

## **Submissives, Nekos and Futanaris: a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Glee Kink Meme**

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### **Abstract:**

This article examines the online erotic fanfiction repository The Glee Kink Meme looking to understand the kinds of fiction being written and how this can be used to understand how fans of *Glee* use participatory methods to attain an understanding of the canon text. Starting with a quantitative analysis of the works being created the article then explores the themes and tropes prevalent in the most popular types of fiction. Through this process what is discovered is an online space where traditional sexual roles and a strict adherence to canon prevail, despite the supposed limitless nature of such a space.

**Key words:** Glee, Fanfiction, Erotica.

### **Introduction**

Fanfiction, perhaps most notably slash fiction, has long been of interest to fan scholars; Camille Bacon-Smith's 1992 work for example.<sup>1</sup> However, much of that scholarship has looked at these works of fiction in terms of fan community or, in the case of Pugh's work (2005), as a literary text. The purpose of this essay is to look specifically at a particular form of *Glee* fanfiction, namely the Glee Kink Meme<sup>2</sup> (a Livejournal erotic fiction community). The aim here is to use this subset of fanfiction as a way of understanding how fans consume the source text itself through a process of continuation. By looking at what kinds of stories are both requested and written in the Glee Kink Meme (The GKM) this essay will explore how the authors of these works seem to attempt to resist the canon text of the television show yet ultimately defer to it, and rather than creating works 'inspired' by the *Glee* text create works that reinforce canon and function as a fantasy addendum to the text, using sexual gratification as default character motivation.

The GKM presents a different kind of fanfiction space than those studied before, perhaps because *Glee* offers a different kind of text. Where previous works on fanfiction

looked at the need to reinterpret the source text in order to fulfil fan desires, *Glee* presents a text with little need for re-arrangement. Instead, what can be found in the GKM is a form of extension, of taking these characters to their “natural” conclusion. This fits into Pugh’s notion of ‘more of’ (2005: 43), suggesting that what these authors want is not necessarily additions to canon, but a continuation. This is different from what Pugh terms ‘more from’ (ibid.) where the author looks to extend canon into new areas, taking characters outside of the original text. Though there are GKM stories that do take place in different locations or times than *Glee*, they are a rarity, for the most part GKM stories are about telling the story of *Glee* through a lens of sexual motivations. This is similar to the argument made by Anne Collins Smith in her essay on *Harry Potter* filking (2009) in which she argues that creators of fan works, like readers, do not “supplement willy-nilly” but are “governed by a number of clues furnished by the author” and “ordinarily stick fairly close to a perspective authorized ... by the original author’s descriptions”. Looking at these particular kinds of reactions to *Glee* provides a different way of seeing how fans interpret the source text and how they position themselves as creators within its boundaries. Looking at the Glee Kink Meme both quantitatively and qualitatively will illuminate a subsection of fanfiction generally ignored and explore how the most liberal section of the fanfiction community can also be the most policed and the most faithful to canon.

### **What is the Glee Kink Meme?**

A kink meme is not a new phenomenon; they have existed on Livejournal almost since the site’s inception in 1999, the Glee Kink Meme itself was started in November 2009. A kink meme is an anonymous collaborative online space where sexually explicit fanfiction is both requested and written. Not all kink meme repositories exist on Livejournal but the majority do and the system is set up the same across most fandoms. Though *Glee* has one of the most active kink memes (actual numbers of users are impossible to determine due to the anonymous use of the site, however, on average 25 new requests are made each day and around 10 filled each week) there are kink memes for numerous other media texts, from the TV show *Supernatural*<sup>3</sup>, to places such as *Norsekink*<sup>4</sup> which deals with any works involving the Marvel character Thor and his universe. However, kink memes are often hard to find for those outside of a specific fandom as there are no regularly maintained databases. Though popular the GKM is also not the only place to find *Glee* fanfiction, on fanfiction.net<sup>5</sup> *Glee* is the most written about television text, the show also has a large presence on Archive of Our Own<sup>6</sup>.

The Glee Kink Meme itself has two main areas, the prompt post<sup>7</sup> and the fills archive.<sup>8</sup> The prompt post is where fans go to ask for a particular story to be written, then in the comments below interested writers will respond with a story. The story can either be written all at once or over a period of days/weeks. Once the story has been finished a link to it is posted in the completed fills post so that readers can find it. While the process of requesting and filling is fascinating in terms of ideas of a gift economy, it is not the focus of

this work. However, that the creation of each work is collaborative, with both a person wanting the fiction written and a person wanting to write it suggests each story has some kind of resonance. It also makes every active user a co-author, as suggested by Lev Manovich in *The Language of New Media* (2001). Thus, recurrent tropes then become part of the community's groupthink; a groupthink dominated by the ubiquity of particular characterisations and certain types of story.

This essay will begin by first exploring what the GKM is and how it functions before moving on to how characterisation functions within the meme. Unlike most other fanfiction spaces online handles are rare in the kink meme, most work is posted as "anonymous". Therefore attempting to follow a particular writer's work is almost impossible. There are a handful of GKM writers who are not anonymous but they tend to write their work under GKM related nicknames.<sup>9</sup> As a consequence the focus of the GKM is not on authors but on the content of stories. The text is king in the GKM and while praise for authors is an important part of the space's culture, there is no way for an author to cash-in on the popularity of their work. However, as this screenshot demonstrates, encouraging authors to continue their work is part of the job of the community, especially as dozens of stories are left unfinished.



**Fig 1**

Consequently, what is most interesting about this aspect of the GKM is the way in which the stories are catalogued.

