

Axel Fust

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Dr. Fogerty

Illuminating Paths: The Intertextual Relationship Between *The Count of Monte Cristo* and  
*Gankutsuou*

When I first began to watch Mahiro Maeda's animated series, *Gankutsuou: The Count of Monte Cristo* (2004). I was excited by the beautiful artwork and the lively and colorful scenes, not to mention the impressive dubbing. I knew, based on the title, that the series was supposed to be an adaptation of Alexandre Dumas's novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844), but I was doubtful that it would be a successful one. How could a futuristic sci-fi animated series from Japan, full of aliens and spaceships possibly recreate a nineteenth century Napoleonic French novel without losing the most vital themes and motifs? Then the Count appeared on screen. He was dark, dangerous, and beautiful with his cloak billowing around him; I realized that this series was more than some half-hearted attempt to become a pale imitation of Dumas's novel. Unable to stop watching, I stayed up all night to see how the series would play out. As the credits of the last episode rolled I realized that Mahiro Maeda's series represented something new, an artistic connection that reached past the barriers of time, language, and culture to create something that I had never seen before. In order to fully comprehend the implications and subtleties of what I had seen, I knew I would need to familiarize myself with a new array of ideas then I had previously been exposed to; theory.

According to Graham Allen's book, *Intertextuality*, the theorist Julia Kristeva originally coined the term intertextuality as a product of her studies in the 1960's during the shift from the structuralist movement to the poststructuralist movement. Allen says that although

intertextuality is a complex and broadly used term, the simplest definition is the relationship between a text and all the other texts it refers to or to which it is related (4-5). Several examples of intertextuality are anagram, allusion, adaptation, translation, parody, and pastiche, but the biases and assumptions that readers bring from previous texts, films, photographs, and so on also effect the personal intertextual world of that particular audience (Allen 6).

Intertextuality relies on another theory, adaptive “lineage.” Linda Cahir, in her book *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches*, explains that the relationship, or “lineage,” of an adaptation and its source should be “evident” (98). If the adaptive lineage is not clear and “the film becomes so distinctly independent of . . . its literary source that no parenthood is noticeable other than, for example, a shared title” the adaptation ceases to be an adaptation and loses what Chair calls its “pedigree.” Cahir considers that “pedigree” to be an adaptation’s status as a “literature-to-screen translation” and any claim to the intertextual universe shared between a source and its adaptations (98). Cahir goes on to explain that a source and its adaptation should be like a diptych; two paintings that are “allied, but different,” their similarities being the lineage between them and their differences acting as the intertextual relationship. Each painting is beautiful on its own, but both paintings are at their best when viewed side by side “Each canvas illuminates the other” (Cahir 98). When viewed together each text “yields insights about each individual picture that studying the canvases in isolation might not achieve” (Cahir 98). She explains that the elements in each source should “evoke comment” on the other. In placing an adaptation and its source together Cahir says that the two works should “help us to see . . . in deeper and more critical ways, ideas, motifs, and aesthetic practices within each” (Cahir 99). It would be impossible to share an intertextual connection if the two sources did not have an evident lineage.

As Cahir says, an adaptation cannot be completely independent of its source and without lineage. She also points out that an adaptation cannot be totally dependent on its source. As Cahir explains, using translations as an example, it would not make sense for someone reading a novel translated to English from Spanish to have to know Spanish to understand the novel. It does not make sense for an audience to view an adaptation and not be able to understand it without knowing about the original source. According to Cahir an adaptation should be able to stand alone as a work of art, rather than exist as an abridged copy of the original that can be understood only by fans of the original. It is also helpful for an adaptation to have some narrative or structural difference from its textual sources that can allow it to establish itself as a work of art that is distinct on its own (Cahir 98).

An active example of intertextuality in the English canon, well familiar to those in literary or adaptive studies would be an analysis of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and its many adaptations. The adaptive lineage between Austen's and Fielding's novels is clear and easy to trace, making it easier to analyze the intertextual relationship of the two. The two sources are also very similar in that they are both novels and were originally published in English. An analyst could choose to look at the intertextuality of Austin's original novel and the adapted novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding and compare the two characters Mr. Darcy and Mark Darcy and how each author's version of the character works to create a fuller composite version. If the analyst wanted to expand his or her study they could include the adapted film *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire) in their study and include not only the film's version of Mr. Darcy, but the actor Colin Firth, Mr. Darcy in the film as well as in the 1995 BBC mini-series adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. In studying these four sources the analyst would have four different versions of the same character, two of which are played by the same actor, which

completely changes the impressions of and assumptions made about both film versions of the character. Adaptive lineage between these sources allows audiences who read the novel and then watch the film or vice versa to see a definite connection between the two stories even if characters, such as Mark Darcy and Mr. Darcy, hadn't shared the same name. While Fielding's novel shares intertextual levels and an adaptive lineage with the Austen's original novel it is still able to maintain independence with some distinct differences from Austen's, such as the setting which is modern England rather than 19<sup>th</sup> century England or less emphasis on the theme of family.

Applying the theoretical model described to *Pride and Prejudice* and its adaptations is fairly simple. Applying that same model to two more divergent examples, such as Alexandre Dumas's 1844 French novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* and Mahiro Meada's 2004 futuristic Japanese animated series *Gankutsuou*, is the focus of this study. The intertextuality shared between Mahiro Meada's animated series *Gankutsuou* (2004) and Alexandre Dumas's novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844) is complex and offers insights and new understanding into both sources and their individual subtexts. This study will explore ways that *Gankutsuou* interacts with Dumas's novel, maintains adaptive lineage with the novel while still existing as an independent work of art, and brings audiences' attention to different interpretations of the narrative. The series maintains an adaptive lineage with the novel by engaging with the most important themes of the narrative: the mystery and indestructability surrounding the Count's character, the humanization of villains (making them more identifiable to the audience,) the complex and convoluted subplots integral to the narrative, and the most dominant theme--one that is vital to the narrative and any adaptation of it--the failure of human justice. While the series and novel are connected, *Gankutsuou* recreates the narrative in distinct and independent

ways: changing the narrative point of view from the Count to Albert (bringing the story full circle), setting the narrative into the far future, manipulating political intrigue to fit the new setting, and using a more culturally fitting demon as the driving force behind the Count's need for justice. Maeda's series also brings attention to new interpretations of the homoerotic subtexts of Dumas's novel by making explicit the implicit homoerotic relationships between Albert Morcerf and Franz d'Epinau, as well as a similar relationship between Albert Morcerf and the Count. This study will also show how the intertextuality of *Gankutsuou* and *The Count of Monte Cristo* changes the way audiences understand and think about both sources, as well as how audiences engage the "hypothetical third text" created by the intertextual relationship of the two sources (Cavallaro 38).

