

**“You’re a Puppet Harry”: What the Rhetoric of Responding to Digital
Deception Reveals about Online Communities**

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Introduction

Fandoms, communities brought together by their shared fandom, are ones inherently driven by passion. This passion can be the fuel of boundless creativity or open safe spaces of solidarity; however, just as easily, this passion can cause fandoms to be plagued with drama and disagreements. Factoring in a digital component, these positive and negative traits are only heightened. What may once have been in-person arguments online have become digital, public, and more anonymous, giving small disagreements the potential to become whole-scale wars. In fact, disputes within these niche online communities in the early 2000s became so common that websites dedicated to preserving these wanks, a fan term for controversy, arose. Controversy like a fan with an astral plane celebrity girlfriend (Urbanski, Heather 64) or a Hamilton fan who pretended to be HIV positive (HIVliving). Yet despite all the many schisms and strife, one figure stands out in the canon of controversy for her sheer derisiveness: Ms. Scribe, a central figure in the Harry Potter fandom from 2003-2005. Within weeks of posting her first fanfiction to an online fandom site, this new rising star became surrounded by equally devoted super fans and racist homophobic trolls. Through sheer notoriety, she was able to work her way into the inner circle of the fandom and befriend all the big-name fans (BNF), joining the much envied "inner circle" of the Harry Potter fandom.

It was not until 2006, after Ms. Scribe herself had chosen to leave the fandom, due in part to rising suspicion, that *The Ms. Scribe Story: An Unauthorized Fandom Biography* was published pseudonymously by "The Duchess of Richmond." This biography gave a comprehensive account of the network of sock puppets that Ms. Scribe had allegedly been controlling for years (Lennox). Sock puppets, a term earliest used by Dana Rollins in 1993, refers to an online account made under deceptive pretenses with an identity separate from the posters (Levine). While sock puppetry was in no way a new phenomenon to the fandom, Ms. Scribe and her sock puppets stand out for the sheer number of socks she created and the notoriety they had within the fandom.

Though the unauthorized biography provides much-needed archived evidence and context to help understand Ms. Scribe and her exploits in the HP fandom, the full extent and scope of her lies and deceptions may never be known. Much of the evidence that may have absolved or convicted Ms. Scribe has been deleted or lost to the void by the ever-shifting sands of the internet. The goal of this paper, however, is not to revel in the wank, nor is it to attribute or absolve guilt to any one party, nor still is it to psychoanalyze Ms. Scribe and her sock puppets, rich for analysis as that may be. In fact, Ms. Scribe serves as but a secondary means to the true goal of this paper: to study the way that fans frame their response in times of crisis and, in so doing, highlight their perception of the cause of this crisis and the structure of the online community.

To do this, this paper will perform a critical rhetorical inquiry, a method borrowed from "A Virtual Death and a Real Dilemma: Identity, trust, and Community in Cyberspace" by John W. Jordan (Jordan 201). Breaking down this methodology part by part, the critical is not to find fault but rather to evaluate and analyze. Inquiry is investigating with an open mind, taking the subject seriously, and believing there is something of value to be learned. Rhetorical then refers to rhetoric, the study of persuasion. Therefore, to inquire critically about rhetoric means to study what is persuasive. Online, much of what might be persuasive in person, body language, tone, and setting is stripped away. While identity still exists online, these are much more fluid than in person (Donath) (Berman and Bruckman). This means that the rhetoric of online spaces refers mostly to the text itself; the arguments, framing, and vocabulary used in the discussion of an issue are what prove persuasive. It hinges on treating the discussion around a text as a text (McKerrow 101). Put together, a critical rhetorical inquiry is to think critically about the rhetoric and inquire into its meanings; in this case, the text is the rhetoric around Ms. Scribe.

This is not inquiry for inquiry's sake. One main aspect of online rhetoric is the way in which an issue is framed, which ultimately is the way that issue is discussed and ultimately the cause attributed to it. Carol Bachie, in "What's the Problem represented to be? An Introduction," examines this in a policy context (Bachie 1). One example given is the high infant mortality rates in Aboriginal communities in Australia.