Unlike more traditional forms of fiction, fanfiction has always had very specific archival methods. For example Fanfiction.net, by far the largest fanfiction repository online archives its stories starting with the particular fandom and moving down through pairing and theme. Though ff.net and the GKM are not comparable necessarily, it is interesting to note that fanfiction spaces are ones catalogued in a particularly granular way. When searching ff.net the search string is as follows: Medium->Text->Pairing/Character->Genre-

>Rating. For example TV->Glee->Rachel B and Finn H->Hurt/Comfort->M[atature]. This allows users to find particular stories about particular characters that deal with a particular theme. The above search is for *Glee* fics about Finn and Rachel that deal with themes of emotional distress that are meant for mature readers. The GKM goes even further. Obviously due to its sexual nature it forgoes genre and instead categorises by the sexual acts depicted in the story. For example a requester might ask for “Blaine/Kurt Dom!Kurt Sub!Blaine, bondage, dirty talk”. (2012)<sup>10</sup> This request lists not only the characters to be involved and the acts to be performed but also the sexual roles the two characters must play. Most requests are then followed by a more detailed explanation of what is wanted from the story. The request above went on to say:

Blaine has never been good enough for anyone, which is why submission works so well for him. Kurt lets him know if he's doing anything wrong and rewards him when he gets things right. Basically I want a very sweet D/s dynamic between them, with Kurt telling Blaine how much he loves him, with pet names like sunshine or sweetheart. I want Kurt to be a firm and rough and talks dirty, but for aftercare and outside the bedroom he's super sweet and encouraging, always telling Blaine he's proud that Blaine's his, and there's nothing more beautiful than Blaine submitting completely to him. Want: facefucking (because Blaine is kind of a cockslut and really wants to please), hands and knees, light bondage, dirty talk.

Do not want: non-con or dub-con, extreme kinks (watersports, scat, vore, blood and needle play, bugcock)

Bonuses: Kurt regularly gushes about Blaine to Rachel and Mercedes

Blaine being affectionate and cuddly

Blaine with a vibrator in his ass while Kurt fucks his face

Facials

Spreader bar

Some punishments (spanking, corner time)

D/s domesticity, such as Blaine having a gag in his mouth while they cuddle and watch TV

Written in Kurt's POV (I relate to him better, but that's entirely up to the filler!)

Long prompt is long! I would be eternally grateful if someone can fill this!  
(2012)

As this illustrates requests are often very detailed. Most requesters are after a specific kind of story and the GKM, and kink memes in general, are built around this premise. Unlike most other fanfiction which, like fiction in general, is written as the author wishes and then sought out by consumers,<sup>11</sup> kink meme works are made to measure. On the importance of reviews in the social economy of fanfiction, Hellekson writes: ‘fan communities as they are

currently comprised, require exchanges of gifts: you do not pay to read fan fiction or watch a fan-made music vid. They are offered for free ... yet within a web of context that specifies an appropriate method of “payment” (2009: 114)<sup>12</sup>, but this is a different form of co-authorship.

While general fanfic authors can, and often do, ignore the requests of reviewers, kink meme works only exist because of requests; the system is built on a notion of co-authorship. However, works are written with both the requester and the community as a whole in mind. Stories are written ‘for’ the requester but there is a system of seconding and thirding requests so that particularly popular ones gain more attention and are more likely to be filled.

As such, the way in which the GKM is catalogued and archived has to support the ever present push and pull between the array of topics and fans’ very detailed desires. It has to allow for both those who want to write and those looking for stories they want to read to be very specific in their interests. Not everyone wants to read about Kurt Hummell receiving oral sex from his teacher but many may want to read about him receiving oral sex from his boyfriend. All stories are archived and can be searched for by one term or many terms in conjunction, allowing for someone to either find all the Kurt based stories, all the “dirty talk” stories or all the ones which involve both Kurt and “dirty talk”. The GKM then becomes both a queer, inclusive playground of writing in which a panoply of interests are catered for and a repository for those looking for something specific.

However, while specificity is the *modus operandi* of the GKM its other defining element is tolerance. One of the main rules of the site is ‘Your kink is not my kink (and that’s OK)’. While one reader may visit the GKM in search of stories in which Rachel Berry loses her virginity that does not allow them to deride stories in which she engages with multiple sexual partners at once. In fact, there is a distinct lack of criticism and negativity throughout the meme. If a particular story does not interest, or even upsets a reader, the onus is on them to simply not read it. There is also a strong adherence to a policy of warning triggers; that is ensuring that in the ‘title’ of the piece any issue which might prove traumatic reading for some is listed. These include topics such as suicide, kidnapping, alcoholism, abuse and non-con/dub-con. Non-con and dub-con stand for non-consensual acts and acts with dubious consent (in most cases this means being drunk or stories in which non-consensual becomes consensual).

The GKM is very strict on having every story properly labelled and categorised and has a team of people working to ensure that every story adheres to the rules. The GKM is heavily policed. While any sexual act, bar paedophilia, is permissible, not complying with the correct labelling rules can have a user banned. Consequently works in the GKM lack conventional titles; rather than having names stories simply have a list of kinks. For example ‘Faberry with Santana – slight dub-con – whipping, top!Rachel, sub!Quinn, forced orgasm’. (2012) This adherence to strict and accurate labelling makes the GKM a perfect place to not only take a quantitative look at how this particular subset of fans sees *Glee* but also the

perfect place to look at the themes and tropes that this community of writers plays out in their participatory consumption of the show.

### **Gender/Character/Kink Division: A Quantitative Analysis**

As part of this work I conducted a simple quantitative analysis of the meme looking to establish which characters, pairings and themes were most popular. This was done using the kink meme's archive<sup>13</sup> to gather numerical data on the frequency of story types and character use. All information was gathered from open public sites rather than through contacting authors or readers for their opinions. By far and away Kurt Hummel, the show's first canonically gay character, was the most requested and the most written about; in fact 58% of all the stories on the GKM are slash, the next most popular is femslash at 23.85%. However, while both Kurt and his onscreen boyfriend Blaine are the most popular characters (both separately and as a pair, 25.7% of all filled fic on the GKM is Klaine [the pairing of Kurt and Blaine]) other male characters hardly figure at all. This suggests that rather than slash fiction being popular, in fact it is Kurt Hummel stories that are popular. The next most represented slash pairing is Finn and Kurt at 3% of the total GKM. This in some way undermines much of the thinking around fanfiction as a place for fans to "queer" the text.<sup>14</sup> Anne Kustritz defined slash as 'stories, written by amateur authors (who are almost solely heterosexual women), that involve placing two television or film characters of the same gender, usually male, into non-canonical romantic relationships with each other.' (2003: 371) Here instead the most popular works are sexual depictions of a very much canon relationship. In many ways *Glee* already "slashes" itself; depicting in canon the kinds of homosexual relationships that used to be the domain of fanfiction. In this case "slash" loses its element of rebellion and instead the term simply denotes the presence of a homosexual pairing.