Adaptive lineage between a text and its adaptations does not mean that the narratives of both must be exactly the same or even similar. The two stories could be very different. This is true for *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Gankutsuou* because although the two sources have very different narratives there are four particular Dumasian elements present in both that this study will discuss: the mysterious and indestructible person of the Count, the techniques used to humanize the three antagonists and make them easier to identify with, the convoluted subplots essential to the narrative, and the failure of human justice as a vital theme.

One element prominent in both the novel and the series, despite the differences in the two sources' narratives, is the mysterious and indestructible persona of the Count that makes him a powerful and awe inspiring character. In the novel he is presented as a man of all nations and yet no nation. His education is extensive and as Dani Cavallaro says "His long years of brutal incarceration have taught Monte Cristo not only science, history and languages . . . but also patience and the exquisite sophistication of the art of waiting" (49). He speaks many languages,

including English, Arabic, Spanish, and his native Italian. He is a master of disguise, as seen by his ruse against Villefort in chapter seventy, *The Inquiry*, when he disguised himself as the Spanish Abbe Busoni and the English Lord Wilmore and was able to meet with Villefort twice on the same day without him knowing that both figures were also the Count. The Count is, by choice, without a nation or nationality. He says “My kingdom is bounded only by the world for I am neither an Italian, nor a Frenchman, nor a Hindoo, nor an American, nor a Spaniard. I am a cosmopolite. No country can say it saw my birth. God alone knows what country will see me die. I adopt all customs, speak all languages” (663). Nor does he want to answer to any authority other than God and his own and he says outright “The Count of Monte Cristo bows to none but the Count of Monte Cristo himself” (1178). His past is mysterious and impossible to trace. The Count shares his plans with no one, not even the staff who is willing to die for him. In the end one can only know about the Count what the Count wants one to know, nothing.

Besides his cloak of mystery the Count’s seemingly fearless indestructibility is yet another important trait vital to his persona. Though in Dumas’s novel the Count is a man, he is untouchable by most men. Although Villefort tries to investigate the Count in chapter seventy, *The Inquiry*, he is unable to find anything that can be used against him. The Count himself tells Villefort in chapter forty-nine *Ideology*

that being of no country, asking no protection from any government acknowledging no man as my brother, not one of the scruples that arrest the powerful, or obstacles which paralyze the weak paralyze or arrest me. I have only two adversaries-I will not say two conquerors, for with perseverance I subdue even them, though they are time and distance . . . my condition as a mortal being. This alone can stop me in my onward career (662).

The Count explains then and there why he cannot be injured through political intrigues or through threats to his family, he cares for no one and is connected to no one, or at least that is what he tells everyone. His only true enemy is his mortality, but he even finds ways around that,

for example, his “pliant tunic of steel mail” he wears when Caderousse tries to stab him in chapter eighty-three, *The Burglary*. The Count’s complete lack of injury gives Caderousse the impression that he really can beat death and in his panic Caderousse truly believes the Count is protected by some other force of nature.

When it comes to preserving the Count’s intense persona Mahiro Maeda makes subtle changes but is always careful to keep the core of the Dumasian flavor in his work. Dani Cavallaro says “the series conveys the tenebrous sense of mystery bound to become Monte Cristo’s defining trait” (45). For example, instead of needing long dialogues to explain the Count’s refusal to be claimed by any country Maeda gives the Count a powerful line in episode three 5/22, *Stormy* when he is being questioned by Debray and Beauchamp about his origins. “I see no reason to swear loyalty to people who will not extend their hands to protect me,” is The Count’s explanation for why he wanders space as he pleases with no care for international boundaries and taboos. Maeda also maintains the Count’s mysteriousness by killing off Villefort’s spy in episode ten, *The Letter from Edmond*, rather than allowing the spy to live and expose the Count as Edmond Dantes. Maeda also takes full advantage of his futuristic choice of setting to cultivate the Count’s mystery. The Count cannot be photographed or have his voice recorded, seen by Beauchamp’s attempt in episode three 5/22, *Stormy* which means that even in a future full of technology like spaceships, microphones, computers, and instantaneous communication across galaxies the Count’s visage, voice, or past cannot be recorded or identified.

Maeda takes full advantage of his futuristic universe by making the Count completely indestructible in every way. The Count cannot be killed or even injured thanks to Gankutsuou, the demon that exists in his body and gives him supernatural powers. He cannot be

photographed or recorded and has enough wealth to bribe any politician or police commissioner, also all thanks to Gankutsuou and the demon's powers, and is therefore not threatened by any country's jurisdiction. The Count is unable to feel any emotion for anyone because Gankutsuou has frozen his heart, meaning that even if he wanted to he could not care for anyone enough for them to be used against him. He truly has no weakness.

The second element that acts as a lineage between the novel and the series is the type of antagonists the Count struggles against. What is interesting about these three men, Morcerf, Danglars, and Villefort, is that though they have done something very evil to Dantes, they are not simply bad men. These three men, to varying degrees, are identifiable to the general public. Instead of simply being pure evil and easily hated these men are very human with the same wants and desires for love, money, and power that most people have. The novel shows the three men's humanity and fragility the most clearly in the beginning as each man takes his part in Dantes's betrayal.

For example, in the novel Fernand Morcerf, or Fernand Mondego as he was originally known, betrayed Dantes because of his love for Mercedes, Edmond Dantes's fiancé. It is not a healthy love. Dumas wrote Fernand in such a way that he would kill Edmond if it would win him Mercedes (26). Unfortunately Mercedes does not love him and if any harm were to come to Edmond she would kill herself. She says "If he is dead, I shall die too" (27). So, unable to hurt him physically or attack him in any way publicly, Fernand almost gives up and accepts his place as Mercedes friend. Then in chapter four, *The Plotters*, he is called to by Danglars, who knowing the younger man's dark wish sets up a way for Mondego to destroy Dantes without physically hurting him or exposing himself as the one that destroyed him. How could a young man obsessively in love resist? Fernand cannot resist so he goes through with the plan, pushing

away his fear and marrying Mercedes when she finally loses hope for Dantes's return. His reasons do not necessarily justify his actions, but they are understandable.