Reports about this subject often blame the semi-nomadic lifestyle of this group as the cause of the issue. If, however, the problem were to be represented by asking why the Australian medical establishment does not possess the tools to help nomadic communities, then the onerous shifts from the Aboriginal communities onto the Australian medical establishment (Bachie 3). In both cases, the same problem is presented, yet by shifting the rhetoric and the frame used, two very different causes emerge.

Applying the knowledge that rhetoric shapes the perception of the cause, this paper will examine how the rhetoric used by commenters around Ms. Scribe frames the problem of deception and, by doing so, who is to blame. Unlike the example above, there is no clear "correct" frame. Rather, each highlights a truth while burying another. These comments, sourced from various parts of the internet and archives, are not meant to be taken as the "correct" opinion. They are products of a community and crisis and are the authentic thoughts of those reeling from a reveal of deception posted in a time of confusion and the coalescence of new community norms. The goal is to show some small part of the discussion that occurred around Ms. Scribe. These comments deserve to be taken seriously just as much as any primary source would. As one commenter said, referring to why they are leaving the Ms. Scribe story should be studied: It is a chronicle of what should be studied on a wider scale. We have developed a whole new kind of society online; it is both more personal and less, and I really hope that the fields of sociology and psychology will get caught up with it one day (Ishie).

Now, eighteen years later, it is time to catch up.

Critical Rhetorical Inquiry

The discourse around Ms. Scribe after she was exposed can only be understood by first understanding the state of the Harry Potter fandom before and during when she was active. Fan communities thrive off of fan work, be that art or writing. These communities are always producing and building off not only the original work but each other as well. Within this collaborative community, some fans rose to the top, gaining notoriety equal to or, in some cases, surpassing that of the original author.

They became Big Name Fans or BNF. "I well remember the state of affairs in those early years," one commenter says, trying to provide context for those new to the Harry Potter fandom, "huge sections of the fandom were ruled by the various BNFs, and it was terribly important to know the "right people" (RJ_Anderson). These sections of the fandom that the BNF "ruled" were more often than not ships, or romantic pairings between characters. Within the Harry Potter fandom, there were two main factions that divided the fanfiction community: the Harry and Ginny shippers, known as H/G, and the Harry and Hermione shippers, known as H/HR. The division between these two groups was so stark that the various fanfiction sites were unofficially affiliated with one or the other and posted primarily fanfiction of that ship. The perception within fandom, fair or not, was that the H/G shippers were more chaste and dull in their devotion to their ship, assured by the main series that their ship would prevail, while the H/HR shippers were edgy, perverted, and militant in their devotion to the pair, more on the fringe yet very popular with the fandom. These reputations meant that H/HR was seen as more adult and therefore attracted many more BNF who saw the ship as the more serious of the two (Lennox Part One). These BNFs, who all interacted with each other, became online friends and formed the "inner circle," a tight-knit friend group whose ranks every new fanfiction author desired to join.

Enter Ms. Scribe, a new aspiring author citing time off work as finally giving her the time to post her first fanfictions. Much speculation has been done since as to Ms. Scribe's true motivation for entering the fandom. Some commenters suggest that she did so with "a masterminded covert campaign to dominate and destroy the shipper community" and that she purposefully played two rival camps of shippers off each other: the Harry/Hermione shippers of FictionAlley.org and the Harry/Ginny shippers of the Gryffindor Tower community" (Newitz). Other commenters imagine her motivations to be more personal. "This woman went to the most extraordinary efforts, spending countless hours hunched in front of her computer keyboard constructing an elaborate web of deceit so that she could eventually befriend and share the popularity of *a Harry Potter fan fiction author*." one commenter writes sharing their disbelief at her actions (RJ_anderson)

Whatever her motivation, Ms. Scribe, almost immediately after posting her first fanfiction, attracted several devoted fans, notable for their unwavering loyalty to this new author and for also being equally as new to the fandom as Ms. Scribe (Lennox, Part 2). In addition to these tireless Ms. Scribe devotees, she also very quickly came under fire from what the fandom came to call "nutty Christians," new accounts just as hateful to Ms. Scribe as her fans were loving. These trolls spewed racist and homophobic insults at Ms. Scribe and created a list of "big name sinners," fanfiction authors who, according to these religious fanatics, were the worst of the worst in fandom. These lists included Ms. Scribe and all the members of the inner circle, placing her equal to the BNF. This, paired with her super fans, promoted her non-stop and served to rocket Ms. Scribe's stardom to bold new heights and gained her the attention of the BNFs, the attention she would not have gotten without such controversy generated by her sock puppet accounts (Lennox, Part 3). Within a year of joining the fandom, Ms. Scribe had befriended most of these BNFs and firmly joined the inner circle.