Perhaps the presence of a gay character in *Glee* feeds into the prominence of slash in fanfiction, but the lack of canonically straight characters in the GKM's slashfic seems instead to point to something else happening; an odd conservatism and faithfulness to the canon of the show, which is unexpected. *Glee* with its tenuous attachment to realism or narrative continuity seems to present a text primed for the work done by the writers of the GKM. The show's somewhat dark undertones and panoply of canon sexualities,<sup>15</sup> paired with its sing-along pop sensibility, and early evening broadcast scheduling leave spaces for the explicit sexualising of its characters without truly moving outside the realms of canon. Or perhaps as Ika Willis suggests 'writing fan fiction first of all *makes* gaps in a text that the cultural code attempts to render continuous, and then, rather than filling them in, *supplements* these gaps with intertexts.' (2006: 158) The work done in the GKM is bringing in erotic intertexts, including tropes found in multiple fandoms, to the sexual spaces *Glee* attempts to gloss over because of its supposed young teen audience. However, there is no need to take the further step that Willis suggests in having to completely open up these texts by 'reading ... canonical intensity and physicality according to a set of sexual associations, informed by readerly

knowledge that homosexual desire *does* exist in the wider world.’ (2006: 161) In *Glee* homosexuality does exist, it is desire that is somewhat denied. Rather than imagine characters have non-canonical reciprocal romantic feelings for one another the writers of the GKM must make gaps for the explicit sexual expression of these feelings. Where *Glee* stops at a sexually suggestive duet between a couple, the GKM authors follow on and consummate that which the canon text cannot.

The next most popular character (with less than half the number of requests and fills as Kurt) is Rachel Berry. It is in here that this “queering” that is at the heart of most analyses of fanfiction starts to appear; Rachel’s most popular coupling is the femslash pairing of Faberry, Rachel and Quinn Fabray. In fact, Faberry are the second most represented couple on the meme, however they still only represent 8.6% of all filled stories [Appendix 1]. These numbers are reflected in the listings found on fanfiction.net.<sup>16</sup> Faberry are the only non-canon pairing with any real presence in the GKM; however, there is precedent for their coupling within the text. By looking more closely at the works which feature the pairing the direct links between canon and the GKM works become clearer. The works almost entirely focus on a dominant/submissive sexual dynamic; this plays heavily on the dynamic the characters have on the show where Quinn bullies and belittles Rachel on a weekly basis. This friction based on social hierarchies moves into the GKM and becomes D/s sexual practice. Where Brittany and Santana often have fluff written about them (stories of happy consensual sexual acts), Rachel and Quinn rarely do. Their on screen relationship dictates their fan created sexual practice. *Glee* portrays them as equal parts to blame in a back and forth game of bullying and goading, as such, sexually they are written as willingly giving and taking of power.

The pairing of Brittany and Santana, Brittana, are the third most popular couple, however, their presence is complicated by the fact that their relationship on the show moved from non-canon to canon in the second season. Nevertheless, the GKM stories stick very closely to the development of their relationship from promiscuous teens to committed lovers. Of stories featuring Santana, 1.2% of them feature her not with one of her onscreen sexual partners; this 1.2% instead depicts Santana involved in multiple partner acts. She is the most represented character in these kinds of stories; stories which for the most part depict Santana willingly taking part as the aggressive instigator. These works play off the Santana of early seasons who was happy to take Finn’s virginity as one of her many sexual conquests,<sup>17</sup> and who once proclaimed her sexual desires were because she was like a lizard and needed “Something warm beneath me or else I can’t digest my food”.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Brittany declared in a season one episode that she aimed to kiss every single boy in the school;<sup>19</sup> consequently, there are 106 requested heterosexual gangbang stories on the GKM, 46 of those involve Santana and 43 involve Brittany. The writers of *Glee* create a pair of promiscuous teen girls and the GKM simply follows through. Nevertheless, it maintains these girls’ sexual power. Though there are works in which these girls are forced into acts with multiple partners they are a rarity; instead they are depicted as characters with voracious sexual needs who find willing partners to help fulfill them. In the world of the

GKM sexual desire is valid rationale for any action and so the promiscuity played as somewhat taboo in canon in the GKM becomes a legitimate, and necessary, behaviour.

Bar Faberry there is very little stepping outside of the official world of the text despite the fact that as a fan space it has the fewest limitations in terms of what is permissible. Again, the emphasis here is not on the work of slashing, in the re-arranging of the text, but in the literalising of that which has been rendered figurative in the text. Willis suggests ‘fan fiction, then, is generated first of all by a practice of reading which, rather than expressing its latent meanings, *reorients* a canonical text, opening its fictional world onto a set of demands determined by the individual reader and her knowledge of the (fictional and nonfictional) world(s).’ (2006: 155) However, in the context of the GKM the demands are not for the reorientation of characters but the making explicit of latent sexual undertones; the rest of the text is left intact. To use Mafalda Stasi’s work on fanfiction as palimpsest (2006), the GKM presents a form of fanfiction in which very little of the original work has been erased. In fact I would go as far to as suggest that for the most part the fan fiction authors leave the *Glee* text whole and add to it, rather than replace it.