In Danglars's case, the leader of the plot, he suffers from a very common problem, want. He wants more money, more power, a better life, a better existence. Who does not want that? Although his way of getting the things he wants, such as embezzling from his employer M. Morrel and sending Dantes to prison in order to keep Edmond from exposing him, are wrong they are not completely unreasonable.

Of the three antagonists Villefort is the most interesting because, though he did not know Dantes or even of the plot against him, he is the most responsible for the tortures Dantes suffered. At the same time though his reasons for leaving Dantes to suffer are the most understandable. Villefort was born in a Napoleon supporting family. His father, M. Noirtier, was a powerful supporter of Napoleon and much to his son's embarrassment made no secret of it. Unfortunately Villefort grew up in a Royalist time when it was dangerous not to support the man considered to be the true ruler of France. In order to build any sort of career Villefort needed Royalist connections so he was marrying into the Saint-Meran family who, based on his work against the "rebels" as a deputy prosecutor, looked past his relationship to Noirtier. Then on the eve of Villefort's engagement Edmond Dantes was arrested for carrying a letter from the Isle of Elba. Villefort questioned Dantes and, seeing that he was naïve and innocent, was about to let him go when he learned that the letter, which contained information about Napoleon's escape from Elba, was addressed to his father M. Noirtier. Faced with a difficult choice, to destroy a man he barely knew in order to enjoy his own life and career or to suffer the sins and mistakes of his father and lose everything, Villefort chose to save himself. But not only did he send Dantes away to prison to rot, he also marked Dantes's records in negative ways to make him sound like

an extremely dangerous criminal so there would be no chance of him ever being freed. Again, Villefort's actions were wrong, but when faced with such a difficult choice, it is in human nature to make the choice that hurts the self the least, and Villefort for all his power is only human.

In the series Meada chose to tell the story from a different point of view than the Count's, so viewers are not shown the full story of how Dantes's life was destroyed. Maeda instead of showing the three antagonists at their most vulnerable before they betrayed Dantes, chose to bring out the three men's humanity at the end, when they are in turn destroyed by the Count. This choice, while it maintains the Dumansian theme of identifiable villains, allows Maeda more room to recreate Dumas's narrative.

In the series, Fernand's humanity is shown most clearly when he begs Mercedes to stay with him in episode twenty-two, *Counterattack*. He says to Mercedes, "I can't believe I said such horrible things. I love you more than anything." He seems a bit crazy as he babbles, but his emotional attachment to her is obvious as he yells "I'm sick and tired of living in that bastard's shadow. You're staying here right where you belong: by my side." A montage of shots of him watching in the distance as Dantes and Mercedes laugh and embrace plays and Fernand's reasons for betraying his friend become clear. Fernand betrayed Dantes, his closest friend in the series, because he loved and wanted to be with Mercedes. Now as his life collapses around him Mercedes decides to leave him rather than face the evil he's done. Although Fernand is not a very likeable character seeing his pain and surprise when he realizes that for all the years they have been married Mercedes has secretly still loved Edmond more is moving and it acts as a reminder that for all his mistakes Fernand is still human.

In Danglars's case, his fear, instead of his greed, is his proof of humanity. In episode twenty-one *The Golden Boy's True Identity*, after escaping from Paris with five trillion francs

Danglars thinks he is free and away from the punishment waiting for him. He is wrong. The Count appears, and after showing Danglars that everything on the plane is filled with gold, including the food storage, and that there is no pilot he turns to go. Danglars, caught between love of gold and the realization that this plane will be his tomb begs “Wait don’t leave me here! Please! Come back!”. Danglars’s greed is very off putting making it easy to pin him as nothing but a greedy monster, but hearing him beg for his life and seeing his fear of death is a startling reminder that he is not so different from everyone else good or bad.

Villefort, once again seems to show the most humanity of the three men, although he is still the most responsible for Dantes’s torment. In Villefort’s case his humanity is most evident when he meets his adult son Benedetto for the first time in episode twenty-one, *The Golden Boy’s True Identity*. Villefort had mistakenly buried Benedetto alive as a newborn thinking he was dead. He seems like a very cold man but the look of sorrow and love on his face when he thinks his son wants to embrace him and forgive him is very moving. For a moment he lets his mask down and shows that he is in fact a lonely human being and a parent who has made many terrible mistakes but who still wants the love of his children. It’s unfortunate and startling when Benedetto, rather than embracing him, stabs him in the neck with a poisoned pin. It is difficult to not feel sorry for Villefort when he is rejected so violently, even if he is an unscrupulous and cold man.

Continuing the explanation of the adaptive lineage between the two sources, the third element maintained between the two is the use of convoluted and intricate plots devised by the Count as a means to his revenge. Dumas does not simply have the Count go and shoot Villefort or Morcerf, he writes how the Count plans and calculates and finds a way to take the exact things they love most of all, destroying their lives completely without giving them the pleasure of

death. For example, it may seem that the Count, then disguised as the Abbe Busoni, only goes to visit Caderousse in chapter twenty-six, *The Inn of Pont du Gard*, as a way to quickly find out what happened to Mercedes, Morcef, Danglars, and Villefort after the Count was incarcerated, but this chapter is much more important than that. In this chapter the Count gives Caderousse a diamond as a reward for being a “true friend” to Edmond Dantes, this seems to be useless to the narrative until over three hundred pages later when it is again mentioned in chapter forty-six, *The Rain of Blood*, by Bertuccio. Dumas uses this simple diamond as the cause of the murder that framed Bertuccio and put him in touch with the Count. That is just one example of small details used throughout the novel that seem useless at first but actually play pivotal roles later on in the schemes and subplots of the narrative.

Maeda is careful to maintain the Count’s love of scheming which is a vital part of the Count’s persona. According to Dani Cavallaro “Like the original novel, the anime repeatedly indicates that the Count of Monte Cristo derives considerable pleasure from the arrangement of events and the creation of opportunities for encounters bound to prove axial to the adventure as this develops while making them seem quiet accidental” (49). Cavallaro makes an interesting point about how Maeda was able to show audiences that the Count was not only responsible for the carefully planned “accidents” and misfortunes that befall his enemies, but that he also enjoyed every moment of said “accidents”. Cavallaro says “the surreptitious smirk wreathing the Count’s mien . . . neatly discloses to the viewer the premeditated nature of the character’s actions from the start” (49).