If Ms. Scribe had stopped there, she might not have been discovered. The trolls, while offensive in their content, provided entertainment for the fandom in the form of troll bashing, and her sock puppet fan accounts were just as quick to praise her friends as they were to praise Ms. Scribe. Ms. Scribe even at one point posted as a Pakistani woman who claimed that Harry Potter fanfictions had taught her about feminism and helped her survive abuse from her husband (Lennox, Part 2). The inner circle, at least according to the tale laid out by the biography, had no reason to suspect Ms. Scribe because they only benefited from her sock puppetry. Ms. Scribe did not stop there, however. Instead, she turned her sock puppets against other parts of the fandom, notably the H/G shippers, claiming the religious zealots' trolls, whom she controlled, were part of their ranks. This caused a wave of hate against these fans, such as bigotry and sock puppetry. This prompted those accused to begin to sleuth and eventually uncover the truth that Ms. Scribe, her fans, and the trolls who attacked them were all posting from the same computer. Armed with IP evidence and inconsistencies in her story, they posted the evidence online and waited for the fandom to turn against Ms. Scribe (Lennox Part 5).

In any other major case of sock puppetry, like that of Alex and Joan, a psychologist who used the online persona of a disabled young woman to set up real-life dates for himself (Van Gelder) or the case of Kaycee Nichole Swenson, a Kansas woman who pretended to be a non-existent daughter with a terminal illness (Jordan 201), the story would end there with a climatic reveal of the villain that forces the community to reckon with the news all at once. This, however, did not occur. Instead, many fans, including the BNF, disbelieved these claims, choosing instead to side with their friend. They accused those accusing Ms. Scribe of being fueled by hatred caused by differences in ships and attacked her would-be accusers, even going so far as to set up a web page called the Gryffindor Tower hidden room to mock them. Comments like these show the ire of the community, directed back at her accusers: "Magic has entered the muggle world. That's right, kids! Now, thanks to the Magic of Harry Potter, you can do things that were never possible before! You can post from your computer while lying unconscious in a hospital bed! You can attend funerals and still be able to post on Livejournal at the same time!" or comments like this accusing GT admins of faking IP evidence by using "PhotoWizard to manipulate images and destroy reputations! You can lie and stalk and hurt people! (Lennox Part 5).

Over the course of Ms. Scribe's time in the fandom, multiple other individuals attempted to come forward and expose Ms. Scribe, but all of them were met with similar anger or apathy from her friends and supporters. Eventually, Ms. Scribe's main H/G enemies and main accusers in Gryffindor Tower collapsed, at least in part due to her many sock puppets and hate campaigns against them. It was not until *The Ms. Scribe Story: An Unauthorized Fandom Biography* was published with overwhelming proof that the story shifted, and most of the fandom came to believe that Ms. Scribe was behind her most adamant fans and trolls. Even then, some of Ms. Scribe's closest friends continued to deny any allegations. What these varying timelines create is a discourse in which commenters are at vastly different points in accepting Ms. Scribe's guilt, some to whom it is old news, some to whom it is new, and some who still do not believe.

Even from those who have known of Ms. Scribe's guilt since the beginning, the reactions vary. The truth, one commenter said, had been a "cold comfort then, but now how sweet vindication tastes"

(Oulangi). Others got no satisfaction from finally being proven right; instead, they were confused as to how it had taken so long. "What really boggles my mind is that at the time, nearly every single one of the people defending Ms Scribe had access to evidence that could have either supported or contradicted GT's claims. (Lennox 5). The most common response, however, from those who had long believed that Ms. Scribe was guilty was anger and a sense of betrayal towards the BNFs who supported her.