These numbers then prove that the GKM is a space where, for the most part, canon versions of the characters are being worked through by process of authorship; fans are using the space to develop their own understanding of these characters by extending them. The depictions of *Glee* characters in the GKM are not as far removed from the text as one would assume. So if the story these fans are telling is a more explicit version of the source text (in more than one sense) than a complete retelling, what kinds of stories are they telling? As Willis asks ‘along what paths of association – personal and idiosyncratic, cultural and hegemonic – does a fan reader/writer come to an interpretation of canon?’ (2006: 155)

### Prevalent Themes of the GKM

The twenty most popular kinks on the meme are<sup>20</sup>:

Kink	No. of filled prompts and works in progress		
1. Dubcon/noncon	474	11. Bodilyfuilids	135
2. Dirtytalk	252	12. Boypussy <sup>22</sup>	133
3. Inexperienced	237	13. Gettingcaught	123
4. Inpublic.atschool	228	14. Incest	115
5. Analsex	214	15. Preg/mpreg	110
6. Masturbation	191	16. Animalplay	97
7. voyeurism	189	17. Strap-on/pegging	96
8. Futanari <sup>21</sup>	175	18. Ageplay/infantilism	94
9. Bondage	149	19. Drugs/alcohol	89
10. threesome	147	20. Daddy.mommykink	73



As this table illustrates, the most popular kind of story by a considerable margin are those labelled dubcon or noncon. The nature of kink memes means that a story can, and usually does, involve more than one kink; however, by breaking down the archive in this way we can see the kinds of character dynamics that interest these authors. With Kurt being the most popular character to write about, it is of little surprise that over a third of these dubcon/noncon stories involve him. By drilling down further, the results reveal that half of those are Klaine stories and a third are Kurtofsky (the pairing of Kurt with his bully turned secret admirer). The strong presence of Kurtofsky in these stories with its inherent imbalanced power dynamics once again speaks to how the writers in the GKM are more inclined to extend the text of *Glee* into a sexual realm rather re-invent it. Kurt and Karofsky's story is one of a closeted bully who physically assaults the boy he has feelings for; the stories on the GKM simply extrapolate that dynamic into a sexual relationship. In her work on *Harry Potter* Catherine Tosenberger touched on the idea of enemyslash, as she states:

The joy of an enemyslash pairing is in watching antagonists overcome their differences, at least long enough to have sex. Dislike is recast as sexual tension, and when the characters are both men, part of the pleasure is in seeing their negotiation of expectations of male aggression (rather than friendship) in terms of desire. (2008: 193)

While in some parts this is true for GKM Kurtofsky fics, it is complicated by the fact that the show itself revealed Karofsky's bullying to be the result of sexual tension. *Glee* is a text in which many slash fiction (and, to be fair, traditional literary) tropes are played out knowingly and so the canon text complicates previously held views about the work done by slash fiction writers through its depiction of traditional slash relationships in the main text, if somewhat desexualised. Due to the constraints of network television, there are things *Glee* cannot physically show and so the work of the GKM becomes not to re-imagine relationships but instead to turn rather transparent allusions into actualities.

Of the rest of the kinks that make up the popular topics in the GKM it is of little surprise that both inexperience and trysts that happen at school are among the most popular, considering *Glee* is a show set in a High School. However, again this points to the lack of what fanfiction authors call AU, that is, alternative universe depictions of these characters. Though there are sometimes elements which suggest a world other than the standard US high school (people with cat DNA for example) these tend to be the only "othering" element to the stories, the rest will usually be entirely canonical. For example in 'KittyKurt/Bigger AnimalDave AnimalPlay InHeat BP InPublic', (2012) though all the characters have animal traits, they still attend the same high school and have the same personalities and relationships; in some ways the animal traits just become another way of expressing physical relationships that the canon text has alluded to. The GKM serves a different purpose to others forms of fanfiction where characters are often transposed into

other times, places and genres, instead the GKM is about in-text fantasy. The GKM is only effective if the stories feel as if they could take place within the show because it is only then that become truly illicit. The fans know the tropes of the source text, as Deborah Kaplan explains: 'Between canon knowledge and agreed-upon fan conventions, the readers know quite a bit about a source text's characters before the fan work is even created, and that knowledge plays into the fiction as part of the transaction between text and reader' (2006: 136). The pleasures of the GKM, of any kink meme, come from the sexualisation of that which is not explicitly sexualised. Consequently the GKM becomes a place rife with unwanted advances, inexperienced teen fumbblings and sexual acts spurred on by the vocalising of forbidden desires; very much a sexualised mirror held up to the original text. The presence of both Mommy/Daddy works and infantilism are possibly due to the age of the characters in question; while the stories of inexperience play out one part of the teen narrative, these other kinks speak to the issues of teen agency and control so prevalent in shows focused on this age group. These stories allow the teen characters to sexually explore issues around growing up and the increase in, or in the case of these works a chosen lack of, control in their lives. These stories skew the parent/child dynamic by having the characters take on extremes of both; the parental role in these works being one of complete care and control and the child role usually resembling that of a small child. For example 'Quinn/Sam/Rachel – infantilism, daddy.mommy!kink, spanking' (2012) finds Quinn (a character who gave up a baby for adoption in season one) and her then boyfriend Sam caring for the canonically childish and impetuous Rachel as if she were an actual baby and they were her parents.

Overall, these numbers illustrate a creative space in which control and agency are themes constantly being explored. This of course is the standard for a kink meme, as most sexually explicit fiction is about power in some way. However, what is of interest here is not necessarily the exploration of power dynamics, but who it is that fulfils particular roles and who is seen to embody certain sexual traits.

### **Characters and Power, How the GKM Plays With Agency**

While the above section dealt with the themes most popular on the GKM, what is of even more interest is how the meme deals with characterisation and the way it folds canon into non-mainstream forms of sexual expression. More simply, how does the GKM combine the kink with *Glee*? This section will look at a handful of particular tropes to explore how the two form a relationship.

To begin with, I will look at how Kurt, as detailed above the most popular GKM character, is figured in the meme. Firstly, his popularity does not mean he is lauded, in fact the opposite is true, Kurt is the most abused character in the fandom. My aim here is not to get into the politics of particular kinds of sexual expression, but rather to understand why Kurt Hummel is almost always the character at the centre of more extreme sexual acts and why in almost every story he takes a submissive role.

