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The Rise of Social Ereading: Interactive Ebook Platforms and the Development of Online
Reading Communities

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Abstract

Ebooks have caused a revolution in how people read fiction. Ereading devices and apps now integrate interactive features which have led to the development of digital reading communities populated by millions of readers from around the world, with a resurgence of social reading practices in new forms.

Two of the biggest social reading communities in existence today are hosted by Amazon's Kindle and Wattpad. This thesis offers an analysis of how these platforms' readers are using the interactive technology within the pages of their ebooks to participate in these online reading communities. Original research into popular texts on Wattpad reveals that while only a small percentage of users are actively engaging with the ebooks and other readers during the process of reading, *all* active and passive interactions have a significant influence on the reading experience. Thus, the infrastructure of such communities 'rewards' serialised books which encourage higher levels of reader interactivity with greater recognition within the community, but this reward is short-lived.

The application of Genette's paratextual theory to the interactive features of these ereading platforms reveals new processes of authorisation and readers-as-writers. New paths for the evolution of digital paratextual theory see paratexts developing from 'thresholds' into 'vectors'. The statistical notations of reader interactions are now informational paratexts attached to each ebook, and these online reading communities may be considered paratexts themselves, operating through the new paratextual phenomenon of digital marginalia. Furthermore, the existence of these reading communities on free platforms such as Wattpad is supported by commercial paratexts found within the ebook pages. These new paratexts are

having a significant impact on social ereading and reading communities - such as how they operate and judge the 'value' of ebooks - but historical precedents suggest these paratexts will be readily accepted by most readers, leading to an increase in the incidence and influence of such digital paratexts.

These new interactive technologies and paratexts will potentially lead to significant changes in how fiction is read. Exactly how these technologies may develop, and how public, industrial, and academic stakeholders might take advantage of these opportunities, requires further research.

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1. Introduction: The Impact of Digital Technologies on the Fiction Industry

Ten years ago, the global fiction industry was changed forever by the introduction of commercially viable ebook technologies. Long-form electronic texts became accessible, affordable, and attractive to the international community of readers, beginning with the release of Amazon's Kindle ereader and followed quickly by Apple's iPhone and iPad. These devices, along with multiple other internet-capable devices and the development of mobile applications, now enable people to access and read fiction anywhere, any time. The age of the ebook, predicted for decades, had finally begun.

During their first decade of evolution, from 2006 to the present day in 2016, the companies developing these ereading technologies began to include interactive communicative features that are common to many dedicated social media platforms. Such features enable and encourage the interaction of readers *while reading* their ebook. Those readers who initially took advantage of these tools formed the first *online reading communities*; a phenomenon that has been quietly growing in influence and popularity ever since. The major ebook platforms which most overtly and successfully host these reading communities have been seen as a threat by both the established publishing industry and literary academia (Acedo and Laverkus 45; Carreiro 219-20; Klein 35-7; Manley and Holley 307; Striphas 298-9); certainly, the commercial and theoretical models of publishing and analysing the contexts of fiction need to be adapted in order to understand just how these new ways of consuming fiction affect readers' relationships with each other, the text, and the author. Most significantly, the *interactivity* of these platforms and engagement of the readers who populate these communities offer a glimpse into how our fiction reading culture may continue to evolve over the next decade of ebooks and ereading.

1.1 The Changing Climate of Fiction: Self-Publishing and Digital Technology

At the beginning of this new era of digital books and reading, the Kindle was met with fear and suspicion by many academics and literary professionals (Klein 35-37). The advent of such digital technologies enabled the easy and ‘free’ self-publishing (using platforms such as Amazon’s Kindle Direct Publishing and CreateSpace, Smashwords, and so on), which resulted in a glut of cheap independent ebooks flooding the market (Coker; Maher; McCartney, “Self-Publishing”). Some claim over 2.5 million self-published titles are released each year (Lewis 289) although the exact statistics are seemingly impossible to collate across all the different platforms. Regardless of the true numbers, it is clear the established publishing giants are being forced to compete with the growing number of independent companies and self-published authors, and readers are overwhelmed for choice as “discoverability” becomes the driving theme for those in the business (O’Leary 13; Phillips 77). With “wildly uneven sales patterns”, the publishing industry was seen for some years to be “skating on thin ice” (Greco 38).

However, while some were convinced this was “the end of printed literature” and predicted these technologies would lead to the “loss of deep reading”, there has been little evidence of such catastrophes coming to pass (Vlieghe et al. 26). For example, the European Commission in 2013 found that although there had been a slight decrease in the percentage of people who had read at least one non-ebook in the previous 12 months, this was still very high at almost 70% of respondents (8). An apparent social awareness of the importance or value of reading - as an activity that the respondents felt they ‘should’ be doing - was also implied throughout the report, as it appeared that people (especially those with higher education) were more willing to blame a lack of time rather than a lack of interest for their failure to read (37). Therefore, it is not ebook

technology alone that is causing any noticeable decline in reading rates, and the decline itself is minimal.

Other studies in other Western societies show similar results, such as the Pew Research Center study of Americans' reading habits in 2016 which found over 70% of adults reporting they had read a book in any format in the previous year. This is consistent with the results from previous surveys (Perrin). It is evident that books, and reading, are still seen as an important part of Western culture. The rates of reading are not significantly changing; instead, is *how* people are reading, and that is due to the digital shift. Ebooks and ereading technologies have introduced a drastically different new medium that has multiple effects on the reading experience.

The act of reading a book on a screen instead of holding a physical printed copy has ramifications on both the reader's comprehension of, and relationship to, the information and narrative of the text. Several studies have attempted to identify the practical impacts of reading on screens compared to reading on a paper page, with conflicting results. There is some evidence which shows a reduction in comprehension when reading a digital page vs. a paper page (Mangen et al. 67), while other research suggests there is either little difference (Porion et al. 574; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al. 265), or the difference is in the consumption process rather than in the ultimate absorption of information (Walsh 36). Other discussions lament the loss of the materiality of holding a book and the *physical* relationship with the text (Mangen 405). Regardless, it consistently appears the results depend on how familiar the test subjects are with using digital platforms; unsurprisingly, those with little digital expertise were alienated by the activity, whereas those who had great familiarity with reading on a screen have no difficulty in comprehending the information.

However, most of these studies were published in the first decade of the twenty-first century, before mobile electronics became as ubiquitous as it they are now, and many consider the reader as a single, isolated entity. The technology for the ‘as-you-read’ interactivity was simply non-existent, and all discussion of how digital texts might offer an altered yet commonplace reading experience was hypothetical. Anne Mangen’s observations in 2008, as she looked back on thirty years of digital experiments in various kinds of electronic fiction, could only see an “esoteric” interest in hypertext, multimodality, and interactivity when reading fiction (407). She also identified the significant impact that hypertext (that is, hyperlinked pieces of narrative that require significant input and action from the reader to navigate and follow) would usually result in a greatly altered psychological state that affected the reader’s immersion in a long-form fictional text, which is “highly vulnerable to distractions” (409), and while it was not explicitly stated, her discussion suggested that such texts are highly unlikely to replace the traditional experience of reading a book with consistent flow. That part of her predictions, at least, has been accurate so far; while ebook technologies on multiple platforms certainly allow for multimodal texts, it is difficult to find any evidence of such texts finding any notable success or traction with readers.

At the time of Mangen’s discussion, however, the renewed efforts to produce viable ebooks as challengers to print books, signalled by the release of the Kindle and other devices, had only just begun “after their dismal and quite spectacular failure” in the 1990s (406). Now, another decade later, the answer to her question “will we be reading novels on screen – perhaps on our mobile phones – in the future?” (406) is a resounding *yes*. Outside of the influence of commercial giants such as Amazon, other readers and writers have developed their own ways of publishing and reading fiction; for example, the Japanese cell-phone novel (Kim 476-7; Lewis

290), and independent ebook communities such as that hosted by Wattpad, which will be the focus of this study. Despite the various reservations expressed by researchers, ebooks have gained traction among fiction readers, and large ebook retailers and other ebook platforms allow readers instant online access to vast libraries of electronic fiction texts, as well as their authors.

In today's digital environment, anyone with an internet connection has instant, international, and interactive access to books, the books' other readers, and the authors of the books themselves through social media sites such as Goodreads, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Wattpad, and so on. These social media have allowed the development of a digital culture that revolves around writing and reading, and allows almost-instant interaction between all members. One of the consequences of these new publishing technologies, apps and communities is the re-emergence of serialised literary publishing (Albanese and Reid 24; Alter, "The Return") once common in Dickens' era in the late nineteenth century (Altick 279). Perhaps this should not be surprising, as these literary communities have much in common with the oral-based storytelling communities of the more distant past, potentially even more so than with the isolated readers of the twentieth century. Marshall McLuhan anticipated this when, writing in the "TV age", he observed that "traditional oral culture[s] ... [have] the total, unified 'field' character of our new electromagnetism" ("Understanding Media", 44). He goes on to discuss what he calls, using Kenneth Boulding's term, a "break boundary"; a point at which a dynamic system passes a point of no return (58). Typically, Marshall says, this involves a "reversing" (59-60). In this case, the 'reversal' is the resurgence of social reading and storytelling.

During Dickens' time in the late 1800s, illiterate members of the public would listen to more-educated peers reading aloud the latest update to his serialised novels (Hauser 116), enabling an immediate social interaction with other readers, and these intense discussions of the

developments in the narrative in turn had an influence on the writing of the novel. Dickens is known to have adapted characters and plots in response to feedback from readers to make some characters more likable, or to boost lagging sales (D. Lodge 118). This is extraordinarily similar to the intense interactions that occur on some of the most popular serialised ebooks on the platform Wattpad, for example¹. The ability to comment directly on the text of the online book, to view others' comments and respond, is comparable to the in-person discussions that occurred during or immediately after social readings of Dickens and his contemporaries (Collins 6). Readers of the narrative can argue about what a particular sentence means, debate the merits of various characters, and speculate how the story will develop *as they are consuming it* in very similar fashion to the communal 'readers' of generations ago.

The popularity - or indeed, necessity - of this kind of communal reading in the Victorian era began to wane with increasing literacy levels, the improvement of printing technologies, and the reduction in book prices, leading to the dominance of the fully written, edited and revised single volume over serials (Altick 286), and the isolation of readers became the norm in the twentieth century (Eisenstein 102). This even came to be considered by the "reading class" to be the 'proper way' to consume literary works (Bérubé 421). Yet, it is clear this is not necessarily the most 'natural' or 'logical' way to read at all, as it is just one phase in the history of storytelling. According to David S. Shields (xiii) and as discussed by Bérubé (422), early communal reading was not a result of a civilised community, they were the *sources* of that civility. Through the communal reading of the vast numbers of texts being produced (newspapers, news, pamphlets, poems, plays, etc.), the expected norms for that society were disseminated and propagated into a type of 'law' that 'bound' the community by those shared

¹ That is, allowing for the scattered and text-based nature of the participants and conversations - while this admittedly has additional complications for the philosophical nature of the community, it is not directly relevant to this investigation.

narratives. Bérubé et al. further suggests there is a “yearning for social interaction” in the context of literary experience, which drives readers’ desires to discuss books with others, whether in real world book clubs or in online blogs (422). These desires and drives have been catered for with the development of interactive features within ebooks that allow readers to find social fulfilment *while reading*. These features have been most notably and successfully implemented on two massive international ebook platforms: Amazon’s Kindle and Wattpad.

1.2 Digital Reading Communities: Amazon’s Kindle and the World of Wattpad

The internet retailer Amazon, its Kindle ereader and the Kindle Store are giants of the ebook world. Estimates of Amazon’s ebook market share have ranged from 60 to 90% (Konoval 119). The release of the Kindle itself at the end of 2007 (Striphas 297) was clearly a defining moment in the history of technology that led to the development of viable ebooks and ereading technology. However, what fewer people may be aware of is the existence of Kindle online reading communities that Amazon facilitates with its Popular Highlights and Public Notes functions. These features enable readers to view and contribute to ongoing discussions regarding the text of the ebook they are reading on their Kindle device or app. Multiple scholars have investigated this phenomenon present in the Kindle reading community (see Barnett, Cameron, and Rowberry), but Amazon is not the only company to have utilised such technologies to engage readers. There is another massive ebook platform that has heretofore been disregarded by the academic community, and has been selected as the main case study for this research: Wattpad.

Wattpad was launched as a website in 2006 by co-founders Allen Lau and Ivan Yuen in Toronto, Canada. Ten years later, it claims to engage 90% of its 45 million monthly users, 85% of whom are aged 13-30, via its mobile applications available on all mainstream devices and operating systems (Herman; Wattpad, “Brand Stories”; Wattpad, “Wattpad Pressroom”). Frequently referred to online as the YouTube of ebooks (Phillips 9), it is used by many well-known and accomplished traditional authors such as Margaret Atwood, Dan Brown, R. L. Stine, and Meg Cabot (Atwood; Herman; IPA), as well as hundreds of thousands - potentially millions - of other writers publishing their creative work directly to the desktop site or on the mobile app, instantly accessible to other Wattpad users who are able to read, comment, and “vote” on individual story parts.

Wattpad’s rapid growth has frequently been featured on many international and prominent news sites, especially when established publishing companies have acquired Wattpad books for traditional publishing contracts (de Vynck; Herman; S. Lodge; Reid, “S&S Acquires”). However, the few pieces of scholarly research that have been published about this massive, well-established community tends to focus on the phenomenon of fanfiction, or on individual stories and narrow niches within genres or subgenres (Mirmohamadi 35; Nawotka; Sorensen; von Veh). Meanwhile, this vast and rapidly-growing community is attracting increasing numbers of readers and writers who might otherwise have had no interaction with the literary community at all. Wattpad writer Anna Todd, whose works have earned over a *billion* collective “reads” on Wattpad and has since signed publishing and film adaptation contracts, claims she would never have considered writing a book before discovering the site (Herman; Reid, “S&S Acquires”). There is a vast international population of readers on Wattpad who have previously gone almost entirely unnoticed by the academic community.

Due to the nature of the site, the so-called ‘quality’ of the ebooks hosted on Wattpad is admittedly, on average, ‘inferior’ to that of industry-produced fiction; that is to say, the technical and grammatical accuracy is often poor, with little originality or refinement. This is inevitable when a large proportion of the site’s writers are teenagers, second-language speakers, or simply new authors attempting to write a story for the first time. However, there are many stories published on this platform that have in fact undergone professional editing and polishing. These include sponsored content as well as works by a significant number of professional authors (traditional and independent) marketing themselves to this audience, and some publishing companies posting story samples to hook readers and drive sales elsewhere (Albanese and Reid). Romance publishers in particular are known for running writing competitions, such as Harlequin’s 2015 *So You Think You Can Write?* contest, offering publishing contracts as prizes (Wattpad, “Wattpad and Harlequin”). Wattpad itself runs an annual writing competition, the Wattys, which claims to be the largest online writing contest in the world. The 2015 contest earned over 75,000 entries (Wattpad, “The World’s Largest Writing Contest”) and 2016 saw over 100,000 entries (“The Wattys Winners”). The sheer size and popularity of this site alone marks it as worthy of further study, and this research investigates how this platform is influencing the development and acceptance of online communities that form around the shared love of books.

The interactions between authors and writers in Wattpad’s massive international community is highly relevant as Wattpad offers a vision of how fiction may be most commonly written and read in the future - commercial and literary works included. Wattpad’s head of content, Ashleigh Gardner, reportedly has said Wattpad users “don’t see themselves as reading ebooks--they’re following social media” (Albanese and Reid 22). This is probably true for those

users, particularly teen users, who prefer to engage with diary or blog-like works on the site which feature ongoing narratives of the author's daily lives or thoughts. However, for the majority of 'Wattpadders', the truth of how they see themselves using the platform is somewhere *in between*: a blend of using social media (in the usual sense of the term - think Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) *and* reading ebooks (such as Kindle, Kobo and Nook) as well as, for many users, writing them. It is not so much social media as 'social reading and writing'. As the 'social media' features of the app are integral to its users' reading experience, they are having a significant effect on how they relate to other readers, the text, and the authors of the books they are reading. Consequently, this investigation is focused on the effects of the *interactivity* that is integral to this community of millions, rather than the 'quality' of literature that it produces.

1.3 An Academic Approach

This vast Wattpad library and community is, by its nature, overflowing with different genres and styles of fiction that could quickly overwhelm the well-meaning researcher. Additionally, the ability to include in-text media (photos and videos) was recently introduced, which has seen a rise in the number of multimedia stories. However, Mangan's observations of readers' lack of interest in hypertexts largely correlate with the type of texts that still dominate on Wattpad; despite the *potential* for reader-text interactions, multimodality, and the development of hyperlinked, electronic "Choose Your Own Adventure" stories (Kraus 78-81), the dominant type of Wattpad fiction is long-form, sequential, text-based, serialised narrative that does not require the reader to move in any direction except forward through the book's parts.

Therefore, this research will focus on text-only Wattpad ebooks, and will use a single category on Wattpad as a case study to focus on for the duration of this investigation: science fiction. Along with romance, teen fiction, and fantasy, science fiction is one of the most popular categories on the site, but one that is more manageable within the scope of this research. Additionally, as platforms such as Wattpad offer a vision of how fiction may be predominantly written and read in the future, it seems appropriate to choose the genre that nurtures its users' own visions of the future.

In order to consider serialised texts as discrete works, each text in question will be considered as the sum of all of its parts; every individually published chapter is not viewed as a standalone or "self-contained" text in the same sense as a television episode or comic book issue (Beaty 319). It is possible that each Wattpad "part" or chapter could be viewed as the equivalent of a TV episode, if it were assumed that each chapter contains its own narrative episodic structure within the larger serialised narrative (Beaty 319; Gray 42). Dickens' serialised novels certainly followed this individual-story-within-an-arc structure (Allen 184), yet they are still generally considered part of a single novel, a single text. Therefore, unless the author self-identifies the work as a collection of smaller stories, then each Wattpad 'book' will also be considered a single text for the purposes of this discussion.

Furthermore, rather than analysing the literary 'qualities' or messages within these texts, this research is concerned with what they can reveal about the social reading communities that they encourage and support. Therefore, this discussion focuses on the objective facts and observable aspects of Wattpad texts and its online reading community, and directly compares this original research to existing studies on Amazon's Kindle. These two case studies offer insight the practicalities of digital technologies, interactivity, and the effects of the communal

reading process that facilitates the development of online reading communities. These findings will then be used to inform an examination of existing paratextual theory, which allows a deeper theoretical analysis of these online reading communities, interactive ebook platforms, and commercial contexts, seeking insight into how such ereading technologies and interactions are influencing book reading in the digital social era.

2. The Phenomenon of Modern “Social Reading”: Interactive Ebook Platforms and the Sense of Community

The rise of mobile technology and social media in the first decade of the twenty-first century has seen the development of multiple niche online communities, including every type of book club imaginable (Keiser 22). With the parallel development and commercial success of practical ebook technology and ereading software platforms (whether accessed through a dedicated ereader device such as the Kindle or an ebook reading app for a tablet or smartphone), it is perhaps unsurprising that both technologies and activities should merge. Now the community interactions of social media can occur during the actual reading process itself and within the textual and digital space of the ebook. This is referred to as “social reading” or “an experience between multiple readers and one text” (Stevens 4). As Joachim Vlieghe et al. point out, “the social aspects of literary reading have been extensively studied in relation to off-line environments” but now the term increasingly refers to “literature-related practices in social media environments” (27).

Humans are social creatures, and the act of reading in a social environment, with multiple readers and a single text, is not a new phenomenon. Read-aloud sessions at home, book clubs, and libraries (for example) have been occurring since before Dickens’ time (Altick 35, 39, 250; Baron 198; Bérubé et al. 422; Cameron 81, 87; Collins 6; Stevens 4). The key difference is the technology that enables interactions between readers separated by significant time and space (Jenkins et al. 30, 39-40; Lessig 41). No longer limited to those people physically present in a particular room on a particular date at a particular time, book clubs and reading communities can now encompass thousands of readers across every continent, with conversations recorded as

digital text and remaining available to other members to read and respond to at any time, should they choose. This new type of reading community can be hosted on a separate dedicated website or social network such as Goodreads or Facebook (Nakamura 239; Vlieghe et al. 31), or, in another strange merging of old and new, within the text of the book itself; the reading community's digital interactions become the "marginalia" of the book (Cameron 90). The readers, the narrative, and (on some platforms such as Wattpad) the author are all drawn together by the interactivity these platforms promote and rely on, fundamentally altering the reading experience.

In literary theory, the act of reading itself is considered 'interactive' between reader and text; "a two-way recursive and dynamic interaction that occurs within both an immediate and wider socio-cultural context" (Walsh 25). However, this is only part of the interactivity under consideration here. The perception of 'interactivity' in these digital text environments, as on most social media such as blogs, is "more than the human-machine and human-message interactions"; it hinges on the perception of "human-human interactions" (Mutum and Ghazali 354). When conceptualising this in relation to virtual realities in 1992, Jonathan Steur defined "perceived interactivity" as "the extent to which users can participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment in real time" (84). More recently, Yuping Liu offers an updated definition of "interactive communication" as "a communication that offers individuals active control and allows them to communicate both reciprocally and synchronously" (208). This 'reciprocal' and ongoing nature of such communication is key to these social reading communities, and none more so than Wattpad.

On Wattpad, these ideas of control, reciprocity, and synchronicity (meaning here a very short turnaround time for these communications to occur - practically instantaneously when all

parties are online and active at the same time) are critical to the social experience the platform promotes. For the purpose of this discussion, the term “interactivity” is considered to encompass both the *potential* for social exchanges, as well as the action itself. Even if a user declines to “interact” whilst reading a particular Wattpad text, the mere knowledge of such potential, it will be argued, has a significant - if subtle - effect on their relationship with the fictional narrative in this digital, mobile environment.

2.1 The Age of the Ebook and Digital Social Reading

Literary cultures have now been actively and energetically evolving online since the highly successful introduction of Amazon’s Kindle ebook reading device in 2007 and Apple’s iPad tablet computer in 2010 (Striphas 298), which heralded the coming of age of the ebook and ereading (McCracken 105) and to which some refer as the ebook “revolution” (Manley and Holley 293; McCracken 107). Prior to this revolution, theoretical predictions of the evolution of fiction books in electronic formats focused on increasing complexities and control from the point of the reader with “random-access or hypertextual narratives” (Nakamura 240); essentially focusing on attempts to develop “radically experimental electronic literary forms for which the public is not entirely ready” (McCracken 106). On the other hand, practical and commercial experiments in releasing ebooks with more traditional narrative structure alongside dedicated ereading devices in the 1990s and early 2000s were met with limited success (Manley and Holley 298-306). There are two significant reasons for this. From a literary or theoretical point of

view, these early efforts had a notable focus on experimental styles of digitally-native texts that defied traditional reading practices, as writers and software developers pursued an individual ‘new’ experience. This alienated, frustrated, and excluded potential readers (Fitzpatrick 97; McCracken 106) rather than enhancing the existing reading experience and “pleasures of readerly sociality” which the vast majority of established readers were familiar with and expected to have (Nakamura 240). The other practical and highly influential reason is simple logistics. Early computers and ereaders were bulky and heavy, with limited battery life and unappealing visual aesthetics. Even if a customer had the money to spend on one of these expensive early devices, the experience of reading on it was unpleasant or exhausting compared to the traditional, pleasurable materiality of a paperback (Carreiro 222; Manley and Holley 299-304). Therefore, while many devices were brought to market, few enjoyed any measurable success.

With so many different experimental approaches and devices appearing and disappearing since Vannevar Bush’s first scientific description of a “memex” in his 1945 essay “As We May Think” (as discussed in Manley and Holley 294), it seems unsurprising that there has been some conflict and confusion as to what, exactly, the term ‘ebook’ refers to. Multiple attempts have been made to define what counts as a so-called “ebook” (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al. 260), generally depending upon the context, format and purpose; descriptions range from hypertexts intended to be read and navigated on a computer to narratives only accessible through a dedicated ebook reader (Manley and Holley 293), or indeed the physical electronic ‘book’ device itself as distinct from the content it holds (Carreiro 221). An expanded definition suggested in 2000 included “the contents of any book made available in electronic form through four different methods: a downloadable, dedicated ebook; a dedicated ebook reader; a web accessible ebook; or

a print-on-demand book” (Hawkins, as cited in Manley and Holley 293). As Manley and Holley acknowledge in their 2012 discussion, the ongoing changes in the definition reflect trends in the market; the first ereaders were “multifunctional” before becoming dedicated reading-only devices (293), as seen in the early models of the Kindle and Kobo. Now, of course, in the late twenty-teens, multiple functions are again the norm in ereaders such as the latest generation Nooks and Kindles, and reading apps are simply one piece of software on millions of smartphones (293, 305). An early single-function Kindle could have been called an “ebook”, but an iPhone cannot, although it may *contain* ebooks.

In an attempt to amalgamate these considerations, in 2010 Erin Carreiro proposed a two-part definition of an “e-book”:

An e-book is a digital object with textual and/or other content, which arises as a result of integrating the familiar concept of a book with features that can be provided in an electronic environment.

E-books, [sic] typically have in-use features such as search and cross reference functions, hypertext links, bookmarks, annotations, highlights, multimedia objects and interactive tools. (221)

In her discussion of the definition, Carreiro suggests the first part is “stable” as it describes “persistent characteristics” of a traditional printed text as applicable to any electronic version, and the second part is “dynamic”, needing regular revision as it refers to “benefits and technologies that will evolve over time”. This second part is particularly relevant here, as it is the interactive tools and how these tools influence the reader’s experience that is the focus of this discussion.

Therefore, for the purposes of this investigation, the term ‘ebooks’ refers to the discrete pieces of electronic text that would be considered a fiction book if they were printed and bound in the real world, in a looser reworking of Carreiro’s first definition. This encompasses a wide variety of written narratives that are published in electronic format, accessible to internet users either free or for a price, available to read on an electronic device, and are defined by a single title and author name (whether a username, pseudonym, or otherwise). This term therefore includes discrete files that are downloaded onto the user’s device subsequent to purchase on retail sites, as well as free, serialised instalments of stories published on platforms such as Wattpad. It is admittedly a very broad definition, but one that is required when considering the social reading communities that develop in and around unfinished or serialised fictional texts as a result of the interactive features that are built into the software and hardware that contains these ‘ebooks’.

As the ‘ebook’ became a viable commercial commodity, literary scholars and industry professionals raised fears about the fate of the print book (Barnett 160; Carreiro 220). Consumers, whether individuals or libraries, have been subject to abrupt changes and confusion as the big publishing houses have warily entered the ebook market with highly volatile approaches to purchasing, licencing, fair use and copyright issues (Acedo and Leverkus 45-49). Up until 2014, there were frequent changes in publishing and distribution models which were complicated by various pieces of legislation that were enacted long before the technology they now govern was developed (49), and different devices limited access to different types of files from different vendors (Romero 65). In 2016, the International Digital Publishing Forum was established as the supervisory organisation for the digital book trade (Carreiro 224). This forum, along with the ubiquity of mobile technology, has led to the development and adoption of

international standards for ebooks. At the same time, there has been a proliferation of free ebook reading apps that allow users to read any standard format of ebook on their choice of device. For example, Amazon books can now be read on a free Kindle app on a vast variety of devices instead of only on a Kindle ereader, and unaffiliated apps such as Bluefire can open all standard ebook formats (Bluefire Productions). Some of these apps allow access to a vast library of ebooks without having to leave the digital environment of the app itself to visit an ebook store, enabling direct access to hundreds of thousands of books available for free or for very cheap prices, such as those found on Wattpad. However, despite the proliferation of these platforms and the fears of the industry, the print book is still the dominant format for book sales and remains an integral part of literacy and the simple enjoyment of reading in 2016 (Carreiro 232; Milliot, “As E-book Sales Decline”; Perrin; Raab 38-39; Sweney).

The biggest difference in the reading experience offered by ebooks in contrast to print books is the networked technology that is part of the physical object that holds the story: the “interface” (Cameron 83). The software applications that enable the reader to turn the electronic pages have many more embedded functions than simply displaying letters and numbers in a particular order, as Carreiro outlined in the second part of her definition. These extra technological functions are not limited by the hypothetical front and back covers of an ebook (such as within-text searching, hyperlinked contents tables); ebooks now allow much more interactive features² such as electronic highlighting, annotating, and, most significantly for this discussion, external links to social media networks of other readers. As Tully Barnett points out, reading is both an individual and a social experience; a text can be read in silence or aloud, alone

² The incorporation of dictionary software into many ereading platforms, which allow readers to select words and instantly view their definitions, is one such interactive feature. While the ramifications of such technology would be interesting to investigate, this is not relevant to the social focus of this discussion.

or in a group, while the experience itself can be discussed with others in a multitude of different situations (141). Solitary reading is not the universally preferred standard, and is noted by multiple researchers as a cultural construction dependent on time and location (Barnett 157; Bérubé et al. 422; Jackson 65; Long 7). In the current era of social media and networking, the incorporation of communication technologies into ebooks and ereading “creates a foundation for reading communities” (Barnett 143), as is seen by the evolution and popularity of literary-focused software.

2.2 Interactive Ebook Platforms and their Social Features

As a result of the development of ebooks and readers’ tendency to seek out social experiences, entire websites and apps have been developed alongside ebooks to facilitate electronic communications and online relationships between readers, such as the book club website Goodreads (now owned by Amazon) (Carreiro 226; Nakamura 239-242). Within these apps and other parallel websites that revolve around discussing, advertising, and selling books, readers of the books can interact with each other and form social reading communities online. In most cases, as with real-world book clubs, this occurs as a closely-related but separate activity to the actual reading. Some ereading software, such as Barnes and Noble’s Nook, embed social media tools from external sites such as Twitter and Facebook to allow readers to export their thoughts about their reading to their established social networks. In effect, this imitates the experiences and advantages of a real-world book club (Stevens 5). In other cases, such as in Kindle ebooks and on Wattpad, these interactions can happen within the ebook itself. The

software technology allows the user to interact directly with the text as well as with other readers *while reading*, without embedding or redirecting to external networks or even leaving the page. These ereading platforms, companies, and communities are redefining the experience of reading ebooks.

Amazon's Kindle version of this kind of digital interaction is known as Popular Highlights. This function was introduced in 2010 (Barnett 145) and allows the reader to digitally highlight pieces of text, which are automatically saved to the user's individual Kindle account as well as anonymously uploaded to the central Amazon database (Cameron 83). As Lauren Cameron describes, if three or more individual users highlight the same passage, Amazon automatically applies that highlighting to *all* other Kindle copies of that particular edition of that book in all territories, including both past and future purchases. This social reading feature is turned on by default, so a user opening a new Kindle ebook for the first time may be immediately confronted by the anonymous community of other readers in the form of numerous highlights. These appear as grey dashes under each particular 'Popular' excerpt with a popup annotation tallying how many users highlighted this section. The reading community hosted and promoted by Amazon has invaded the new ebook; the opinions of the "hive mind" are pre-inscribed on the page for the new and returning reader to see (Cameron 89; Rowberry 212).