Some thought they had known and obfuscated for Ms. Scribe, "They used the influence they had to cover up for Ms. Scribe" (Phoenix writer), while others believed they had done so unknowingly. "The FictionAlley fans were so incensed by the "persecution" of Ms. Scribe that they ignored the evidence." yet still hurt people in the process (Newitz). Some did not care much about whether they knew or not. "They hung out with and gave support and status to a bitch who hurt people. Knowingly or not, they did it and should feel sorry for it." Feeling sorry is not enough; this same commenter goes on to say this: "If it turned out that one of my good friends had done this sort of thing, I would be responsible for every post, everycomment, everything I did that gave her credibility. I would have failed in my judgment. This is like your friend being a child molester"(Aubrem).

These comments suggest that even if the BNF were blindsided by the fact that Ms. Scribe controlled sock puppet accounts, they still supported her main account, which in some ways was just as mean as the trolls whom Ms. Scribe was pretending to fight. "I don't believe for a minute that Ms. Scribe's character was completely hidden. Mean people are apparent and it's clear that even Ms. Scribe's false persona was mean." this same comment goes on to say. "These people liked her because she was like their pet pit bull - mean on their behalf" (Aubrem).

The rhetoric of these comments, angry and righteous, places much of the onerous onto the BNF and fans who supported Ms. Scribe. However, while some seemed to be content to accept that malicious action was the cause of this complacency, others went deeper, attributing a cause either directly or with their rhetoric.

A lack of suspicion is what these BNFs did, according to some commenters. This "hopefully makes people become more cautious with their net dealings," one commenter wrote in a post about Ms.

Scribe's biography (Rhiannon). "One shouldn't trust people on the internet too easily," this same commenter warns the newbies of the fandom. Trust, to this fan at least, was the mistake that supporters of Ms. Scribe's made. The story of Ms. Scribe only emphasizes what they already believe, that people are more likely to lie on the internet and that caution should be the default mode when interacting online. Such a reaction is not uncommon. In other cases of sock puppetry, such as the case of Kaycee Nichole Swenson, a teen with a terminal illness who never was, a culture of suspicion arose in the online community in which she was active. If a central figure could lie about who they say they were, then the attitude becomes that so could everyone else. Suddenly, everyone is suspected of lying and must somehow prove every aspect of their character, causing the foundations of the virtual community to begin to crumble (Jordan 209). This creates a "loss of innocence" for the community and those in it, a shattering of trust that can be hard to repair, a trust that is fundamental for the existence of online communities (Greyson and Costello 3333). One commenter acknowledges how they have experienced this "loss of innocence" before: "It's amazing to me now that people were so trusting, but maybe that's because my prior online fandom was full of wank, lies, and socks, leading me to be jaded about such things rather quickly (**Divinereverie**).

There were, however, those who saw a community of suspicion forming and cautioned against it. "It's better to trust someone and be disappointed than never to trust anyone at all," one commenter writes, responding to such assertions that a lack of caution gave rise to Ms. Scribe's "I would a thousand times rather be hurt because I believed in the wrong person than live with the burden of never being able to believe in anyone again" they continue (the fickle pickle). Another commenter says they understand the urge to distrust: "I have dozens of thoughts running through my head, mostly going, "Well, mama was right. Never trust anyone online." Ultimately, though, this commenter concludes that trust is still important even if it was broken in this instance. "Then the rest of me remembers that not everyone is that devious or in desperate need of whatever [Ms. Scribe] needed" (Veracity)

Not all who blamed the BNF came to the same conclusion about trust being the root of the issue. Instead, others used the opportunity of an open conversation to discuss issues larger issues with the way

fandom is structured. "Fandom does have a hierarchy," one commenter states as a fact in response to the biography. "At the top, you have those often called Big Name Fans, or BNFs." while at the bottom are those who are unknown. The commenter continues, "I suspect very few want to be at the bottom. But at the top... Yeah, I think a lot of people want it". "Fame just has a certain magic pull on most," this commenter states, reflecting on why this hierarchy exists (Misscam). Other commenters agreed, both about the existence of the hierarchy and the desire to be at the top. "I think I do feel the pull of BNFs, and sometimes want to be around them, and then worry that hanging around someone for the reflected glory is wrong" (**Doubtful-salmon**). It was "terribly important to know the "right people" if you wanted to get ahead." another fan says, referring to the time they entered fandom, around when Ms. Scribe was at large (RJ_Anderson). The goal of fandom, as all three comments emphasize, was not to bond over a shared love but instead to love that thing the most and, in turn, be loved for it.