As the featured protagonist in a large number of noncon/dubcon fics, the Kurt of GKM is a vulnerable figure, he is drugged and beaten and tied up. Stories include Kurt being killed while performing oral sex, (2012) Kurt receiving unwanted corporal punishment, (2012) being drunkenly sexually assaulted, (2012) and roleplaying as a young child being raped. (2012) The general formula seems to be that Kurt begins the story as his usual confident self only for him to be forced into submission in some way by an aggressive sexual attack (sometimes consenting but often not). The theme somehow relating to the idea of “putting Kurt in his place”, these stories seek to undermine the proud and confident gay teen that the show foregrounds and focus on the subtext of Kurt’s inherent insecurity. When *Glee* began he was an opinionated but timid character. As the show progressed he became bolder, yet many of his storylines undermined this; Kurt has been the character forever in need of rescuing. In *Glee* he meets Blaine at a new school because the bullying by Karofsky becomes so bad he fears for his safety; Blaine soon then becomes his gay teen mentor. When Kurt does eventually return to his previous school he is voted class president, but because his friend rigs the election, rather than on merit. GKM Kurt much like *Glee* Kurt is constantly learning that he does not know what is good for him. Only through the intervention of others is Kurt able to achieve happiness. The show presents Kurt as supposedly proud and successful but it seems the GKM feeds on the undertones of vulnerability and dependence that the show provides; it feasts on the gaps it can make in the version of Kurt promoted versus the version of Kurt actually presented in the show. While it would seem the GKM is victimising Kurt, instead it is turning Kurt’s inherent victimisation into a sexual dynamic.

The success story *Glee* wants to sell is that success only comes about through pain and suffering; Kurt must be bullied to find love, he has to be rejected from his college of choice before getting an internship at *Vogue*, and though this is a known narrative trope of television, that Kurt is the *Glee* character to repeatedly go through this cycle makes him ripe for portrayal as someone consistently sexually dominated and/or violated. For example in ‘Somnophilia, non-con, bondage, rimming, forced orgasms’, (2012) Blaine essentially rapes Kurt while he is asleep because Kurt does not want to include bondage in their sexual relationship. However, the next morning Kurt decides he wants Blaine to tie him up during sex. The implication here is that through his unconscious experience of bondage Kurt somehow becomes aware that it is something he wants; Blaine has taught him a lesson. Similarly in, ‘Kurt/Tentacle Attack, Noncon, Overstimulation, tentacle!cock, humiliation, forced orgasms’, (2012) although it is not as explicit as the previous story the final sentence alludes to the fact that Kurt will be okay. Canon *Glee* suggests that Kurt will always triumph and so GKM Kurt can do the same, he can be the protagonist in stories where he is a victim because GKM’s adherence to canon means that not only can he withstand suffering, but that he succeeds because of it.

To this end, Kurt is also the character most likely to be found in stories which depict extreme sexual acts such as bestiality, necrophilia and vore. Vore stories, derived from

vorarephilia, are those which depict characters eating one another. The most prevalent trope is that of inserted worms, for example:

**Kurt/Worm, Kurt/Blaine?, noncon, bestiality, overstimulation, lactation?**  
(Anonymous)  
[2012-08-27 11:28 pm \(UTC\)](#)

I really really want another Kurt/Worm story. It could be with Blaine (or any other guy) putting it inside him, or just supernatural stuff, just want a worm inside Kurt's ass squirming around, overstimulating him, laying eggs in him, etc.

A LARGE bonus would be Kurt breastfeeding the baby worms once the eggs hatch, please please. If Blaine (or any guy) is behind it, they can be forcing Kurt to feed them this way, aroused even as Kurt cries at the baby worms suckling.  
([Reply](#)) ([Thread](#))

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**Re: Kurt/Worm, Kurt/Blaine?, noncon, bestiality, overstimulation, lactation?**  
(Anonymous)  
[2012-08-28 09:11 pm \(UTC\)](#)

size kink okay? How about pain? How extreme are you okay with the pain getting? I want to fill this, but I have intense kinks :P  
([Reply](#)) ([Parent](#)) ([Thread](#))

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**Fill! Re: Kurt/Worm, Kurt/Blaine?, noncon, bestiality, overstimulation, lactation?**  
(Anonymous)  
[2012-08-29 02:28 am \(UTC\)](#)

Here! I filled it! I will put it on scarvesandcoffee, soon, too...

[http://www.fanfiction.net/s/8476289/1/Nighttime\\_Terrors](http://www.fanfiction.net/s/8476289/1/Nighttime_Terrors)  
([Reply](#)) ([Parent](#)) ([Thread](#))

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**Re: Fill! Re: Kurt/Worm, Kurt/Blaine?, noncon, bestiality, overstimulation, lactation?**  
(Anonymous)  
[2012-08-29 02:30 pm \(UTC\)](#)

THIS IS PERFECT, AUTHOR ANON, PERFECT!! :):) HALLELUJAH! x  
([Reply](#)) ([Parent](#)) ([Thread](#))

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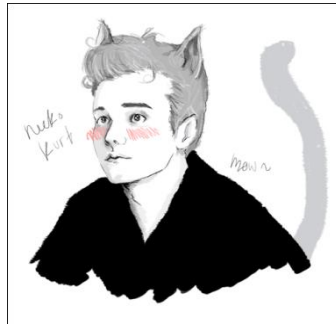
**Fig. 2**

In stories such as these and ones where Kurt is sexually attacked by a dog, once again, the general theme is of Kurt's inevitable victimhood. In order to escape he must give in and often in giving in he finds pleasure in these sexual acts. A good example is 'Kurt/dogs + Kurt/Blaine bestiality, handjobs, humiliation, optional dub-con/non-con', (2012) a story where Blaine ties Kurt up so that his dog can have sex with him. At first Kurt seems afraid, however, by the end of the story he has submitted to the experience and seems to enjoy it. These stories of bestial acts go hand in hand with many of the other dubcon/noncon stories as they depict Kurt as a character with very limited agency; Kurt is often at the mercy of others, for his own good. As well as playing into Kurt's inherent victimhood on the show it also plays with the way Kurt's character is often infantilised, he is the only character with a recurrent parental figure who offers guidance. While other characters struggle to grow up and understand the world, sometimes with the help of "parental" adult figures, Kurt is the only one who repeatedly turns to his father for advice, a pattern that serves to keep Kurt in the position of a child. This infantilising position in the show only strengthens the ease with which his canon character is shifted into a sexual submissive or abused victim in the GKM.

