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erative and transformative potential—rather than on creatureliness as a condition of vulnerability, exposure, and finitude. And yet, as her own analyses repeatedly show, these dimensions are deeply intertwined. Her metaphors are not only inventive; they are fragile, permeable, open to damage and to misreading. Hence, one might have wished for a fuller articulation of how Trejling’s “creaturely metaphors” relate to the ethics and politics of embodied life, and to the question of responsibility that runs through her reading.

This is connected to another central tension in the dissertation: the decision to focus on literary as opposed to “actual” animals. Trejling herself is entirely explicit about this choice: as she writes in the introduction, “[t]he present study is more concerned with metaphor than meat, with significations rather than slaughterhouses, with literary theory rather than leather” (19). Fair enough, but still one senses that the emphasis on the textual sometimes leads her to retreat from the very border zones that her analyses otherwise so powerfully evoke—the porous interface between word and world. At various points in the dissertation, Trejling appeals to more empirical branches of knowledge, be it cognitive neuroscience (47) or ethology and entomology. In her reading of *The Waves*, for instance, she draws on ethological observations of bees and swallows to illuminate Woolf’s figural imagination, suggesting a reciprocity between animal behaviour and literary form: an awareness that the “facts” of animal life influence or even co-author their cultural and metaphorical meanings. This is an important question, and one that might have been developed further into a broader reflection on the relationship between literary and “actual” animals—on how animality inhabits and shapes human discourse, and how, conversely, our figurations of animal life shape the conditions of living beings beyond the page.

None of this seriously undermines the achievement of “Creaturely Metaphors” as a study of metaphor’s spectrality and of literature’s capacity for ethical responsiveness. Still, it seems fair to say that the dissertation attends more fully to the second term in its title than to the first. In so doing, it forgoes an opportunity to explore how the vulnerability and materiality of creaturely life might further complicate the relation between figuration and ethics that lies at its centre. To trace that connection more explicitly would not diminish the subtlety of Trejling’s readings; it would deepen them,

allowing the “creaturely” to appear not only as a condition of language but as a shared mode of being in the world.

Ultimately, *Creaturely Metaphors* offers a powerful rethinking of what it means to read figuratively in the wake of the animal turn. It restores to metaphor its ethical and imaginative force, showing that figuration need not entail substitution or erasure but can constitute a space of encounter. *Creaturely Metaphors* thus leaves its readers with a renewed sense of what it might mean to respond to literature, and to animals, responsibly. In the end, this is a dissertation that is as much about literature and literariness as it is about the figure of the reader, and how we, as readers, can and should engage with literary texts, how we can read more responsibly, with greater attentiveness and vulnerability towards the haunting strangeness of language, which is to say its *literarity*—or maybe rather, though perhaps it amounts to the same thing, its *animality*.

Käri Driscoll

Camilla Wallin Lämsä, *Yearning Hours: Desire, Darcymania, and Readerly Attachments in the Digital Jane Austen Fandom*. Linköpings universitet. Linköping 2025.

Yearning Hours: Desire, Darcymania, and Readerly Attachments in the Digital Jane Austen Fandom is study of fan-created texts from an online community of Jane Austen fans. It is also a study of character through shared, spreadable forms that make it possible for readers to create multimodal texts that respond to the character and to one another, from a wide range of perspectives. A major contribution of this work is to complicate the scholarly understanding of fan reading practices and fan affect to emphasize the range of identificatory positions they might take. As a study of fans, *Yearning Hours* is careful not to reduce fans to enthusiastic attachment—it argues they “feel” but also “memes,” a shorthand for irony, self-consciousness, and humor. Moreover, these multimodal creators do not only work in well-known fan genres like fanfiction, fanvids, and fanart, but minor “spreadable modalities” like memes. Camilla Wallin Lämsä establishes that these forms are essential to understanding the interpretive and social modes of fandom.

The Jane Austen Fandom is one with an outsized place in literary criticism and fan studies; it

is often understood that this is because Jane Austen has prestige as well as fans—fans of the novels, fans of the adaptations. Studies of character have long been of interest in Austen's novels of manners in part because of her use of free-indirect discourse. Mr Darcy, the hero of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) has proven a generative figure for considering, as Lämsä does here, issues of gender, sexuality, class, and whiteness in the novel and its afterlives. The thesis uses Darcy, a prominent figure in the fandom, to demonstrate the breadth and complexity of digital social reading practices. The thesis treats engagement with M. Darcy that consistently reappeared over a four-year period to illustrate modes of collective interpretation without losing sight of the specific histories of the figures—from the novel, from the film, from their distinctive circulation in the fandom—grouped under the name “Mr Darcy.” To understand how fans create and contest meanings in the playful and chaotic space of the Austen fandom on Tumblr, Lämsä uses what fan-girls themselves might call their “obsession” with Mr. Darcy to track a set of patterns over time in an ephemeral social context. The methods from this study could be adapted to other inquiries into digital social reading and fan culture.