Attention, however, according to those who have been a BNF in some capacity, "is here today, elsewhere tomorrow. What will you do to swing it back if that's your game?" "It's never enough. Perhaps that is why Ms. Scribe kept creating more sock puppets. (Misscam). If fandom is set up for those who crave the spotlight, then it becomes the perfect place for those who will stop at no end to get it. Ms. Scribe, according to these commenters, is not a rogue malicious entity but rather the natural result of a flawed system. It was only a matter of time before someone like her went to such lengths to get the thing fandom tells fans they should want.

This conclusion that fandom overly emphasizes the importance of notoriety and influence leads some readers to question the very idea of BNFs and their influence within the fandom. "It's just... Why bother? Why is it so important to be so popular in fandom? Why bother with the drama? It's just mind-boggling..." (Souredpoison) or this comment remarking on how "there is something amusing about the thought of being famous for being a fan." (Misscam) this comment outright states how mundane they are "BNFs are people just like everyone else and knowing them offline won't put cash in your pocket or make your stock rise with people outside fandom (**Veracity**).

Not only do commenters question the existence of BNFs, but they also suggest that BNFs have a negative impact on the whole fandom. One commenter went on an impassioned diatribe comparing BNF to religious figures. "Human beings are hardwired for worship []. If you don't have faith in God, you're going to have it in something or somebody else," in this case, the BNF. "Like all true worshippers, you're going to close ranks with others who share your particular object of devotion, and you're going to argue passionately against anyone who tries to put your idol down" (RJ_Anderson). Ms. Scribe was both a worshipper of the BNF and later an idol for those who worshiped the BNF to protect. Through this lens, it is the devotion to the BNF that caused Ms. Scribe to create the sock puppets, and then the devotion from her fans that protected her from facing harm. Comments like these highlight another conclusion that those who blamed the BNF for supporting Ms. Scribe came to by way of the rhetoric used. It was the BNF themselves, in existence, more than actions, who caused and allowed Ms. Scribe to rampage through the fandom.

BNFs are not just products of the social dynamic but also products of the evolution of technology. Just as mass print media created celebrities or social media created influencers, technology was also important in the creation of BNF, which, according to some, caused Ms. Scribe. One commenter, in discussing these dynamics, reminisces about fandom before live journal, the site where most of the Ms. Scribe wank went down. Before, when fandom was on the Usenet and mailing lists, fame, especially the para-social type the BNF fostered, was impossible. Likewise, anonymity, a trait Ms. Scribe used for much of her trolling, was similarly unfeasible. The commenter ends their musings with: "another data point in my never-to-be-written essay about structure influencing the social dynamic of online fandom" (Finisterre), and while this paper is not that essay, it is an interesting rhetoric framing to analyze, proposing yet another cause for Ms. Scribe by way of framing technology as the cause of her deception.

As with every argument, there are two sides. The BNF and Ms. Scribe supporters, while coming under heavy fire from various sides of the fandom, were not silent. Instead, many responded publicly in comments or with their own posts explaining their actions and, in some cases, outright attacking the other

side. The rhetoric of these comments can be just as telling in terms of the causes they present and the way they frame fandom.

According to one commenter summarizing the responses of the BNF, there were three ways that Ms. Scribe's former supporters responded to the discourse that spawned after the biography was published. "a) horror over the betrayal, b) regret for past actions, yet not really overly sympathetic, or c) ignoring or issuing passive-aggressive statements of apology" (Veracity). A and B, according to this commenter, are understandable reactions at such a time, but C is unacceptable. Scouring the internet, it is hard to find many examples of fans outright defending Ms. Scribe; however, there are those who brush the issue off. "It doesn't really matter. One commenter said, "Ms Scribe hasn't been active in fandom in a year or more. These people are just bored without her" (Mogliecat). Some commenters theorize that this downplaying of importance is a defense "caused by fear and--not guilt, exactly, but feeling very uncomfortable with what's been revealed. Worrying that people are going to gloat at them, rub in past mistakes, or do the dance of I Told You So," and while there were those who were eager with an "I told you so," many offered grace claiming no one's going to make you eat crow. If you *were* a good friend of this person, no one would ask you to burn her at the stake without question."