The most important element of the adaptive lineage between the novel and the series is the dominant theme of the failure of human justice. Both sources make two very clear points: humans make mistakes either out of stupidity or malice and self-service, and human forms of

justice, death or prison time, do little to console the victims of most crimes. How would the death of his three betrayers console the Count and replace the twenty years of his life he has lost, the father who died because of his absence, or the family he was never able to have because his heart was hardened in prison? Human forms of justice cannot punish the three men enough. The Count must go to a high power, God or a demon, in order to finally have the monetary means, physical and mental endurance, and convenient opportunities to reach what he considers ultimate justice. Any adaptation that did not make this a dominant theme would lack a serious and vital piece of Dumas's novel and therefore a vital piece of adaptive lineage to the novel.

There are many ways an adaptation can stand alone from its textual source and one way is to have specific structural or narrative differences. Some interesting and defining differences between the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* and the adapted series *Gankutsuou* are the change in narrative point of view, the futuristic setting, the manipulation of political intrigue, and the use of a demon rather than the proof of God as the driving force behind the Count's need for justice.

Dumas's novel begins with Edmond Dantes, the future Count and the "hero" of the novel, on the day that he is betrayed by Villefort, Danglars, and Morcerf and continues through Dantes's time in prison before jumping to Franz and Albert in Rome. Maeda's series *Gankutsuou* on the other hand, begins in the midst of the Roman Carnival on Luna (the moon) with Franz and Albert because they are the main focus and "heroes" of Maeda's version. This small change, though it doesn't change the main themes and elements shared by the two sources, affects how the entire story is understood by audiences; Albert's view is much more limited than the Count's. This change means that Maeda can take the narrative in several new directions while still maintaining vital Dumasian elements and themes.

Mahiro Maeda, as the director of *Gankutsuou*, has used Albert's character, a young man on the verge of adulthood just trying to find himself, beautifully. Seeing the world through Albert's passionate, naïve, and slightly childish eyes brings richness to the dry and cynical world seen by the Count. Young people can identify with a character who is simple and hopeful like them more than they can identify with an angry avenging angel. This choice changes how audiences experience the narratives in many ways.

Albert, in the novel, is a fairly well known character because the Count sees and talks to him often as a means of putting his revenge into motion and of keeping said revenge running smoothly to completion. By seeing Albert as the Count does, as a tool to help him gain entrance to Parisian society, it can be easy for audiences to consider him as little more than a spoiled rich man's son who was not badly harmed in the Count's plot. Audiences may even think that dealing with his father's complete dishonor and humiliation, and losing his own place in society because of that dishonor, was merely a good lesson for Albert. Readers can tell themselves that the loss of his fortune and status as a Viscount was best. When seeing the same events through the eyes of Albert, experiencing them with him, it is much more difficult to dismiss the seriousness of the Count's betrayal and the consequences of that betrayal. Watching his pain and humiliation as he learns his father, a man he loves and respects, is nothing but a liar and a dishonorable murderer is intense, but important because it brings Dumas's story full circle for the audience by placing next to the narrative of the conquering Count presented in the novel the narrative of the conquered Albert presented in the series.

In the novel, because the narration follows the Count from the time he is betrayed as Edmond Dantes until he says farewell to Morrel and Valentine as the Count, readers know what is happening and why. Readers are fully able to grasp the Count's motives for revenge as well as

his complex means of reaching that revenge. For example, it is no surprise to readers when Danglars is captured by Luigi Vampa and forced to give up all of the money he has embezzled in order to save his own life. Based on events that take place earlier in the novel readers know that Danglars was one of Dantes's betrayers and that as the Count, Dantes is allied with Luigi Vampa. Readers are also able to see him not only when he is exacting his revenge, but also when he is his most generous, for example when he rewards the Morrel family in chapter twenty-nine *The House of Morrel and Son*, or when he is at his most vulnerable after being confronted by Mercedes in chapter ninety *Mercedes* about his approaching duel with Albert.

Because Maeda chose to change the point of view of in *Gankutsuou* to Albert viewers know only what Albert knows. There is no former knowledge of Morcerf, Danglars, and Villefort's relationships with Dantes, or even that a man named Edmond Dantes ever existed. Viewers are able to share Albert's confusion over the mysterious poisonings of the Villefort family as well as the strange economic failure that plagues the Danglars family. Audiences are also given a front row seat to the humiliation placed on Albert's own family when his father, Frenand Morcerf's sordid past is revealed.

Not only does Albert lack knowledge of the Count's history and motives, he does not even know or understand the Count himself. In the novel, readers know the Count is a man who has deemed himself an "emissary of God"; while he has punished the wicked--such as Danglars or Villefort-- he rewards the good--such as Morrel, whom he saves from bankruptcy in chapter twenty-nine *The House of Morrel and Son*. In the series Albert knows and understands nothing about the Count's actions past or present. The Count he sees is fractured: he is a mysterious foreigner who has been kind to Albert in rescuing him from Luigi Vampa; he is an older man who can be Albert's mentor of sorts and teach him about the world through which the Count has

wandered extensively; he is a sinister and evil beast who was sent to Paris to destroy Albert's family, along with his friends, the Danglars and the Villeforts; finally, he is the innocent but broken hearted man betrayed by Albert's father. Dumas's readers know the Count is all of these things at once because they know his past and present. Maeda's viewers, on the other hand, do not and are forced, along with Albert, to navigate the Count's character in confusion until the end. But as Cavallaro says, the lack of knowledge viewers have about the Count and his motivations "helps maintain the level of suspense" (48).