Yearning Hours has an important place among an emerging set of texts in Digital Humanities research following what Melanie Walsh has called the “reception turn” in quantitative literary studies, which benefits from the affordances of social media as a kind of receptional archive (“The Challenges and Possibilities of Social Media Data” in *Debates in the Digital Humanities* 2023: 278). The site of the digital social reading practices analyzed here is Tumblr, a microblogging platform aimed primarily at fans, queer youth, and amateur creators. The authors of the texts in this study are identified by Lämsä as “the kinds of readers who have traditionally been left out of academic research” (35). Their work is challenging to access and even to describe in part because Tumblr trades in “multimodal text-image hybrids” like moodboards, which are surrounded by paratexts like comments, likes, and hashtags and which communicate by shared terminology, idioms, and even idiosyncratic emoji use (31). Tagging culture on Tumblr is described by Lori Morimoto and Louisa Ellen Stein as “almost defiantly nonhierarchical, decentralized, and uncontrollable” (35–36). Lämsä makes two strong methodological choices to study the Jane Austen Digital Fandom: *these* readers on *this* platform.

The principal texts here are not novels by Jane Austen. They are not even the major screen adaptations: the 1995 series directed by Simon Langton and written by Andrew Davies or the 2005 film *Pride & Prejudice*, directed by Joe Wright and written by Deborah Moggach—though this last is the most central to the fans on Tumblr. Rather, the principal texts are what *Yearning Hours* calls the “ancillary” or secondary, supplementary materials used by fans, including—and especially—some of the slightest-seeming forms, like hashtags, memes, and GIFs (19–20). The “Digital Jane Austen Fandom” means these spreadable, ancillary texts. The conceptual work of the thesis grows from a framework that weaves fannish hermeneutic practices with critics of affect theory and queer theory, among others. Lämsä argues, further, that such forms create and sustain digital social reading communities.

In this context, “Jane Austen” can be understood as a brand that takes in not only the novels but a larger “storyworld” or “fictional universe.” As Lämsä shows, this universe carries nostalgic tendencies from the idealization of Regency England and from the Heritage era of film-making, a legacy of normative whiteness largely implicit on Tumblr, but more explicit in fandoms on Facebook and Twitter (240). Lämsä argues that we should consider the whole growing group of material an archive, drawing on Abigail de Kosnik's notion of “archontic production” from *Rogue Archives*, in which fan texts—“fanfiction, memes, fan-casts, moodboards, GIFs, and other creations[...] become part of the same fictional multimedia ‘archive’” (194). Since the archive includes Austen's books and adaptations, but also the digital forms that fans use to theorize that work and build community with one another, the older texts don't have a prioritized status as original. Lämsä uses this idea to counter previous critical claims that “fan creations are unfulfilling ‘surrogates’ or ‘compensatory tactics’ for a past or original experience of reading” (79). Lämsä points out, citing examples, that “fannish attachments to fiction can be motivated by other emotions and impulses” than an originary experience of engagement with a text—including relationships with other fans and participation in fan culture (186).

Yearning Hours demonstrates that immersion over years is an effective way to study patterns in “the fleeting social environments wherein [they become meaningful]” (26). The examples here are

informed by the focus on Darcy and the queer female space of the Austen fandom on Tumblr; the method of inquiry into digital social reading and fan culture offers a useful model for other fandoms, in other communities. Lämsä calls the method “lurker participation,” or immersion “in the interpretive community on Tumblr without actively communicating or collaborating with the fans.” The work builds from her fluency in other fan communities and uses archival and community-building strategies developed by fans to “navigate the unruly structure of the platform” in a multi-step process:

First, I have read the fantext through multiple entry points: subscribing to relevant hashtags (like “jane austen,” “mr darcy,” and “pride and prejudice”), manually searching these terms, shifting between the “Top” and “Recent” categories of search results, and tracing a path through the network of reblogs to locate active participants in the community. This allowed for rhizomatic entries into the fantext, where older and more recent posts, and more and less popular posts, appeared irregularly and interspersed with one another. To ensure that culturally significant posts were not missed, I also identified several of the more influential fan accounts (so-called “big name fans”), whose original posts and reblogs are consistently shared by hundreds or thousands of other users.

Second, I have performed this multi-step search regularly enough to become familiar with the community’s vernacular and to spot recurring patterns: thrice a week for a period of four years (2020–2024). During this time, several memes and tagging conventions rose to prominence and then vanished as quickly on Tumblr, but the examples cited and analysed in the thesis reflect engagements with Mr Darcy which have consistently reappeared throughout the study. (36–37)

Because “lurker participation” was developed with Tumblr’s affordances in mind, it enabled Lämsä to collect virtually unsearchable materials that reveal the collective nature of the interpretive and creative work within the fandom. Fans develop the language by which they are to be understood, and this thesis connects those critical concepts with critical theory to understand relations between fans and character and also relations among fans themselves. The result is a study that offers meticulous readings of fantexts, which include glosses for readers who might be unfamiliar with the discursive context and a pitch-perfect explication of tone and textual (or even emoji-al) detail. The scholar’s fluency in

the discourse reveals the way readers engage with Darcy through texts created and shared by others to demonstrate that fan reading is a much more multivalent practice than the pleasurable absorption suggested by many previous critics (135).