### **Power and Zoophilia in the GKM**

Another common occurrence on the GKM is the appearance of nekos, human-cat hybrids (they look mostly human but with cat ears and tails). These feline humans once again come from Japanese manga tradition but their purpose in the GKM is to further the submissive state of certain characters (though by no means in such extreme fashions as the Kurt stories discussed above). Every neko story involves the neko character going into heat and having to fulfil their sexual desires. The neko character has no control over their sexuality as it is a

biological imperative, not having sex causes them pain. As such, both the neko character and their sexual partner are somewhat blameless for the acts that take place,



Neko!Kurt by KIDSGOTGUNS<sup>23</sup>

the neko is doing it because they must and their partner is trying to alleviate their distress. One such example is, 'g!p Santana/neko!Brittany, in heat, multiple orgasms, bareback, pregnancy', (2012) a story in which Brittany has a desperate urge to constantly have sex with Santana, to the point where it starts to interfere with their romantic relationship. These stories not only allow the writer to depict multiple acts of sex without any other justification but they also neatly sidestep an issue the canon text has struggled with, what to do with happily promiscuous characters. Rather than the small percentage of gang bang works referenced earlier which use libido as a legitimate reason for promiscuity, these works go one step further and make the need for sex an inescapable biological necessity. On one hand, this is simply an easy way to force the characters into sexual acts, however, the fact that only Kurt and Brittany feature consistently as neko characters points to more being at stake here. Kurt's victimisation has already been explored, and this particular form of rendering a character agency-less only compounds those ideas, however, while Brittany is rarely a victim in *Glee* she is canonically stupid.

Across three seasons she has been shown to still believe in Santa, think her cat can read and assume that a man with long hair is in fact a woman. Ultimately, Brittany is a vulnerable character because she has no real understanding of the world. In the GKM her lack of critical faculties, and therefore inability to really make informed sexual decisions, is morphed into a lack of choice. While for Kurt his status as Neko continues to remove his ability to make his own choices, for Brittany it turns her promiscuity into something she cannot be "blamed" for; Brittany is not a slut, she's half cat. Furthermore, her canonical dubious consent (she claims in one episode to have lost her virginity to an unknown man, she calls it an 'alien invasion'<sup>24</sup>) is rendered less worrisome if Brittany is somehow being helped by these sexual acts; moreover, the biological make-up that forces her into these sexual situations makes her partners blameless. This is another way in which the writers of the GKM take the allusions of the canon *Glee* text and make them literal; just as they turned Kurt's victimisation into sexual submission they turn Brittany's promiscuity into a biological

symptom of her cat hormones, repackaging the same characters and characteristics into an overtly sexualised world.

### **The Agency of the G!P**

Not only is species not a fixed state in the GKM, neither is gender. Though these fans may stick rigidly to the character relationships *Glee* depicts, they are not as rigid about notions of binary biological gender; in fact, characters with Futanari and their male counterparts are incredibly common in the GKM. What is of interest here is not necessarily the existence, or the pervasiveness of this trope, but the consistency with which particular characters are portrayed with opposite sex genitalia. These generally take the form of stories about sexual relationships between traditionally biologically gendered females and G!P owning females. Once more the conservative bent of the GKM becomes evident; the G!P does not become a way to introduce male homosexual acts into a heterosexual relationship but instead a way to introduce heterosexual acts into lesbian relationships. However, I do not want to suggest that the G!P becomes a way of, for want of a better term, “legitimising” lesbian relationships through the presence of a phallus, the characters involved in G!P stories have more traditional femslash stories written about them than they ever do G!P. The G!P is not about concepts of sexuality but rather about power and agency; Wendy Brown in *The Mirror of Pornography* (2000) talks about heterosexual acts in pornography making gender a productive power and equates it with ideas of male domination. This is played out explicitly in G!P fics where the girl!peen is generally owned by the character deemed sexually dominant. The world of the GKM is very conservative in terms of its ideas about sexual gender politics and owning a penis is viewed as a default statement of dominance. Of course there are exceptions, such as works where the G!P owning female is submissive, but they are rare.

Quinn and Santana are the most common owners of G!Ps followed by Brittany and very rarely Rachel. Canonically Quinn and Santana are aggressive characters who are deeply emotionally troubled. In G!P stories this is worked through by way of sexual acceptance and control. Either Quinn or Santana begin most stories embarrassed or ashamed by their difference, hiding it from their peers. At some point, usually through contrived accidental nudity, one of their female peers sees their penis. At this point the traditionally gendered female will tell the girl with the G!P that she does not mind/has fantasised about her/knew all along and then proceeds to try and seduce her. The story then shifts; having been accepted and given permission to take sexual control the girl with the G!P becomes the aggressor. Examples of this include ‘Quinn/Rachel – G!P, accidental stimulation, in public’, (2012) and ‘Brittany/Santana: Accidental stimulation, G!P’. (2012) These characters who in the source text bully because they are shown to be ignored by their parents or scared of letting people down are given permission to be themselves; they are redeemed through these sexual acts. The G!P becomes a way to tell the story of personal acceptance, one that both Quinn and Santana go through in the canon text; however, rather than learning to love themselves despite emotional issues, in G!P stories their self-loathing is rooted in the

physical. Again the GKM writers turn emotion into physicality, and in doing so simultaneously render the only possibly solution a physical (sexual) remedy. The need to overcome their anger and self-doubt over their physical anomalies can only be happen when fear is replaced with physical pleasure. While in the canon text they must atone through song, in the GKM they are forgiven by taking control of the vulnerability of sexual intimacy.<sup>25</sup>