Amazon explicitly states the intention of these encounters is to influence the reader's attention and reading experience, to encourage the reader to focus on excerpts that are the most meaningful to the majority of other readers, and to encourage *interaction* with the reading community (Cameron 83). However, Cameron notes that while this feature does seem to foster a sense of interactivity, in reality that interactivity is extremely limited to "all or nothing", and the contributions of the user are restricted to simple highlighting without any customization features

(83). The “dialogue” between readers and the interface is “clipped” (84); essentially a way of pointing at a particular line and being able to add no further information to the attempted communication. Cameron’s criticism of this kind of enforced and limited interaction suggests “the Kindle violates basic, albeit informal, rules about how interfaces are supposed to function” but acknowledges this does not appear to affect the device’s popularity, and that many users choose to take advantage of this feature (85).

Such interactions and interactive features can be examined in theoretical terms already existing in academia. With the visual appearance of Kindle’s Popular Highlights (along with similar highlighting and note-making functions available on other ereading apps) resembling the pencilled underlining of real world annotations in print books, the most immediately obvious comparison is with marginalia. Cameron notes the phrase *digital marginalia* is common enough on the web, but appears to be somewhat avoided by the scholarly community, “perhaps because of a reluctance to acknowledge such a category or because of a lack of understanding of what exactly it may constitute” (86), which is likely due to the inconsistency in feature, function and form across the vast variety of ereading hardware and software. She argues that while Amazon’s Popular Highlights could potentially be identified as a type of ‘image’ or ‘hypertext’, they do not quite fit the intended purposes or effects of the ‘true’ versions of these media forms (85). She chooses instead to use the term “digital marginalia”, which fits with the purpose and content of this discussion.

In fact, Cameron notes that a “truer form of digital marginalia would allow an e-text user to access comments from other readers on a popularly highlighted passage” (86); as it happens, this is precisely the form and function of “inline comments” on Wattpad. While Amazon has enabled the feature of “Public Notes”, this function must be opted into, and users must deliberately

choose to follow a particular user to view their specific highlights and notes. They must also have purchased the exact same edition or version of the title in order to access the annotations made by that particular user (Amazon Kindle). Just like the unrestricted public access to all comments on Wattpad, if an Amazon user chooses to make their notes public, then all other Kindle users would have the ability to follow and read them. These features form the basis of a “social infrastructure facilitating interactions” between readers (Rowberry 212). Cameron explicitly states that the general effect of these interactive features of these Kindle ebooks “serves to create the feeling of a reading community” (87), and this effect can also be found on other interactive ereading platforms such as Wattpad. Therefore, in the context of these ebooks, the digital marginalia are the means by which the community is formed and operates.

The concept of marginalia and applications to existing paratextual theory will be examined in much more detail in the next chapter, but firstly, there are alternative terminologies and theories to consider. Instead of ‘marginalia’, Simon Rowberry suggests the act of making a Popular Highlight on a Kindle book is a modern form of *commonplacing*; the “historical practice of selecting important parts of a text to remember and reflect upon for their significance beyond their original textual context” (212), a way of identifying aphorisms for later consideration, of extracting knowledge from the narrative (217). However, as his study focused on public domain texts such as Shakespearian plays, this study’s data regarding the most common types of Popular Highlights are subject to selection bias and not applicable to all other fiction genres or community demographics, and is less useful when considering less ‘literary’ reading communities and ereading habits. For example, in her own study of Kindle Popular Highlights, Cameron noted her results revealed “scholarly and popular reading communities value different aspects of a piece of literature” (90). To his credit, Rowberry did acknowledge this, and found

that the second most common type of annotation in the “shared highlights culture” focused on “pivotal narrative moments” (220). But as these highlighted sections need context to make sense, they cannot always be classified as ‘commonplacing’ or aphorisms. Rowberry therefore chose to identify these as “*in media res* highlighting” (220-221, emphasis in the original), as they occur within the context of the narrative, and depend on this context to make sense. These types of Popular Highlights are not commonplacing, and therefore the term ‘commonplacing’ cannot be used to describe all such interactions between readers and ebooks. However, if a reader of a print version of the same book were to highlight the same passage with ink on the paper, it would be classified as marginalia. Therefore, some Popular Highlights are acts of commonplacing, some are not, but *all* are marginalia. On the Kindle, these digital marginalia (commonplacing or not) are immediately hyperlinked and networked to other parts of the social infrastructure of which the ebook is a part.

These hyperlinked excerpts of Popular Highlights are collected by Amazon and made accessible to the public. However, after several years of collating lists of the most popular excerpts and making these easily visible to the idly curious user, in 2014 Amazon retracted these lists and, as of the time of writing, no longer offers any analysis of the Popular Highlights, although the extracted highlights themselves are still available *en masse* in its database (Rowberry 213). Similarly, Wattpad also does not draw any public conclusions or collations of popular text sections on its website, even though it relies on in-text highlights and comments as part of its social infrastructure. In contrast to the Amazon Kindle, it is only possible to view Wattpad comments *in situ* as the reader progresses through the book, and this makes broad analysis of such interactions difficult. As Rowberry notes, when examining this type of data it is impossible to draw conclusions about “small-scale reading practices” (213). Furthermore, it is

difficult to determine the demographics or intentions of such “mass readership” when relying only on fragmented digital marginalia (213). However, certain patterns in the data *can* be observed that suggest how such interactivity between text and readers influences the social reading experience. One of the first conclusions that can be drawn is that this practice certainly is ‘popular’; Rowberry’s 2016 data from Amazon’s Kindle community indicated there were already more than a million highlights made across over a hundred thousand titles (214), and on Wattpad, hundreds of thousands of comments can be found on some of the most popular individual ebooks. It is obvious that the practice of digital marginalia, or of Rowberry’s ‘commonplacing’, clearly holds significant appeal for certain readers, who must be gaining some sort of value from the activity.

However, the nature of the value offered by these interactive features is not immediately clear. If the highlighting is a form of commonplacing, then scholars such as Rowberry would award this a high cultural value, as he declares that historically “commonplacing helped transform narratives into wisdom” (213). This practice enabled readers to easily identify and ponder on the most truthful or valuable parts of a text, turning the quotations into “decontextualized expressions of wisdom” either on their own or through the direction of more authoritative parties such as publishers of anthologies of commonplaced excerpts (213-4). As previously mentioned, he also notes its close relationship with the aphorism; a brief, self-contained section of text that considers some kind of moral topic (217). His research into Kindle literary classics suggests some readers *are* gaining this type of benefit from the practice of Popular Highlighting on the Kindle.

In comparison, the highlights in books that are not classified as ‘classic’ or ‘literary’ such as fanfiction and romance (which both historically and currently are not seen as particularly

‘cultured’ genres) do not offer this type of ‘value’, especially on amateur-dominated sites such as Wattpad. Additionally, the act of highlighting and commenting on Wattpad cannot logically be undertaken with the intention to return to these excerpts to consider them at any length, as readers’ highlights are not accessible even to themselves anywhere outside of the text itself³. In fact, the actual highlighting is not visible on the Wattpad text until a user chooses to view a particular comment by tapping on the annotated speech bubble icon in the margin next to the relevant section of text, whereupon the exact extent of the highlighted text that the comment is attached to will be revealed in conjunction with the comment. This is a distinct contrast to the Kindle, on which highlights are immediately “rendered distinct” from the original text and copied into multiple other databases such as the central Amazon collation of highlights as well as the user’s own ‘notebook’, and can be viewed and reread in many different contexts (Rowberry 214-5). On Wattpad, the highlights and other marginalia are only accessible within the pages of the ebook where they were made, much like the physical marginalia of a print book. Therefore, the value that readers gain from using Wattpad’s highlighting function must be different to that of commonplacing, and, given the attached commenting and conversational functions, it seems that this value is *participation* with the online reading community.

To avoid confusion, it is important to define who and what is meant by the ‘reading communities’ which form through these digital interactions (Cameron 87). Perhaps one of the

³ That being said, Wattpad does enable a ‘quote’ function that allows a user to deliberately export that selected text by combining the quote with an image (up to a certain number of textual characters) which can then be ‘shared’ to other social media networks such as Instagram, along with the author’s username, the book title, and Wattpad watermark. This is similar to functions also available as part of the Popular Highlights on the Kindle (Rowberry 217), and such ‘sharing’ capabilities are a notable feature of many websites and platforms that seek to take advantage of “cross-platform integration” (van Dijck 42) to include themselves in the social network of the internet. This could be argued as a way of extending the social infrastructure of the host platform (whether Kindle or Wattpad) into the established networks of other social media, which in turn also has potential effects on their reading communities, but as these actions must be deliberately taken into an external environment by the users and bring in further theoretical complications of multimodal meaning-making, it is not considered directly relevant to the discussion at hand and will be set aside for future researchers to investigate in depth.

reasons that the term ‘community’ seems to lend itself so readily to the description of these digital environments is because of the historically social nature of reading. As already noted, ‘social reading’ was a common pastime in the Victorian era (Cameron 87). However, some academics profess a discomfort with the term ‘community’ in this context, preferring instead the term *affinity spaces*; arguing that participants enter these digital environments in search of a particular experience or interest (in this case, reading fiction) and their primary attachment in that environment is to that pastime, and only secondarily, if at all, to other users who are also active within that digital space (Gee 98; Vlieghe et al. 27). These academics argue such digital interactions and communications revolve primarily around the users’ shared interest, or *affinity*, that caused their arrival into that space in the first place, and their personal, social bond is limited to and by that affinity. Yet however logical this may be, and however theoretically arguable, the vast majority of scholars consistently use the term *reading community* when describing the users whose activities collectively comprise the cultural phenomena being studied (see Barnett, Cameron, Carreiro, Nakamura, Romero, Rowberry, etc.) and this discussion will also continue to do so. Therefore, reference to the ‘social reading communities’ of these digital platforms encompasses any registered user who engages with any of the fictional texts hosted on these sites. In effect, these communities consist of any reader of the ebooks under discussion, and any user who might be exposed to those texts whilst actively browsing through the various digital spaces within the context of these platforms, such as lists of the currently most-popular books in particular categories, or pages of the actual books themselves. All these users are automatically included in the term ‘community’ as their actions directly or indirectly affect and are affected by the experiences and actions of other readers and users of the same software and texts.

These digital ‘libraries’, as has been demonstrated, are the foundation and infrastructure for the development of these social reading communities. Readers’ public participation in these communities generally takes place within the digital pages of the ebooks in the form of marginalia. However, each platform has additional structural differences that affect how the communities and their interactions are distributed. Most significantly, the entirety of Wattpad’s content is free and streamed (each users’ copy of each ebook is constantly updated by reference to a centrally-held file), whereas ebooks acquired through Kindle are licenced and downloaded in full to the relevant device(s). On Wattpad a user may save a copy to their device to read offline in the short term, but as soon as they reconnect, their book is updated and refreshed with any changes the author and other readers have made to the text and its attached interactions. Therefore, at any given moment all readers of that text are reading an identical (or as near as possible) narrative, and all text, comments, and other social data related to a Wattpad ebook is centralised. This is a significant contrast to the multiple editions of books held in the databases of other ebook retailers which can cause conflicting data between versions (as seen in Cameron’s discussion of Kindle’s Popular Highlights), and as a result the community highlights and notes are not applied to every single edition. The Kindle reading community is then splintered depending on which edition they have downloaded, whereas Wattpad only has one, constantly-updated version of a single title in which *all* participating readers interact.

The advantages of the Wattpad system is that all readers are literally kept on the same page: centralising, collating, streamlining, and potentially intensifying the social interactions around and within that particular text. The author can correct errors as they appear without having to release another edition and suffer with the knowledge that ebook files still containing the errors are still in ‘circulation’. Yet, the disadvantages also come from the same action; if the

author chooses to make significant alterations to a text (say, rearranging or rewriting entire chapters), then later readers or re-readers will encounter a significantly different text with the highlights, comments, and votes from the earlier version still attached (unless an entire part was deleted, in which case, the attached marginalia are also). If this occurs while a reader is still only partway through the book, then their entire reading experience may be disrupted. This is a fundamental shift in power between author and reader, with the author retaining control of the story rather than relinquishing a completed product into the reader's hands. Additionally, this raises concerns about whether a text will ever be finished. Therefore, while the reading experience is now immersed in the social community formed by that text, the experience is also more vulnerable, and potentially uncertain. Kindle users are a little more protected given the terms of their purchase with Amazon, yet as the infamous and ironic 2009 incident of Amazon's remote deletion of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* and *Animal Farm* (Milliot, "Uproar") reveals, not even Kindle owners are invulnerable to such disruption.

So, it is clear the age of the ebook has ushered in a new era of social reading that has seen the rise of reading communities on a scale and of an immediacy and intrusiveness that was never before possible. Despite the various disadvantages or disruptions, it is evident that vast numbers of readers are actively participating in these communities and choosing to take advantage of the interactive features that are now common across major ebook platforms. These readers and communities are continuing historical reading practices such as commonplacing, marginalia, and social sharing in an entirely new environment. Indeed, as Ralph Raab passionately contests, the social aspects of reading are what promotes literacy amongst all generations, including the millennials and the technophiles (38-39). To delve deeper into the construction and engagement of the average reader with these social reading communities, and to investigate more specifically

on how the interactive features of these ebook platforms affect the reading experience, it is necessary to examine more closely the structure of one of these communities. Specifically, one of the largest and yet most under-studied ebook reading communities currently in existence: Wattpad.

2.3 Wattpad: The Mediated, Interactive Social Structure

Wattpad is one of the first and most successful ventures to have combined ereading and social media on one platform. The community it hosts boasts 45 million monthly users across the world, with the vast majority of these users reading, writing, and communicating in English (Wattpad, “Wattpad Pressroom”). The structure that supports this massive social reading community has several notable features: its entire library and network is free to access and participate in for any user with an internet capable device (using an internet browser or the dedicated app) and email address; the overwhelming majority of its content is serialised and continually focuses the social interactions of its community into the textual space of the ebooks; and its written content and library structure is highly responsive to user participation and contributions. These features work together to create a social reading community that operates within the digital pages of the ebooks themselves.

Wattpad’s inception in 2006 predated both Amazon’s Kindle ereader and the iPad; however, it was not until the arrival of ubiquitous mobile internet-accessing devices that it became a sustainable venture (Bello). One of its most notable features is the focus on serialised

content, with books and stories being published chapter by chapter, encouraging readers to engage with the author during the writing process, as well as with other readers. Multiple attempts to develop interactive *read-as-it's-written* communities to compete with Wattpad have, so far, been relatively unsuccessful. Sites such as Amazon's Write On by Kindle (Kozlowski; Publishers Weekly) and the teen-focused platform Figment are essentially ghost towns in comparison to Wattpad, with the most popular titles earning mere hundreds or perhaps a few thousand views, and a handful of comments or 'like'-equivalents (Fig. 1.1⁴), against Wattpad's most successful books which have *hundreds of millions* of reads, millions of votes, and hundreds of thousands of comments (Fig. 1.2). Public online opinions indicate that some think Wattpad is simply too big and too strong to compete with "because that's where all the readers are" (Kozlowski); the strength of its reading community is the driving force of its success, which in turn relies on the way the platform mediates this massive social readership.

Like most other social networking sites, Wattpad is free to use and is open to anyone to register, read, write, and interact with any other member, and its revenue comes from advertising schemes. The structure and individual impact of these commercial aspects will be discussed in much more detail later, but when it comes to influencing the reading community as whole, this leads to an emphasis on encouraging users to *participate* rather than passively viewing (reading) the content (ebooks). This is in keeping with today's "participatory culture" in which users' "contributions" are usually valued more highly than their simple consumption (Jenkins et al. 112). The main contributions which are enabled as interactive features on Wattpad are 'votes' for individual story parts (this can be considered an equivalent to a Facebook 'like') and 'inline comments', as well as general comments that can be appended to any book part.

⁴ All figures and tables mentioned in this format are found in the Appendices: Fig. 1.9 is the ninth figure in Appendix 1; Table 2.2 is the second table in Appendix 2; etc.

Similar to the Kindle's Popular Highlights, Wattpad users who are reading on one of the official apps may select text in any book and attach a comment to that particular passage (as a side note, copying and pasting is prohibited by the software in an effort to reduce plagiarism and pirating), contributing to the mass of marginalia that has been created by previous readers. This Inline Comment feature differs from Kindle's Popular Highlights in several significant ways; on Wattpad a user *must* add a comment in order for the highlight to be recorded, whereas on Kindle "Public Notes" must be enabled for a comment to be added to any particular highlight. Aside from these direct interactions with and on Wattpad ebooks, users may send private messages one-to-one, or may post public messages on other users' profiles. But beyond this, there are few options for readers to socialise directly with each other. There are some forums called "clubs" on the desktop site but, unusually, these are not accessible or even visible on the app, through which 90% of its 45 million monthly users access the platform (Wattpad, "Brand Stories", "Wattpad Pressroom"). The mobile website also does not have any link to these clubs; the user must specifically request the desktop site when on a mobile device. Instead, Wattpad has a series of dedicated category-specific profiles which are monitored and run by Wattpad employees or by volunteers known as Ambassadors (Wattpad, "Wattpad Ambassadors"). Some examples of these accounts are @ScienceFiction and @LGBTQ, with approximately 455,000 and 100,000 followers respectively (at the time of writing). There are also other profiles run by collectives of some of Wattpad's most dedicated authors, such as the @SciKick account. According to the description, this profile is overseen by eleven individuals, each of whom are some of the most successful authors (either in terms of popularity, Wattpad awards won, or acceptance into the paid Wattpad Stars program) in the Science Fiction category on Wattpad (Fig. 1.3). These types of profiles assemble reading lists of recommended books and run competitions that any user can

participate in using a combination of “tags” and the standard Wattpad “contributions” of comments and votes. However, due to the restrictions on what and where users can post on profile walls and in comments, these community interactions must still all take place within the usual format of a Wattpad ebook. Instead of readers taking books into a social space such as a book club (online or off), Wattpad’s social spaces are *inside* the books. This makes it more similar to the Kindle reading community than dedicated social media networks such as Facebook or Goodreads.

There are additional limitations on contributions, or the types of interactivity, that further differentiate Wattpad from other social media sites. While the use of multimedia within the pages of a Wattpad ebook was made possible in late 2015 (Wattpad, “Wattpad Introduces New Multimedia”), users cannot post multimedia either on their own wall, on other profiles, in comments (in contrast to the currently popular practice of using animated pictures (gifs) to illustrate responses on many social media platforms [Feifer 26; Lavery 79]), or even in private messages. Links and their previews are disabled on most parts of the platform; the only hyperlink users may include within the text of a book is a tag to another Wattpad user name. Furthermore, it is impossible to interact directly with a comment or message from any user except to ‘reply’, as there is no ‘like’ or ‘share’ button on anything except a book part; the extreme opposite to the recent introduction of Facebook’s “reactions” (Krug), or the “upvote” or “downvote” options found in many comment sections of forum- or article-based websites, for example. So, even though Wattpad continually prompts users to contribute with messages that appear between chapters, in practice, these interactions are only a little less limited than those found on a Kindle (Cameron 83-84).

These limitations effectively prevent the judgement of others' contributions or interactions with the community, and extend to the books themselves. Unlike Amazon or Goodreads, for example, Wattpad does not have a reviewing or rating feature. If users decide to record a reaction to a particular work elsewhere than within the actual book, they have no ability to publicly hyperlink directly to the book within the app itself; they may only tag the author's username, which in turn sends a notification to that user. This limits readers' abilities to talk about a particular book anywhere but on other individual profile walls, or as marginalia attached to the book itself. This again has the effect of redirecting users to the primary text, to engage directly *with* the text, its author, and other readers of that text within the context of that book; the focus is on the work rather than the social media personality who produced it (Bridle). Consequently, although there are some users who post works consisting of book reviews (Fig. 1.4), there is no way for the user to advertise these opinions elsewhere or hyperlink them to the actual book. Instead, it is up to the author of the reviewed book to direct potentially-interested readers to the individual reviewer, if they choose. As a result, most readers rely on the direct contributions or interactions of other community members with the book itself in order to judge its 'quality'; how many reads or votes it has, for example. The interactions of a book's readers are an important, visible part of each Wattpad text, and are easily taken into consideration by other readers when gauging whether to interact with it themselves. After all, when content is free, readers have nothing to lose except a few minutes of time when trying a new book. On the other hand, a reader has little reason to invest time in a work with which they are *not* interested as they have not committed money to purchase it, and are likely to move on very quickly if they are not engaged by the text (this reader behaviour is visibly and statistically evident on the platform and will be discussed in much more detail shortly).

As with any community, there are the inevitable troubles of ‘trolling’, bullying, plagiarism, and other negative interactions (Wattpad is far from a digital reading utopia). On Wattpad, there are several recourses for the affected users. While any user on the site can read, vote and comment on *any* published work as soon as they register, they can be “muted” by other users if their interactions are consistently of a negative or provocative nature (Wattpad Help Center, “How To Mute”). However, this will only restrict the two users’ ability to *directly interact* with each other: they will no longer be able to exchange private messages, write on each other’s profiles, or comment on each other’s books. Yet, the muted user will still be able to read and vote on the muter’s works and vice versa, as well as view each other’s profiles and interactions with other Wattpad works and users, rather than completely hiding the muter from the muted. Wattpad states this is “designed to empower the community to resolve minor disputes and differences on their own” (“How To Mute”); it also has the effect of returning the involved parties away from each other and back towards the books, towards the act of reading.

These technical aspects of the platform have the combined effect of keeping the Wattpad community focused on the actual text of the ebooks; to actually *read*, and interact *as they read*, rather than as an external and separate exercise. Readers are continually nudged back to the digital pages of the ebooks to fulfil their desires for social interactions; and such desires are very common, as Tully Barnett discovered in his examination of Kindle’s Popular Highlights and Public Notes (151-157). Even on Amazon’s Kindle platform, where the Popular Highlights/Public Notes feature does not enable a ‘reply’ or linked conversation function, Barret found there were still comments made that were entirely unrelated to the book and appeared to be attempting to communicate directly with other specific users, e.g. “Go to bed Remi” or “Hey anyone on?”, which “indicates that users colonize specific books (or their Kindle pages on the

Amazon website) for specific conversations and social configurations” (151). These readers are attempting to use the ‘affinity space’ of the ebook to engage in social interactions with other like-minded users; they are seeking to participate in the perceived community of readers. Barnett suggests this use of the Popular Highlights and Public Notes on Kindle is “beyond that which Amazon had planned.” On Wattpad, in contrast, it is clear that such discussions are an integral part of the structure of the platform and the community it hosts; the ‘reply’ function allows each of these conversations to be collated in a single thread rather than overwhelming the page’s other marginalia, as Barnett found tended to happen in “specific” Kindle books (151). By allowing for users to engage with the community in different ways but in the same digital space, Wattpad encourages a wider variety of users to participate socially as they read.

Barnett also observed that, due to the Kindle’s automatic function of extracting Notes and displaying them on a separate part of the website (now sans any collation or analysis), the contributions of Amazon’s social ereading community are turned into a “feed of constantly updated social chatter” which can obscure any notes that are attempting to actually discuss the book (152). However, Barnett also found that this type of social community usually occurred in less popular, free ebooks (one of the examples was actually an English dictionary). He suggests they are chosen because they are easy to acquire and are less likely to attract notes and interactions from other readers who want to discuss the book, and therefore there are fewer interruptions to the social conversations (153). In contrast, bestseller Kindle books attract higher numbers of readers with higher rate of emotional and financial investment in the story, and the types of comments are noticeably different; typed responses to events in the story that either “reflect a reaching out to a community of readers about the book” or in some cases “responding to a character’s comments in a way that mirrors an interaction with the character”. These types of

interactions would be very familiar to Wattpad users. As Barnett noticed on the Kindle, the online platform promotes and emphasises the presence of other users and the potential to connect with them, which by extension can also “facilitate an illusion of proximity between reader and characters” which frequently leads to these types of interactions (153)⁵.

Yet, it is evident on both Kindle and Wattpad that the interactive features of ebooks are not universally accepted by readers. Barnett references the abundance of blog postings and other online chat forums which discuss how to turn off Popular Highlights and Public Notes on the different types of Kindles, due to irritation, privacy fears, and “dissatisfaction” (155). Ted Striphas asserts that this practice insults and objectifies “the propriety of reading” (302-304), which certainly indicates how some people may consider their reading experience significantly and negatively affected by forced implementation of such online reading communities. Barnett points out this is also a process of “commodification”; he notes the social reading habits of Amazon’s customers offer yet another way to collect data on their behaviour, which can then be “cash[ed] in” (155). With Wattpad being free to use and relying on advertising to cover its operating costs and turn a profit, similar fears of its users may be well-founded and are quite likely present in a large proportion of the community. Despite the large numbers of interactions and contributions visible on the platform, there is a significant and statistical majority of readers who choose *not* to actively participate in the reading community (which will be demonstrated and investigated in depth in the next section). However, those users who *do* participate in the community with various degrees of enthusiasm may do so because they feel secure that their comments stay within the books, only visible to others who enter the same ‘affinity space’.

⁵ Barnett suggests further study on the differences between the types of readers who “colonise” different genres of books, and the differences in the way they take advantage of the interactive social community present in these ebooks (154). This discussion does not attempt to answer this call, but instead will remain focused on how these contributions and sense of community affects the reading experience among socially active readers.

Users' comments appear on their profile in a recent 'Activity' feed, but these are temporary. With the addition that Wattpad comments are unable to be searched or filtered (by public users, at least), and that readers' Wattpad accounts are not directly linked to a shopping account as Kindle accounts are to Amazon (Striphas 298) and Nook accounts are to Barnes and Noble (Stevens 5), this maintains some semblance of privacy.

As a result of such interactions with ebooks, and the reading community around and within them, Barnett suggests such social practices are bringing textual analysis and close reading, along with "reader interventions", back to the coalface of everyday reading in the "technologically mediated" context which encourages a much deeper engagement with the text (158). He notes Kobo's attempt to 'gamify' similar features by offering 'awards' for reading and participating in the community (159), but this has not appeared to have significantly affected its readership as Kobo still trails behind the larger ebook platforms like Kindle and Barnes and Noble's Nook (in fact, it is nigh impossible to find reliable data to show the level of Kobo's success compared to the wealth of information available for the Kindle, Nook, iPads and other devices). Token 'awards' or personal statistics and data do not appear to have any impact on users' motivations to participate in these digital reading communities. This suggests it is the engagement with other readers, the books, and the authors that attracts millions of readers to Wattpad rather than personal 'achievement'. There is a perceived (conscious or unconscious) value to the platform, its community, and the social reading experience that surpasses the simple fact (in Wattpad's case) that it is free. However, it is not just an individual's own reading on Wattpad that is influenced by these features. Every single interaction a reader has with a book - including a single, simple page view - is added to a work's statistics and, when added up with all

the other users, can have massive effects on a single ebook, on Wattpad's entire ebook library, and on the social reading community as a whole.

2.4 The Effects of Interactivity on the Content of the Wattpad Library and Community

As the infrastructure of Wattpad's software is so strongly focused on its users' interactions with the books it hosts, it is unsurprising that these interactions have a significant influence on its featured content. This in turn influences other users' interactions which results in ripple effects that extend far beyond a single text. Most visibly, and similar to many other social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, Wattpad highlights its "trending" content (Fig. 1.5; Fig. 1.6) as indicated by the strength of user interactions. There are several ways Wattpad does this; most noticeably by posting trending tags, profiles and books on the user's home screen, and by displaying a "What's Hot" list for every category in each language (Wattpad, "My Story"). This "Hot" list is the only way that Wattpad ranks its books; however, while the books that make the list have a small note added to their 'about' description on the desktop website that states (for example) "#7 in Science Fiction" (Fig. 1.7), this is not visible anywhere on the app (Wattpad, "See Story Ranking"). The only way a mobile user can view this ranking is by observing the order in which the books appear on the Hot page (Fig. 2.1), and these lists change daily. It is impossible to visit an 'all-time most read' list, or to find out which is currently the most popular book on the entire site, and a user cannot search for a book by its current ranking or by how many times it has been read. This means that while user interactions can have a huge effect on a book, that effect is extraordinarily short-lived, and does not accumulate in a way that, say, a

collation of ratings or reviews do on other book platforms. Amazon's product pages and its subsidiary book club website Goodreads are the most dominant examples, as these platforms strongly encourage users to submit a rating out of five stars for the books they have read. This practice is common across all other major book retailers, including Apple's iBooks and Barnes and Noble's Nook stores, and the ratings appear to be permanently attached to the books with the average score out of five being displayed next to the titles. This shows this practice is considered the most effective way to advertise the 'quality' of a book and therefore encourage other readers to read it, either by purchasing or borrowing (such as through Amazon's Kindle Unlimited subscription library). The lack of such a rating on Wattpad indicates that the platform is not concerned so much with the reading community judging the quality of a book by a single accumulated lifetime rating, but rather by how it is *currently* encouraging interactions with its readers; its *social* strengths are valued more than its 'literary' worth, and this 'value' fluctuates from day to day depending on the engagement of its readership.

Wattpad openly explains the algorithm that calculates the daily ranking is based on "the strength of recent support in the community" (Wattpad, "See Story Ranking"). In practice, this "support" appears to take into account all aspects of reader interactions with a book - reads, votes, and comments - with varying degrees of influence; a large number of comments in a short space of time appears to have greater impact on the ranking than a similar number of votes, for example. Noticeably, and unlike other social media giants such as Facebook and Twitter, the number of "shares" is not visible either on the public book or on the author's private analytics page for each individual work (Fig. 1.8; Fig. 1.9), although this factor does appear to have an effect on Wattpad's recommendation algorithms (Fig. 1.5); whether it is included as a factor when calculating the wider effect of users' interactions is unclear.

What is evident, however, is how significantly the sum of these individual interactions of reading, voting, and commenting can cause the trending content on Wattpad to fluctuate massively within a mere twenty-four hours. Books can appear in a category's Hot list for any time ranging from a single day to many consecutive months, depending on the engagement of its readers. The more socially interactive and "supportive" the readers are, the higher that book will rise in the rankings. This increases its visibility, encouraging others to read it, which in turn can drive more interactions. However, the extreme mobility of the books in the ranking indicates the level of contributions must be highly consistent in order to retain a higher place. While a single enthusiastic user (perhaps even the author herself) could artificially inflate the ranking of a book over a day or two, lack of engagement from other users would quickly result in that title disappearing from the Hot list again.