Something else that is interesting about Maeda's decision to change the point of the view of the narratives is that viewers are able to see the effects of social class differences that they would not have been able to see if the narrative was from the Count's point of view. Through most of the series Albert is able to move freely as one of Paris's elite, with few worries or responsibilities. He spends most of his days in lavish apartments, posh parties, expensive cafes, or even racing through the country side. There are no boundaries for him or his friends. When in, episode three 5/22, *Stormy*, he and his friends want to go for a drive in the country, they are easily able to leave the city with no need for the passports or forms of identification required of ordinary people. Their reputations and status as rich and powerful citizens make them untouchable. They race past the gates of the city without even slowing down. On the other hand, in episode nineteen *Even If I Should Stop Being Me*, Albert attempts to run away to the country in order to avoid everyone and is stopped at the gates of the city. Because of his father's humiliation and his own loss of status Albert can't leave without some sort of passport, something he has no concept of having because he's never been required to carry one. Though he was once untouchable, now he is subject to the powers of the law and to the physical power of the gate officials. Instead of flying through at top speed Albert is surprised when he must slide to

an abrupt stop because the gate is closed. The guards demand a permit and Albert tell them he does not have one as “they always just let me through before”. Now that Albert’s father has no power, the guards see no need to hold themselves back and start to make fun of Albert. Maeda’s emphasis on the guards’ hostility towards Albert as a former member of the aristocracy brings the audience’s attention to the tensions running between the upper and lower classes.

Another way that *Gankutsuou* stands alone and is able to define itself outside of Dumas’s legacy is its futuristic setting in the year 5053. The change in time does not change the clarity or the adaptive lineage of the story, though it does change contemporary and future viewers’ understanding of Dumas’s world and the reality he created for his characters. What is especially interesting about Maeda’s change is that he is able to transport Dumas’s narrative far enough into the future to allow for space travel, giant mechanical armored duels, and alien civilizations while “flawlessly capture[ing] the essence of Dumas’s France even as it thrusts it into an almost unimaginably distant future in the visible guise of trappings, paraphernalia and status symbols typical of early nineteenth century French aristocracy” (Cavallaro 45).

Maeda’s decision to recreate Dumas’s Paris in the future, revamping the world with computers and space travel while still maintaining the strict class system and horse drawn carriages at first glance may seem like little more than a cheap attempt to add a sci-fi twist to the story. In reality Maeda was skillfully bringing Dumas’s story into a time period contemporary views could understand and identify with, while encouraging audiences as Dani Cavallaro says “to reflect on the historical reality alluded to by the source novel and on its future interpretations by disparate generations of both readers and adaptive agencies” (39). Maeda creates a technologically thriving world in his series. Danglars, for example, is able to keep up with the various stock markets across the universe because he is assisted by a computer program he

affectionately calls Michele. Instead of having libraries, data is stored in databases that can be accessed through interactive technology that puts the user into the archive. Using this interactive technology is how Franz finds out about “the Man in the Iron Mask,” also known as Gankutsuou. Another interesting technology is the pen used by Noirtier that allows Franz to access his mind directly so Noirtier can tell Franz all about Edmond Dantes without having to bore the audience by being forced to literally spell everything out like Noirtier was forced to do in the novel. These advanced technologies make the narrative not only run more smoothly but also give it a more up-to-date feel.

Maeda also skillfully changes the political atmosphere of his futuristic world to keep the narrative running smoothly while differentiating his version from Dumas’s a little more. In Dumas’s novel Dantes is easily betrayed and arrested because of the tense political atmosphere at the time. The story takes place around the “Hundred Days” and the public was deeply split between supporting Emperor Napoleon or the heir to the throne whom Royalists believed was the rightful ruler of France. With politics so tense and alliances so crucial to one’s life people were mistrusting, paranoid, and not willing to stick their necks out for fear of ending up allied with the wrong team. It was this atmosphere and national attitude that allowed Dantes to be arrested and forgotten without a fair trial and without anyone knowing what happened to him. By moving the story into the future, Maeda could no longer use Napoleon or his reign over France as the catalyst for the necessary political tension. Instead he changed Dantes’s letter about Napoleon’s escape from Elba to a letter connecting him with the “Prince’s” assassination, maintaining the narrative’s tense atmosphere even though the situation is taking place several thousand years in the future. The “Prince” is mentioned only briefly in the series, for instance

when the Count takes his opera box in episode six *Her Melancholy, My Melancholy*, and the rest must be inferred by the viewers.

Maeda is very careful about not giving too much information about Dantes's past or what it was exactly that caused Dantes's arrest. Any aspect of the Count's past as Edmond Dantes is shown in the series briefly and only through flash backs. For example, Danglars has a flash back in twenty-one, *The Golden Boy's True Identity*, and remembers slyly telling his plan to a depressed and desperate Fernand and drunken Caderousse, but the plan is only told of in general and little detail is given as to what exactly Dantes is being accused of in the letter the two men, Fernand and Danglars, plan to send. If a viewer has read the novel, they know why and how Dantes was arrested and can put the flash backs together themselves. Viewers who have never read the novel are forced to make as educated a guess as to the full situation as possible. The "how" of the situation is not important as long as viewers understand the "why" behind the three antagonists' campaign against Dantes.

The last interesting difference in *Gankutsuou* that makes it independent of Dumas's novel and in this case independent of all other adaptations of the novel, has to do with the series' origins. In the novel the Count is driven to the point of obsession to find justice by punishing the men that betrayed him, but he is not simply out for a shallow revenge. Revenge is a simple human concept and what the Count wants is "to become Providence myself, for I feel that the most beautiful, noblest, most sublime thing in the world is to recompense and punish" (664). Because he cannot be God he takes it upon himself instead to be "one of the agents of that Providence" (664). Through every moment of his quest for justice the Count believes he is not only working in God's will, but that his justice will prove the existence of God, because if he

were acting in a way that displeased God (or if there was no God at all) he would not be given the unlimited wealth, patience, strength, and opportunity to accomplish his mission.

Dumas presents the Count “like the Avenging Angel” on a mission from the Lord and most previous adaptations, especially those created in the west, continue that tradition, though they may not make it a dominant theme. For example, in the 1934 adaptation *The Count of Monte Cristo* directed by Rowland V. Lee and starring Robert Donat it is never said directly that the Count is acting as an agent of Providence, but religion is still a theme especially in the scene with the Abbe Faria. When Dantes is on the verge of an insane rage at the thought of those who betrayed him, Faria tells him to “go and pray” that God will keep him in prison long enough for him to forget his rage. It is assumed that he does so and little is mentioned of Christianity again. In the 2002 adaptation *The Count of Monte Cristo*, directed by Kevin Reynolds and starring Jim Caviezel and Guy Pearce, Dantes believes in God very deeply and that adds to his simple naïve charm at the beginning of the film because he does not believe his friends would betray him. Then, as his time in prison stretches on with no hope of being freed, he begins to lose all faith and eventually completely denies the existence of God when he meets the Abbe Faria. Even when Dantes manages to escape and assumes the identity of the Count he does not regain his faith. It is not until the end of the film when he is reunited Mercedes and Albert (his son in this version) that he is able to once again have faith. Although neither adaptation deals with God and faith as heavily as Dumas does, both still incorporate Christianity, reflecting their creation in the west where, although there are many religions, Christianity is the dominant one.