There is also a trope which sees these G!P females endowed with impossibly sized penises, making them some form of ultra-masculinised figure. Rather than women “becoming” men with the addition of male genitalia, they become women endowed with an extreme ability for masculine sexual dominance. So extreme is their difference that it becomes entirely about them embodying the masculinised power that has rendered them “bitches” within the source text and very little to do with the literal concept of “male”. This in many ways goes against some of the theorisation of early slash fiction academics such as Lamb and Veith (1986) and Penley (1991) who suggested slash was subversive because it created sexual equality; as these fics and most of the Kurt stories illustrate, sexual equality is rarely evident, these stories are all about the need for dominance and power. In ‘Brittany/Santana - girl!peen, sizekink, oral fixation, anal, sub!Brittany’, (2012) Santana’s penis is described as ‘huge. Not only long, but thick as hell. We’re talking [porn star] Shane Diesel thick’, (2012) and in ‘Rachel/girl!peenQuinn, blowjob, cockslapping, facial, size!kink’, (2012) the description of Quinn as ‘hung, at least eight and half inches, and she was only half hard yet’ is common place. The G!P phallus is all about power; power that was sublimated through notions of the “mean girl” is translated and instead sublimated through literalised hyper-masculinity. Instead of dealing with the stigma attached to being powerful women, as they do in canon, they deal with, and are ultimately pleased because of, a physical rationalisation for their perceived masculine behaviour. Santana and Quinn are angry and bitchy because they have giant penises, in *Glee* their anger allows them to achieve popularity; in the GKM it allows them to receive intense pleasure. The GKM becomes a place where canon character flaws are given physical explanations that are not only elucidating, but serve as justification for characters’ actions.

## **The Role of Canon**

Ultimately, what is interesting is what is chosen to be filled, which stories spark interest. For the most part the relationships written about in the GKM are between characters that have canonically had sex, what is important is not having sex but rather *how* these characters have sex. There is a creation of a sub-fanon; a fanon of sexual gratification that only works because it stays so closely linked with the canon. Catherine Driscoll has argued that ‘Not only is characterization not the point of most pornography, it is even an obstacle to the efficiency of pornography. This would be anathema to fan fiction because only by characterization, setting, and plot can a story enter the web of canon and become part of the community that will circulate it.’ (2006: 91) However, I would argue that these works of erotica manage to enter the “web of canon” by maintaining the characterisation and setting

of the source text. The lack of deviation means there is no need for detailed character work in the stories themselves. By staying true to the essence of the text the writers of these works can then ensure they perform their function as a tool for sexual stimulation. This is further demonstrated by the ease with which requesters and fillers are happy to move characters between different kinks as long as the essence of the character, the canon notion of them, remains:

Brittany is a teacher, she has a penis, and she's usually quite shy and lets a lot of things slide. Santana is her student and quite rude and cocky. One day Santana pushes her too far, so Brittany makes her stay behind after class, then punishes her with spanking and rough sex. Santana doesn't see it coming so doesn't initially consent and is like "what do you think you're doing!?" But then starts to enjoy it (maybe spurs her on with dirty talk).

Genderswap version: Bret is a teacher at Mckinley, Santiago is a cocky student. Bret's never that assertive but one day loses his cool, asks San to stay behind after class and punishes him with spanking and rough anal sex.

Het version: story/kinks as above, teacher Bret and student Santana. (2012)

In this request Santana remains bullying and angry and Brittany somewhat innocent. Only after being pushed does Brittany assert any control and Santana is punished, eventually taking back control of the sexual encounter. It is not the particular kink that matters here but the sexualisation of the canon dynamic. Perhaps these characters and their relationships have to remain the same so that the taboo of extreme sexuality can have the required resonance. By maintaining the status quo of the text the sexual acts stand out against the familiar backdrop; they become highlighted amongst the mundanity of the known and the thrill of the hidden revealed. It has been suggested that 'Fanfiction may therefore provide a kind of endless deferment of closure' (2012: 215) however, the purpose of these stories is rarely to continue the text in terms of narrative or character development; they are detours from the text, vignettes that allow the characters sexual expression but do not detract from the source text itself. They are short fantasises about the possibilities for the characters of *Glee* not attempts to derail the text and co-author it from a new perspective. In the GKM the characters and relationships of *Glee* remain intact. Canon characterisations and motivations are given physical justifications that make sense in an erotic space where sexual need is a legitimate excuse. Brittany is promiscuous because of her DNA, Kurt's suffering will always lead to greater sexual pleasure and Quinn is domineering because she is in possession of a gargantuan phallus, none of these things are the fault of the characters and they all help make sense of the canon text in an erotic context. As such these works provide a way of understanding how these particular fans make sense of canon characterisation, how they understand these relationship dynamics to work; they do so by reproducing them. Kurt will never be the dominant partner in a bestiality story, just as Brittany will not be on the receiving end of the advances of a Neko, the canon simply does not allow it.



## Conclusion

The empirical findings here suggest a collection of authors looking for ways to ‘make sense’ of canon, their overwhelming deference to canon character relationships is testament to this. Though this deference may shape the *Glee* characters in new and unusual ways, from added appendages to more literalised versions of power relationships, the story dynamics remain; Kurt is in a relationship with Blaine, Quinn is a dominating force and Brittany is promiscuous. The GKM presents a space where almost anything is permissible, nonetheless, the kinks themselves serve as a way for authors to sexualise canon. Unlike previous examinations of fanfiction, which have suggested it reworks and rebels against the source text-and perhaps because of *Glee* itself and the panoply of sexualities and relationships it offers-the GKM instead reinforces the text through a doctrine of pleasure where sexual gratification is provided as the cause for all canon characterisation. There is further work to be done that looks to the fans themselves and asks why this text is one of the most popular fanfiction texts and what draws them to this mode of creative consumption. However, there is also more work to be done around further empirical fandom studies; work that looks not to communities of authors but to collections of texts, for example a study into whether more ‘mainstream’ fanfiction sites such as ff.net (or in fact other fandoms) follow similar patterns when it comes to canon. With the popularity of fanfiction, many repositories now have stories in their thousands, these places are ripe for further empirical study.