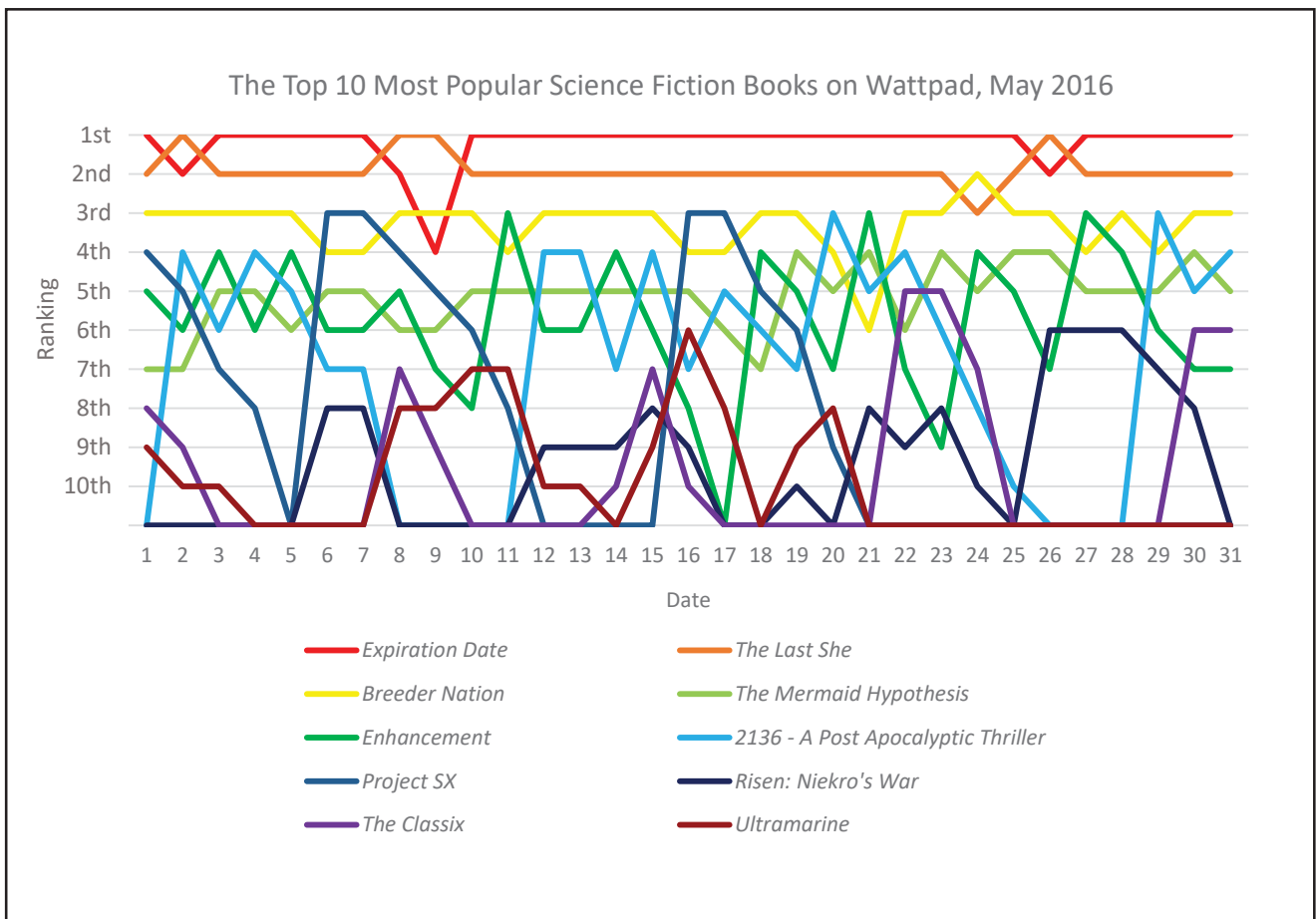
While Wattpad does not explain just how these algorithms work (presumably to prevent users from 'gaming the system'), it is possible to 'reverse engineer' the process by observing the statistical data of the most 'popular' titles over a period of time and examining the patterns they reveal. By analysing the outcomes and comparing these to the structure and activity around each book, general trends can be observed and explained. This analysis must assume the algorithm that measures the 'support' of the community gives most weight to the statistical evidence that is made public (i.e. the total 'reads', 'votes', and comments on each book) rather than some hidden value that only the company can access, and that the algorithm is generally consistent over time. These limitations are due to the potentially 'commercially sensitive' nature of the information regarding the company's operations and software, and also due to the timeframe of this research. However, it will provide a glimpse into the social reading community, its values and the infrastructure, that allows general conclusions to be drawn and useful analysis to be made.

To gather the data needed for such an investigation, for each day in the month of May 2016, the top ten “Hot” books in the Science Fiction category on Wattpad were recorded. There are several reasons this category was selected as opposed to one of the more popular categories such as Fanfiction or Romance; firstly, as this investigation is most interested in the evolving process of writing and reading, this ruled out Fanfiction because existing preconceptions of, and attachments to, readers’ favoured characters from other works (or real life celebrities) would have additional influences on the interactions between readers, writers, and texts, which could complicate the findings of this research. For similar reasons, this also eliminated the Classics category (which features literary works such as Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* which are out of copyright and have been transcribed into Wattpad ebooks) from consideration. Secondly, the most popular categories are so large (there are over 1.4 million stories listed under Romance alone [Fig. 1.10]), this threatened to make the investigation unwieldy in the limited timeframe. Thirdly, the smaller readership (relatively speaking) of the Science Fiction category means that smaller differences make more visible effects within the shorter timeframe, enabling more effective comparisons. Taking all of these considerations into account, the following discussion of the most popular Science Fiction titles on Wattpad is an effective illustration of the significant ramifications that readers’ contributions have for Wattpad’s content.

2.4.1 The Most Popular Science Fiction on Wattpad in May 2016

Throughout May 2016, twenty-nine different titles featured in the top ten of Wattpad’s Science Fiction Hot list (the raw data is available in Appendix 2). When observing the placement and movement of these twenty-nine works, the persistent ranking of three particular books is one of the most immediately noticeable patterns (Tables 2.1, 2.2, 2.3). The titles *Expiration Date* by

@MikaelaBender and *The Last She* by @HannahNelson809 were fairly consistently ranked at #1 and #2 respectively. Third place was often occupied by *Breeder Nation* by @KaraMichelleBooks, though there was more movement for this rank. Fourth to seventh place frequently moved between *The Mermaid Hypothesis* by @adam_and_jane, *Enhancement* by @scifiwriter, *2136 - A Post Apocalyptic Thriller* by @genk01, and *Project SX* by @_salacious. Eighth to tenth place had the most variety of titles, with few clear patterns. This is most effectively illustrated in the following graph, which features the movements of the ten titles which appeared most consistently in the top ten places during May.



Not all of these ten titles were in the top ten every single day of the month, but on average, they were the ten most popular titles for May. The term “most popular” here means the books that enjoyed the most “support” from the Wattpad community (Wattpad, “See Story Ranking”): i.e. those with the most reader contributions and interactions. It is almost certain that the algorithm also takes the author’s activity into account, as the author’s views of her own book are added to the total “reads” for each part (for example, a draft story part can begin to accrue reads even before it has been published, if the author saves and previews it). Therefore, the more an author interacts with the readers (which in turn encourages their engagement), the more “support” the algorithm recognises and the better the work’s odds of rising in the ranks. As part of this, it is perhaps unsurprising that most of these titles were frequently updated with new parts during the course of the month; more story sections equate to more potential reads, votes, and comments. Clearly, readers are not dissuaded by reading “ongoing” or serialised books. In fact, they are more significantly engaged by them, evidenced by the fact that 6 of May’s top ten (*Expiration Date*, *The Last She*, *Risen: Niekro’s War*, *Project SX*, *The Mermaid Hypothesis*, and *The Classix*) were classified as unfinished, and three of those (*Risen: Niekro’s War*, *Project SX*, and *The Classix*) are discrete sequels to other Wattpad works, while *Expiration Date* includes its own ongoing sequel under the same title.

The remaining nineteen individual titles appeared throughout the month in various placings; some only once each, and others enjoying a single brief surge in popularity that lasted for a few days. One example of this is the book *The Famous* by user @famouxx, which appeared at #2 on the 9th May, dropped to #4 on the 10th, then to #6 on the 11th, down to #8 on the 12th and 13th, then disappeared and did not return to the top ten for the rest of the month (Table 2.1; Table 2.2). However, it must be noted that this data only records the top ten; it is possible and indeed

probable that this particular title remained in the rankings below #10 for some time, as the Hot list keeps track of the top 1000 in each category in total, and *The Famous*'s sequel *The Classic* was the 9th most popular title on average for the whole month.

Such brief appearances from individual titles suggest a single reader, or perhaps a small handful of users, were working their way through the title in a short space of time, voting and commenting frequently. This has a significant effect on the work during the period that this active user is engaged. *The Famous*'s overnight appearance at #2 (while acknowledging the fact it may have moved from as high as #11 the day before) is a good example of this. However, despite its sudden high exposure at the top of the Science Fiction Hot list, it did not succeed in earning additional highly-engaged readers, and it sank out of immediate sight within a few days. Those works which are consistently successful in engaging a high number of users and encouraging their high number of interactions are those which remain in the highest rankings for long periods of time, and just *how* these particular works attract and retain such readers, often forming a small community within the pages of each book, reveals the effects of interactivity on reader engagement with narrative fiction.

2.4.2 Reader Engagement with the Top Five Science Fiction Books of May 2016

When discussing how interactive media affects the fiction reading process and encourages “contributions” and interactions from readers, it seems adroit to study those texts which engage its readers most effectively. During May 2016, in Science Fiction on Wattpad, the five texts with the most engaged readers (i.e. with the most “community support”) were:

- 1st: *Expiration Date* by @MikaelaBender
- 2nd: *The Last She* by @HannahNelson809
- 3rd: *Breeder Nation* by @KaraMichelleBooks
- 4th: *The Mermaid Hypothesis* by @adam_and_jane
- 5th: *Enhancement* by @scifiwriter (Table 2.1; Table 2.2)

The domination of *Expiration Date*, which occupied the #1 spot for 27 out of 31 days, and was #2 for all but one of the other days (Table 2.2), is particularly noticeable when considering the high mobility of the other 28 titles in the ranks over the course of the month. However, it is important to note the work has an unusually high number of story parts, with the 152nd being added at the beginning of August 2016, with more still to come (Fig. 1.11). This has a significant effect on the potential number of statistics it can generate, as a much higher number of parts means readers stay within its pages for longer and can add a higher number of data points, affecting the relative rate of ‘popularity’ compared to other titles with fewer parts. On the first of May, *Expiration Date* had 5.9 million total reads (Fig. 2.2), on the 31st of May, it had 6.7 million (Fig. 2.32), and on the second of August, it had 8.2 million (Fig. 1.11); an increase of 2.3 million reads in 3 months. Even when taking into account the fact that this tally includes every single individual view of a part (including part-reads, and re-reads, or visits to add/reply to comments) and is the accumulated total of reads for all 152 story parts, it is still an impressive number, as

few works in the Science Fiction category appear to have passed the milestone of a million reads, let alone several million (in more popular categories, this achievement is more common, and the most popular titles frequently pass tens of millions).

However, it must also be noted the work that was called *Expiration Date* in May was in fact the entire first story as well as a significant number of chapters from its sequel, which had been added to the same ‘work’ rather than published in its own individual listing. As of August, the title of the work had been updated to *Expiration Date Duology* to reflect the nature of its double content, and was still highly ranked in the Science Fiction Category. The ongoing nature of the work clearly played a significant role in keeping the work at the top of the ranks for so long; as the other popular sequels in Science Fiction demonstrate (as mentioned earlier), having the first and second stories as separate works does indeed affect the ranking, as official Wattpad recognition of reader engagement is for individual titles, not series. (Similarly, *Enhancement* has an additional novella as extra “story parts” (to use Wattpad’s terminology) at the end of the work, rather than publishing the novella separately on the site elsewhere; however, this was not ‘ongoing’ as *Expiration Date Duology* is⁶.)

Regular visitors to the Science Fiction category would certainly notice *Expiration Date*’s consistent placement at the top of the Hot list, much like ‘real world’ readers notice when a book is placed on the *New York Times Best Seller* list (Krakovsky). Readers who might not have initially been enticed to begin reading the book are given more chances to reconsider it when they are continually reminded of its existence, and may be further encouraged to try it when they see the extraordinary statistics displayed next to its title continuing to improve each week. If they

⁶ However, as of December 2016, the work had been marked ‘completed’ and, despite winning a Wattpad award, had dropped to #40 in the ranks, further proving the ‘ongoing’ nature was significantly contributing to its domination of the Hot List for most of the year (Fig. 1.21).

do begin reading - as even a single page view is counted as a valid contribution by Wattpad - their engagement is then added to that of those before, and the book's status is reinforced.

However, 'merely' having a few million reads is not enough to be considered the "most supported" by Wattpad standards. Multiple books with only a few tens of thousands of total reads also frequently appear near the top of the Hot list. *The Mermaid Hypothesis* by user @adam_and_jane, which was the fourth most popular SF book of May 2016, began the month with approximately 58,000 reads (Fig. 2.4), and ended with approximately 91,000 (Fig. 2.32). As of the beginning of August 2016 it had 150,000 total reads (an increase of approximately 90,000 reads over the 3 months from the beginning of May), was still prominent near the top of the Hot list, and was not yet completed (Fig. 1.12). *Enhancement* by @scifiwriter was a winner of the 2015 Wattpad-wide story awards, one of a few dozen triumphing over 75,000 global entries (Wattpad, "The Wattys 2015"); yet its total number of reads 'only' improved from approximately 520,000 at the beginning of May (Fig. 2.2), to approximately 560,000 at the end of May (Fig. 2.29). Two months later, at the beginning of August, the books' 'reads' reached approximately 720,000 in total (Fig. 1.13), an increase of 200,000 over three months. Therefore, *Expiration Date*'s consistent high popularity is not simply a total number of reads, but a combination of multiple factors; frequent updates, a large number of parts, but most significantly, the way that its readers are engaged with the story and are contributing at a relative rate that outstrips its competition.

This rate can be most effectively demonstrated in the following table, directly comparing the main statistics of reader contributions and engagement that Wattpad displays next to all titles published on its site:

Raw Statistics for the Five Primary SF Texts on 4th August, 2016 (Figs. 3.1-3.5)

	<i>Expiration Date Duology</i>	<i>The Last She</i>	<i>Breeder Nation</i>	<i>The Mermaid Hypothesis</i>	<i>Enhancement</i>
No. of parts	152	65	48	30	95
Total reads	8.3 million	1.3 million	850 thousand	150 thousand	719 thousand
Total votes	365 thousand	80.7 thousand	45.8 thousand	10.6 thousand	48.9 thousand
Ongoing/ Complete	Ongoing	Ongoing	Completed	Ongoing	Completed

As impressive as such numbers are, these raw totals are deceptive. *Expiration Date* has not been read from beginning to end by 8.3 million people, although this is the number that is displayed next to its title. In addition, the average number of reads across the number of parts, which gives a result of 54,605 (as shown below), does not mean fifty-four and a half thousand people have read the entire book; indeed, the final chapter of the first complete book displays only 50K reads. It is worth noting again that *all* reads are counted in the book's statistics, including repeat views, and views from the author. With duplications occurring from ongoing conversations in comment sections, or replies from the author to readers, the true total of people who have read every single part at least once is impossible to determine in any precise manner. However, if it is assumed that the average total of approximately 55,000 reads per chapter has been grossly exaggerated by the extreme number of views on the first few chapters (this is discussed in more detail below), as well as the repeat views from highly engaged users taking part in the multiple conversations that have contributed to the ongoing high ranking of the book, and the 50K views on the final chapter, an educated guess would therefore suggest the number of readers who have read the entire first book that is actually titled *Expiration Date* (as opposed to its extra content and attached, ongoing sequel) is closer to forty thousand. This in itself is an

audience of an impressive size, but is a number far from the bold “8.3M” displayed next to the title.

Comparative Statistics for the Five Primary SF Texts, 4th August, 2016

	<i>Expiration Date Duology</i>	<i>The Last She</i>	<i>Breeder Nation</i>	<i>The Mermaid Hypothesis</i>	<i>Enhancement</i>
Average reads per part	54,605	20,000	17,708	5,000	7,568
Average votes per part	2,401	1,241	954	353	514
Average reads per vote	23	16	19	14	15
Percent of reads resulting in a vote	4.4%	6.2%	5.4%	7%	6.8%

At this time Wattpad does not display the total number of comments for entire works, only the total number of comments per chapter (in stark contrast to Amazon Kindle’s Popular Highlights) which makes analysis slightly more complicated. However, when averaging the number of reads per part, votes per part, and reads per vote, a clearer picture begins to emerge that enables a fairer comparison of reader engagement across the five primary texts.

As is already obvious, *Expiration Date Duology* is in a Science Fiction class of its own with its number of chapter parts, reads, and votes (this title’s statistics pale in comparison to the tens or hundreds of millions of reads of the most popular titles in Fanfiction and Romance), which makes it difficult to draw convincing comparisons with its peers. However, the books at #2 and #3, *The Last She* and *Breeder Nation*, are within 10-20% of each other, and while there is a larger statistical difference between *The Mermaid Hypothesis* and *Enhancement*, they are still within a few thousand average reads and a few hundred average votes of each other, which allows some interesting comparisons to be drawn.

The Last She gets, on average, a vote for every 16 reads, whereas *Breeder Nation* has 19 reads for every vote, which works out to approximately 5-6% of readers of any given chapter choosing to vote for that chapter for these titles. *The Mermaid Hypothesis* and *Enhancement* have a vote for every 14 and 15 reads respectively which equates to approximately 7% of readers choosing to vote for each chapter. Interestingly, despite *Expiration Date*'s extreme popularity, only one in every 23 reads will result in a vote, which suggests only 4.4% of users contributing a vote in return for the read. This is not a huge difference, statistically, but it is noticeable; particularly as the lower percentage belongs to the title which is #1, and the slightly higher percentage of read-vote conversion belongs to the books slightly lower on the Hot list.

There are several potential explanations for this phenomenon of lower vote percentage and higher ranking among these five titles. Perhaps *Expiration Date*'s higher number of reads is skewed by users who would not normally be interested in that particular story, simply flicking through the first few chapters just to see what the fuss is about but losing interest and discontinuing. This explanation seems credible when comparing the extreme difference in total reads for the first few chapters; 514K for chapter 1 (Fig. 3.6) is nearly halved to 287K for chapter 2 (Fig. 3.7), decreases further to 219K for chapter 3 (Fig. 3.8), to 131K for chapter 5 (Fig. 3.9), then drops to 97K by Chapter 10 (Fig. 3.10) and 71K for Chapter 20 (Fig. 3.11). The reads remain more consistent over the next sixty or so parts, but still gradually decrease until the total for chapter 89 concludes the first book at 50K (Fig. 3.12) - only ten percent of the total reads that the first part enjoys.

However, when compared to the 'reader loss' of the other four top Science Fiction texts of May, a similar statistical difference is found across all titles. On average, the final part of each

story only has 10% of the reads that the first part does regardless of the actual total, as demonstrated in the following table:

Statistical Comparison of Reads Per Part for the Five Primary SF Texts, 4th August 2016 (Figs. 3.6-3.34)

Story Part	<i>Expiration Date Duology</i>	% loss**	<i>The Last She</i>	% loss	<i>Breeder Nation</i>	% loss	<i>The Mermaid Hypothesis</i>	% loss	<i>Enhancement</i>	% loss
1	514,000	-	98,000	-	78,100	-	17,700	-	48,200	-
3	219,000	57	49,600	49	31,000	60	9,700	45	21,700	55
5	131,000	75	39,600	60	28,500	64	6,300	64	17,000	65
10	97,000	81	33,000	66	21,500	72	4,700	73	12,900	73
20	71,000	86	22,400	77	15,000	81	4,000	77	12,500	74
Final*	50,000	90	-	-	9,400	88	-	-	3,200	93

**The ongoing titles have very recently updated parts, setting them at a disadvantage as not all committed readers will have had a chance to catch up. Therefore, the “final” chapters of these titles have been omitted from the comparison of the final data point. In addition, the others’ data has been taken from the final chapter of the main book, not necessarily the final story part published under the title (e.g. to exclude the sequel published as part of the title Expiration Date Duology [Fig. 3.13] or the novella that follows Enhancement).*

***Percentage loss compared to the first Wattpad part, which may not necessarily be designated “Chapter 1” by author, and may be a prologue, blurb, or author’s note.*

This pattern suggests there is a fairly consistent rate of attrition of reader engagement (at least for titles at this level in the Wattpad community) that is steepest at the beginning of the book, but the decrease decelerates as readers progress further into the book and become more invested in the story, which is an entirely logical and understandable phenomenon.

On the other hand, *Expiration Date Duology*’s greater ratio of reads to votes may be simply due to the higher number of users contributing to a higher number of conversations occurring in the comments section, which sees a greater number of return visits from individual participants - each user can vote only once per part, no matter how many times they read it. It is impossible to determine for certain without better variable controls in place (or direct confirmation from Wattpad), but observations suggest this alternative scenario is more likely

because comments appear to have a greater impact on the algorithm's calculations than votes⁷; however, this may be also because comments are more likely to encourage response from others to further boost reader interactivity and therefore the book's rank. Thus, one of the reasons that comments may be valued more than votes is *because* of the impact they have on other reader contributions.

These votes (the icon appears as a small star or a heart on the app, depending on the device and version) are equivalent to a Facebook "like" (Krug) or a Twitter "favourite" (Twitter); a way of demonstrating appreciation to the user who generated the content without committing oneself to a public comment, or a public rating/review as on Amazon and Goodreads. Perhaps some users may be deterred from commenting as their message would be visible to *all* other users on the site, and would be attached to the text permanently (unless it is deliberately deleted by either the original commenter or author). However, the only record of what a user votes for is noted on their activity feed on their profile, and on the news feed of any followers they may have. This record will soon be lost in the infinity scrolling of their profile or their followers' new feeds. Some users appear to apply their votes very begrudgingly; only a few here and there for when they enjoy, in their opinion, an 'exceptional' chapter. Others are much more generous and vote for every part they read. In general, it appears that while there is a significant percentage of readers who actively take part in conversations on their favourite Wattpad titles, leaving multiple comments both as standalone responses to the texts or direct replies to others, there is a large,

⁷ This observation stems from my own experiences as an author on the site; the time delay (which appears to be a day or two depending on time zone) between reader contributions and the visible effect on a book's rank makes it difficult to prove an exact correlation. However, whenever the notification feed has shown a user making a high number of comments as they read through a particular work, the work in question shows a marked increase in its ranks within 24-48 hours - on one occasion jumping from approximately #220 to #15 in its category overnight. Other times, when a user makes a similar number of contributions but purely in the form of votes, the increase in rank is more limited; perhaps a few tens of places.

silent majority who choose *not* to engage with the text, author, or other readers in this form. This is made starkly evident with the following data:

Comparison of Reads to Comments for the Five Primary SF Texts, 4th August 2016 (Figs. 3.6-3.34)

	Part 1			Part 10			Part 20		
	R	C	R/C	R	C	R/C	R	C	R/C
<i>Expiration Date Duology</i>	514K	5.4K	1%	96.9K	977	1%	71K	595	0.8%
<i>The Last She</i>	98K	741	0.7%	33K	381	1.2%	22.4K	753	3.4%
<i>Breeder Nation</i>	78.1K	2.7K	3.5%	21.5K	1K	4.6%	15K	470	3.1%
<i>The Mermaid Hypothesis</i>	17.7K	131	0.005%	4.7K	49	1%	4K	43	1%
<i>Enhancement</i>	48.2K	226	0.4%	12.9K	23	0.2%	12.5K	238	1.9%

When taking three parts from the first third or so of each title, recording the total reads (R) and total comments (C), then calculating what percentage of reads results in a comment (R/C) for each, it is clear that an extraordinarily high number of users are reading without ever commenting. Even taking into account the statistical variation of duplicate views from returning users and the authors themselves, the very small sample size (some of these selected parts may be non-representative due to higher- or lower-than-usual numbers of comments), and the limitation to the single category, the percentage of readers who are likely to comment is significantly smaller than those who will vote. For 3 of the 5 titles, rarely more than *one percent* of reads will result in a comment. *Breeder Nation* and *The Last She* are the exceptions, yet they are 2nd and 3rd most popular, not 1st. There must be another aspect of reader contributions that Wattpad uses to calculate a title’s “support” in the community, but this is currently invisible to the average user.

These results could simply reveal that the typical user who reads Science Fiction is, on average, less inclined to contribute. However, when compared to a snapshot of the statistics on

the most popular titles on other categories' Hot lists, it seems that this stark contrast between reads, votes, and comments is reasonably consistent across the wider Wattpad community.

Comparative Statistics of the Top Books in Other Categories on 15th August 2016 (Figs. 4.1-4.16)

Title	Rank	Total Reads	Total Parts	Total Votes	% R = V	R. Pt 10*	C. Pt 10*	% C per R
<i>Ruthless Romance</i>	#1 Romance	2.9M	37	88.4K	3.05%	75.6K	302	0.4%
<i>Claimed By Him Without Love</i>	#5 Romance	1.8M	51	61.5K	3.4%	45.7K	107	0.2%
<i>Louder >> Dan x Reader</i>	#1 Fanfiction	5.1M	135	265K	5.2%	60.8K	6.5K	10.7%
<i>twitter [j.b]</i>	#5 Fanfiction	923K	94	34.9K	3.8%	12.8K	50	0.4%
<i>The Hoodie Girl</i>	#1 Teen	13.6M	51	535K	3.9%	332K	11K	3.3%
<i>I Am Living With An Idiot</i>	#5 Teen	13.3M	81	415K	3.1%	321K	8.4K	2.6%
<i>Badass nerd can fight</i>	#1 Action	2.7M	55	95.6K	3.5%	80.8K	828	1%
<i>Badass in the Shadows**</i>	#5 Action	113K	9	4.5K	4%	8.3K	538	6.5%

*Taking part 10 as the semi-random sample to avoid the bias in the disproportionate number of reads on the first few parts.

** This book happens to be the sequel of the book sitting at #1 for this day, and only had 9 parts.

The two Romance examples clearly show the same pattern of 3-5% reads resulting in a vote, and less than 1% resulting in comments. The Teen Fiction examples show a different pattern, where comments and votes are almost equally likely at around 3%, which, assuming the vast majority of readers are also teens, suggests a demographic reason for this difference. The Fanfiction and Action examples have two outliers in their data, for which there are logical explanations. The book titled *Louder >> Dan x Reader* is an example of a work that is written in the second person, placing the reader in an active (usually romantic) relationship with the main character; in this instance, a British YouTube celebrity known as Danisnotonfire. With the significant change in dynamics between reader and text (the narrative uses YN for 'Your Name' as the romantic character's name), and the writer trying to convince the readers that they would act the way they have written the Your Name character, it is unsurprising that this results in a

higher number of responses and contributions from engaged readers (as mentioned earlier, this is one of the reasons that Fanfiction was not selected as the main case study category for this research). As for the outlier in the Action category, *Badass in the Shadows*, it just so happened that on the day that the samples were taken this fifth most popular book was the sequel of #1 on the Action Hot list, and was still in the very early stages of being written. Readers who are actively following this writer and this story are more likely to be closely engaged during the writing process, and more likely to contribute. Essentially, these ‘outliers’ confirm the assumptions made earlier.

Therefore, it can be deduced that one of the reasons that Wattpad appears to value comments so highly in the execution of its ‘hot’ algorithm is because when a reader *is* moved to comment, that contribution is statistically unusual enough that it is worth highlighting to the rest of the community, and those works which generate the highest numbers are considered the most popular. However, it is not the only factor contributing to the algorithm that calculates the daily Hot list, as the percentage of readers who choose to vote instead of (or as well as) comment also have a visible effect on the placement of the title within the community. This can and will in turn have an effect on which other users see and potentially choose to read the title, further compounding the reach of the title, and how its readers engage with it. It is clear that, beyond simply making the title more visible within the social structure of this community, the interactivity of the platform has a greater impact on the individual and how they read, consume, and experience the text.

2.5 Conclusions

The ebook 'revolution' has seen the development of online social communities both alongside and within the digitised texts. This new form of social reading allows readers to interact with each other and the text in ways that both enable relationships and communications to vastly isolated readers, and yet can be commodified and reduced to data points, which can both discourage and encourage readers and researchers alike. Comments and discussion about the books are no longer private, yet this is not unusual in the long history of social reading situations, book reviews, and the practice of marginalia. The sheer scale, permanence (inasmuch as digital-only records can be considered long-lasting) and instantaneous public access to such interactions are the notable features of these new reading communities, which are enthusiastically taken advantage of by a significant number of users. It would appear on the basis of the sheer numbers of active participants that members of these communities find a level of satisfaction, enjoyment and fulfilment by participating in these social reading practices, that isolated or passive reading does not supply.

Yet, quantitative analysis of platforms such as Kindle and Wattpad reveal a larger, silent majority of readers who passively participate, or limit their visible contributions, in ways that suggest these users do not find the same level of value in these interactions that the active participants do. This is potentially why the Kindle allows users to highlight passages without adding a comment, as a compromise for less-extroverted individuals who would like to participate more quietly, or keep track of excerpts they like or want to return to (similar to the historical practice of commonplacing) without exposing their thoughts to the wider social community. Perhaps it is also for this reason that Wattpad chooses not to display the total number of comments as part of each title's statistics; as such a small percentage of readers

choose to contribute in this way, the majority of readers may in fact be discouraged from reading a particular book if they see that tens of thousands of comments have been made because they dislike the distraction, or see it as an indicator of contentious material they wish to avoid. Or, simply, they prefer to read more traditionally, without interacting with the community and instead focusing their attention solely on the narrative. However, despite their limited contributions, a significant number users will rely on the interactions of others (total number of reads and votes, for example) to gauge the worthiness of a book for their time, particularly when considering the size and equal cost (or lack of) of all ebooks in the Wattpad library and how these interactions affect the wider structure and visibility of its virtual shelves. Therefore, it is necessary to examine these contributions in closer detail, with the existing theoretical framework of paratextuality, to gain insight into how these interactions influence the text and the readers that form the community within and around it.

3. Digital Paratextuality: Interactivity, Marginalia, and Implications of Commercial Contexts

As the host of a social reading community, Wattpad continually invites its readers to participate and make contributions which impact other readers and their relationships with the texts. Even when a user does not wish to take advantage of the interactivity of the platform, their reading experience is still continually nudged by the interactions of others: from the appearance of the small grey speech bubbles in the right-hand margin of the digital page, denoting how many inline comments have been made on a particular part; to the messages and promoted stories and users that appear in between each chapter as the user swipes her way through, prompting her to vote, comment, share her thoughts on the text on other social media platforms, or to follow other authors. The presence of the community cannot be turned off or hidden as on the Kindle. The interactions and contributions of other readers, from the digital marginalia to the visible statistics of each ebook, are permanent features, and as such, their role as paratexts and their influence on the individual reading experience must be considered.