*Gankutsuou*, however, was made in Japan. Patrick Drazen, in his book *Anime Explosion: The What? Why? And WOW! Of Japanese Animation* explains that Japan has followed three religions for many centuries: Confucianism for its teaching about ethical behavior, Buddhism for

its teachings about compassion and equality, and Shintoism because it is the basis of their mythological history. The Japanese also have a very different concept of religious belief and although ideology is important to them, it is not a dominating factor in their lives. Since Christianity is marginalized in Japan, it would not have made sense to Japanese viewers if Maeda has maintained Christianity as a dominant theme, so he made subtle changes to recreate the same obsessive need without God as the inspiration for it. (Drazen 145-147)

Maeda, instead of using God, used a demon named Gankutsuou, which translates to “the King of the Cavern” as the power behind the Count’s revenge. Gankutsuou, also known as “the Man in the Iron Mask” in the series, was at the Chateau D’If, a machine run space prison, with Dantes. When the prison was destroyed by asteroids Gankutsuou as a demon was unharmed; he saved Dantes from death by joining with him and giving him power in exchange for his heart. Gankutsuou is the one who gave the Count his wealth, strength, and indestructibility, not unlike how the Abbe Faria led Dantes to the wealth of Spada and how the Count’s trust in God makes him feel indestructible.

An important note is, although Gankutsuou is a demon, he is not a demon in the Christian sense. He is not some version of the devil that seeks to damn souls and possess innocent Catholic girls. In Japanese culture a demon--a rough translation of the word *oni*—is a monstrous creature, but their main function is not to simply damn souls. There are many stories in Japanese culture of demons acting like business men by trading portions of their powers for equal portions of humans, such as their heart or eyes or in some cases their soul (Drazen 157).

Of the many interesting and distinct differences between Dumas’s novel and Maeda’s series that have affected the way audiences think about either narrative, the most striking is Maeda choice to place emphasis on the homoerotic male relationships alluded to in Dumas’s

novel and to develop those relationships into explicit homosexual desires. Martin Green, in his article "Homosexuality in Literature" explains that homoeroticism is considered the celebration by "both writer and sympathetic reader" of "the bonding of man to man, and man to boy" (394). In other words, homoeroticism is more about the closeness and intimacy between males than the sexual tensions and feelings between them, though in some circumstances homoeroticism can also signal the beginning of a homosexual relationship. According to Green many adventure stories, including Dumas's novels have elements of homoeroticism in them because the narratives are focused on the strong relationships between predominately male characters, "from Defoe through Scott, Cooper, Dumas, to Stevenson and Kipling, the principal value celebrated is the comradeship of a band of brothers - typically brothers-in-arms, three musketeers or whatever" while the female characters are "thematically minor" (394). The intertextual interaction between Dumas's novel and Maeda's series "illuminates" certain implicit clues in the novel of the homoerotic and intimate relationship between Albert Morcerf and his friend Franz d'Epinau, as well as between Albert and the Count. Interestingly, it may not be until an audience has looked at the novel and the series side by side that said implicit homoerotic signals become more apparent due to the explicit homoeroticism of the series.

However, Dumas did more than just develop homoerotic relationships between his male characters. In fact, an attentive reader will quickly see that the most homosexual character in the novel is actually a woman, Eugenie Danglars, Albert's fiancée. Throughout his novel, Dumas develops Eugenie's character in such a way that he emphasizes not only her masculinity and her comfort with said masculinity, but her preference for attractive female companions rather than male companions. Dumas makes an effort to point out that Eugenie would rather spend time with her piano tutor, Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly, than any man. In chapter fifty-four, *Robert Le*

*Diable*, Debray says of Eugenie “I really never met with one woman so ready to do justice to the charms of another as yourself” when she notices “the extreme beauty” of Haydee, rather than any of the Count’s obvious charms (735). Dumas also makes it a point to remark that “it had not occurred to her to observe” the Count when she could observe Haydee (736). Further, in chapter ninety-eight, *The Departure to Belgium*, when making an escape Eugenie easily, even gleefully, takes on the guise of a man. While comparing herself and Mademoiselle d’Armilly to “Hercules” and “the pale Amphale,” Eugenie takes “a complete man’s costume” from her dresser and “with a promptitude which indicated this was not the first time she had amused herself by buttoned her waistcoat up to the throat, and put on the coat with admirably fitted her,” showing a total comfort with her choice of gender expression (1267). She then proceeds to run away from home with Mademoiselle d’Armilly. Even if there is no evidence of romance between Eugenie and her tutor, Eugenie’s masculinity is developed throughout the novel, meaning it held some purpose for Dumas as well. In seeing this more explicit example of homoerotic in the midst of Dumas’s novel, some audience members will be able to more easily notice and analyze the deeper buried and implicit male homoerotic relationships, especially between Albert Morcerf and Franz d’Epinay, and also between Albert Morcerf and the Count.

In the novel, Dumas subtly places clues throughout the narrative explaining that neither Franz nor Albert, though both are engaged to wealthy and attractive young women, feel anything for their fiancés. In chapter sixty nine, *A Summer Ball*, Albert and the Count have a brief conversation about Albert’s relationship with his fiancé Eugenie Danglars and how he would “give a hundred thousand francs” in order to avoid having to marry her (913). The Count even asks if he could go too far in saying that Albert and Eugenie hate each other: rather than denying or agreeing with him, Albert simply says he feels nothing for her and that while she may make a

wonderful mistress because of her beauty, he would never be able to stand marrying her. Franz, though he feels little for his own fiancé Valentine de Villefort, is less crass than Albert in expressing his lack of passion. His most exposing comment occurs in the same conversation when Albert tells the Count that he offered to let Franz marry Eugenie and in response Franz said “My eccentricity may be great, but it will not make me break my promise” ( 912). Franz does not say anything about his love or even any feeling for Valentine being his reason for refusing to consider Eugenie, he merely mentions his promise and therefore his honor that is involved in the engagement. Also, both young men are rarely seen with their fiancés, Albert goes so far as to leave the city rather than be forced to see any of the Danglars at a ball (910). Franz is only seen with Valentine when the two sign their marriage contract in chapter seventy-five, *The Villefort Family Vault*, and right after that when Franz is told that Valentine’s grandfather, Noirtier, killed his father and their engagement is subsequently ended in chapter seventy-six, *A Signed Statement*.