This was a defense latched onto by many of those most closely associated with Ms. Scribe, citing a genuine friendship with her as the reason they trusted her over those who had claims against her. Ms. Scribe "helped me when I was in a very, very bad situation, and she didn't have to," one supporter commented, "I'm not blameless," they continue, "I just took what I was told on faith. My mistake." (Nmalfoy). Many expressed hurt at this betrayal from a friend: "I feel extremely duped and upset about this whole situation. [] It's so hard to understand how someone who has been so kind to me, and whom I've seen be kind to others, could also do this - could be untruthful directly to me" (Heidi8). "We trusted her." Another comment stated, "We let her into our lives, and her close friends thought her kindness and support were because she was a thoughtful and good person. They were all used, and to them, she has to be accountable" (Poconell). The BNF, though not the targets of her negativity, still felt hurt to find out that someone they had formed genuine connections with had been lying and manipulating them. Many

felt used by Ms. Scribe and confused as to how much of their interactions were genuine and how much was part of her quest to join the inner circle. This frame is an individualist one. Rather than blame a sweeping flaw in the structure of fandom, as many others did for Ms. Scribe, the BNF blamed only Ms. Scribe, framing her as the deceiver and them as the dupes.

Some, however, felt that this frame and the cause it proposed you positioned the BNF as Ms. Scribe's main victims and took issue with it. "I have absolutely no compassion for the BNFs involved in this--ESPECIALLY the ones attempting to martyr themselves on the "Oh no!! I was Duped, I tell ya!" cross." a commenter says, expressing a lack of empathy towards the BNF and mocking the idea that they would be victims (Vain_chan). What this anger gets at is a fear that the BNF are trying to remove themselves from the narrative. In claiming Ms. Scribe to be the mastermind and them the helpless sheep, it ignores the fact that they were just as vocal in attacking those who opposed Ms. Scribe. What this frame has the potential to do is erase the audience despite the fact that "audiences are an important and active part in any online persona's development, even an inauthentic one" (Jordan 204). Ms. Scribe would not have created her socks to interact only with herself, nor would she have continued if they proved ineffective at swaying the people around her. The audience is responsible, at least so far, for engaging with Ms. Scribe and her socks and, therefore, giving her attention. This rhetoric then not only strips away the BNF's role in the situation but also positions Ms. Scribe as a black sheep, a rogue entity within the fandom who can receive the blame without reflecting poorly on the fandom as a whole (Joinson and Dietz-Uhler)

This sentiment is exemplified again by the rhetoric of the comments. "Personally, I'm a little glad that it was all one person. I find comfort in the fact that it was just one messed up, attention-seeking individual" (Oulangi), one commenter said, exemplifying this black sheep approach. If Ms. Scribe is separated from the fandom, then she can receive blame without it reflecting poorly on the fandom. Using another barnyard animal descriptor leads to Ms. Scribe becoming a sort of scapegoat for the fandom, with fans piling on. "This shit is responsible for a lot of the general hatred and BNF hate that's still around today." one commenter says, pinning BNF hate onto Ms. Scribe and therefore avoiding a conversation

about fandom hierarchy that might be distasteful (Lyore) "It finally explains a lot of the tensions that still run through the HP fandom in a much more transparent fashion than you normally see." another commenter said in regards to the biography (Oulangi).

Others see this being done and call it out, acknowledging the revisionist history rhetoric. "I don't think it's a fair assessment of the HP fandom to say that all of its troubles stem from CC or Ms. Scribe" (Mogliecat), one commenter said, going on to point out that drama and wank existed in the Harry Potter fandom long before Ms. Scribe. Others felt more passionate about repudiating this claim; this commenter uses outdated language to express how little they think for anyone who used Ms. Scribe to cover for them, "for anyone that has religiously participated in stupid ship debates to now say that the opposing sides were just against them because of all the shit that Ms. Scribe did is just Retarded" (Mogliecat). Just as how Ms. Scribe could not have performed her many identities without an audience, so too could she not have stoked the flames of fandom hate without a spark. So while it is true that Ms. Scribe often instigated the fights that occurred while she was active in the fandom, those fights would not have occurred without others being willing to believe and join in the various ship-bashing and assorted wank.