Another notable paratextual element of these ereading platforms is the presence of advertisements. While to some, the occurrence of advertising whilst reading a book may seem bordering on blasphemous, it is in fact a feature of commercial fiction publishing that has been almost consistently present in various forms since Dickens' time, persisting through the publication of pulp science fiction and fantasy novels of the twentieth century, and continuing through into the new technologies of today. Now, with the pervasiveness of advertising on the internet and on free-to-use social media platforms, small marketing images and popups are a sight that most web users are accustomed to. However, the stringent control that Wattpad exerts

over its advertising and revenue schemes results in an unusual layer of meaning. Its video advertising schemes are only implemented on select works that Wattpad has approved as being of higher quality, produced by authors with a strong track record of attracting and retaining readers. Therefore, the presence of these advertisements in certain ebooks becomes an indication of worthiness; a paratext denoting a measure of value by the standards of the wider community and its host platform. This in turn has a significant effect on how the reader relates to the text, and their experience of reading that particular ebook, and will be considered in closer detail shortly.

Firstly, to more closely examine the experience of reading on social ebook platforms, the exact nature of the reading community's contributions and extraneous information such as advertisements and statistics attached to every book needs to be identified in theoretical terms. Gerard Genette's theory of *paratext* is the most applicable foundation for this examination. In (the English translation of) his consideration of print books as texts, the term paratext is used to represent any other kind of text or "production" which has a position in direct relation to the central narrative itself - around or within the physical book, or external and at a distance - and posits that these are in fact required to make a *text* into a *book* (1-2). In his terms, the *peritexts* are the elements included in the "interstices" of the work, for example, chapter titles (4). The elements at a distance, such as communications *about* the book, are the *epitexts*. Genette offers the following formula: "*paratext = peritext + epitext*" (5). As he notes, it is impossible to conceive of a text as a book without such paratextual elements as a cover, title page, and author credit: the things which tell the reader *this is a book*. Their function is to construct the text's relationship with its readers (14). His theory has been widely adopted by the academic community and is used in multiple facets of textual studies that extend beyond the print book (on

which Genette's discussion focuses almost exclusively), and is a useful concept for theorising the effect of Popular Highlights, inline comments, and other social reading features on the structure of ebooks and their relationship with their readers.

Yet, while initial application of Genette's theory to the paratextual elements of digitised books appears to be quite straightforward - and indeed, many of his terms can be used for various ebook elements without any modification - several scholars have noted the complications caused by electronic technologies and interactive features that are becoming increasingly common across ebook platforms. Ellen McCracken, and Dorothee Birke and Birte Christ, have explored potential adaptations of Genette's theory to 'standard' ebooks in some depth. Their discussions reveal aspects of digital paratextuality, such as the phenomenon of marginalia, which afford significant insight into how such paratexts influence the reading experience. Prior to this, however, Genette's original theory and its application to ebooks and Wattpad will be explored in some depth.

3.1 Genette's Theory of Paratext and its Application to Ebooks and Digital Reading Communities

As Genette discusses at some length, there are certain elements of a printed text that are required for the text to complete its transformation into what is culturally and commercially accepted as 'a book'. Similarly, industry standard ebooks on platforms such as Kindle, iBooks and Nook, as well as Wattpad, feature many of the same standard paratextual elements as a traditional print book, such as a title, cover, author name, blurb, and chapter divisions. For retail platforms such as Amazon's Kindle, such elements are required before the work is allowed

through the vetting system onto the virtual shelves (Amazon Kindle). Although Wattpad has fewer ‘quality controls’ in place, it too enforces specific paratexts on every work published on the platform. Even if an author chooses not to add certain elements, Wattpad will generate one for them, such as the chapter title ‘Untitled Part 1’, or a cover produced by an automated blending of the author’s profile picture and the title. Additionally, Wattpad will not allow the text to be published until the author has added some information in the book’s Title, Description, and Category fields, which are also considered standard metadata for trade ebooks. Arguably, this is because our society is so accustomed to these paratexts that, as Genette has noted, a text cannot be considered a “book” without them, and the major publishing platforms adhere to these conventions. So, Genette’s theory applies to these types of paratexts in a quite straightforward manner. The ‘threshold’ of the cover image for an ebook is directly equivalent to the front cover or spine that is facing out on a shelf display; the blurb listed on the information page has the same function as the blurb that generally appears on the back cover of modern paperbacks or on the dustcover of hardbacks; the author credit, title, and placement within a particular category (literature, historical, YA, science fiction ...) are all paratexts with direct parallels both in the real world and online.

There are other digital paratexts, completely apart from the ‘traditional’ aspects of cover, title, etc., that also fit into Genette’s original categories in a relatively straightforward manner. For example, the statistics of a Wattpad book may be considered, in his terminology, “factual paratexts” (7). These types of paratextual elements, as he suggested, include facts about the author such as age and gender, or the genre of the book and any awards it may have won. This includes all information about the book which will have an influence on how the reader approaches the text (8). Such factual paratexts on Wattpad take several different forms. Most

noticeably, this includes the visible statistics of how many reads the book has earned (whether it be twenty or twenty million) and how many votes and comments have been added by readers. These numbers will affect how the reader considers the text and can, consciously or not, influence their reading experience. For example, seeing that a certain paragraph has had hundreds of inline comments attached may pique an otherwise distant, minimally-interactive reader's interest, and the act of reading through any or all of those paratexts will have an impact on how she makes meaning of that particular moment in the text. Even if she chooses not to read any of these paratexts, just the *knowledge* that many other readers were moved to comment has the potential to alter how the book is read.

These types of paratexts can further be identified as “public paratexts”; those which may be potentially read by any person at all (Genette 9). In comparison, Genette identifies a “private paratext” as one addressed specifically to individuals with the expectation that they would not be made available to the public, for example a letter from the author to the publisher, and the “intimate paratexts” are those messages that the author makes for herself such as in a diary or notes about the work (9). A Wattpad ebook's paratexts would therefore encompass any communications between the author and readers of the book on other parts of the platform, such as in private messages, or messages posted on public profiles, that specifically discuss that particular text. Additionally, it is also significant that Genette only considered a true paratext to be an element that was approved by either the author or her authorised representative, such as the publisher (9-10). However, the term ‘paratext’ is now widely considered to apply to any text that is derivative or representative of another text, including audience-generated content (Gray 20, 40-3, 118, 137), and as such is highly relevant when considering content attached to an ebook that is generated by readers instead of the author.

Therefore, the major differences that must be considered when applying paratextual theory to ebooks are those elements that are central to the promoted social reading experience on these digital reading platforms, but are impossible to reproduce with a physical volume: the recorded, electronic interactions from other readers. Even the ‘simple’ decision about whether these should be considered as *epitexts* or *peritexts* comes up against complications when the comments, or communications *about* the book (epitextual elements) are contained within the interstitial (peritextual) spaces of the book itself. Even when simply using the catch-all term *paratext*, it is difficult to determine exactly the effect that such comments have on the reading experience as it is impossible to tell who has read which comment, in what order, and how it affected their reading experience and relationship with the text. On the other hand, when the comments in the book have nothing to do with the text itself, and are being used as a community space for unrelated conversations and social interactions, it becomes questionable whether these are still accountable as paratexts - they are no longer ‘thresholds’ into the book but are instead interruptions and distractions that do not appear to contribute to the reader’s approach to the text. However, such ‘unrelated’ interrelationships between text, paratext, and ‘reader’ would potentially be comparable to a book taken to a social gathering and left on the table in the centre of the room; visible and present between all members but not noticeably affecting the proceedings. However, the simple presence of the book - or of the comment-conversation happening within its pages - is likely to have a subconscious or ideological effect on the participants, so the book itself might have become a paratext (or arguably a context) for the social community around/within it.

Additionally, when attempting to apply these theories and questions specifically to a Wattpad text, further complications arise from the ongoing, serialised nature of the text and the

paratextual elements generated by the interactions of its readers, or what Genette considered the “temporal situation of the paratext” in terms of its relation to the source text (5): i.e., when the paratext appeared compared to the publication of the text to which it is related. “Prior” paratexts appear *before*, e.g. advertising or announcements of publication; “original” paratexts appear *with* the original text, e.g. title pages, book covers, prefaces etc. (5). Genette further differentiates between *later* paratexts and *delayed* paratexts - such as paratexts that were created within a few months of the text’s publication, and those that come in an edition published decades later (6). Wattpad works to further complicate these definitions by the very nature of their existence and production. An “original” work and its paratexts may be updated or edited at any time, completely overwriting and erasing the initial form. The paratexts created by its readers and recorded in the interstices and margins can appear within moments of its publication, and are continually being added to sometimes years later, blurring the distinctions between ‘original’, ‘later’ and ‘delayed’. However, Genette considers the “intermittent” existence of paratexts to be “very closely linked to the basically functional nature” of paratexts in general (6, 7), and as such, these digital elements can still be considered paratextual, albeit in a new category of their own.

So, while Genette’s theory provides a solid foundation for the deeper analysis of the paratextuality of an ebook on a social reading platform, it is clear there are adaptations required to fully theorise and explicate just how these paratextual elements influence the text and its readers. With the relatively recent evolution of such ebooks and online reading communities, there is not yet a significant amount of research available to gather definitive quantitative or qualitative data on the subject. However, there are several scholars who have offered ways that Genette’s theory might be developed for the analysis of ebooks and social reading on Amazon’s Kindle platform, and these are also very applicable to the Wattpad case study.

3.2 The Continuing Evolution of Paratextual Theory in the Digital Era

One of the most direct discussions that develops Genette's theories for the ebook era has been put forward by Ellen McCracken. Her analysis of electronic "transitional literature" follows the evolution of Genette's fixed and discrete paratextual categories into paratextual elements that can be used as "guidelines" and "models". She proposes that paratexts, instead of being considered as "singular fixed objects", should instead be considered in terms of their "centrifugal and centripetal vectors" (106); those that draw the reader *into* the central text, and those that lead the reader out again to engage with other aspects of the central text or reading experience. This approach allows the paratexts to be studied while accounting for their dynamic temporal and spatial situations, which is particularly useful for a text with constantly evolving paratexts, such as those found on Wattpad.

McCracken's suggestion of centripetal and centrifugal vectors take the "verbal literary text as the center", and analyses the direction in which each particular type of paratext takes the reader's attention (106). By her definition, 'centrifugal paratexts' lead the reader 'outside' or away from the text; for example, a link that takes the reader to the author's personal website or profile, or a list of similar books. In contrast, 'centripetal paratexts' draw the reader deeper into the text itself and "modify readers' experience on inward vectors", such as options that allow alterations to the format, font, text size, and within-text searching (106-7), as well as highlighting options such as the Kindle's Popular Highlights (112). This is quite an alteration to Genette's stance that paratexts are neither inside or outside the text, rather, existing on the 'threshold'. Instead, McCracken proposes that some of these paratexts can be considered as "expanded versions" of epitexts, existing in a "larger textual orbit". As examples, she offers the paratexts of

comments about or reviews of the book on blogs external to Amazon's website, which may have drawn the reader's attention and propelled her inward towards purchasing the ebook; a 'centripetal' paratextual effect. Alternatively, McCracken notes the same type of paratext when encountered during the reading experience, such as an added comment or link to a review, is then considered 'centrifugal' as it draws the reader's attention away from the central text (110). Rather than ascribing a single element either one of a binary distinction, it is discussed in terms of the motion that it encourages in the relationship of the reader and text, depending on the present context.

In the context of a Wattpad ebook, however, it is possible to argue that inline comments made on the text are not truly 'centrifugal' as the reader never leaves the page of the story. Instead, these paratexts are contained within the space of the text. As opposed to the Kindle, which moves the reader to an extracted feed of comments and discussions, the comment function on Wattpad maintains the discussion alongside the text, within the 'covers' of the ebook. Yet, if a reader chooses to read or interact with the comments, their attention is certainly moved, perhaps only momentarily, to the side of the text. The strength of its centrifugal effect entirely depends on what the discussion is about, whether it closely relates to the narrative and/or the experience of reading, or whether it is entirely disconnected. Therefore, it is likely that this is a significant reason why Wattpad is designed to keep all comments within the pages of the ebooks: to reduce the centrifugal effect of the comments and retain reader attention as close as possible to the ebook, whilst these interactive paratexts still enable readers to fulfil their desires for social communication.

In a deeper exploration of the definition and function of paratexts, which acknowledges but sidesteps McCracken's notions of inward and outward movement, Dorethee Birke and Birte

Christ identify three aspects of these textual elements. Firstly, they note the *interpretive function* of paratexts that suggests or guides the reader to ways of reading and comprehending the text; secondly, the *commercial function* of elements that promote the text and encourage readers to select the book (whether off a retail or library shelf); and thirdly, those elements which have a *navigational function*, assisting the reader in locating themselves in relation to the text (e.g. contents pages, page numbers, and so on) (67-68). Some paratexts of a particular book may fall into only one or multiple categories, but all of them interact and overlap with each other in order to create the product and reading experience which is *that* book. Birke and Christ consider Genette's discussion to be lacking in consideration of the latter two, as it focuses almost exclusively on this first interpretive function of paratexts. However, as they note, these additional functions (particularly navigation) become difficult to ignore when discussing "digitized narratives", and it is important to consider all aspects of paratexts when the economic and accessibility of a text has a significant impact on its "reception and interpretation" (68). It is certainly highly relevant when analysing a free ebook platform with a constantly-fluctuating, evolving, and interactive mass of paratexts which are slightly different for every reader.

Birke and Christ further suggest there are three aspects of Genette's theory that need to be addressed; "the materialization, the boundaries, and the authorization of the text" (66). As they point out, Genette's discussion essentially focuses on textual or 'verbal' aspects of a book as its paratexts, but this could easily include design features and choices such as typography (69). In an ebook, however, and as McCracken noted, the reader has some degree of personal control over this. Many major ebook platforms, including iBooks, Kindle, and Wattpad, allow the reader to customise how the text appears on the screen from within a reasonably generous range of text formatting styles, and even the 'page' texture or background colour. Additionally, Birke and

Christ refer to the “materiality of the delivery device itself” as an influential paratext (75), similar to McCracken’s observation that the “text’s materiality changes the sense readers make of the ‘same’ content” (108). However, there are significant difficulties in conducting “an analysis of phenomena that are constantly and rapidly being modified”, as there are now hundreds of different brands and generations of devices through which readers can access the same ebook, constantly being redeveloped and updated (Birke and Christ 75). So, unfortunately, the research and theory required to adequately consider the effects of device ‘materiality’ on the individual user is far too complex for this discussion and must be set aside for future consideration. However, other ‘materialisation’ aspects to consider include book covers. On Wattpad, these can be altered at any time by the author and the appearance of the ebook in the user’s ‘library’ can change without warning, and this is certainly an aspect of Wattpad ebook paratextuality that is worth analysing, and will be looked at in more detail shortly.

Genette’s discussion of *thresholds* and the theoretical boundaries of where a text and paratext begin and end have also been analysed in detail by Birke and Christ, who accuse Genette’s theory of being “vague” and “contradictory” (69), which complicates its application to digital paratexts. Certain elements of a text are required to assist its transformation into a *book*, as already mentioned, and these types of paratexts could therefore be considered inextricable from the text-as-book (hence Genette’s ‘threshold’ concept); yet there are other ‘paratextual’ elements that are entirely removed from the text, such as communications *about* the text that may inform a reader’s approach and relationship to the text, but are not considered a part of the book itself. Genette suggests these external elements (the epitexts) are ‘authorised’ by the *author* or his *authorised* representative and are therefore legitimised as part of the paratextual network that creates the entity that is a book. Using this logic, some paratextual elements may move between

parts of the network over time; for example, a review is an epitext that may become a peritext when a quote from that review is incorporated onto the cover of a future edition of the book. Yet it could be argued that the future edition could be considered a distinct entity on its own; or it exists as a paratext of the original. This becomes further blurred and complicated when digital technologies become inextricably linked to these paratextual networks that create the experience of a particular ebook, and even more so when additional paratextual generation is allowed and encouraged by the ebook's reading community. In such instances, readers can be said to have become *authorised* (McCracken 109); they are now authors of multiple incremental contributions that organically develop into a fluctuating mass of paratexts that surround, permeate, and influence other readers' relationship with the original, central text. In Genettian terms, they have become part of the publisher's peritext (McCracken 112).

By contrast, in Birke and Christ's application of paratextual theory to digitised narratives, they conclude that once a text's context becomes too enmeshed with online interaction, hyperlinks, and interruptions, "the concept of paratext loses its analytic value" because the "thresholds," paratextual elements that negotiate the space between text and context, become increasingly difficult to isolate and identify", and essentially the terms of paratextuality becomes useless as a tool for scholarly examination (80). However, the nature of the ebook platform being studied in detail here, Wattpad, is still far enough removed from the hypertextuality of the wider web that the paratextual boundaries are clear enough for the theory to remain useful. Specifically, this applies to the paratextual elements that are generated by the reading community and the host software around and within Wattpad ebooks, such as the interactivity prompts, advertising, and most significantly, the inline comments and social communication functions.

While the vast majority of Wattpad's reader comments remain in situ where the contributor made them and are thus able to be termed 'paratexts' with reasonable confidence, it is worth noting that occasionally the Wattpad website, presumably by an automatic or random algorithm, selects some "Recent Comments" to appear on the title's description page in a process akin to the Kindle's feed of Public Notes on a title's Amazon information page. This adds a further layer of 'authorisation' to such paratexts; and, as Birke and Christ would suggest, it also alters their function. These particular "Recent Comments" now have a "commercial" aspect, as they give other prospective readers an idea of what the current community in that book is talking about, which may encourage them to select that book for their own enjoyment. Additionally, the users who made these comments would be unaware that their contributions are now much more visible, unlike readers on other sites who post public reviews or comment specifically to promote their opinion of the book. However, as only 10% of users access Wattpad through the website, and it appears that a maximum of six random comments are displayed as 'Recent' at any one time even on the most heavily-trafficked ebooks with hundreds of millions of reads and hundreds of thousands of comments, this type of paratextual appropriation likely has a very minimal impact on either the contributor or the potential audience. For all intents and purposes, readers' encounters with these paratextual contributions will remain within the context where they were made in the digital 'margins' of the ebook. Their effect on the reading experience can be explored not only as a new paratextual phenomenon, but also in the terms of a much older and established social reading activity: marginalia.

3.3 The Paratext of the Reading Community: Digital Marginalia

Marginalia is a term created by Samuel Taylor Coleridge to describe annotations in the margins of print books (Ferrari 69). Since its formal recognition, most studies of marginalia appear to have concentrated on evidence of historical note, such as medieval manuscripts or notable authors, or annotations left by scholars and students in non-fiction books (Fajkovic and Björneborn 902-3). Earlier in history, marginalia and annotations were considered a legitimate part of the reading process, but from the nineteenth century onward, following the establishment of public lending libraries in English literary culture (Altick 220-33; Fajkovic and Björneborn 903), the “cult of the clean book” (Sherman 157) took deep root in the psyche of the reading community, and the stigmatisation of the unauthorised annotative action - despite its continued occurrence - perseveres in relation to print books today (Fajkovic and Björneborn 903). This might explain why some ebook users are reluctant to interact in the form of comments, yet others enthusiastically engage with the practice. Readers throughout history have found some benefit in adding their thoughts and reactions in written form, so inevitably some will continue to do so in an electronic format. On the other hand, adding marginalia to a text is socially unacceptable with a print book, so others might find it an odd habit to develop with an ebook; finding it just as much of an “interference; annoyance; irrelevant; sloppy; vandalism; nuisance; patronizing; self-promoting” as the students in Fajkovic and Björneborn’s study (911).

However, Fajkovic and Björneborn also make brief mention of the fact that marginalia’s “digital counterparts” of “tagging, commenting, reviewing, etc.” are nowadays encouraged instead of frowned upon by most libraries (903). Yet unless these comments occur within the text of the book, as it does on Kindle and Wattpad ebooks, it is not convincing that these count as

‘marginalia’. They are identifiable as paratexts, certainly; Fajkovic and Björneborn’s discussion acknowledges the similarities with Genette’s structuralist work (903). However, “tags” and reviews of a book that became part of its metadata (or attached paratexts) in a library’s digital catalogue would not count as ‘marginalia’; as they themselves discuss, the very nature of marginalia relies on the proximity to the original text (914). Only a digital comment that is made *within* the pages of an ebook (including a ‘title’ or ‘blank’ page equivalent to those found in print books), particularly when it is clearly attached to a defined piece of text - much like the lines, stars, squiggles, sentence fragments, and other common types of physical marginalia that Fajkovic and Björneborn identify (911-17) - can be defined as the ‘marginalia’ type of paratextual element. ‘True’ digital marginalia are anchored to the text, like the physical marks of marginalia on a paper page. So, marginalia are a type of paratext that occurs in the closest possible proximity to the source or original text, clearly attached to a piece of that text (although the meaning of the marginalia itself might not be readily apparent even within context); and as such, inline comments and highlights that are found in Wattpad and Kindle ebooks can be termed as such.

Fajkovic and Björneborn argue the purpose of marginalia is activated upon a new reader opening a book, releasing “the additional layer of meaning applied on the original text by previous readers”, which is the moment when the marginalia cease to be “solitary acts of annotation” and become “an *interactive act* of handing down information from one reader to the next one in the line” (904, emphasis added). Thus, they refer to marginalia belonging to the “socio-physical realm”; they exist “not only as physical artifacts but also as a social experience of reading and sharing a library book” (904). However, the significant difference between physical marginalia and digital is that the digital comment remains linked to its author. No longer

anonymous, readers can instantly see *who* wrote the comment as well as what it says, and can *interact* with the first reader. Marginalia in print books are considered as “a forward-propelled kind of communicating”; as Fajkovic and Björneborn observe, a reader can write a response to any marginalia in a print book but it is the next reader who will see it, not the “originator” (914). That is even assuming the originator of the marginalia intended to communicate with anyone other than themselves; the study found the majority of marginalia authors were writing *aide memoires* to their future selves, and often simply forgot to erase them once they were finished with their library book (913-915). Additionally, as this study focused on university students and text books they used for study, this is not directly applicable to fiction reading community. However, what *is* clear and relevant from their study is that communication and social interaction of the reading community via print marginalia is linear, and generally one-way; a physical book is only in the hands of one reader at a time.

On Wattpad, by comparison, not only can multiple readers be accessing the *same text* at the *same time*, the app will automatically notify the originator of a comment should someone choose to reply. Instead of leaving behind a trail of anonymous markings, annotators on Wattpad remain at the centre of the web of interactions and marginalia they create during their use of the app. The only way to disconnect from these recorded interactions is to delete the Wattpad account (or the comment/s) entirely; but the digital marginalia are left behind with a blank dash where the username should be, and the original text to which it is anchored, and the time and date stamp of its creation (a paratext of a paratext) remain. The act of commenting, of contributing to the paratext of an ebook’s marginalia, is now comparable to the annotations in print books written by readers from decades before. Ebook platform technology has not only enabled communal

highlighting and commenting functions, it has assisted a historical social reading practice to evolve and return to the forefront of reading communities.

Arguably, the purpose of individual digital marginalia highly depends on the content. In contrast to hand-written marginalia, which can take any form, colour, style or appearance depending on the author's available tools, skill and desire, digital marginalia are (currently) highly restricted by the software of the host platform⁸. Kindle highlighting tools allow a user to choose between a limited colour palette and allow a text note to be attached; Wattpad is even more limited by offering no customisation option for the visual appearance of the selection in addition to limiting the note to text only. Also, as previously described, there is no way for a Wattpad user to access their highlights and comments from any location that is external to the ebook part on which they were made, which, for example, restricts the *aide memoire* function of print marginalia (or Kindle highlights) from being relevant. Yet, there are multiple other functions of print marginalia that are certainly applicable to their electronic counterparts. As H. J. Jackson suggests, marginalia create a "four-way transaction" between the reader, the text, the intended audience, and the "unknown future reader" (96-97). Therefore, the intent behind the action of highlighting and commenting on interactive ebook platforms is likely to be one of a range of other significant motivations; an immediate response to the text itself, either from an objective or subjective perspective; an effort to instigate communication with the author or other readers; or to respond to existing comments and continue a conversation.

⁸ Yet, by the same technology, readers are no longer restricted by the physical dimensions of the page. In print books, readers are constrained by how much space there is around the text; in an ebook, these spaces are a 'threshold' into paratextual marginal dimensions that are potentially 'infinite', allowing possibly *millions* of readers to add to the collection of so called "*marginalia*" attached to something so small as a single character of type, almost invisible to the reader until she chooses to enter through that threshold. As Marshall McLuhan observed, "electric technology is instant and omnipresent and creates multiple centres-*without-margins*" ("Marshall McLuhan Unbound", 8: 14, emphasis added).

In her discussion of potential intentions or motivations behind digital marginalia, Lauren Cameron conducted an analysis of Popular Highlights on a Kindle text, and found that readers responded to pieces of text with criteria other than its “straightforward catchiness” or its quotable quotient (89). She found the three main features of the narrative that Kindle readers commonly highlighted were “[l]ove, method, and culture” (89); notably, however, as it was a *Sherlock Holmes* text, the romance plot was limited and so she suggests the readers focused instead on Holmes’ famous process of deduction. Additionally, being a classic text, readers tended to highlight passages that revealed aspects of Victorian life, or quirks that were unfamiliar to the modern reader. In a similar analysis, Tully Barnett identified several intentions behind the most popular highlights of texts on Kindle, such as making a note of a “sentimental statement, a Hallmark card or bumper sticker message designed to explain not the book or its characters so much as human nature or life” (147), which could also be identified as the ‘commonplacing’ or aphorisms discussed in Rowberry’s work. Like Cameron, Barnett also notes that famous quotes are among the most commonly highlighted on Kindle, clearly not for any ‘discovery’ purpose but instead indicates “a tendency of readers to seek out the iconic”. The third most popular type of highlighting was a “functional” highlight of individual phrases that explain “the logic of the series’ narrative setting and is the sort of statement that might be found on the back cover or in the book trailer” (147). It is unclear whether this ranking takes into account the purely-social conversations that occurred in the Kindle Public Notes feed as discussed earlier, but this is certainly a major function of digital marginalia due to the interactivity the technology allows in contrast to the linear communication of print marginalia. Finally, and certainly not least importantly, it is clear a significant number of digital marginalia focus on “pivotal narrative

moments” (Rowberry 220), as readers record their recognition of and reaction to these important points in the narrative.

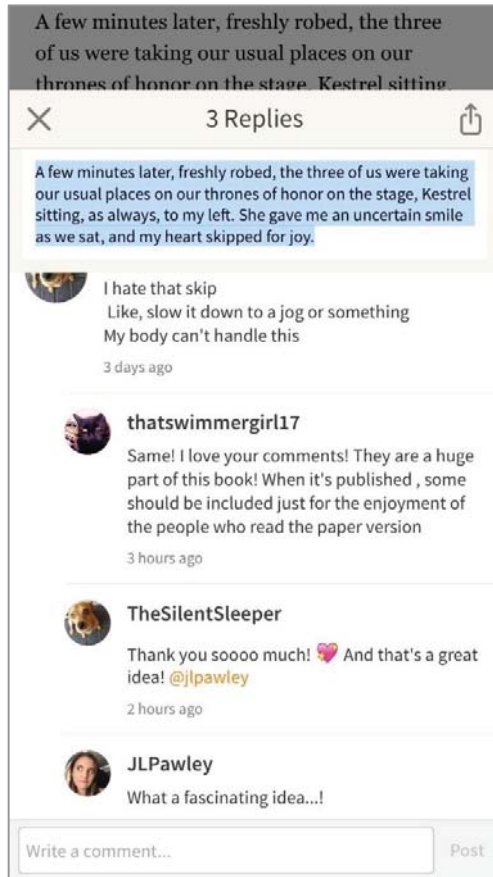
All these intentions and motivations behind the digital marginalia found on Kindle are also present in the interactions of the reading community existing in Wattpad ebooks. To show this most clearly, these studies of classic texts on Kindle can be compared to the Wattpad editions of the same, such as Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and Arthur Conan Doyle’s *Sherlock Holmes* stories. The iconic opening line “It is a truth universally acknowledged ...” from *Pride and Prejudice* was the second most-highlighted excerpt of ‘all time’ at the time of Barnett’s study (146), and the Wattpad edition similarly has an extraordinarily high number of inline comments on this exact excerpt, with close to two thousand tallied in the right-hand margin at the time of writing (Fig. 1.14). As Barnett also suggested, many of these marginalia are attached to this particular excerpt as it is the first available hook in the text, and readers are wishing to comment/interact/contribute immediately. Some examples include; “I’ve been yearning to read this for so terribly long!”, “FTR” [First Time Reader] (Fig. 1.15), “Oh my god I love this story....”, “Love this book”, and “Heard this book was good so here I am” (Fig. 1.16). Others are directly related to the content, such as “I love this quote so much! It’s not even that meaningful, yet it’s so true!” and “The first sentence is truly the essence of the book” (Fig. 1.17). A few paragraphs later, the marginalia become more complex and interactive between readers as more educated users help ‘translate’ the nineteenth century language for other readers⁹. One comment posted by @insertfandompunhere on to Mrs. Bennet’s opening conversation “My dear Mr. Bennett ... have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?”, offers the translation ““Mr

⁹ Exchanges such as this were the reason why the classics were not selected for the statistical case study and analysis, as this would bias the results and make them unreliable for comparison to the rest of the categories on Wattpad.

Bennet,' said his wife to him one day, 'did you know Netherfield Park has been rented out at last?'" (Fig. 1.18). No fewer than twenty individual replies have been added at the time of writing, most expressing gratitude for the original commenter's assistance in understanding the text; the remaining few being additional responses from @insertfandompunhere. Not only is the digital marginalia affording readers the ability to express their responses to the text, they are allowing positive relationships and benefits for the reading community to support one another during the reading experience.

Curiously, and fortuitously for this research, there are also other comments in the digital margins that express intense satisfaction and significant enjoyment of the community interactions whilst reading the book. User @lupita1531 notes, on the first page of *Pride and Prejudice*, "FAVORITE CLASSIC + WATTPADIANS' COMMENTS = BEST READING EPXPERIENCE EEEEEER", to which four other users have agreed (Fig. 1.19). Similarly, @NorehB commented "So here I am reading one of the best classics but these comments make me feel as if I'm reading a regular wattpad book [laughing emoji] this is amazing!", to which another five users have also agreed with variations on the reply of "True" (Fig. 1.20). On other Wattpad works, there are also other examples that make it clear many members of the social reading community are finding high value in the interactive digital marginalia promoted by the ebook platform.