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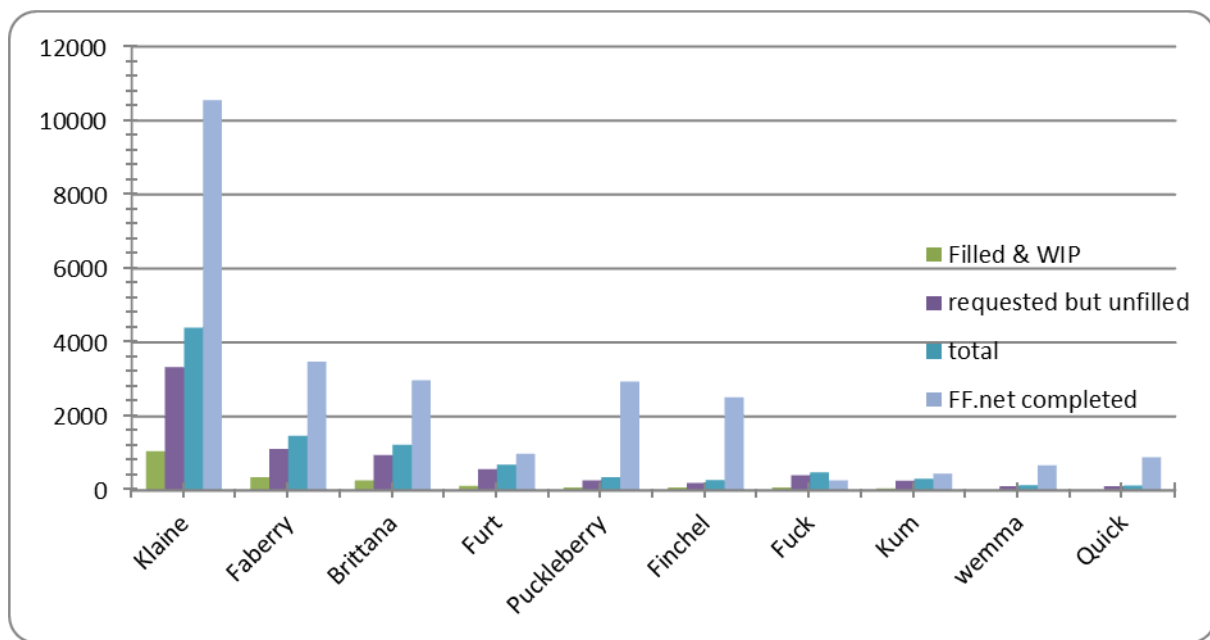
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## **Appendix:**

*Number of stories for individual pairings in the GKM vs. FF.net*



**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Further work includes Jenkins’ 1992 *Textual Poachers*, Joanna Russ’ “Pornography by Women for Women, With Love” in her 1985 collection of essays, Matt Hills *Fan Cultures* (2002) and Will Brooker’s work on *Star Wars* (2002).

<sup>2</sup> <http://glee-kink-meme.livejournal.com/> [accessed 28/11/12]

<sup>3</sup> <http://spnkink-meme.livejournal.com/>[accessed 28/11/12]

<sup>4</sup> <http://norsekink.livejournal.com/>[accessed 28/11/12]

<sup>5</sup> [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net) currently hosts 84,482 works associated with *Glee* (as of 28/11/12). The next most popular show *Supernatural* has 68,867.

<sup>6</sup> [Archiveofourown.org](http://archiveofourown.org) [accessed 28/11/12]

<sup>7</sup> <http://glee-kink-meme.livejournal.com/tag/prompts> [accessed 28/11/12].

<sup>8</sup> <https://pinboard.in/u:gleekinkmeme/t:%2521%2521filled> [accessed 28/11/12]

<sup>9</sup> Direct links to Livejournal accounts have been removed in order to maintain privacy.

<sup>10</sup> The use of “!” generally denotes a character trait. The word before the “!” will describe something about the character that follows it.

<sup>11</sup> Although there has been a lot of work done on the communal nature of fanfiction writing for example Karpovich 2006.

<sup>12</sup> For more work on online gift economies look to Rheingold (1993) and Barbrook (2005).

<sup>13</sup> <https://pinboard.in/u:gleekinkmeme> [accessed 28/11/12]

<sup>14</sup> In this case I am using the term ‘queer’ in its most literal incarnation; the morphing of canonically heterosexual characters’ platonic friendships in homosexual relationships. However, in a more broad sense all works of non-canonical fanfiction is a queering of the canon text as they reshape it in some manner.

<sup>15</sup> In episode 3.01 “The Purple Piano Project” the school guidance councillor suggests some students apply to Kent State University despite its “Macabre backstory”.

<sup>16</sup> Faberry represents 8.8% of all completed FF.net stories (4,407 out of 50,289 as of 30/11/12).

<sup>17</sup> 1.15 “The Power of Madonna”.

<sup>18</sup> 2.4 “Duets”.

<sup>19</sup> 1.18 “Laryngitis”.

<sup>20</sup> These kinks are listed as they are written within the GKM.

<sup>21</sup> These is a Japanese term meaning females with penises, there are two forms of this, Girl!peen (G!P) which is a female with a permanent penis and Were!peen (W!P) which is a female who grows a penis either during the full moon or instead of having her period.

<sup>22</sup> This is the male equivalent of futarani (referred to as B!P) and is self-explanatory. There is no ‘Were’ equivalent.

<sup>23</sup> <http://mishasassbutt.tumblr.com/post/35896948143/bonus-kurt-is-taking-anime-lessons-from-dean> [accessed 28/11/12]

<sup>24</sup> 3.5 “First Time”.

<sup>25</sup> It should also be noted that in the male equivalent (the Boy!Pussy) Kurt is by far the most popular character to own one for reasons detailed above.