile of Esther’s “author” is not my goal; an interrogation of the goals and strategies involved in its composition is.

Just as Hamilton, in the song “Hurricane,” declared that he “wrote his way out” of the many challenges that life threw at him, so does the book of Esther use transformation through supplementation to rewrite the ubiquitous Mesopotamian characters of Ishtar and Marduk, shifting them into a context of Jewish identity. This creative and emotionally driven process was shaped by the needs and desires of its Jewish diaspora context, just as the playful and queer world of modern fan fiction was shaped by its own authors’ embodied needs. The result is a piece of literature whose affective stickiness has preserved its emotional resonance up to the present day.

Reference List

- Ahmed, Sara. 2014. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Second edition. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Ahuvia, Mika. 2023. “Reimagining the Gender and Class Dynamics of Premodern Composition.” *Journal of Ancient Judaism* (June): 1–34. <https://doi.org/10.30965/21967954-bja10040>.
- Ammann, Sonja. 2022. “What Follows the Death of the Author?” Pages 1–16 in *Authorship and the Hebrew Bible*. Edited by Sonja Ammann, Katharina Pyschny, and Julia Rhyder. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Amsler, Monika. 2019. “The Making of Ḥanina Ben Dosa: Fan Fiction in the Babylonian Talmud.” *Transformative Works and Cultures* 31. <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2019.1647>.

¹⁴ As a personal anecdote, I recently submitted an application for a prestigious ERC Grant. While some of my application’s readers scored it highly, others were confused; one flatly replied that “the development of an embodied gendered model based on personal feelings and investments, which is possible in the context of fanfiction, is clearly impossible if applied to ancient authors.” Yet this “clearly impossible” work is already being done by biblical scholars (e.g. the 2019 volume *Reading with Feeling*, eds. Black and Koosed). The difference is a matter of degree, not a binary bifurcation between past and present.

¹⁵ Cf. Foucault 1997, “What Is an Author?”

- Black, Fiona C., and Jennifer L. Koosed, eds. 2019. *Reading with Feeling: Affect Theory and the Bible*. SBL Press.
- Brett, Jeremy. 2023. "‘I Put Myself Back in the Narrative’: Hamilton as Founders Fanfiction." *Ejas* 18.1. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.19231>.
- de Bruin. 2019. "Nostalgia, Novelty, and the Subversion of Authority in ‘The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.’" *Transformative Works and Cultures* 31. <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2019.1553>.
- Craig, Kenneth M. 1995. *Reading Esther: A Case for the Literary Carnavalesque*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- Elder, Nicholas A. 2020. "Joseph and Aseneth: An Entertaining Tale." *J. Study Jud.* 51.1: 19–42.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. "What Is an Author?" Pages 113–38 in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*. Edited by Donald Bouchard, Translated by Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Gitner, Seth. 2015. *Multimedia Storytelling for Digital Communicators in a Multiplatform World*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315720104>.
- Hart, Jack. 2011. *Storycraft: The Complete Guide to Writing Narrative Nonfiction*. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press.
- Jenkins, Henry. 2013. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Kelley, Brit. 2021. *Loving Fanfiction: Exploring the Role of Emotion in Online Fandoms*. New York: Routledge.
- Köhlmoos, Melanie. 2022. "Authorial Intention(s) in Old Testament Texts." Pages 74-92 in *Authorship and the Hebrew Bible*. Edited by Sonja Ammann, Katharina Pyschny, and Julia Rhyder. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- LaCocque, Andre. 2007. *Esther Regina: A Bakhtinian Reading*. 1st edition. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press.
- Larsen, Kasper. 2019. "Fan Fiction and Early Christian Apocrypha: Comparing Hypertextual Practices." *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology* 73.1: 43–59.
- LeBlanc, Marc. 2005. "Tools for Creating Dramatic Game Dynamics." Pages 438–59 in *The Game Design Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology*. Edited by Katie Salen Tekinbaş and Eric Zimmerman. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Lothian, Alexis, and Mel Stanfill. 2021. "An Archive of Whose Own? White Feminism and Racial Justice in Fan Fiction’s Digital Infrastructure." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 36. <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2021.2119>.
- Micciche, Laura R. 2007. *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching*. Boynton/Cook Publishers.
- Millner, Michael. 2012. *Fever Reading: Affect and Reading Badly in the Early American Public Sphere*. Durham, New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire Press.
- Moss, Candida R. 2023. "The Secretary: Enslaved Workers, Stenography, and the Production of Early Christian Literature." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 74.1: 20–56.

- Pugh, Sheenagh. 2005. *The Democratic Genre: Fan Fiction in a Literary Context*. Glasgow: Seren Bridgend.
- Reagan, Andrew J., Lewis Mitchell, Dilan Kiley, Christopher M. Danforth, and Peter Sheridan Dodds. 2016. "The Emotional Arcs of Stories Are Dominated by Six Basic Shapes." *EPJ Data Sci.* 5.1: 31.
- Rosland, Kristine Toft. 2019. "Reading the 'Apocryphon of John' as Genesis Fan Fiction." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 31.
- Rouse, Lauren, and Mel Stanfill. 2023. "Over*Flow: Fan Demographics on Archive of Our Own." *Flow* <https://www.flowjournal.org/2023/02/fan-demographics-on-ao3/>.
- Schell, Jesse. 2008. *The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses*. Amsterdam ; Boston: Elsevier/Morgan Kaufmann.
- Schniedewind, William M. 2019. *The Finger of the Scribe: How Scribes Learned to Write the Bible*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Tomasino, Anthony J. 2019. "Interpreting Esther from the Inside Out: Hermeneutical Implications of the Chiasmic Structure of the Book of Esther." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 138.1: 101.
- Toorn, K. van der. 2007. *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Warren, Meredith. 2006. "My OTP: Harry Potter Fanfiction and the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha." *Scriptura* 8: 53–66.
- Zahn, Molly M. 2020. *Genres of Rewriting in Second Temple Judaism: Scribal Composition and Transmission*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- "The Fansplaining Shipping Survey: Results." *Tableau Public*, n.d. <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/fansplaining/viz/TheFansplainingShippingSurveyResults/Welcome>.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)