In fact, some users are so accustomed to this type of social experience as part of their reading, and find such fulfilment from others' contributions, they have expressed desires for the physical world to mimic aspects of the digital. One such declaration is best shown in context:



Evidence of comment value to Wattpad users

The user @thatswimmergirl17 enjoys having her reading experience merged with the contributions of others so much, she took the time to express her desire to have that experience translated into the real world; to have ‘high quality’ marginalia such as those contributed by @TheSilentSleeper actually printed into physical copies of this particular book (JLPawley, *Third Time Lucky*¹⁰) so that all readers of the story can have the added layer of “enjoyment” (thatswimmergirl17). The paratext of digital marginalia has enabled an extra layer of meaning to grow organically within the reading community, which develops the experience of reading and

¹⁰ Please note, this Wattpad book has since been unpublished from the platform.

social bonds between readers, and ultimately influences their attachment to and relationship with that ebook.

Subsequent to the observation that “digital marginalia shapes readers’ experiences and understandings of a text”, it has been suggested that further study of these phenomena may assist in shaping processes by which scholars can continue to investigate “reader-response criticism”. Lauren Cameron argues that digital marginalia, in the form of highlights and notes, introduce a descriptive and prescriptive “norm” into a reader’s experience of a particular text as some users’ comments may influence others’ perceptions of the text and how they interact with the community. She suggests academics should take advantage of this opportunity to resume a literary critic role of “reshaping popular reading experiences with academic expertise”, as well as use the insights afforded by such marginalia to uncover which parts of a particular narrative the “popular” reader is drawn to and use it as a teaching opportunity in the classroom (90). As condescending and devaluing of the ‘common reader’ as the former may seem to some, the latter is certainly worth investigating further in the future.

Yet it is worth noting digital marginalia are not as entirely “prescriptive” as Cameron assumes. Particularly when reading a popular book with many thousands of comments, it is impossible for a single reader to peruse them all. Additionally, if the reader *is* actively engaged in consuming at least some of these paratexts as they read through the book, they are charting their own narrative course. Not every user will read the same number of comments or even in the same order as another user; some may read the inline comments in the order they appear as they progress through the text, whilst others may scroll through the collated general comments at the end of the chapter once they have finished that author-defined part of the story. The consistent stream of new contributions means current readers will have a different experience to those who

came before and those who follow. The statistics also indicate the vast majority of users choose not to interact with the rest of the reading community very often, if at all, and it is incredibly unlikely that *all* users who do not contribute to the digital marginalia are silently and invisibly reading them. So, while digital marginalia can certainly influence how readers experience and understand the text, both positively and negatively (in the case of discussions that take a turn for the worse), it is certainly not a way to *prescribe* that reading experience in any simple or straightforward way.

However, digital marginalia are but one aspect of evolving paratextuality in ebooks which influence the reading experience. Another significant and apparently-modern evolution in the reading of fiction is the prevalence of advertising that invades and permeates ebook platforms in an increasing variety of media. Although it is not actually a new concept in the world of fiction publishing, the changing technologies and distribution/access models of the ebook industry certainly have an impact on how commercial digital paratexts influence the reading experience and affect the social reading community.

3.4 Commercial Paratexts: “Free” Reading and Advertisements in Ebooks

Despite Wattpad’s size, with millions of users and hundreds of thousands of ebooks in the ever-growing library, one hundred percent of its content remains free to access for any user. Therefore, its income (apart from business investment¹¹) appears to be generated by advertising schemes, as is common across the internet. Small isolated advertisements appear alongside an ebook’s text when the reader is accessing it on an internet browser, while on the app the advertisements are contained in the interstitial spaces between chapters in the ‘natural’ breaks in the story (comparable to television commercial breaks). However, presenting advertisements in ebooks is not unique to Wattpad, as ebook retailing giant Amazon has also developed multiple advertising channels within the software of the Kindle. These are seen by Kindle users even when reading an ebook they have already paid for. Other patents have been filed for advertising schemes to be implemented in both ebook and print-on-demand technology, which would automatically insert pages of tailored advertisements into the ebook the consumer has purchased (Zhou et al., “On-Demand Generating”). This might seem an outrageous modern mutation of capitalism, sullyng the sacred narrative space; but in fact, as previously mentioned, advertising has been present in books in some form or other since the Victorian era (Steinlight 133-138; Wicke 35; Williams 319-322).

As they are ‘authorised’ by the publisher, and appear within the context of the core text, these advertisements can be identified as *paratexts*; a type of ‘commercial’ paratext that may not relate directly to the book in Genettian terms, but will still inform the reader and have an effect

¹¹ While some websites feature reports from 2012-2015 about how Wattpad has earned almost US\$70m in investments since 2011 (de Vynck; Dobby; OMERS Ventures; Red Herring), most reputable newspapers and long-established authorities on the industry, such as the *New York Times* or *Publishers Weekly*, appear to have no reports or articles on the matter. The reason for this is unknown.

on the reading experience and how the reader relates to the text. As Birke and Christ note, these commercial elements have an influence beyond the core text to which they are considered a paratext, as they advertise and link to other books and other types of products and services with little or no relationship to the book on/in which they appear (78). Whether the platform that produces and delivers these advertisements is using the customer's recorded online activity to target these advertisements is unknown, and highly dependent on the individual ebook publisher/distributor. It is worth observing that these invisible links could bring in a whole new layer of paratextuality that begins to incorporate the reader's 'authority'; their browsing behaviour and consumption habits on Amazon, for example, become the criteria by which the types of advertisements are selected (or 'authorised') by Amazon's software to appear on their Kindle. Hypothetically, similar algorithms could be in place on other ebook platforms such as Wattpad, but without more concrete evidence, it is difficult to explore in more depth. What *is* certain is that they *are* paratexts, regardless of how and why they came to be 'authorised', and the presence of such commercial paratexts are far from unique to the digital era.

Evidence of the long history of this practice can be found in the original serial editions of Dickens' work, which is the most famous and enduring example from earlier eras of serialised publishing. *The Pickwick Papers*, for example, "consisted not only of Dickens's words and his illustrator's pictures but also a substantial advertising supplement" (Williams 319). These volumes regularly contained an entire section of advertisements, which was known as "The Pickwick Advertiser", and these featured a vast variety of marketing material; from the more familiar single advertisement images to promotional narrative poems to entire self-contained short stories (322, 329). Emily Steinlight details a fascinating list of examples of the commodities that were advertised in original serial editions of Dickens' *Bleak House*:

...[a] dizzying array of ads for publishers, bookstores, libraries, newspapers and magazines, there are assorted offerings of wigs (including Ross and Son's "Invisible Ventilating Heads of Hair"), Macassar oil, "bear's grease," and other hair treatments, watches, pipes, and an array of gloves and ladies' bonnets. ...a daguerreotype portrait gallery, iron bedsteads, "Gutta Percha lining for boxes" (in an ad specifically addressed "To Emigrants, especially such as are proceeding to the Gold Diggings"), fire-proof safes, steel pens, "improved adhesive envelopes," all manner of ink and writing paper, the services of several confirmed expert handwriting-analysts, various financial and legal services, and mutual life insurance. Yet, amidst all other products and services (other than books, of course), the overcoat is perhaps most pervasively advertised. (134-135)

A curious aspect of this classic phenomenon is that not only was Charles Dickens aware of, and assumingly agreeable to, this practice occurring in his published works; he was an author of some of these commercial texts and paratexts himself. Williams's essay discusses the sly wit with which Dickens acknowledged and parodied the existence of such advertisements that accompanied his works, and also points out that Dickens' own earliest known published work was an advertising poem for a boot-black manufacturing company (Williams 321). Given the similarities of Victorian England's "consumer culture" (323) and the current pervasiveness of capitalism (McCracken 111), perhaps it should not be surprising that similar advertising and revenue-generating techniques are seeing a resurgence in digital book publishing today.

A more recent example of unrelated-advertisements-as-paratext can be found in late twentieth century German editions of Terry Pratchett's early *Discworld* novels. There are several

accounts that describe how a German-speaking fan contacted the author to alert him to the unapproved presence of integrated advertising in his novels *Pyramids* and *Sourcery*. The German publisher had edited a few moments in the books to include product placement for Maggi soup (Duane; Keros). The characters in these books were given dialogue and an extra, albeit brief, plot moment where they took a break from the action to enjoy the promoted product (see Duane's and Keros' blogs for photos of the physical pages, complete with the Maggi logo). This practice of product placement in fiction seems absurd now, and Pratchett is reported to have been horrified by the revelation, promptly changing publishers in that territory (Duane, Keros). However, it appears this type of commercial paratextual insertion had been customary for this publisher and others in the early- to mid-twentieth century, as examples could be found in many other pulp science fiction and fantasy novels (Duane), and perhaps more for which there remains little evidence. Other anecdotal accounts online describe early Penguin novels published for British WW2 servicemen featuring advertisements for companies such as Gillette, and suggest that paperback novels in the 1960s and 70s commonly featured advertisements bound in with the other pages (Lebensold, Wheeler). Therefore, the digital insertions of advertisements into ebooks (free or purchased) is not a completely original form of additional income generation for the publishing industry; instead, it could be considered the next stage in the evolution of a much older and established paratextual and commercial practice¹² that certain niches of readers have been accustomed to throughout history. Ebook readers are simply the latest in this historical line.

¹² Amazon appears to have investigated a modern reinvention of such marketing schemes in their patent filing for automatic print-on-demand [POD] advertisement insertion software (Zhou et al. "Incorporating Advertising"), which would allow Amazon's printing processors to insert printed pages of advertisements into POD paperbacks, potentially tailored to both the content of the book or to the customer's recorded consumption and browsing habits on Amazon's retail platform. However, due to the lack of scholarly or anecdotal evidence, this does not yet appear to have been implemented despite the patent application being approved in 2009.

Modern ebook retailers are certainly already taking advantage of these commercial paratextual strategies. For example, the Kindle ebook reading experience *is* full of advertising and has been since April 2011 (McCracken 115), with multiple scholars noting the full-page advertisements that automatically appear on the Kindle device as screensavers, the inclusion of advertising links in the back of ebooks, and so on (see Barnett, Birke and Christ, Cameron, Carreiro, Griffey, Konoval, McCracken, Richardson and Mahmood, Rowberry, Stevens, and Striphas). As noted, paratextual advertisements are also present in, between, and alongside Wattpad's free ebooks. Study of the effects of these types of commercial paratexts and how they influence readers' relationships with the core text is ongoing, particularly with the newness of the technology that enables them.

Yet, before a reader is exposed to the advertising contained within an ebook, another related, commercial paratextual element is the cost of the ebook itself, "as many readers spend time and work searching for free or low-priced bargains before buying an electronic book" (McCracken 111). It may be that the cheaper the ebook, the higher the frequency of advertising in the text to compensate, but data on this is currently impossible to find. In the same vein, it is worth acknowledging the *absence* of cost for ebooks on Wattpad. When all the content is free, it may seem less valuable to the readers. Therefore, they would approach such content, and develop their relationship with such ebooks, quite differently compared to one they have purchased. A comparison between free library books and books purchased from a bookstore could be argued, but as there is an additional paratextual layer of authorisation and meaning from the library environment, this introduces too many complications and therefore will be set aside for this discussion. Instead, when focusing specifically on the free context and the presence of

advertising on Wattpad and in Wattpad ebooks, it becomes evident these factors work together to, somewhat paradoxically, introduce advertising as a mark of ‘quality’ rather than cheapness.

On Wattpad, there appears to be three main types of advertising channels through which sponsored content is delivered to its users. The first is the most common, and is familiar to any experienced internet and app user: the automatically-generated single image (static or animated) that appears alongside the text on a browser or in the interstitial spaces on the app, much like those found on other monetised sites and apps which are powered by schemes such as Google AdSense or by Apple’s (since discontinued) iAd program (Apple Inc.; Google). These advertisements are relatively easy to ignore or to scroll/swipe past with minimal disruption to the reading experience, which is in direct contrast to some similar advertisements on the Kindle, for example, when advertisements automatically occupy the entire page as a screensaver. These juxtaposed advertisements can be compared to the advertisements found bound into Victorian serials, alongside but not within the text itself, and contrasted to advertising in magazines (print and online) where the text often wraps *around* the image (McCracken 115, 117). These types of advertisements on Wattpad are still contained in spaces that are clearly defined as ‘outside’ each story part, although these spaces may be interweaved with the story space.

The second established advertising strategy on Wattpad is referred to as “Brand Stories”. These are narratives written for the express purpose of product placement and promotion. Wattpad authors collaborate with advertisers to write a piece of fiction to entertain as well as promote, such as a Wattpad-promoted story that acted as a prequel (and as a centrifugal paratextual channel) for a USA Network televisual series entitled “DIG” (sic). Another example touted by Wattpad is the success of Unilever’s “Face of the Day” marketing series promoting a facewash from their Philippines subsidiary Eskinol, and a set of “love stories” for Valentine’s

Day commissioned by confectionary company Mondelēz International, which Wattpad claims readers spent more than 3.3 million minutes reading (Wattad, “Wattpad Launches Brand Stories”).

However, this practice also has precedent from Victorian times, as the advertising sections of the published serials often featured stories of several pages in length, which detail a fictional and often amusing story about the powers or adventures of a particular product; for example, *The Pickwick Advertiser* contained “The Auto-Biography of an Oil Bottle”. This “very strange four-page narrative advertisement tells the life story of a bottle of Rowland’s Macassar Oil” (Williams 326), and evidently this was not considered particularly unusual for the time. However, it is unclear (and quite unlikely) if the authors of these marketing narratives were ever publicly credited for their work. In contrast, on Wattpad, the power of the “native Wattpad author” who is contracted to create these ‘Brand Stories’ is often the reason behind their selection for the project (Wattpad, “Brand Stories”). Many of these stories are produced by “Wattpad Stars”; authors who earned significant success (measured by the standard statistics/paratexts of reads, votes, comments, and shares - the ‘virality’ of their work) in the digital reading community on their own, and were consequently invited to join the program to “take their skills to the next level” by working with commissioning brands, and potentially develop their careers in other areas such as screenwriting (Wattpad, “Wattpad Introduces Wattpad Stars”). Therefore, if a reader sees a book is written by a ‘Wattpad Star’ and is sponsored by a particular company or brand, they know this story is more ‘professional’; it has been ‘authorised’ by Wattpad and will have been closely monitored for ‘quality control’ during the production process prior to its publication and promotion on the site. Therefore, although there is a blatant marketing purpose behind the story, they may immediately develop a higher level of trust or expectation for that particular ebook,

compared to the vast number of amateur-produced ebooks on the site. They may be more willing to try the book because they know it will have a more professional quality, and that the story will have been developed through to a conclusion; in short, these commercial paratexts advertise a more ‘traditional’ narrative reading experience and relationship with the text.

The third significant advertising scheme present on Wattpad is the very recent introduction of the “Futures” program. Launched in 2016, Wattpad claims this scheme encompasses the works of a highly select group of authors, who have been invited to take part in video advertising campaigns. They are offered a percentage of revenue from the marketing that appears in the context of their books; as users read their work, the video advertisements are featured between the chapters, with a note that encourages the reader to view the advertisement in order to support the writer (Reid, “Wattpad”; Wattpad, “Wattpad Futures”, “Writers Can Earn Cash”). This is even more similar to television commercial breaks, and has a similar curious effect as the Brand Stories; the presence of these video advertisements alert the reader to the status of the author on Wattpad and the recognised ‘quality’ of their writing. When these ads pop up whilst the user is reading, she is notified the ebook is one of the ‘better’ ones amongst the mass of amateur-produced content on the site, as decided by the editorial team of the host platform itself and the advertiser who has commissioned the video advertising campaign. The video advertisement is a paratext that denotes quality, and therefore influences the reader’s approach to the text. To put it another way, this ensures that the books readers ‘pay’ to read (by spending time viewing advertisements) are of a better ‘quality’; books published without filtering by Wattpad’s content editors will not feature these time-consuming video advertisements.

Additionally, as both of these advertising schemes only invite authors with proven writing and reader-retaining ability on the platform, this not only suggests these authors are examples of

the better-quality writers and producers of content, they have also proven their ability to *encourage others' contributions* on the platform. As previously demonstrated, the most valued books are those which attract the most interactions from readers, not just the highest number of reads. It is not only the 'quality' of the narrative itself, but it is the significant influence of its user-contributed *paratexts* which have marked these particular authors and their works as being more 'worthy' among the hundreds of thousands, potentially millions, of narratives on the site. It is their connection and promotion of the social reading community which has driven these authors' success on this interactive ebook platform, and now, Wattpad is experimenting with ways of monetising that success - the engagement of and with the reading community, as demonstrated by their generation and contribution of additional paratexts - for itself and for the writers.

With a lack of qualitative evidence, or any way of quantifying observable statistics (it is impossible for a public user to specifically search for authors or books involved in any of Wattpad's financial schemes), the impact of Wattpad's selective commercial paratexts on the reader and their relationship to the reading community and the ebooks is subject to speculation. There are several ways the presence of these advertisements might push the reader. She may become more interested, and pay closer attention, leading to longer engagement and more 'reads'; alternatively, she may be turned off by the interruptions and continue reading elsewhere, contributing to an even sharper decline of readership after the first few story parts. However, with the relative infrequency of such advertisements (every few chapters and/or every 30 minutes of each reading session [Reid, "Wattpad"]), and the presence of such advertising practices in so many other internet places the same users are likely to frequent (such as YouTube), it seems unlikely that many would react in this way. In particular, Wattpad's efforts

to remind the reader that their viewing of the ad will help support the writer to continue producing the content they are enjoying may alter the viewer's opinion more favourably towards both the book and the advertisement itself¹³. It remains to be seen how successful these programs are for Wattpad and its authors - whether they are developed into a viable income stream for the company and a viable career path for authors - and how it will impact the reading community in terms of engagement and numbers.

In the short term, at least, the presence of these advertisements and marketing material on Wattpad have become a mark of quality rather than cheapness or 'selling out'. They have an effect on the reader that in turn affects the way they approach the story, as well as the writer. Much like in Dickens' time and continuing through to today into the ebook market, advertisements remain important paratexts that inform and adjust the reader's relationship with a fictional narrative. However, it is difficult to gauge the influential relationship of particular advertisements as paratexts on particular ebooks, as they are all temporary and presumably targeted per user; it is a fleeting encounter that is impossible to quantify in this particular research. What does seem evident is the reading community that is developing alongside and within ebooks is seeing a cultural shift; the presence of advertising as a paratextual element of the reading experience is regaining acceptance, and more than one ebook platform is working on developing it into a viable income source for publishers and writers as an alternative to the traditional publishing model. Such paratexts and digital practices are reforming what it means to 'read' a 'book', and potentially how the 'common reader' approaches not only the consumption but also the creation of fiction.

¹³ Hopefully, this may also encourage consumers of free content to be more mindful of the person who has produced it for them.

3.5 Conclusions

The evolution of paratextuality in the digital age has had wide-ranging effects and has added multiple layers of complexity, both visible and invisible, to the ‘simple’ pastime of reading a book. These practices of meaning-making are at once easier and more difficult to examine; the paratextual record of once-fleeting social interactions that occur as part of the social reading experience allows scholars an unprecedented vantage point for the reading habits and interpretations of the common reader, with the potential for wider themes and movements to be quantified with a specificity beyond simple market trends. On the other hand, the highly personal and customised experience for the individual user of these ebook platforms makes it difficult for the researcher to specifically examine interactive relationships between readers and ever-changing electronic texts and paratexts. Discussion of centrifugal and centripetal vectors, the influence of digital marginalia, and the impression of ‘quality’ is difficult when individual users’ paths through these paratexts are impossible to observe from a neutral standpoint. Yet, arguably, this is the case with any text, digital or otherwise; readers of classical texts are unlikely to approach them without any prior knowledge due to their social capital (or, to put it another way, knowledge of that text’s paratexts) that led them to the story in the first place. Just as it is impossible to know if a user is reading an ebook on the bus, at home, or furtively in class, it is impossible to know exactly where readers of paperbacks have enjoyed flicking the pages, or what their friends said about it at book club or in text messages to each other.

The cultural and industrial shift that is occurring with these technologies and new social and commercial paratexts has been influenced by the parallel resurgence of serialisation, which, along with the digital technology which enables direct interactivity with the author during the writing process, is the final significant factor that is influencing the evolution of fiction reading

practices; but one that requires much more qualitative and investigative study than is possible here. However, the observations made here do offer significant evidence for how these ebooks and their reading communities may continue to evolve in the future.

4. Where to from Wattpad? The Future of Fiction

As 2016 draws to a close, and ebook sales decelerate and those of print books stabilise, “the fear over the decline of the book” (Barnett 160) should be easing. The mass influx of self-published titles on Amazon and other ebook platforms now draw “millions of readers” (Alter, “The Plot Twist”), and the statistics on Wattpad certainly support the idea that more people are reading now than ever before (Nusca), thanks to the accessibility of technology. These online ebook platforms and apps, along with their interactivity and promotion of reader-contribution is leading to, for better or worse, the “democratization of reading” (Birke and Christ 79; McCracken 113).

After ten years of existence, the ebook platform Wattpad continues to grow and promote interactions between readers, texts, and writers. Much like Amazon’s Kindle, and other major ebook retailers and hosts, the ebook reading technology they offer continues to evolve and develop, offering users the chance to contribute to the material they are reading in ways that range from simple indication of approval with ‘likes’ or ratings, or to directly comment during the writing process with the possibility of influencing the direction of the story. While currently only a small percentage of readers choose to do so, the mere potential of the activity can have an influence on how the reader relates to the book and their appreciation or understanding of the story, and their exposure to the thoughts, comments, and conversations of others can lead to entirely new relationships between readers and text. These interactive features have led to the development of massive online communities of readers who are engaging directly with each other and the text.

These reading communities represent what Marshall McLuhan called a “reversal”. In the twentieth century, he noted the “individualism of the mechanical culture and environment ... was also accompanied by an almost total denial of participation in the creative process on the part of the public” (“Marshall McLuhan Unbound”, 20: 13). With interactivity and serialisation, readers have been reintroduced into the fiction-writing and reading process with an immediacy never before possible. This new online literary environment “reprocesses the earlier environments” (3) of social reading and serialisation along with marginalia and marketing, with all the additional paratextual complexities they enjoyed. These interactive ereading platforms have repurposed historical reading practices for the digital era, merging them with social media capabilities that have proven appeal (or, at least, not significant discouragement) for millions of readers around the world.

However, as seen in an in-depth analysis of the statistics for Wattpad’s most popular Science Fiction titles, such interactions and contributions from the reading community are not as common as they appear. Therefore, when readers are moved to contribute, it elevates the ebook that was the catalyst for that contribution within the community for as long as that interactivity lasts. This visible effect of readers’ interactions with the text and other readers of that text means reader engagement is now *measurable*. This offers further opportunities for writers and researchers to understand what readers enjoy and why, and how reader interactions influence their relationships with these books.

These interactive platforms have led to an expansion on the paratextual theory that was initially proposed by Genette, such as how his ‘thresholds’ may be understood in the digital era in terms of the direction in which these paratexts take the reader. By examining the text-centric Wattpad model, it is clear that some of these ereading platforms continually steer their users back

to the books themselves, encouraging users to engage more directly with the book and its writer, and the other readers who are populating the same digital page. This has in turn resulted in the rise of digital marginalia, which is potentially the most significant development in these new digital paratexts, as it has brought the historical practice of social reading into the most immediate and intimate space (currently) possible within a book. Consequently, Genette's concept of 'authorisation' now requires a much broader definition as publishers and authors relinquish some control over the paratexts in return for greater continuing control over the text itself. No longer is the 'death of the author' required for a book to begin its life in the wider world, and its paratexts no longer define exactly where it ends.

Furthermore, the evolution of commercial digital paratexts has seen a resurgence in the historical marketing practice of advertising within the pages of fiction texts. The presence of these additional digital paratexts does not appear to be a deterrent to many users, but it is creating a new system by which ebooks and authors are recognised as 'valuable' in an environment where all content is free. In addition, the implementation of significant marketing campaigns from massive international corporations indicates a recognition of these digital readers and their ebooks as a legitimate community. The implications for individual readers as well as the wider population of these reading communities would benefit from much deeper qualitative investigation. In the meantime, it is clear the presence of commercial paratexts in ebooks is almost certain to increase in the near future.

As Marshall McLuhan said, "Today we come to the oral condition again via the electronic media, which abridge space and time and single-plane relationship, returning us to the confrontation of multiple relationships at the same moment" ("Marshall McLuhan Unbound", 18: 6). Entire communities of potentially millions of readers may now occupy the same digital

page, and interact directly with each other, the text, and the writer *as they read*. While only a small percentage of users currently actively participate in these communities, the popularity of these social ereading platforms indicates the significant likelihood of this type of social reading to increase in frequency and acceptance in the future, with all the additional philosophical and commercial complexities that accompany it. Exactly how such conditions will continue to influence the evolution of literature in general remains to be seen.

4.1 Additional Aspects for Future Consideration

Perhaps most significantly in academic and research terms, the vulnerability and intangibility of ebooks and these ebook platforms is worthy of further research to further our understanding of how the change in the technologies affect readers' relationships to fiction texts. There is the potential for longevity in electronic form, with vast libraries of ebooks being kept safe from the dangers of the physical world and preserved in digital archives; yet the same technologies are vulnerable to data loss through human error, data corruption, viral infection, or physical damage to hardware. Cloud libraries rely on the streamed content from a central database; as on Wattpad, if the core text is removed accidentally or deliberately, the entire node that was built around it in the web of the online reading community also vanishes.

This fact must have a significant impact on a reader's relationship with a text, whether they are aware of it or not. The ease and instantaneous access to an ebook may make it seem less valuable, or alternatively it may make ebooks seem much 'better' than a print book they have to

physically make the effort to acquire at a particular time in their day. In turn, the presence of other readers in their book changes their perception of the book. Whether this is seen as a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ thing needs additional qualitative research across a variety of platforms. The majority of current research, including this discussion, is limited to quantitative observation only.

Such research would also illuminate how the relationship between readers and writers is developing, and how this can be leveraged to the advantage of both the retail industry and the scholarly community. This would perhaps be most effective in deeper study of serialisation. Not only would it reveal the depth to which such publishing and consumption practices affect the reader’s comprehension of and relationship to a fiction text, it may also offer writers and educators the opportunity to engage with readers and learners more deeply in return. Wattpad is certainly the current biggest ebook platform that promotes and encourages serialisation; in fact, it is built into every aspect of the software. It is impossible for an author to ‘publish’ or release all chapters in a single process, every individual one must be opened and published one-by-one. (However, books can be ‘unpublished’ in one fell swoop if desired.) Because reads are accumulated part by part, and readers can only ‘vote’ once per part, the construction of the statistics is geared towards rewarding those books with more parts. The algorithm of the daily Hot list (and therefore the most visible books in each category) clearly rewards books which are marked as “ongoing” rather than “completed”. This massive international reading community must find significant pleasure from this type of reading that far outstrips the simple fact that it is free: from the evidence gathered here, it is most probable that it is because the serialisation of the narrative allows the reading community to enjoy each new instalment *together*. It is the *social* aspect of the serial, the clusters of readers that accrue at the cliffhanger of each new ‘to be

continued', that appears to outweighs any frustration and contributes to the pleasure of anticipation for the release of the next part.

Usually, of course, industry-published books are released in a final, finished form. The story, which the author produced and which the reader consumes, is fixed. While the textual meanings may seem to change depending on different *readers* and *readings* of the text (Schwarz 197), that one particular work is still identifiable as the same *book*, the same collection and arrangement of sentences and paragraphs. But a book which is released in serialised parts, and could furthermore change in response to the reader's contributions, allows digital interactions during the *writing and reading* of the same text, becoming processes which overlap rather than occurring on two sides of a very definite line (being the publication of the work - in Barthesian terms, following the 'death' of the author [145-6]). Such an arrangement leads to more complex demand on both sides of the relationship between reader and text, and reader and writer. When the book is unfinished, or not fully formed, then logically it follows that any relationship it begins with a reader is then also unfinished; open to development in a way that a relationship with a static text cannot be, regardless of the unexpected twists in the narrative. This changes the demands and expectations that the writer and text can place on the reader, and those which the reader place on the text and its writer. Due to the extreme popularity and social success of such works on Wattpad, it is evident that a significant number of readers gain substantial enjoyment and pleasure from such an arrangement.

It should be noted again that even though this digital technology is new, the concept of serialisation of story is not. Victorian audiences were accustomed to literary works being published in this way; early twentieth century filmgoers in America enjoyed weekly 'chapters' of serial movies until the mid-1940s (Barefoot 168); comics have released their interlinked

narratives in instalments since the 1960s (Beaty 319); and television programmes remain a classic ongoing example of this style of storytelling (Gray 42-5). To some extent it has also returned to Hollywood with the current fashion of stretching out movie franchises over as many individual yet interlinked instalments as possible (which could also be identified as an inheritance from the many comic books being adapted into films [Beaty 319-20]). Even book adaptations are being serialised, notably in the large young adult franchises; *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* was released in Part 1 and Part 2, as were both the final instalments of the *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games* film series (Ross). Serialisation is everywhere in the twenty-first century, so the resurgence in serialised text-based narrative should not be surprising.

However, the significant difference between Wattpad stories and these professional industry productions is the finality of the form of each ‘episode’ in these serialised narratives: once a comic book, a television episode, or film is released to the public, the ‘author’ (as Gray identifies, this can be considered as either the writer, director, or an entire production company [104-110]) can no longer change it without releasing a distinct new edition (Gray 83). On Wattpad, as the stories are not released as discrete files to readers and are instead continually updated to match the central version the author saves to Wattpad’s databases (i.e. being ‘streamed’), *any part* of the text can be changed at *any time* by the author, potentially interrupting or confusing the reader’s experience of the narrative. Far from relinquishing the “nourished” creation, like a parent releasing a child (Barthes 145), the author allows the reader to form a relationship with the text while it is still ‘growing’. The reader’s presence and contributions to the relationship will then have an influence on the development of a text, even while it remains within the author’s hands. This is Barthes’s concept of the reader *becoming* the

writer (161-3) in more than a philosophical sense; the readers' influence on the writing may actually become visible, during the process of reading.

This situation appears to be as close to simultaneous as it is possible to get for the production and consumption of written narrative, as it is currently impossible for an author to live-stream every keystroke as they work on a piece of fiction (on Wattpad and other reading and/or writing platforms, at least - and as yet, it appears that no established writer has attempted to do so with the assistance of live video streaming technology). Even if the author has fully drafted the book in advance and is posting the chapters on Wattpad one by one, the to-be-released chapters are still in a "pre-publication" temporality, in the "before" behind Barthes's line that divides book and author (145; Gray 109); able to be edited and rewritten as part of the normal writing process and are therefore still technically in the 'production' phase. When it is released across the line into the grasp of the reader, its publication is in the most direct form currently possible. Rather than working its way through a gauntlet of editors, proofreaders, printers, distributors and retailers as traditional print books must (Greco 150-176), or even through a digital screening process as all major ebook retailers require (Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing, Apple's iBooks, independent companies Smashwords and Draft2Digital, and many others all send submitted ebooks through an automated format-checking program before allowing the file to be made available for purchase), as soon as a Wattpad author taps 'Publish' on a part it is nigh-instantaneously updated on Wattpad's central system, instantly accessible and available to *every single user* of the millions using the platform and comprising its social reading community.