The urge to make Ms. Scribe a scapegoat could be an urge to find some good from the bad. Others felt this urge as well and looked for the silver lining in crisis. "In a weird way, there's almost a renaissance of fandom harmony. People who eyed each other suspiciously are making friends and there's a movement of peace and understanding," one user wrote, referring to the harmony that they perceived the rhetoric around Ms. Scribe to create. "maybe not that far," the commenter goes on to say, "but the self examination is impressive." (Oulangi). This optimistic spin highlights the fact that despite the sometimes harsh rhetoric from both sides, the crisis brought the whole fandom into communication in a way that would not have been possible without the exposure of Ms. Scribe's sock puppets. This conversation spawned accusations, as well as forgiveness, and names were cleared, and while it is not a fair framing to blame all of the fandom wank on Ms. Scribe, it is also fair to say she had a substantial part in it.

No more can the spirit of forgiveness created by the rhetoric be seen than in this blog post from a user who, after sharing their thoughts on Ms. Scribe, offers a once in a "once-in-a-lifetime fandom

forgiveness day." they go on to explain. "Today only, you may tell me if you've lied to me and/or screwed me over that I was unaware of. I'll probably be hurt, but I am going to forgive it and never speak of it again"(Misscam). Surprisingly the comments are full of fans taking this user up on the offer, sharing small and large grievances or transgressions they have against this user, and asking for forgiveness, all of which the user gives either acknowledging their insignificance or their own role in the wank. What is more, within this space of forgiveness, comments see Ms. Scribe herself in less of a harsh light. They acknowledge that they, too, understand the pull of the BNF, and while they would not go to the same lengths as her for fame, her actions were very human in nature. "There is no key here, I think, no one approach that is wrong and one that is right. There are just human reactions and what they lead to," the same commenter who offered forgiveness said, referring to Ms. Scribe, "I don't like being lied to. I don't like being screwed over. But like all humans, I will do both, and others will do them to me. And fandom is filled with humans and sock puppets, and thus lies and screwing over too" (Misscam). This humanistic approach to looking at Ms. Scribe avoids the rhetorical pitfalls others arrive at, such as blaming the perceived other side or reifying the humans involved. Instead, this comment acknowledges that humans are humans and sock puppets, which are controlled by humans, are humans as well. Therefore, fandom, even in this case, abstracted by layers of screens and identities, is still just human interactions. Others agree with this line of thinking, "yes, we go by aliases online, but that doesn't mean real people aren't on the other end." one commenter says, acknowledging the way in which these layers of abstractions can cause people to forget that (Veracity).

"I love online fandom, but obviously I, wouldn't be involved if I didn't.", one commenter says, giving their final thoughts about fandom and the cause of discord within it. "Drama is inescapable no matter what hobbies you pursue." it is part of human nature to disagree, especially when passion is involved. "It's easy to lose sight of the big picture." the commenter continues, "and you don't need to be a sociologist to know that when you create any sort of community where people have to share space and deal with each other on a personal level, there's going to be conflict, and a popularity race, and alliances

and enemies." but also "infinitely more possibilities to create, share and communicate, and to meet people with the exact same interests, values, and passions you do" (Sparkly_Stuff).

This frame puts passions as the cause of wank rather than any one individual or social dynamic is fundamental for fandom. Just as how Ms. Scribe would not have posted without an audience, she would not have gone through the effort of creating socks if she had no passion for fandom. Without passion, the BNF or H/G shippers would not have battled or investigated her various socks, and without passion, the debates that revealed so much about online communities would never have occurred. Ultimately, all the players in this story, just by the fact that they all spend a significant amount of time interacting with Harry Potter fan work, have much more in common than differentiates them, and it is this passion that brought the fandom together and allows them to move on from times of crisis, just as much as it causes trolls and puppet masters.

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