Besides writing the lack of passion the two young men have for their fiancés, Dumas also develops Albert in such a way that though he claims to want a female lover he never actively tries to gain one. Throughout the novel, but most often when the two men are in Rome for the Carnival, Albert mentions his love of a bachelor’s life but his desire for a beautiful mistress. According to Albert his only reason for going to Rome in the first place is to have a love affair with an Italian beauty, yet he is never seen with a woman other than his mother and the mystery woman he rendezvous with in Rome, who turns out to be a teenage boy in disguise. It is interesting that for all of his blustering about wanting a lover Albert is presented by Dumas as only having close relationships with other men, most especially Franz and the Count.

In the series *Gankutsuou*, Mahiro Maeda changes the implicit homoeroticism of the novel into an explicit expression of desire for Albert, though in Franz's case it is an unrequited desire. In the series Albert does not have the same disgust for his fiancé as he does in the novel. He is much more childish and cannot seem to find a difference between passionate love and close friendship and therefore spends most of his time in a sort of triangle among Eugenie Danglars, his fiancé, who in the series is a childhood friend rather than an antisocial snob, Franz d'Epinau, and the Count of Monte Cristo.

In the series, Maeda chose to write Franz as having no confusion about his feelings for Albert or his lack of feelings for his fiancé Valentine. Franz is never shown with his fiancé, Valentine, when he is engaged to her, though he spends more time with her as a friend after the engagement is broken off. The few times the two of them are together as fiancés he ignores her almost completely, barely sharing common pleasantries with her much less deep conversation. For example, in episode three 5/22, *Stormy* when Franz, Albert, and their other friends go on a picnic in the country, Franz barely speaks to Valentine. He really only talks to her when he asks if she is alright after the car gets stuck in a large sink hole. Not only does he ignore her, he even ignores the obvious if innocent flirting between Valentine and Morrel. The most obvious indication that he feels very little for Valentine is when, after telling Morrel it is alright for him to court her, he helps Morrel rescue her from her murderous stepmother in episode eleven, *An Engagement Broken*. Franz knows that Morrel intends to whisk her away to Marseilles and marry her. In his own way Franz even seems relieved to be free of that obligation. His lack of love for Valentine leaves him free, adding to the possibility of his having feelings for someone else, especially Albert.

In order to develop the unrequited desires Franz has for an oblivious Albert, Maeda develops three main scenes where Franz's love is most explicitly shown: the scene where he confesses his feelings for Albert to Morrel in episode nine *I Dreamed a Dark Dream*, the scene where he fights the Count in Albert's place knowing he will lose his own life in episode eighteen *The Duel*, and finally the scene when Albert reads Franz's last letter in episode twenty *Farewell, Eugenie*. In episode nine, after Albert drinks the poison meant for the De Villefort family, Franz and Morrel are having a private conversation in an outer room. Morrel is the first to bring up the topic of Franz and Albert's relationship by saying that he thinks their closeness is not "just because" they are "old friends," but because they "share a special bond that no one else can understand." Franz continues by using the same phrase "special bond" to talk about Morrel's love for Valentine. As he and Morrel speak, Franz often looks longingly through a doorway at Albert, who is ill in bed. When Morrel demands why Franz can't simply love Valentine, Franz tells him that "you can't simply fall out of love even if the relationship is such that you can't marry the person, no matter what you desire." Interestingly Morrel finally asks outright "Are you saying you harbor a hopeless love for someone too?" Franz, instead of answering directly, looking hopelessly at Albert, says "getting married isn't necessarily the only way to bring someone happiness." In this scene Maeda does everything to show audiences Franz's desires without simply having him confess them outright.

In episode eighteen, Franz shows his love by making the ultimate sacrifice for Albert. He takes it upon himself to duel the Count in Albert's stead, because he knows that the Count intends to kill Albert. Fighting the Count will also give Franz an opportunity to try and kill him before he is able to further destroy Albert's life. This act is beyond merely protecting one's friends or even one's family. Franz goes to the duel knowing he will not live to see the next

morning, knowing that his death will be horrific and painful and that there is no hope he will escape it. This choice takes not only courage, but suggests a stronger bond than simply years of friendship can provide. Also, if considered side by side with his confession to Morrel in episode nine, Franz's sacrifice is obviously driven by a passionate love for Albert, not simply friendship.

The most explicit exploration of Franz's passionate feelings for Albert occurs in episode twenty, when Albert finally reads the letter Franz wrote the day before he dueled with the Count. The letter mentions a time when Franz and Albert were children when they could "still love openly" without worrying about being hurt; Franz signs the letter "I am forever in your heart." Alone, the letter is not conclusive; if taken side by side with the previous two scenes it points to passionate feelings from Franz to Albert.

Maeda choose to develop Albert's character as a naïve and oblivious young man who does not notice Franz practically throwing himself at him. Interestingly enough his lack of response to his friend's romantic suggestions is not because he is unwilling to love another man. Throughout both the novel and the series, whether he realizes it or not, Albert pursues a deep relationship with the Count as he seeks to impress and become closer with him. He visits the Count often and shares personal details, such as his problems with Eugenie and his father's dishonor. Contrastively in the series, Albert's infatuation with the Count is much more explicit. In episode seventeen, *The Confession*, Albert finds out that the Count used him in order to gain his revenge. Albert is more hurt and offended that the Count faked their entire relationship than that the Count exposed and dishonored his father. He stubbornly insists that the Count is lying about using him:

Liar! You're lying! You're lying! I can't believe what you are saying! It's been a set up from the beginning? It's not true! Haven't you always gone out of your way when I needed it? Haven't you always been looking out for me and giving me advice? I just don't believe that all the time we've spent together since we met was all a big lie.

As Albert yells this, tears streaming down his face, a short montage of intimate moments between Albert and the Count flashes across the screen: the Count saving Albert from the bandits, the Count embracing him after Albert literally ran into his arms, other close ups of the Count's face smiling gently. It is his anger at being spurned that causes Albert to challenge the Count. Never in the conversation does he ever mention the Count's actions against his father, only the pain the Count has caused him by lying to him.