This also means the text is not published in multiple copies; it is a *single* copy with continually updated links that serve as windows onto that central copy. This is a fundamental

shift in the nature of a published text. It is not one of a hundred, a thousand, or a million printed (or even digital) facsimiles. The work remains on Wattpad's servers, where it is being moulded by the author and protected by Wattpad's computer hardware. This also changes the relationship between reader and text. Instead of a personally-owned copy, or a copy borrowed from a library or friend, *every single reader is reading the exact same copy* (until it is edited by the author). If there is a typographical error, then the author can correct it and over the course of the following hours, as readers reopen their apps, their copy will be refreshed and the typo will have been corrected for every single reader. This draws every member of the reading community together, rather than splintering it across different editions or versions of the same text, improving consistency for new initiates who cross the threshold of the front cover and enter the space of the ebook. It also keeps the readers in a coherent communal space for the author to interact with them, and continue crafting their literary experience.

Much of this was in fact predicted by some scholars upon the advent of electronic technology and ebooks, and they noted the new ability for authors to be able to update their books beyond the initial date of publication fundamentally changes the relationship between authors, texts, and the readers (Klein 40). Further predictions Ezra Klein made in 2008 about the potential for ereading devices to support and promote serialisation and socialisation features have certainly come to fruition on Wattpad. However, this continual ability to update and edit a book leads to "the distinct possibility" that a book an author is working on "could be considered a work in progress forever" (Carreiro 223). Either the story is 'completed' but the author continually edits and tweaks aspects of it; or the story drags on and on like a soap opera far beyond the point at which the narrative really should have been concluded. Either way, the author never 'dies' (until, perhaps, they actually do).

This concern of books never being finished extends beyond the process of editing and tweaking that follows the ‘completion’ of a manuscript. The vast majority of texts on Wattpad, for example, will likely never be finished. The depths of the Wattpad library are populated by hundreds of thousands of books with only a handful of parts; optimistically begun by amateur authors and abandoned for unknown reasons, the stories and their characters left in limbo. Uncharitable critics would probably breathe a sigh of relief that these attempts at writing are likely never to see the light of day again, but the fact remains that such texts do exist and they are still available to any Wattpad user to access and begin to read, should they somehow find them. Even the most popular ongoing books on Wattpad have the potential to be abruptly interrupted. Updates may be delayed due to unforeseen circumstances in the author’s life, or the author may abandon the profile and story without warning, never returning to the site to complete their work(s). This is where Wattpad’s algorithm theoretically comes into play. Profiles which remain active and books that are regularly updated will appear higher in the results lists; those books and profiles which have been left untended for too long slip into the depths.

Thus, reading a serialised book - particularly a self-published one, as on Wattpad - requires a significant amount of trust from the reader that is unnecessary with a traditionally published, completed book. Should a Wattpad author die in real life, to use the most extreme example, then their Wattpad book would be orphaned, incomplete. Given the anonymity of most users, it is highly unlikely that their readers will ever know what happened to them. In the traditional industry, the support of the publishing system (agents, editors, etc.) could potentially see the posthumous completion of a work (as with Steig Larsson’s *Millennium* series; *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, etc. [McGrath]). For most Wattpad authors (presumably, support systems are in place for authors and titles which are involved in Wattpad’s various earning schemes, such as

Wattpad Stars and Wattpad Futures) there is no safety net for them or their books. Statistically speaking, out of the millions of Wattpad's users, there *will* be some (potentially in the thousands) who have passed away, leaving their profiles inactive without explanation. Some of these will have also left behind books, never to be claimed or completed. But the reader cannot know this when they begin to read the story.

This lack of a barrier between the writers and their readers, and without editors, publishers and distributors mediating the flow of the story between author and audience, the reading experience becomes much more *raw* in many aspects: direct access to the writer and potentially influence on the story; witnessing the development of the plot and characters; uncertainty regarding the length of the book, or even each individual instalment; potential inconsistencies in story and style. While some bemoan the domination of the amateur in today's culture as it dilutes the general quality of our civilisation's cultural output (see Andrew Keen's *The Cult of the Amateur*) - and admittedly the average Wattpad book has a higher frequency of grammatical or continuity errors than the average traditionally-published book - the ongoing and serialised nature of the ebooks on Wattpad offers both potential advantages and disadvantages for their readers that have little to do with questions of 'quality'. From their potential influence on the writing of the story, to the social paratexts of the online reading community within its pages, and the time distortions of reading a book in author-controlled instalments; the relationship between readers and such ebooks is potentially more intense and complicated than a traditionally-produced narrative. This is a state of narrative which is already appealing to, and being enjoyed by, millions of readers around the world, and offers additional opportunities for readers and writers, publishers and educators in the future.

4.2 The Future of Fiction and Reading

Just as “the Dickensian serial is thoroughly entangled with the commodity culture of Victorian Britain” (Williams 332), the strength of the serialised ebook culture developing today suggests that popular literature will continue to see a resurgence in commercialisation and advertising as part of the paratextuality and production process. While this is still a process in its infancy, some academics raise concerns that authors are no longer producing a “book”, they are developing “content” (Carreiro 228). But because of the increasing financial challenges in reaching readers in an oversaturated market, perhaps product placement in literature will, by necessity, become the norm, just as it has grown in prevalence in film (Chan 107). Perhaps authorship will become similar to elite sportsmanship; the best writers being sponsored by big brands with product placement either on the packaging of the written product, or as integrated features of the narrative. The historical evidence of advertisements in books, and the current popularity of ad-featuring ebook platforms indicates that readers will certainly be able to adjust to such commercial paratexts without notable protest. Indeed, on Wattpad this commercialisation, recognition, and acceptance has already begun.

The more significant development in this new stage of reading evolution is the presence of instantaneous interactivity as a paratext authorised by the publisher/author and contained within the digital text. Yet, while interactivity seems to dominate the purpose of these ebook platforms, the statistics show such contributions are *not* made by the significant majority of the users. Therefore, content that encourages such interactions is also considered of higher value and deserving of more recognition within the community. It is worth noting that many other websites and platforms feature a similar disproportion between number of views and number of likes and comments; for example, videos on YouTube with tens or hundreds of millions of views only

have a few hundred thousand ‘likes’, and a few thousand comments. Similar patterns can be found on any viral Facebook post, or popular online magazine/news article, suggesting this type of behaviour is consistent across the internet when considering public consumption of entertainment and media. Whether this generalisation will begin to see a shift in the future as the internet and online activity continues to evolve and become even more entrenched in our daily lives remains to be seen - it is certainly already having a significant effect on the production of literature, and on the development of online communities in which readers congregate around such texts. Perhaps the reading communities of the future will become even noisier, as greater numbers of users become more accustomed to having such digital marginalia and being involved in such types of interactive reading (it is to be hoped that better filters will also be developed to prevent users from being completely overwhelmed). Perhaps future readers will come to *expect* it, and regard the solitude of the twentieth century reader with the same distance as we look back on the oral storytellers of earlier eras.

Whether this will be considered an advantage or disadvantage by future scholars remains to be seen. Certainly, current prevailing attitudes suggest that such invasion of texts by readers borders on blasphemy, as this “doesn't encourage the kind of contemplation, independence and solitude that real engagement with books demands--and rewards” (Charles, as cited in Bérubé et al. 421). Bérubé et al. suggests “such reactions are all too common in "serious" literary culture”, from people who prefer the exclusivity of literary reading, and who believe “something precious that will be lost if too many people do it (especially if too many people do it at the same time)”. Such academics and readers would be horrified by the suggestion that ebook platforms and interactive online reading communities might become the norm in the future, but the massive user base and continuing popularity of the two biggest interactive platforms over the last decade

shows this is not a short-lived phenomenon. These online, interactive, social reading communities exist in massive numbers, and are thriving without concern for what literary experts might think of it. These communities are fulfilling a significant need for these readers that goes beyond the 'mere' consumption of a single written narrative.

Bérubé et al. suggests it is the “yearning for social interaction” in the context of literary experience is the driving force behind the readers who populate these interactive ereading environments, and motivates readers to seek fulfilment in other spaces such as blogs and online book clubs (422). These paratextual interactive ebook technologies can then draw in more readers who are less willing to actively seek out these interactions in an external environment. In an act of drawing the digital world back into the real, Nuria Romero further suggests such paratextual online reading communities should be leveraged and taken advantage of in order to promote customer loyalty with their local library (64-66), further developing and strengthening the reading community both online and off. And, perhaps most importantly, such reading communities could generally promote and encourage reading of any kind with a variety of demographics; after all, research into reading - particularly, reading for pleasure and “free reading” - has consistently shown significant benefits for cognitive development across a range of activities, not just literary comprehension (Krashen 28-37; Wilhelm 31). In general, does it matter what we are reading, or how we are reading, as long as we *are still reading*?

4.3 In Conclusion

The age of digital technology has ushered in a revolution in how we read fiction. Readers are able to engage directly with each other and the ebooks they are reading, and sometimes the author as well, from a screen they can hold in their hand. Books, readers, and writers are no longer divided from each other by time and space. Despite competition from millions of other websites and types of entertainment both online and off, both free and pay-to-read ebook platforms have seen astonishing success. The merging of computing technologies, social media, and written narrative has seen a fascinating resurgence in very old styles of storytelling and story-consuming mixed with brand new digital features never before possible. The phenomenon of social reading is not new but the instantaneity and accessibility of *online* reading is. The platforms and mediums by which we read are evolving. The reading community has migrated from the living room or library into the very pages of the books themselves, becoming a nigh-inextricable facet of the experience of reading. Serialisation; interactivity; commercialisation; these are all aspects of these new technologies that have caused the industry and academia to regard this e-revolution with concern. However, it is clear these features have in fact allowed the practice of reading fiction to remain relevant and interesting in an oversaturated online world.

Just as television did not ‘kill’ radio and films, the Gutenberg printing press did not kill the art of calligraphy, the pulp paperback did not kill the hardback, and Amazon and Wattpad have not replaced physical libraries; ebooks have not and will not eradicate print books. As made clear by the statistical analysis in Chapter 2, the majority of the population in these online reading communities are *not* ‘disrupting’ their reading practice by using the interactive functions featured in their ebooks. Instead, these users - potentially more than 90% of these communities - are quietly using these ereading technologies in a much more ‘traditional’, ‘passive’ manner. The

10% of active participants, however, still encompasses hundreds of thousands, if not potentially millions of readers, and their enthusiastic adoption of such technology is having significant ramifications for the production, financing, and consumption of narrative for the other 90%.

Therefore, ebooks and interactive ereading technologies offer a diversification in *how* we can read, rather than a replacement. As with any new technology there are, of course, both advantages and disadvantages. Some will love it (the active 10%), others will hate it (potentially a large fraction of the 90%, although unlikely as they would not use these platforms at all if it truly bothered them), still more readers will alternate between the different mediums as it suits them. While most adopters of these technologies are choosing not to become fully involved in these reading communities, the mere potential for it, and the general construction of these online libraries and social spaces, is clearly attractive to many. Such potential, and the realisation of that potential, is having a major effect on how a digital book's paratexts are produced, disseminated, and incorporated into the reading experience. These new paratexts and the evolution of old ones - marginalia, advertisements, and social reading activities - are changing how millions of readers are approaching and consuming digital fiction in 2016.

Literary scholars may resist or distrust or outright reject such "common readers" and the types of books and the ways of reading that they enjoy. But the fact remains that such 'literary' environments are developing and thriving, and will continue to have an influence on how readers engage with books in the digital era; whether by 'liking', highlighting, commenting, sharing, or simply observing others' contributions of the same in new paratextual layers that we are still only beginning to understand. These ereading environments offer significant opportunities for all of us to engage with fiction and other readers in a more direct, more immediate way than ever before possible, and these interactions now have a defined paratextual and measurable influence

on the books themselves and their place within the reading community. Such is the impact of this influence that these communities and their interactions are now being commercialised, which further legitimises their existence and indicates they will continue to have an effect on reading communities beyond the limits of the platforms on which they operate. It is time for scholars to pay closer attention to these communities and avoid being left behind as the evolution of reading continues.

Ultimately, all the ‘common’ users of these vast platforms and every literary scholar and student of English, despite the conflicts in technologies and traditions, have one thing in common: we love to read. Regardless of how these technologies and new styles of writing and reading develop in these paratextual communities, it is clear the pastime of reading will survive and remain a popular activity far into the future; and that, if nothing else, should give us all hope.

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Appendix 1: The Wattpad Community

Fig. 1.1: The most “hearted” (“like”-equivalent) romance books on Figment, with 3116, 1930, and 1392 approval contributions respectively.

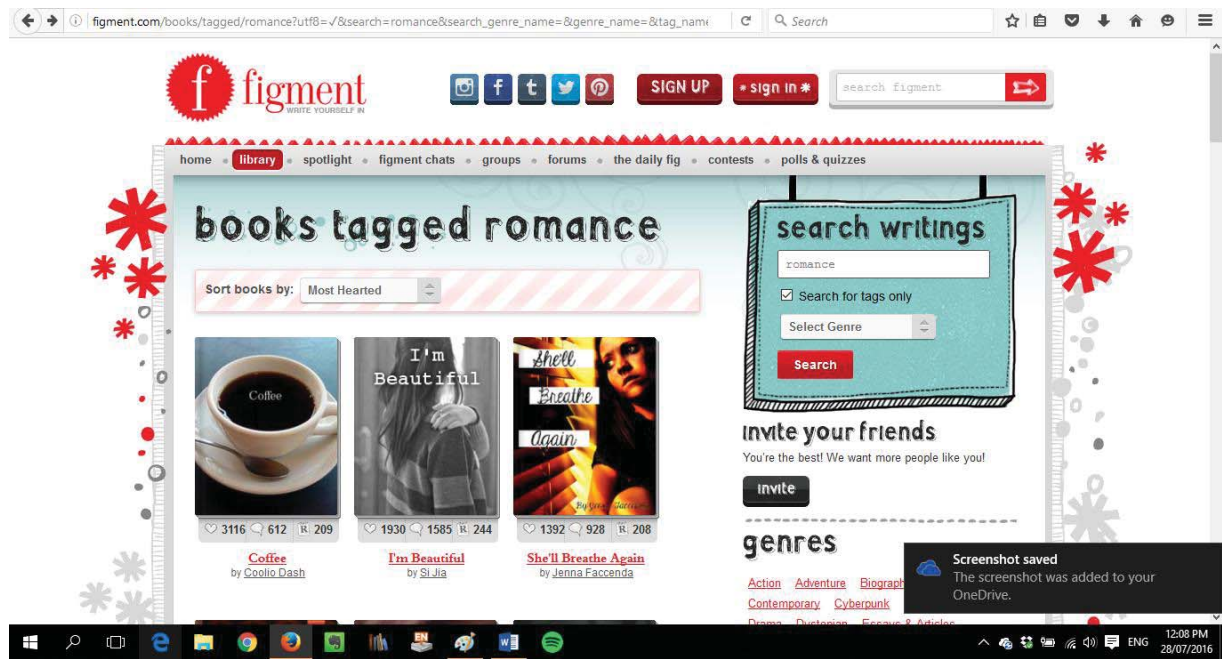


Fig. 1.2: Screenshot of one of the most successful Wattpad books showing 391 million reads and 4.8 million votes. Note the sequel to the side, with 348 million reads and 5.5 million votes.

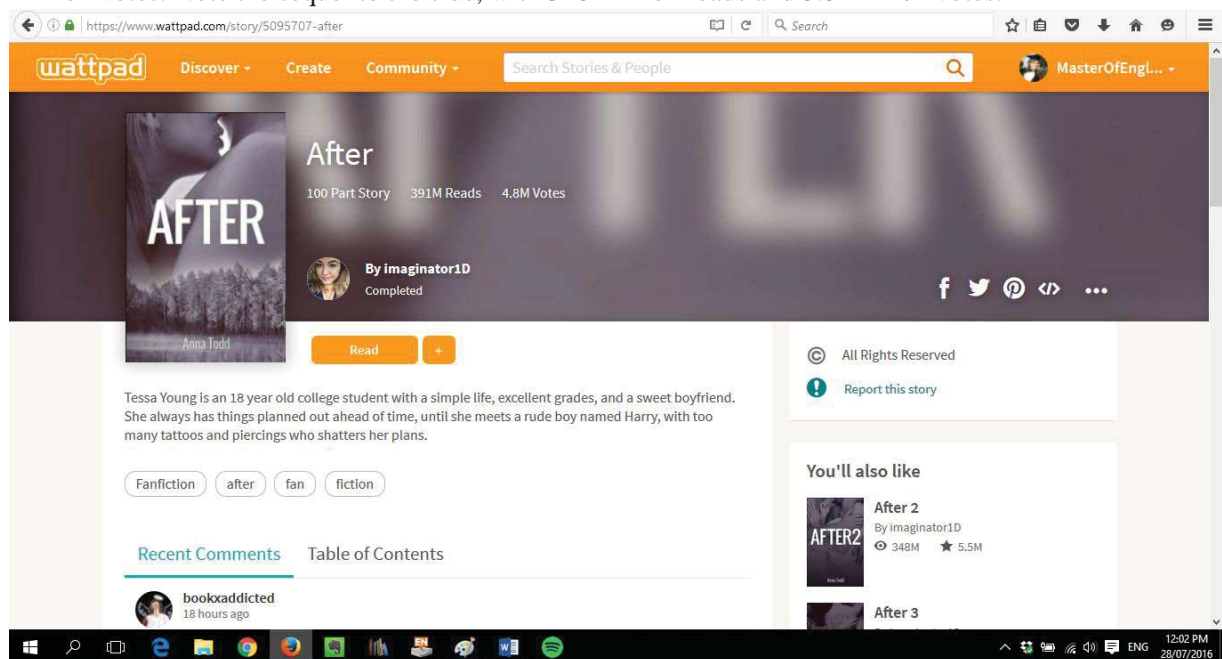


Fig. 1.3: A composite screenshot of the @SciKick collaborative profile on Wattpad.

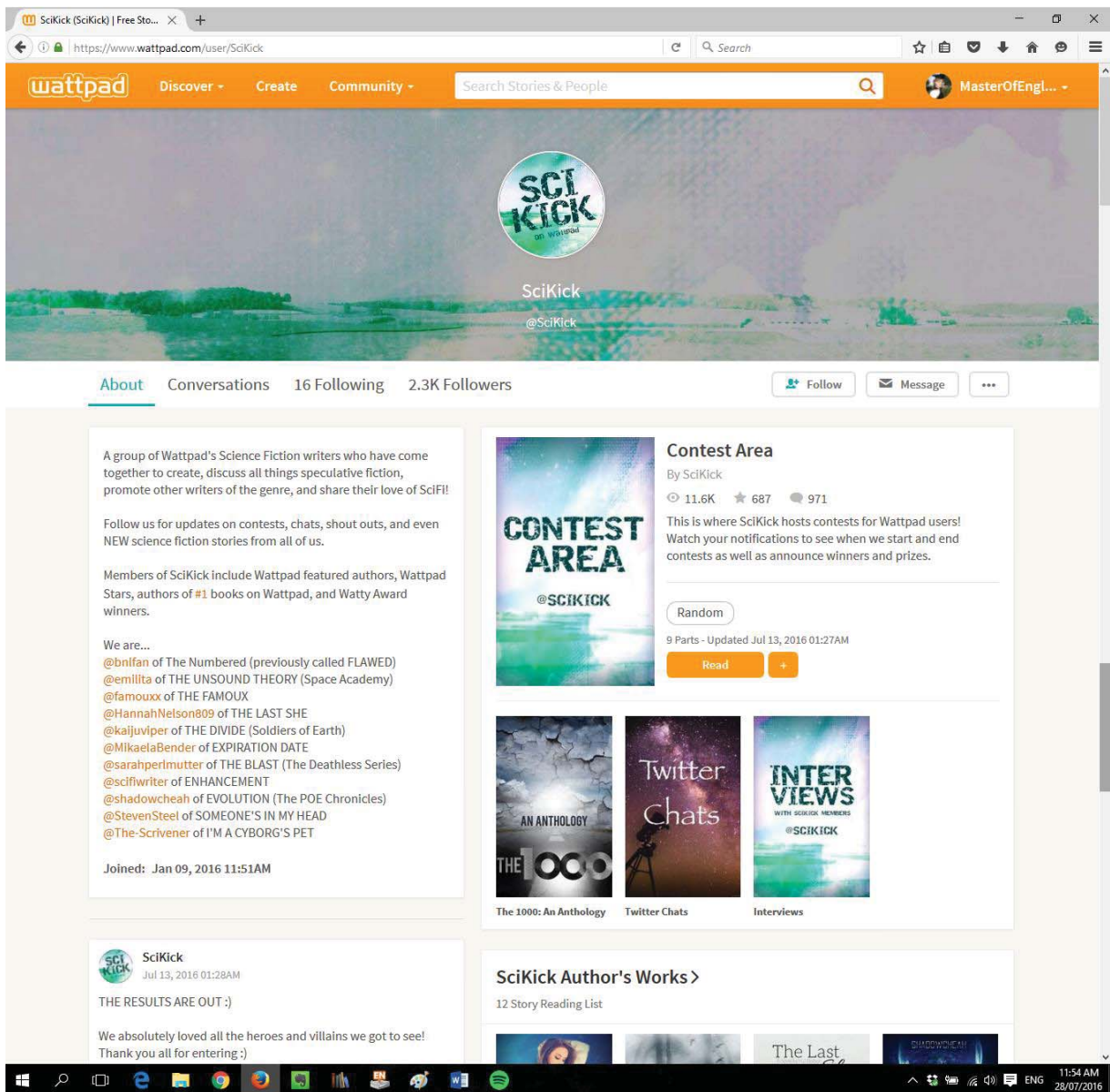


Fig. 1.4: An example of a book of reviews on Wattpad.

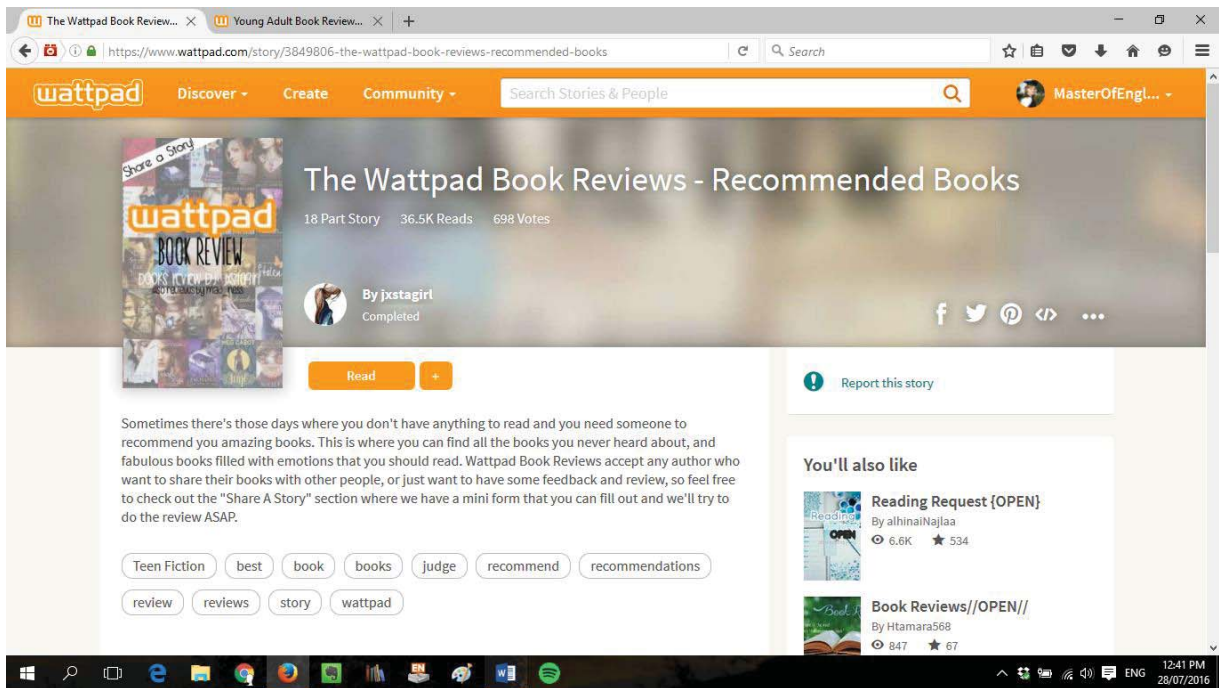


Fig. 1.5: A user's homepage showing one way that Wattpad displays popular content.

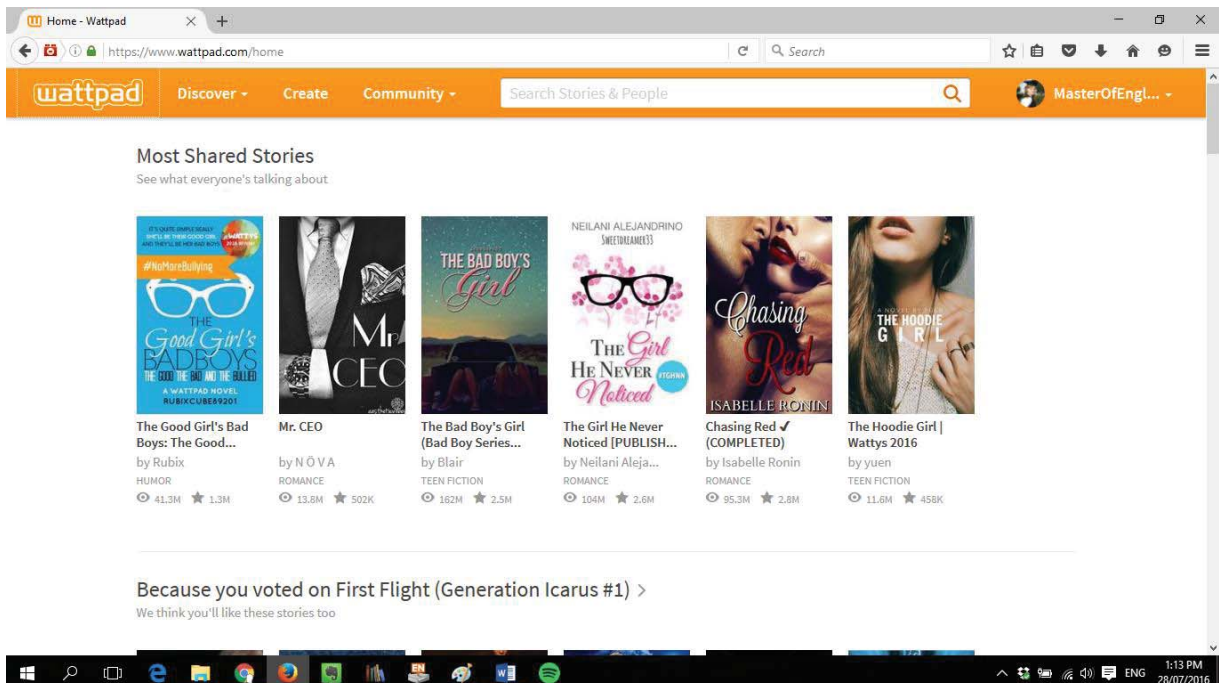


Fig. 1.6: Another way that Wattpad displays popular content on a user's homepage by highlighting a "trending tag".

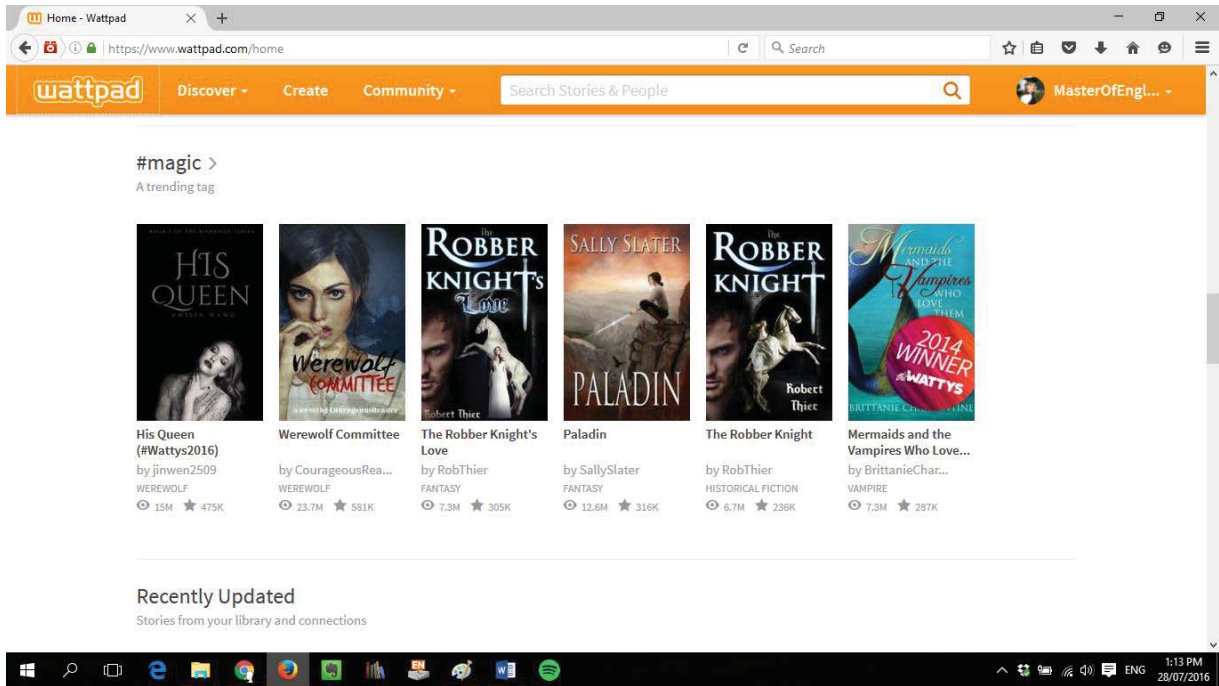


Fig. 1.7: The listing page for a ranked book on 28 July, 2016.