This study aims to “critically understand and describe gender formations in the fantext” as they play out across fan self-representation, attachments to, and treatments of Mr Darcy. The “Darcy” in this Darcymania is not recognizable as the protagonist of what Rachel Feder has called “The Darcy Myth,” the arrogant crush who becomes a romantic hero, which has come down to us from the Gothic novel. (*The Darcy Myth: Jane Austen, Literary Heartthrobs, and the Monsters They Taught Us to Love*, 2023) Neither is he—in many of the examples here—the Darcy of “Colin Firth’s wet shirt moment” in the 1995 BBC *Pride and Prejudice* that Sarah Glosson argues may have “sparked the cultural obsession with all things Austen, referring to a scene where the actor surfaces from a pond, his transparent white shirt clinging to his skin” (15). The Darcy of the 2005 film is most intelligible to the fans when he is frozen in a moment of yearning—longing, relatable. Lämsä finds that the symbol fans return to, again and again, is a shot that became known as the “hand flex,” just after Mr Darcy touches Elizabeth Bennet’s hand for the first time. It is a meme closely connected with yearning even outside the Austen fandom. This Darcy embodies a version of gentlemanly masculinity from the Regency period in which yearning as an affective ideal of restrained desire. According to Lämsä: “Yearning could be described as a feminine affect, associated with sentimentality, melancholy, passivity, and emotional excess. Nevertheless, in romance, it is typically the hero who yearns the most and the longest, and the heroine is the revered (if unaware) object of his desire. And ‘Austen levels of yearning’ are presumed to be the very highest levels imaginable” (95).

An important finding is that a substantial current of fan hermeneutic practices runs counter to an established critical idea about readers of Austen’s novel: that readers will primarily identify with Elizabeth because of the novel’s close, if ironic, attention to her perspective. *Yearning Hours*, by contrast, shows readers explicitly identifying with Darcy instead. For example, one GIF set—reblogged by over 2 000 fans—shows Darcy telling Elizabeth that he lacks the talent of “conversing easily” with strangers, with the added caption: “when

you want to be Elizabeth but you're actually darcy" (qtd. 132). Lämsä writes: "They acknowledge that they wish to, and are supposed to, identify with the sparkling, witty heroine of the novel[...] [but] it is Darcy, who wants too much, and who is weird about it, who sparks recognition." (132).

Lämsä uses the permutations of this meme to show how fan creativity is possible because of shared understandings and creative reuses of material. Methodologically, *Yearning Hours* approaches a vast amount of material by using a consistently prominent meme—the hand flex—to demonstrate different aspects of digital social reading. It handles repetitive material by attending to the layers of meaning a meme accrues through individual examples of fantexts. The hand flex demonstrates a range of fan relations to the object, to one another, to affect, to cultural norms, to hermeneutic practice. Lämsä uses permutations of the hand flex to show, in Felski's terms, readerly attunement to Darcy's experience and feelings here. Lämsä notes that the fangirls on Tumblr approach Darcy as a desiring *subject* more so than a desired object and identify with both of these positions as they perform attunement to Darcy's yearning. Fans demonstrate their sensitivity to the undercurrents in this scene in its expression of historicized, repressed desire. *Yearning Hours* is a study of how fans engage with the text—and not *the text*, but recreated portions of it. The GIF takes what Laura Mulvey calls "moments of erotic contemplation" into an ongoing loop, lifted out of the narrative and "magnified by the *social* pleasures of contemplating [them] together with other fans" (190). Fan reading displays, not enchantment, as is often thought, but ambiguous, ironic, self-aware attachment.

Yearning Hours is careful and thorough; generous and delightful. My concluding paragraph on its limits is therefore more like a wish list for future study. A strength of this project is its explicit commitment to engaging with its material from a position of openness and curiosity. There are few places where critique might be expanded: Orientalist tropes and cultural appropriation in the fandom; the political history of English Heritage Drama; even the playful deployment of "lesbian" identity in Darcy as a lesbian. Chapters I haven't touched on here—like "headcanon" as a fan genre that takes multiple textual forms, or the way the Austen fandom plays with the misogynist "lad culture" of 4chan and Reddit—reveal promising paths of inquiry that stretch far beyond Austen

or *Pride and Prejudice*. *Yearning Hours* shows how reblogging spreadable meme forms work as communicative and purposeful acts, a sophisticated, campy discourse laced with melodrama and irony. The methodological innovation of this thesis grows out of an original theoretical approach that is attuned to its object of study and which clearly contributes to not only Jane Austen studies, but also to debates about the role of digital social reading and fan culture practices.

Sarah Allison