Albert's hurt and anger do not fade until after Franz dies for him and Albert realizes how deeply his friend cared for him while reading Franz's last letter. In his letter Franz writes that feelings of love that are not returned can often turn to feelings of hate, putting in simpler terms Albert's own confused emotions over the Count's rejection. In his letter Franz also wants Albert to understand that he accepts and understands that Albert challenged the Count because of his own spurned feelings and not because the Count has destroyed his father's reputation. Franz also gives Albert his blessing to reconcile with the Count despite the fact that the Count has killed him at this point. Inspired by Franz's words Albert meets with the Count, their first meeting since Franz was killed. The two men meet in the very center of a bridge on the edge of the city, seeming to symbolize their tenuous and tense emotional and physical reconnection. Through the scene, as the Count finally reveals to Albert why he seeks revenge, there are several establishing shots showing how the city is being bombed and destroyed around them. No sound or danger affects them until the Count finally turns his back and walks away, breaking the intimacy between them. At that moment the camera begins to shake and the sounds of the explosions rise in the background getting closer and closer to the pair until Albert screams "So you're telling me that the Count of Monte Cristo that I know no longer exists." Simultaneously, a bomb drops and destroys the bridge between them, literally and symbolically cutting the two off from each other.

Albert is determined to make the Count acknowledge him and the connection they have shared throughout the series and he continues to try and reach the Count. As the series comes to a close Albert finds that his feelings of love for the Count remain. His clumsy attempts at forming an intimate relationship with the Count come to a climax in episode twenty-three *Edmond Dantes* where Albert's love and a kiss literally melts the Count's heart and defeats the demon Gankutsuou. In Dumas's novel it is Haydee, a young lady that has traveled with the Count for several years that rescues the Count from himself. The Count tells her that she has "enlightened me more than twenty years of slow experience; I have but you in the world, Haydee; through you I again connect myself with life, through you I shall suffer, through you rejoice" (1460). Maeda does not let the series end so easily. In episode twenty-three, when Haydee pleads with the Count, and with Gankutsuou, to leave their need for revenge behind and stay with her the Count kisses her forehead and says "Your words no longer reach me." Then demonic eyes, the mark of Gankutsuou, cover his face and he cuts himself off from her. He turns his back on Haydee and maintains his need for revenge.

When Albert confronts the Count the situation goes very differently. If the passion and intimacy between the Count and Albert was unclear before, Maeda makes it undeniably clear in this episode. Gankutsuou insists "the contract is complete. My name is Gankutsuou" and tries to push Albert away by claiming that Albert will "never understand the suffering my friend has gone through." But Albert refuses to falter. Despite his wounds, he blocks Gankutsuou's path and stands up to him even as the demon-faced Count looms over him. Albert tells him "I know it's true, I may not be able to understand the Count's real feelings, but I . . ." then he cuts off and tightly embraces the Count. The shot cuts to Albert, in white and looking much smaller than the shadowed and looming Count, embracing the Count as golden rays of sunlight wash over them.

Then in slow motion Albert pulls the Count to him and kisses him, instantly breaking Gankutsuou's control and transforming the Count once more into a human being. Albert's love and desire transform the Count more than the love of Haydee and Mercedes ever could hope to.

If Maeda's narrative changes and character development do not bring the homoeroticism of the series, especially between Albert and the Count, to audiences' attention the cover art used to market the DVD set will. One cover shows the Count embracing Albert from behind, his left hand holding Albert's chin while his right hand is slipped inside Albert's open shirt, suggesting the Count is caressing the younger man's stomach as he whispers in his ear (see Figure One.)

The intertextual relationship between Dumas's novel and Maeda's series has changed the way that modern audiences view and understand the two sources and the subtexts running through both. This relationship has also changed the way that audiences are engaging and interpreting what Dani Cavallaro calls the "hypothetical third text" (38). According to Cavallaro, in



Figure one

her book *Anime and the Art of Adaptation: Eight Famous Works From Page to Screen*, analysis of the intertextual relationship of two sources increases "not only our understanding of the two works as distinct entities but also of a third party: The hypothetical third text . . . brought into

being by their dynamic interplay” (38). In other words, an abstract but influential third narrative is created by the intertextual relationship of two separate narratives. In reaction to the intertextuality between the two sources, Maeda’s use of explicit homoeroticism in particular, audiences are changing how they engage the once purely abstract theory of the “hypothetical third text” and are actually creating physical embodiments of that theory. For example, on Fanfiction.net, a very popular internet site featuring fanfiction from almost every commonly known film, series, book, and video game there are approximately one hundred forty-one fan fictions about *Gankutsuou* and of those thirty-eight involve a romantic, sexual, or unrequited relationship between Franz and Albert. In one story, *Fifty Moments*, by lefcadio the author writes “They lay, sprawled out on the green grass; Albert arched his back and stretched, and Franz found he could not look away as the shirt rode up above his best friend's stomach.” On another site, Adultfanfiction.net (which is similar to fanfiction.net except it caters to a more mature audience and therefore allows more mature content) there are thirteen fan fictions for *Gankutsuou*, all of which feature a sexual or romantic relationship between two male characters of the series, most predominately between Albert de Morcerf and the Count of Monte Cristo. Fan fiction is not the only way that fans are expressing their new interest in romantic relationships between Franz and Albert and the Count and Albert, there are also a large number of sites featuring fan art of such relationships. For example, on a popular fan art site Y!Gallery there is a variety of art featuring the Count, Albert, and Franz, separately and together. Many of these pictures involved one, two, or even all three of them in implicit, explicit, or even pornographic positions with each other. One artist, Obsessive194, posted a picture showing Albert and the Count, naked and holding each other in bed which is one of the more mild examples. Another example would be fan videos, or videos such as anime music videos (AMVs)

on sites such as Youtube.com, using clips from the animated series edited together to romantic music. Also, fans are creating physical embodiments through Cosplay which is an activity where fans buy or create costumes and props and physically dress up as characters from the sources in order to act out their interpretations of the “third text”. Understanding how the interactions and relationships between two sources affects not only the texts themselves, but the very world the two texts create, is necessary in order to understand the new ways that fans are choosing to express themselves and in turn how these expressions are and will continue to affect the world of literature and literary studies.

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