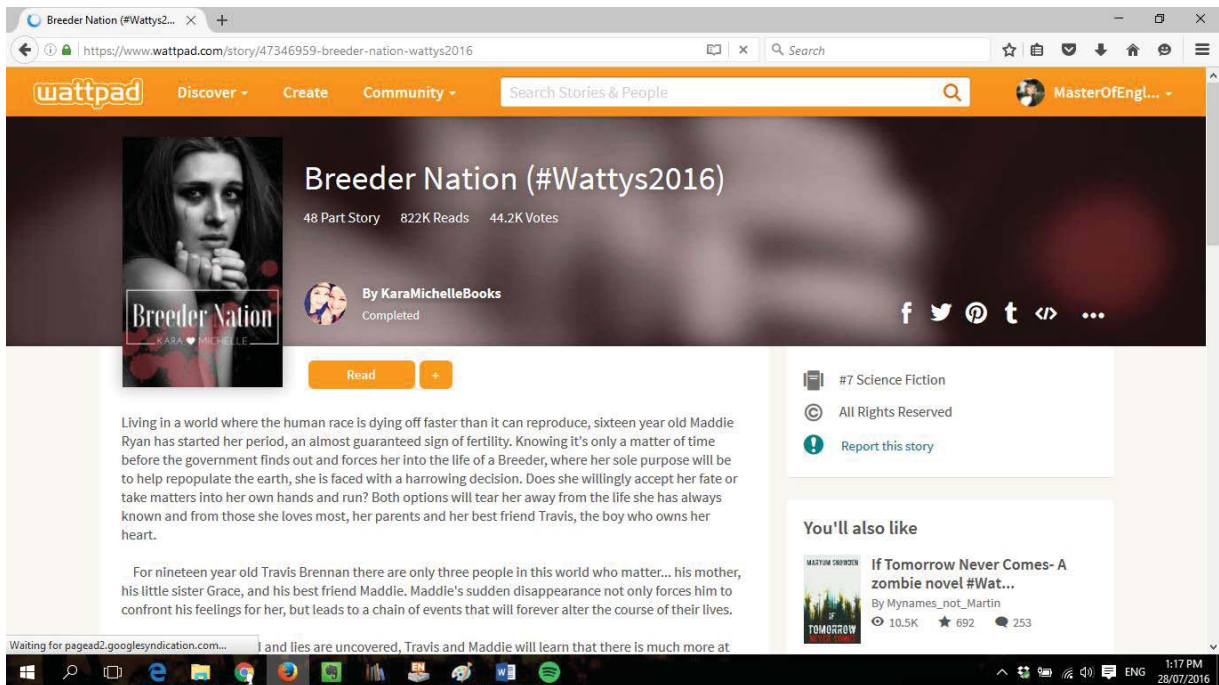


Fig. 1.8: A composite screenshot showing an example of an analytics page for a Wattpad work.



Fig. 1.9: A composite screenshot showing an example of the “engagement” analytics page for a Wattpad work.

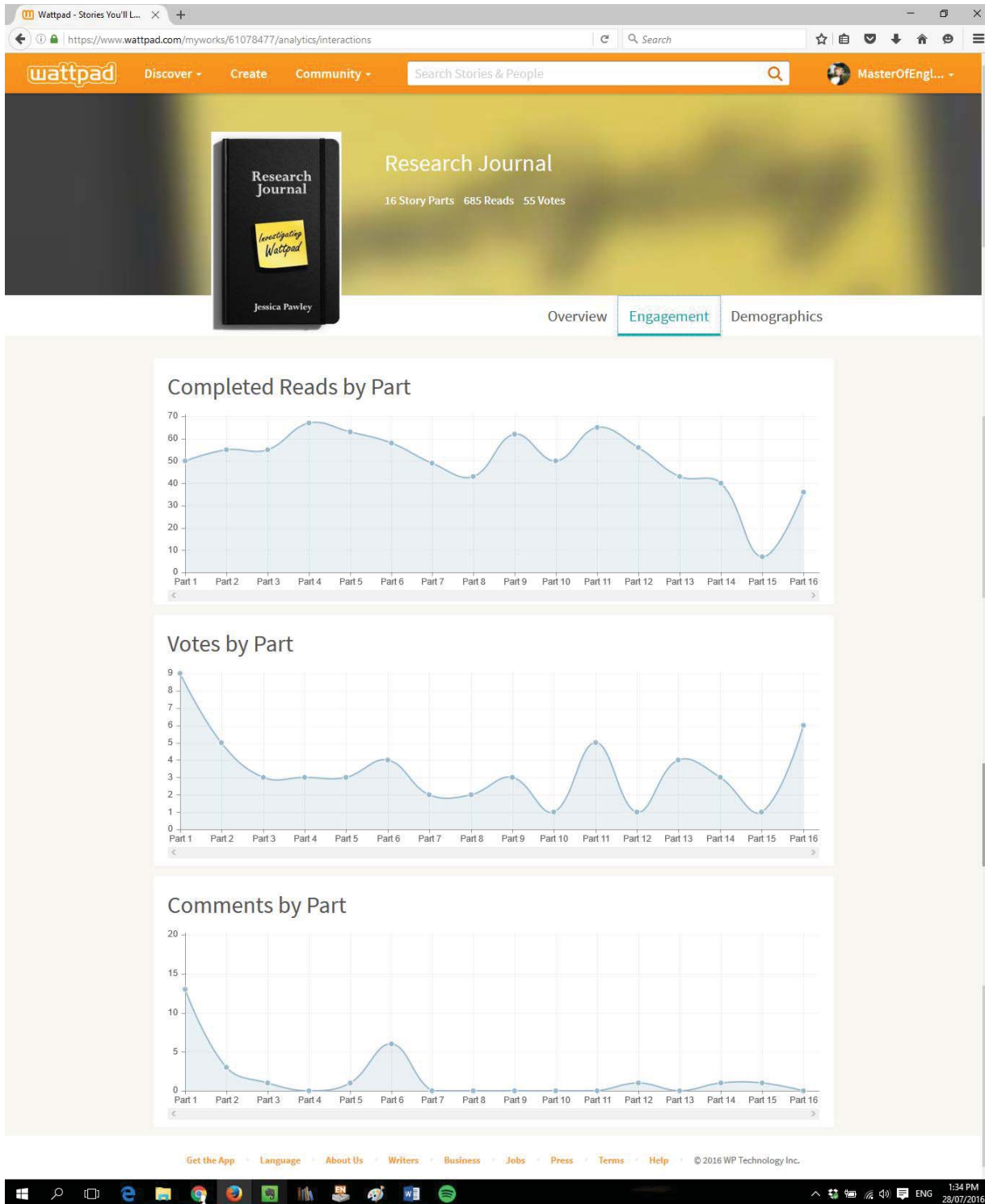


Fig. 1.10: Number of stories with the “Romance” tag on Wattpad as of 1st August, 2016.

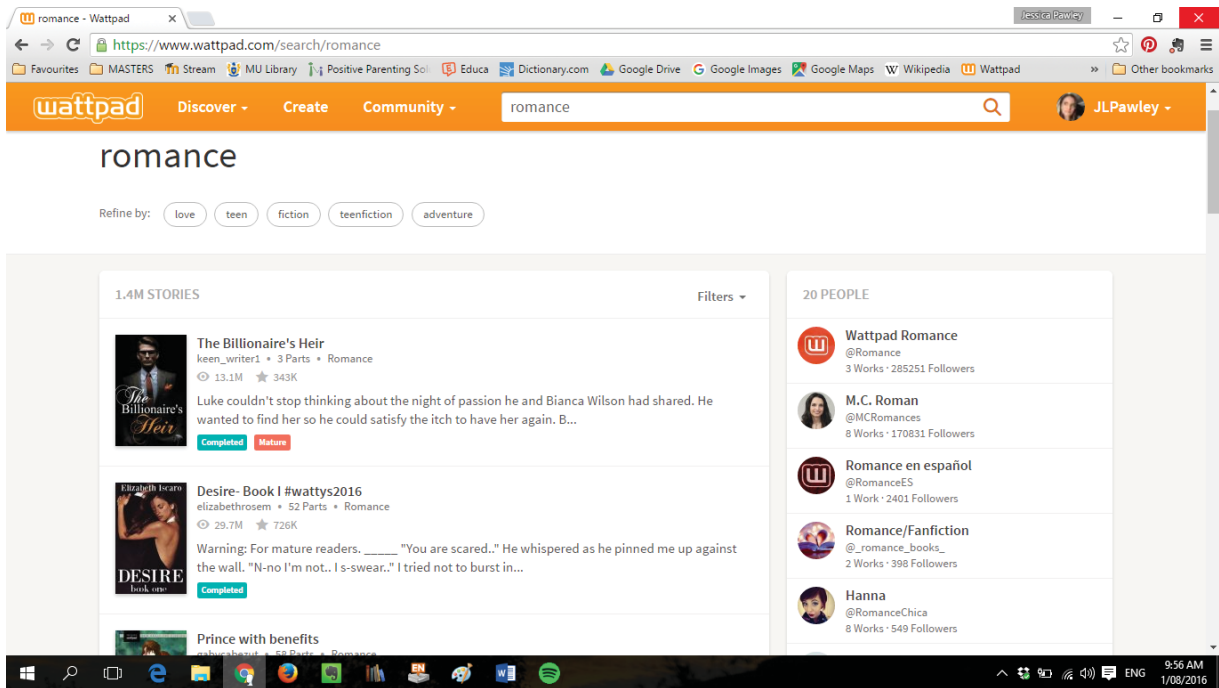


Fig. 1.11: Visible statistics for *Expiration Date* as of 2nd August, 2016

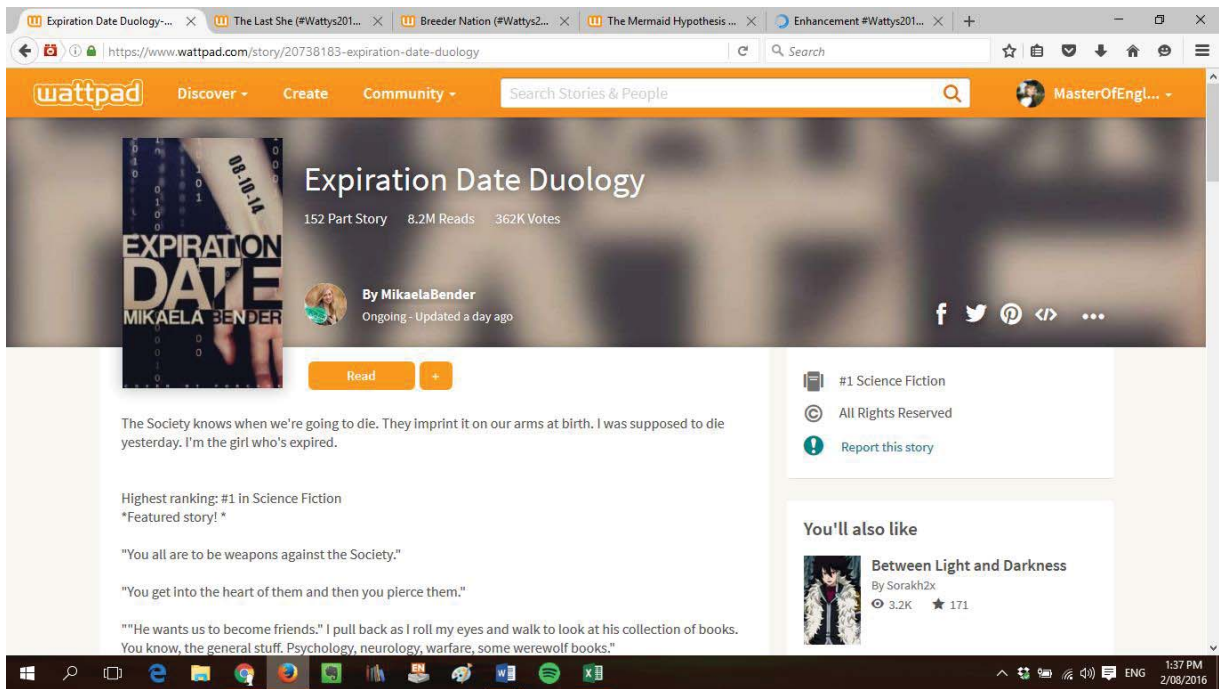


Fig. 1.12: Visible Statistics for *The Mermaid Hypothesis* on 2nd August, 2016

The Mermaid Hypothesis
 29 Part Story 150K Reads 10.4K Votes
 By adam_and_jane
 Ongoing - Updated 6 days ago

In the year 2020, the music industry is dead. A new technology called SirenSong has gone viral and wiped out every major record label on the planet. (Justin Bieber? Long forgotten. One Direction? Went on hiatus and never came back...)

An out-of-work record exec and his grandson Zac are on a crusade to find the one voice that can break the SirenSong spell and save the music business. When Zac encounters a girl named Ari, the connection between them is instant. There's something very different about her. Something special. Could Ari be the girl that they've been seeking? If only he could find a way to hear her sing. . . .

Unfortunately, Ari has suffered her whole life from a condition called Selective Mutism. She can speak (and sing) when alone, but not around other people. Her doctors attribute her condition to anxiety in the wake of a childhood trauma. But Ari isn't so sure about that diagnosis. If her problem is really an anxiety disorder, then why has every psychiatric treatment in the book failed to help her? She can't help but

#6 Science Fiction
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You'll also like
101 Ways to Save a Life
 By reflectives
 34.3K 3.4K 1.5K

Fig. 1.13: Visible statistics for *Enhancement* by @scifiwriter, taken on 3rd August 2016.

Enhancement #Wattys2015 WINNER!
 95 Part Story 719K Reads 48.9K Votes
 By scifiwriter
 Completed

The United States of America is no longer a democracy. It is no longer built on freedom or liberty or equality. Instead the nation values security, productivity, and order.

Everything is monitored. Everything is portioned. Everything is perfectly under control.

Everything except the SkyTrain Holland Renner was aboard.

In a matter of seconds, Holland finds herself in a world she didn't know existed. Before, she was free within limits. Now, she's one of 400 others. Before, Holland was at least human. Now, she's not so sure. All she knows is that she needs to endure and survive.

But what does this have to do with SkyTrain 267-B?

#19 Science Fiction
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You'll also like
Selection (Book 2 of POE chronicles)
 By shadowcheah
 786K 26K 3.5K

Fig. 1.14: Tally of comments on the opening line of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* on Wattpad (screenshot 26 Oct. 2016)

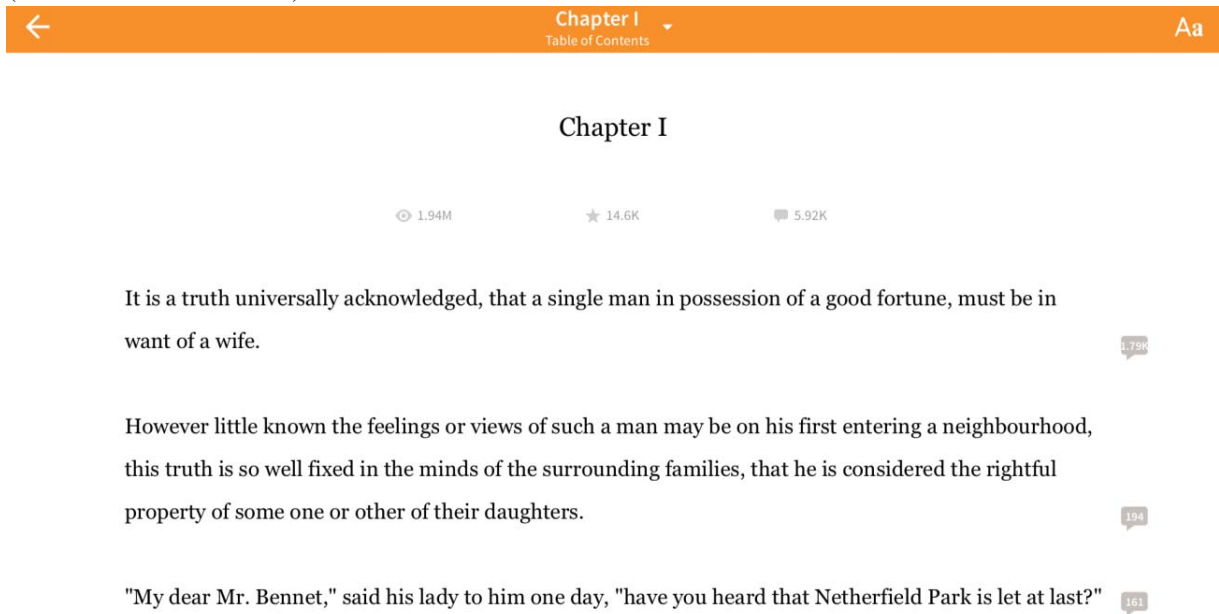


Fig. 1.15: Examples of comments on the opening quote of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* on Wattpad (screenshot 2 Dec. 2016)

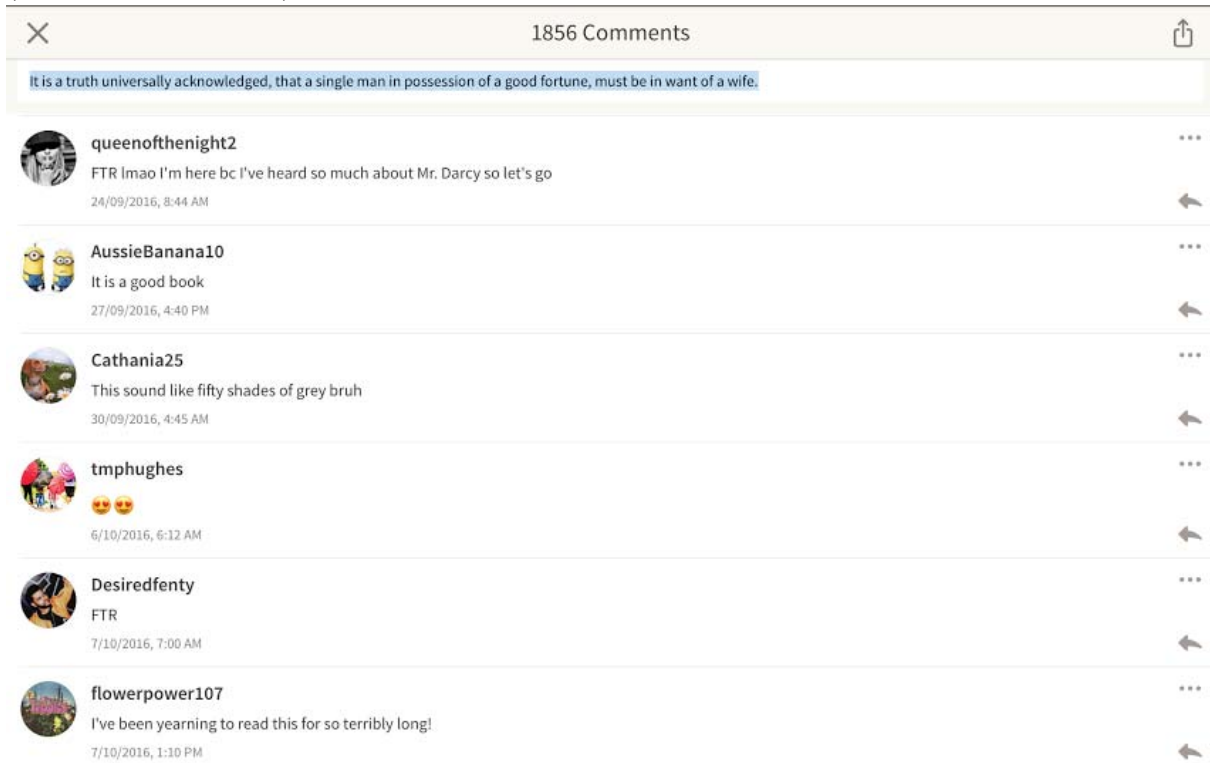


Fig. 1.16: Additional examples of comments on the opening quote of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* on Wattpad (screenshot 26 Oct. 2016)

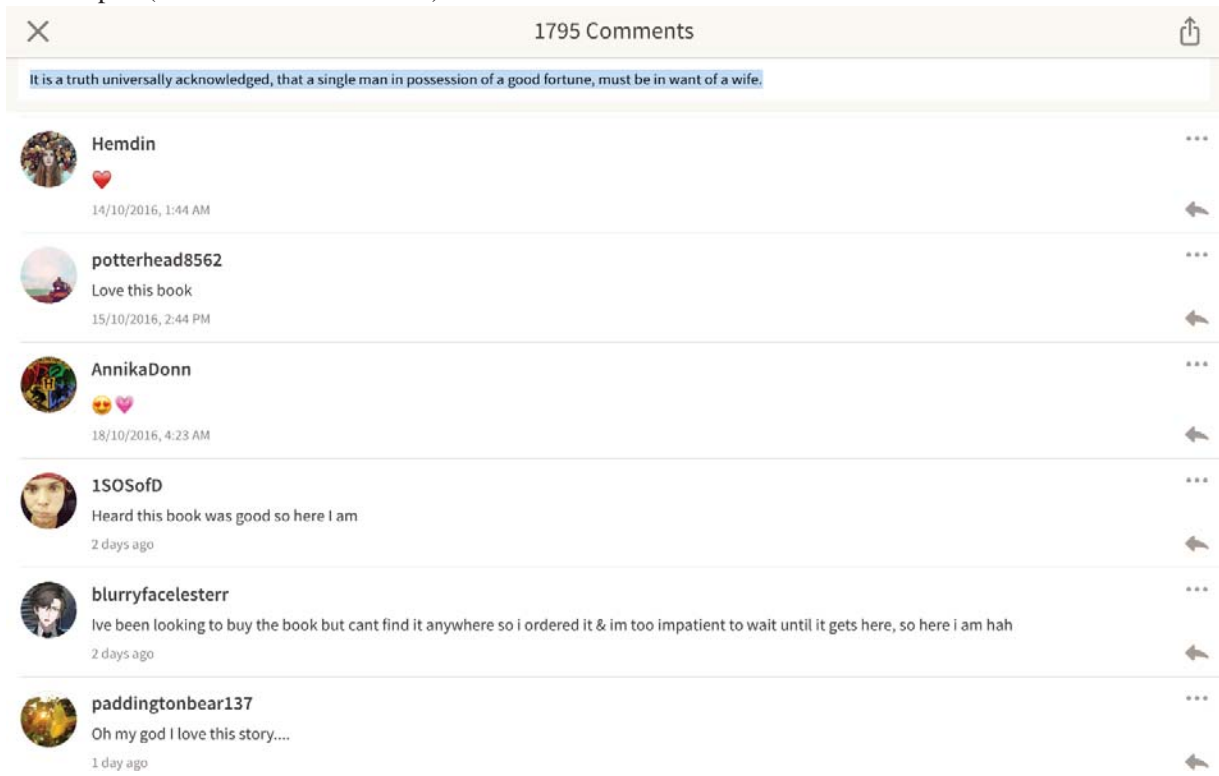


Fig. 1.17: Additional examples of comments on the opening quote of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* on Wattpad (screenshot 2 Dec. 2016)

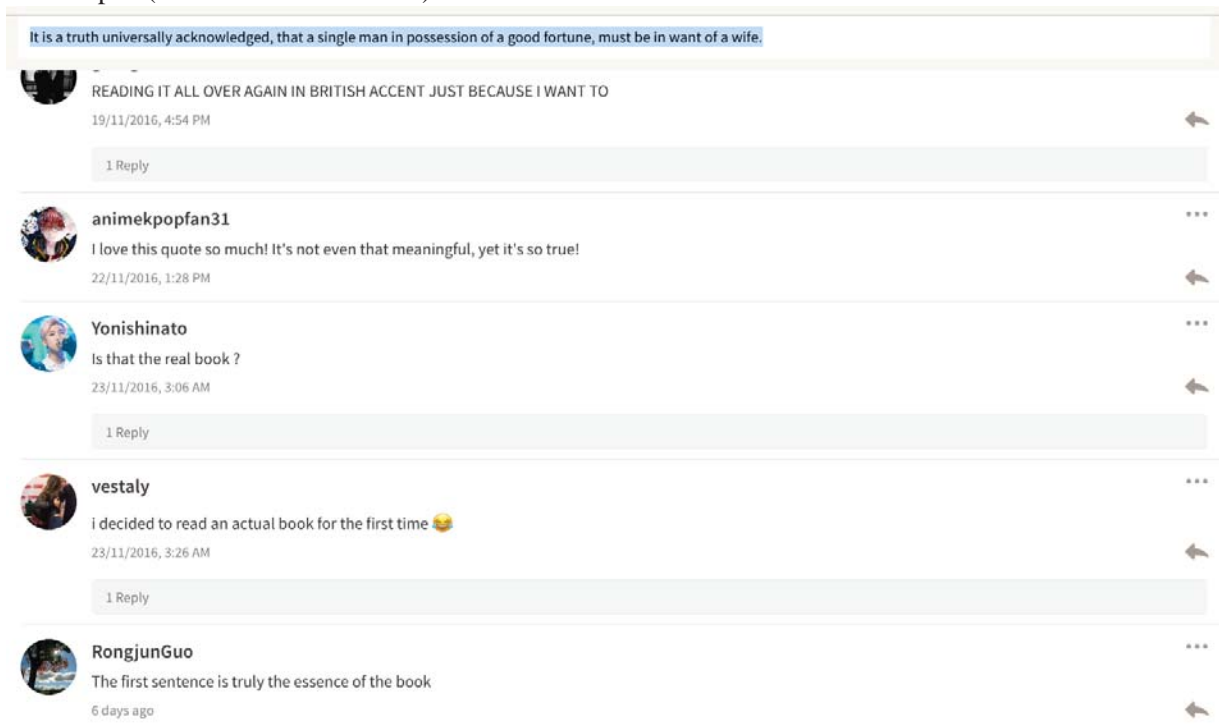


Fig. 1.18: An example of users ‘translating’ the language for the benefit of other readers of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* on Wattpad (screenshot 26 Oct. 2016)

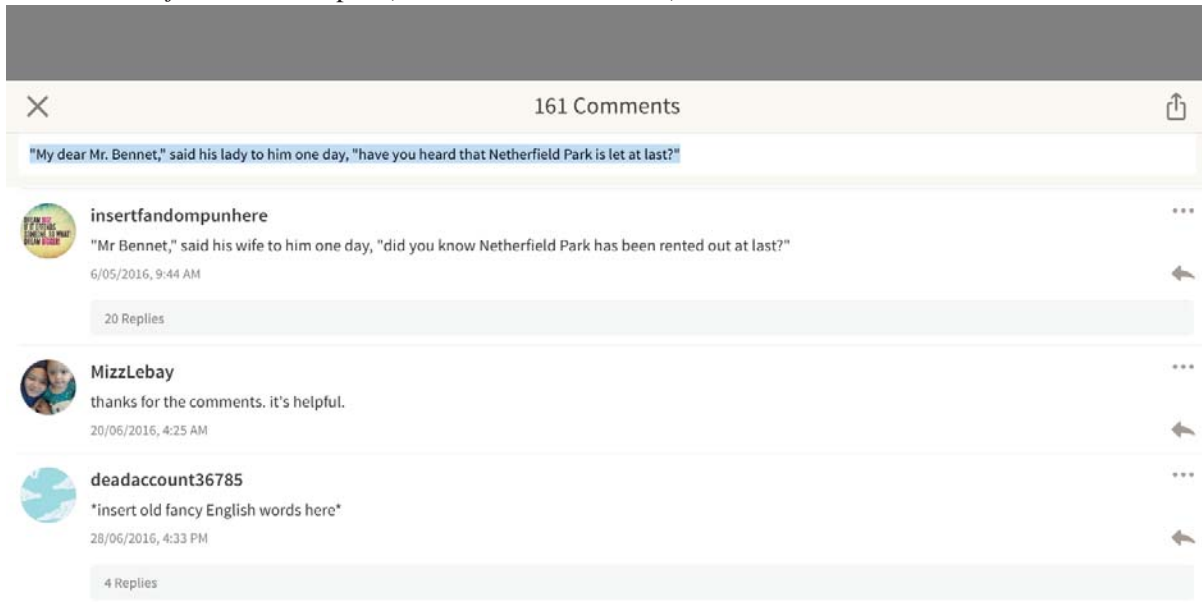


Fig. 1.19: Example of users’ enjoyment of interactivity whilst reading on Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* on Wattpad (screenshot 26 Oct. 2016)

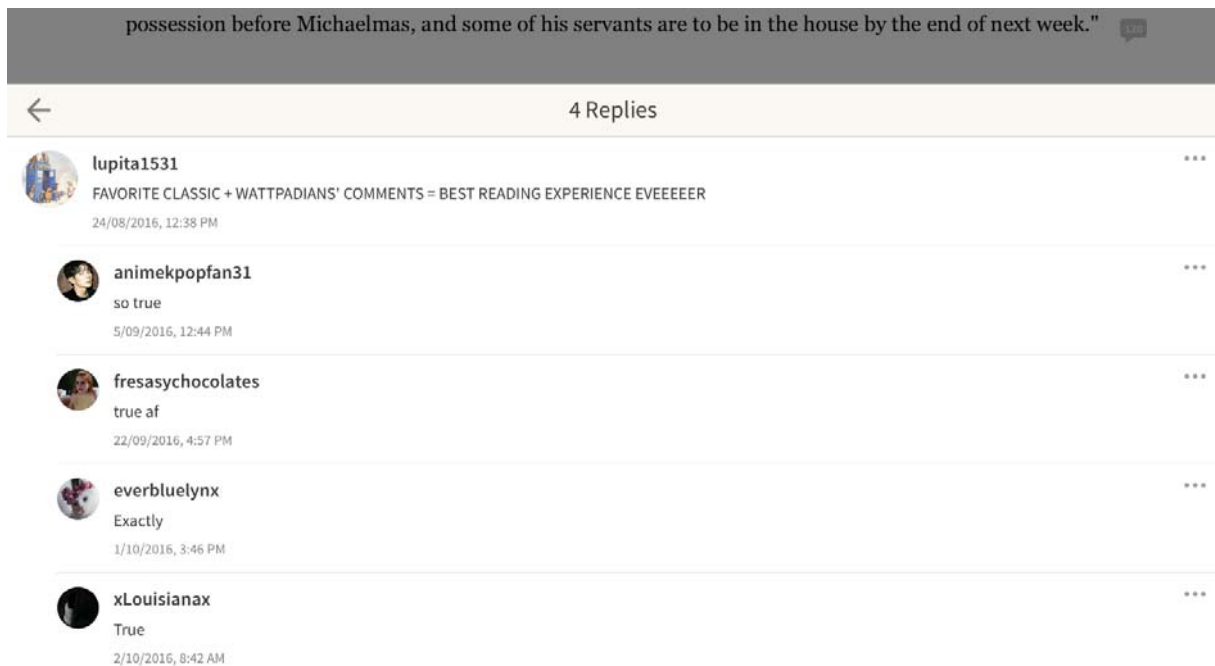


Fig. 1.20: Additional example of users' enjoyment of interactivity whilst reading on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* on Wattpad (screenshot 26 Oct. 2016)

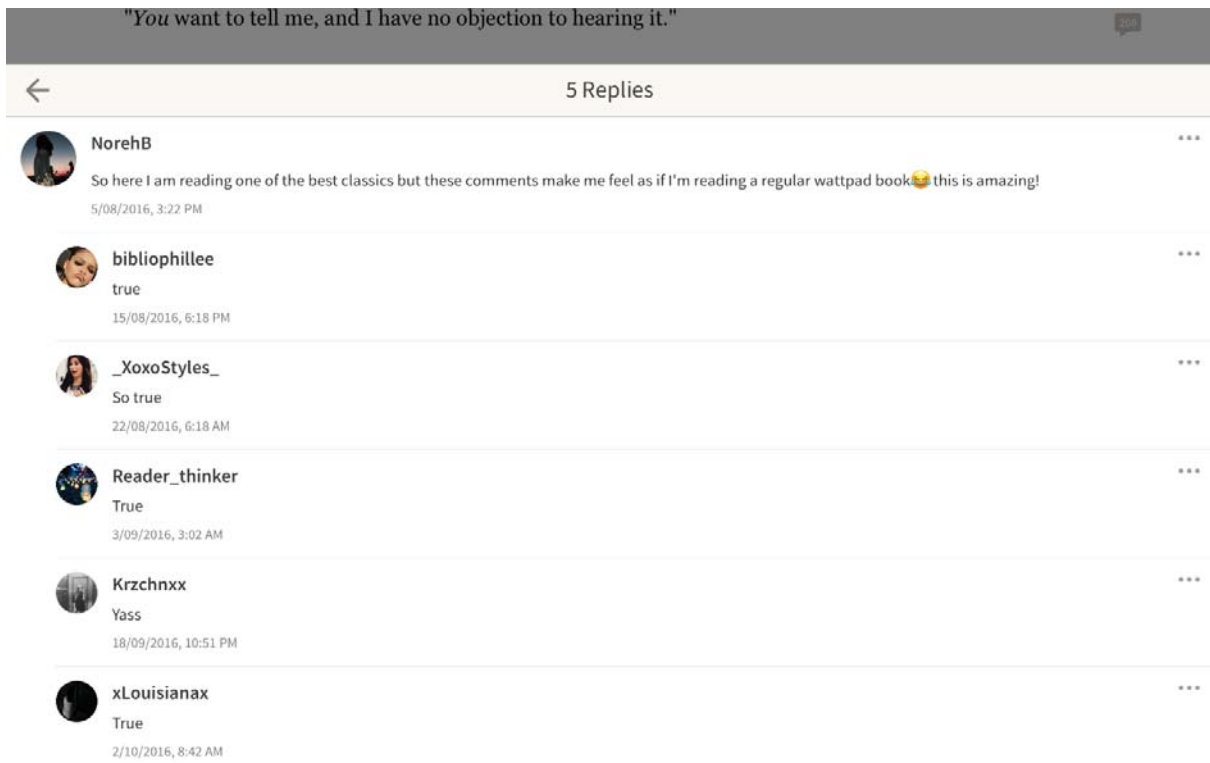
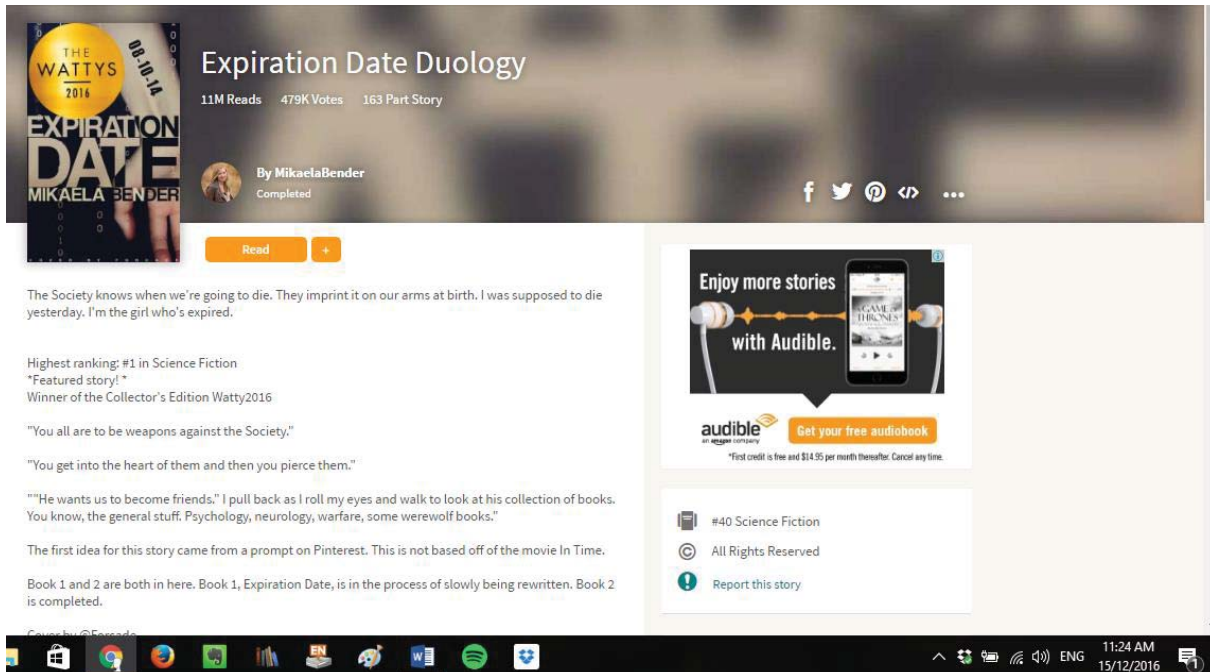
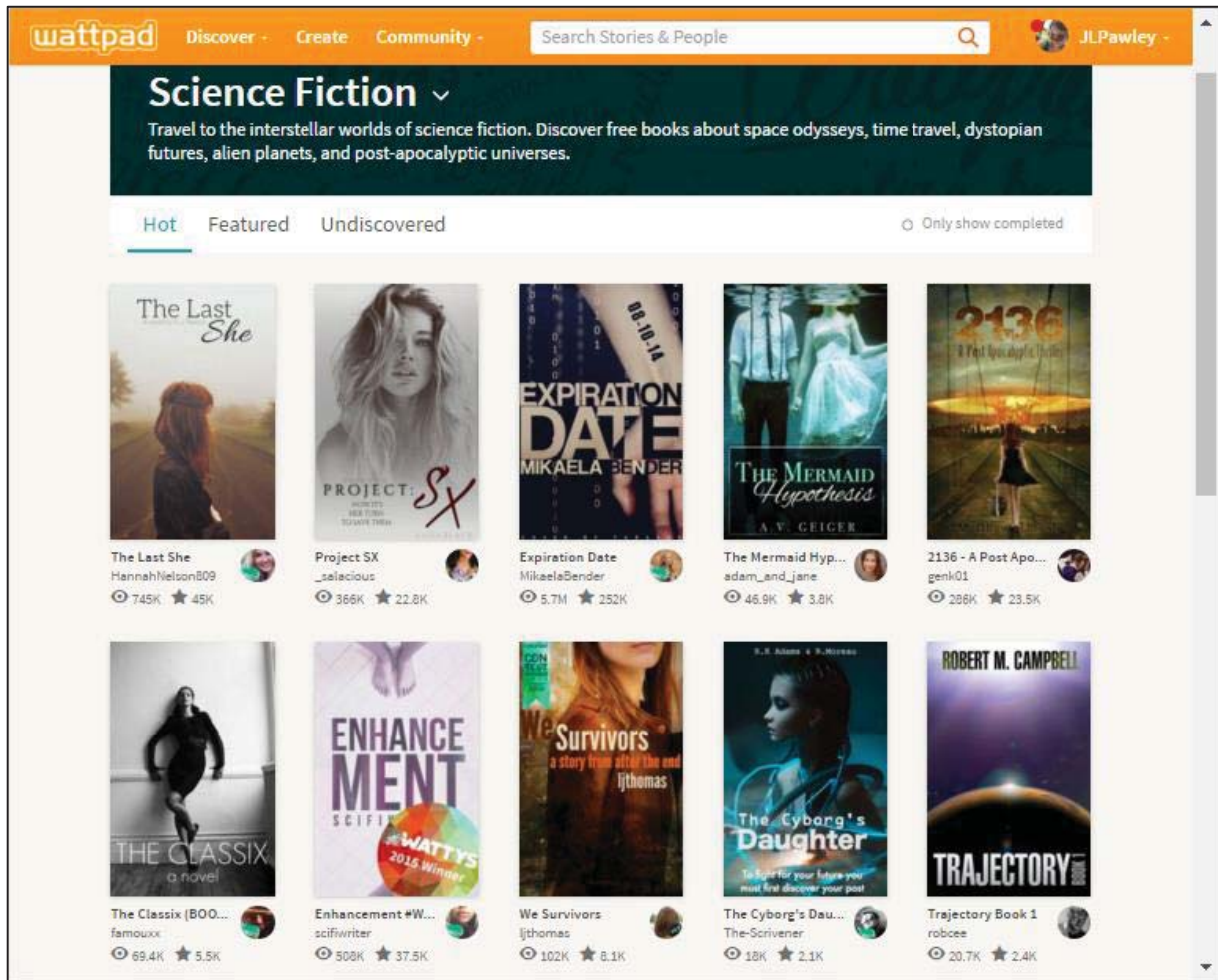


Fig. 1.21: Status of Expiration Date Duology as of 15 December 2016.



Appendix 2: Wattpad “Hot List” Statistics

Fig. 2.1: How Wattpad’s most popular books in each category are displayed on the website



Sample screen capture of the “Hot” books categorized as Science Fiction on Wattpad on 25th April 2016 (NZT).

The titles are ranked from left to right (in this example, *The Last She* is ranked #1, *Project SX* is #2, and so on).

Table 2.1: Wattpad's Top Ranked Science Fiction Books in May 2016

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th
1	Expiration Date	The Last She	Breeder Nation	Project SX	Enhancement	Matched For Life	The Mermaid Hypothesis	The Classix	Ultramarine	We Survivors
2	The Last She	Expiration Date	Breeder Nation	2136	Project SX	Enhancement	The Mermaid Hypothesis	Matched For Life	The Classix	Ultramarine
3	Expiration Date	The Last She	Breeder Nation	Enhancement	The Mermaid Hypothesis	2136	Project SX	Insurrection	Matched For Life	Ultramarine
4	Expiration Date	The Last She	Breeder Nation	2136	The Mermaid Hypothesis	Enhancement	We Survivors	Project SX	Locked Up	Insurrection
5	Expiration Date	The Last She	Breeder Nation	Enhancement	2136	The Mermaid Hypothesis	Infinite	We Survivors	Revolution	Vivid
6	Expiration Date	The Last She	Project SX	Breeder Nation	The Mermaid Hypothesis	Enhancement	2136	Risen: Niekro's War	Infinite	Locked Up
7	Expiration Date	The Last She	Project SX	Breeder Nation	The Mermaid Hypothesis	Enhancement	2136	Risen: Niekro's War	Infinite	Locked Up
8	The Last She	Expiration Date	Breeder Nation	Project SX	Enhancement	The Mermaid Hypothesis	The Classix	Ultramarine	Locked Up	Revolution
9	The Last She	The Famoux	Breeder Nation	Expiration Date	Project SX	The Mermaid Hypothesis	Enhancement	Ultramarine	The Classix	Locked Up
10	Expiration Date	The Last She	Breeder Nation	The Famoux	The Mermaid Hypothesis	Project SX	Ultramarine	Enhancement	Insurrection	Altered
11	Expiration Date	The Last She	Enhancement	Breeder Nation	The Mermaid Hypothesis	The Famoux	Ultramarine	Project SX	Tele	Insurrection
12	Expiration Date	The Last She	Breeder Nation	2136	The Mermaid Hypothesis	Enhancement	We Survivors	The Famoux	Risen: Niekro's War	Ultramarine
13	Expiration Date	The Last She	Breeder Nation	2136	The Mermaid Hypothesis	Enhancement	We Survivors	The Famoux	Risen: Niekro's War	Ultramarine
14	Expiration Date	The Last She	Breeder Nation	Enhancement	The Mermaid Hypothesis	We Survivors	2136	Revolution	Risen: Niekro's War	The Classix
15	Expiration Date	The Last She	Breeder Nation	2136	The Mermaid Hypothesis	Enhancement	The Classix	Risen: Niekro's War	Ultramarine	We Survivors
16	Expiration Date	The Last She	Project SX	Breeder Nation	The Mermaid Hypothesis	Ultramarine	2136	Enhancement	Risen: Niekro's War	The Classix
17	Expiration	The Last She	Project SX	Breeder	2136	The Mermaid	Insurrection	Ultramarine	Altered	Chaos Theory

(Cont. on next page)

Table 2.2: Wattpad's Hot Listed Titles in Science Fiction for May 2016, in Order of Popularity

This table was calculated using an inverse value assignment (where a 1st ranking gives a point score of 10, a ranking of 10th gives a score of 1, and all other placements earned 0) (Figs. 2.2-2.32).

Top 10 Science Fiction Books on Wattpad, May 2016																																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	TOTAL		
Expiration Date	10	9	10	10	10	10	10	9	7	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	304
The Last She	9	10	9	9	9	9	10	10	9	9	9	9	8	8	8	7	7	8	8	9	9	9	9	8	9	10	9	10	9	9	9	9	282	
Breeder Nation	8	8	8	8	7	7	8	8	7	8	8	7	8	8	8	7	7	8	8	7	5	8	8	8	8	8	8	7	8	7	8	8	238	
The Mermaid Hypothesis	4	4	6	6	5	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	4	7	6	7	5	7	6	7	7	7	6	6	6	7	6	181	
Enhancement	6	5	7	5	7	5	6	4	3	8	5	5	7	5	3	3	7	6	4	8	4	2	7	6	4	8	4	8	7	5	4	4	162	
2136 - A Post Apocalyptic Thriller	-	7	5	7	6	4	4	-	-	-	7	7	4	7	4	6	5	4	8	6	7	5	3	1	-	-	-	-	8	6	7	128		
Project SX	7	6	4	3	-	8	8	7	6	5	3	-	-	-	-	8	8	6	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	86	
Risen: Niekro's War	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	-	-	-	2	2	2	2	3	2	-	-	1	-	3	2	3	1	-	5	5	5	4	3	-	49		
The Classix	3	2	-	-	-	-	4	2	-	-	-	-	1	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	6	4	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	43		
Ultramarine	2	1	1	-	-	-	3	3	4	4	1	1	1	2	5	3	-	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35		
Revolution (Book 3 of POE Chronicles)	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	3	-	3	-	-	4	1	-	-	-	5	6	3	4	1	-	-	33		
The Famous	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	7	5	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27		
We Survivors	1	-	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	27		
Insurrection	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	4	2	-	-	-	-	3	1	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	24		
Infinite	-	-	-	4	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17		
Locked Up	-	-	2	-	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	14		
Star Cursed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	4	2	4	3	4	1	-	-	14		
The Cyborg's Daughter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	-	1	2	3	-	-	-	12		
Matched For Life	5	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10		
Altered	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3		
Chaos Theory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	
Starship Vengeance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	
TELE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	
Astronomicon 1: The Beginning	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	2	
Outliers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	
Vivid	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	
Invaded	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	
Gravity Falls	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	
Amber Skies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	

Table 2.3: All 29 Titles and Authors that Reached the Top Ten of Wattpad’s Science Fiction Hot List in May 2016

Compiled from the raw data in Table 2.2 and Figs. 2.2-2.32.

Rank	Title	Author’s Username
1	<i>Expiration Date (later: Expiration Date Duology)</i>	@MikaelaBender
2	<i>The Last She</i>	@HannahNelson809
3	<i>Breeder Nation</i>	@KaraMichelleBooks
4	<i>The Mermaid Hypothesis</i>	@adam_and_jane
5	<i>Enhancement</i>	@scifiwriter
6	<i>2136 - A Post Apocalyptic Thriller</i>	@genk01
7	<i>Project SX</i>	@_salacious
8	<i>Risen: Niekro's War</i>	@bloodsword
9	<i>The Classix</i>	@famouxx
10	<i>Ultramarine</i>	@exposures
11	<i>Revolution (Book 3 of Protectors of Earth Chronicles)</i>	@shadowcheah
12	<i>The Famous</i>	@famouxx
13	<i>We Survivors</i>	@ljthomas
14	<i>Insurrection</i>	@MikaelaBender
15	<i>Infinite</i>	@AnniesBooks
16	<i>Locked Up</i>	@meharrjdawg
17	<i>Star Cursed</i>	@CSW1995
18	<i>The Cyborg's Daughter</i>	@The-Scrivener
19	<i>Matched For Life</i>	@TessaT
20	<i>Altered</i>	@SorchaDeBrun
21	<i>Chaos Theory</i>	@dauneths
22	<i>Starship Vengeance</i>	@etinks
23	<i>TELE</i>	@bfregal
24	<i>Astronomicon 1: The Beginning</i>	@Astronomicon
25	<i>Outliers</i>	@Ximone
26	<i>Vivid</i>	@MonochromeBlue
27	<i>Invaded</i>	@toxicallyyours
28	<i>Gravity Falls</i>	@pranjaliaditi
29	<i>Amber Skies [A 2136 Novel]</i>	@genk01

Figures 2.2-2.32: Wattpad's Science Fiction Daily Rankings in May 2016

Fig. 2.2: Top ten SF books on 1 May 2016

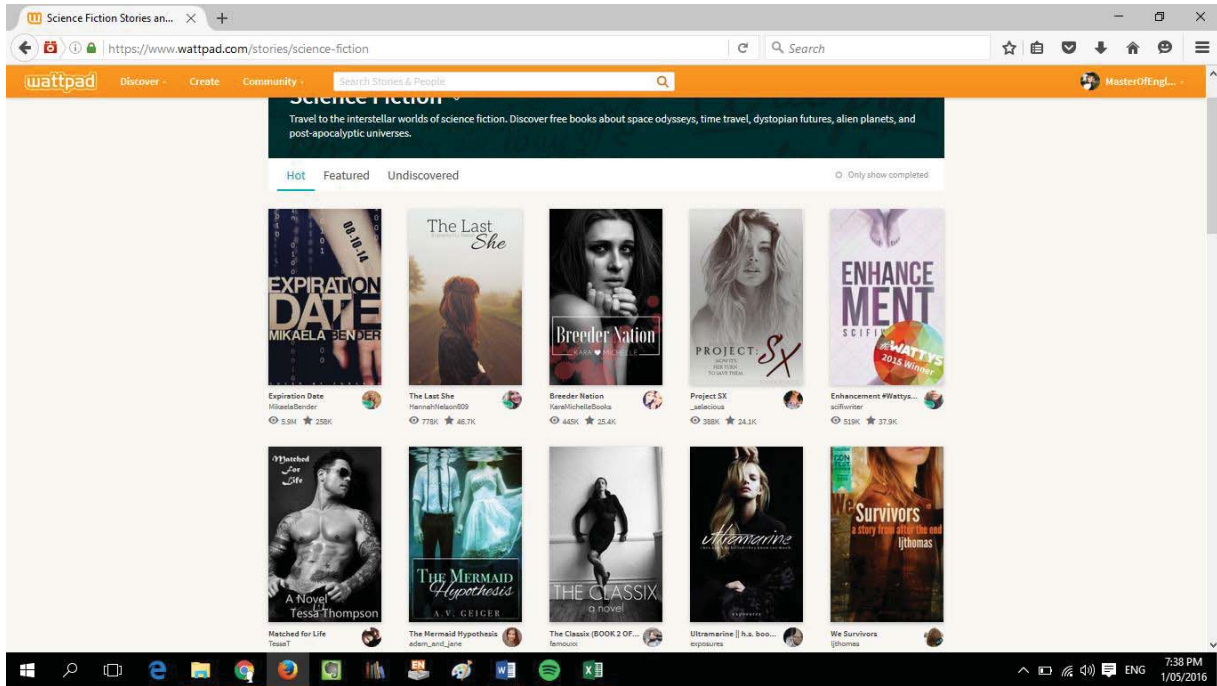


Fig. 2.3: Top ten SF books on 2 May 2016

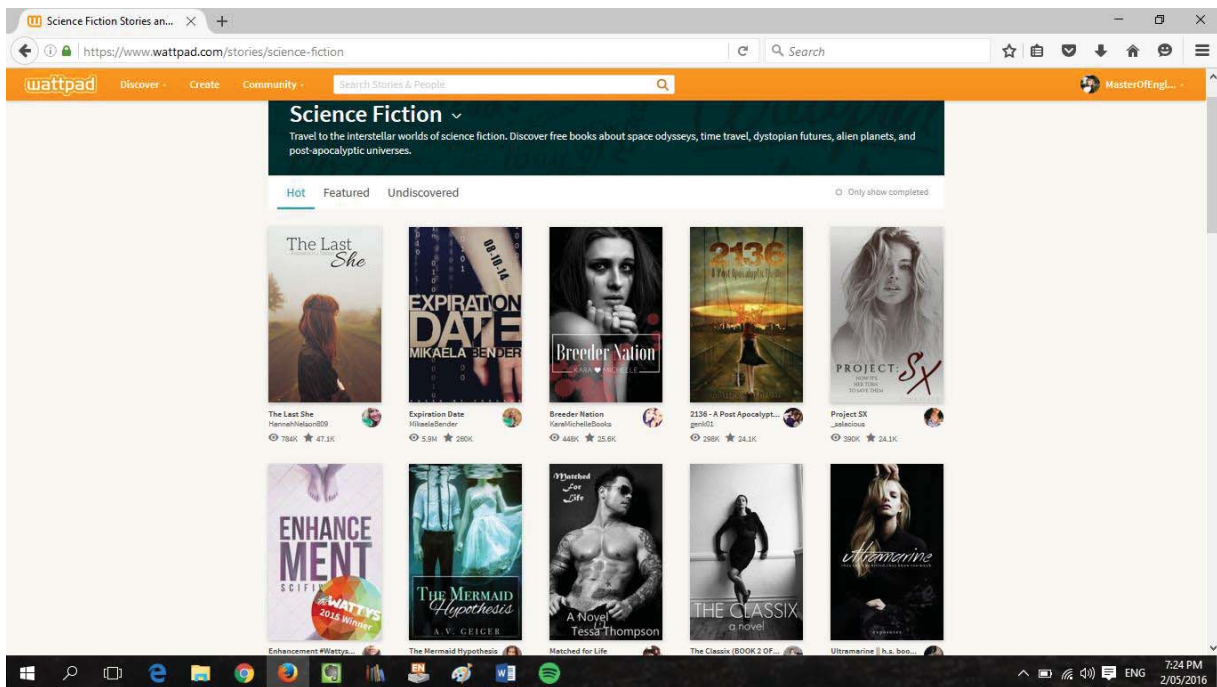


Fig. 2.4: Top ten SF books on 3 May 2016

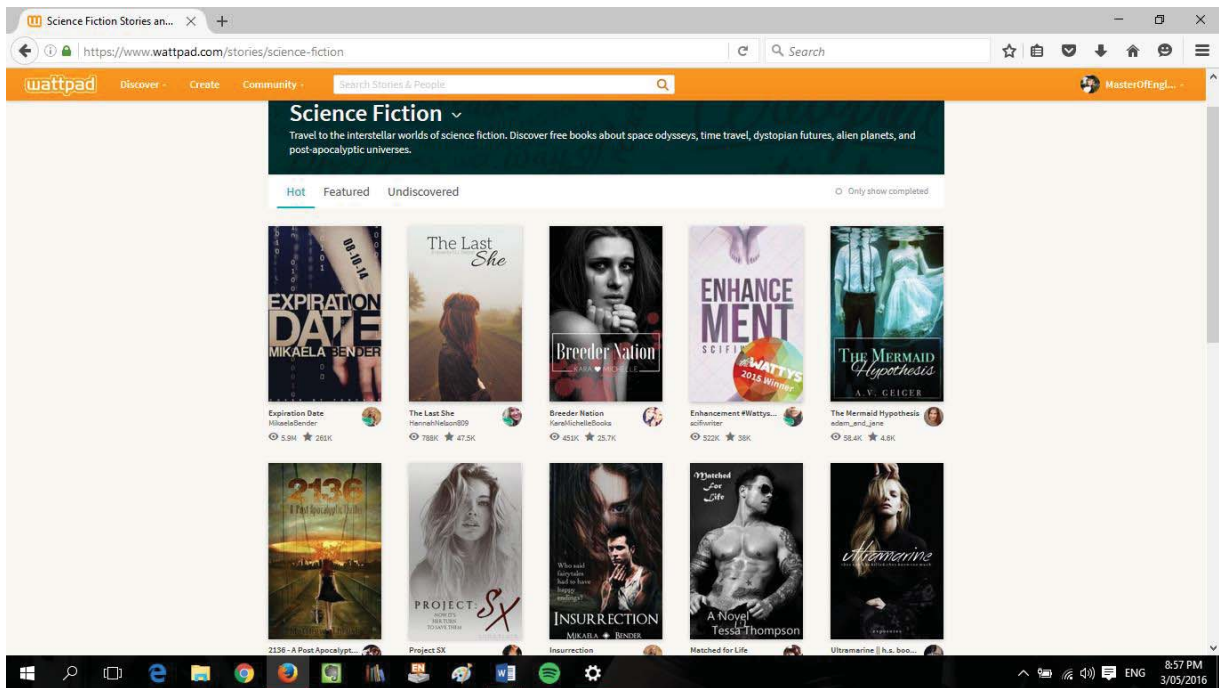


Fig. 2.5: Top ten SF books on 4 May 2016

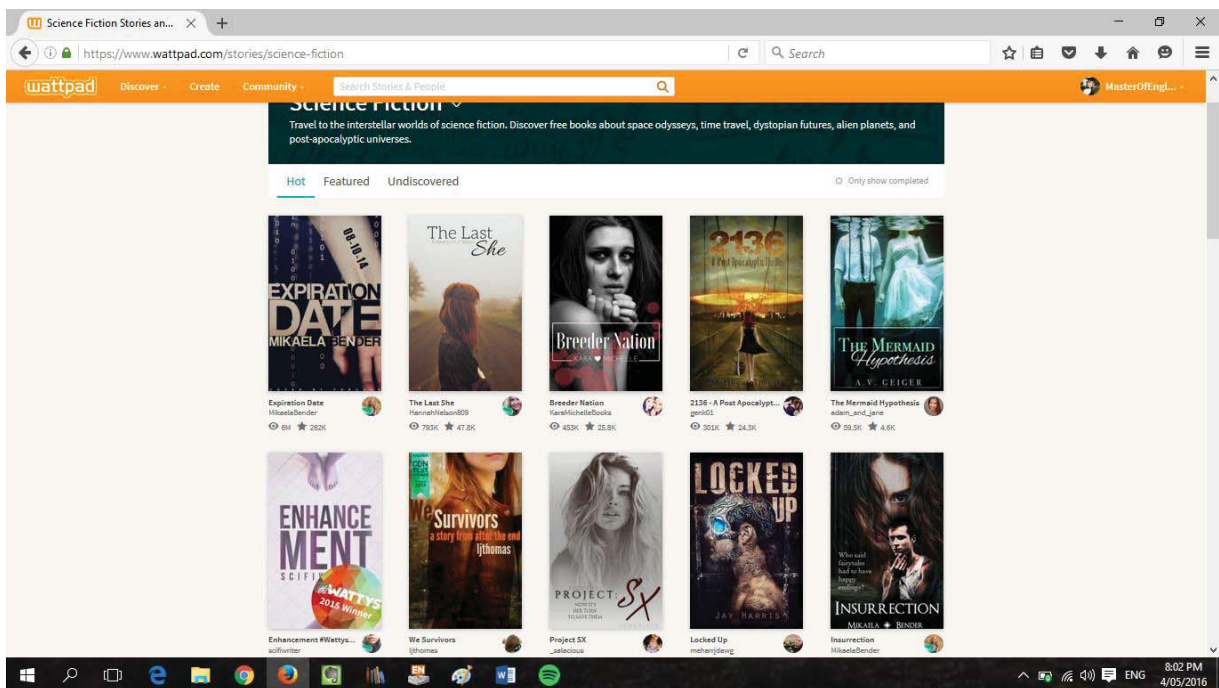


Fig. 2.6: Top ten SF books on 5 May 2016

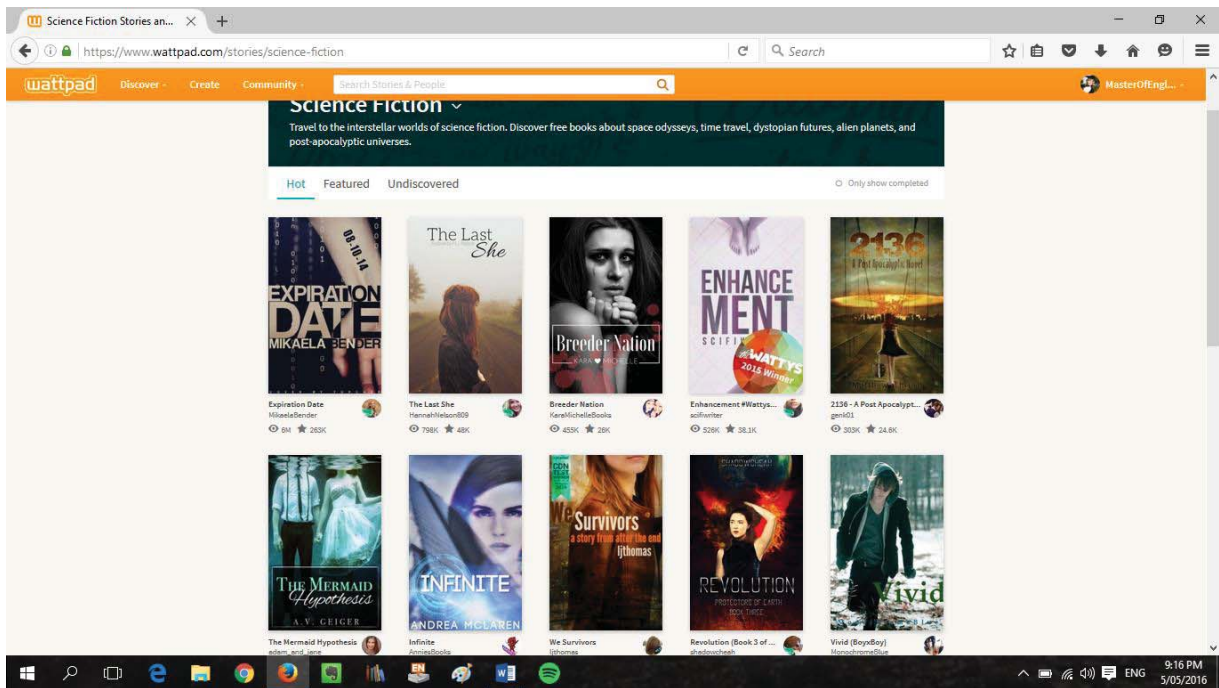


Fig. 2.7: Top ten SF books on 6 May 2016

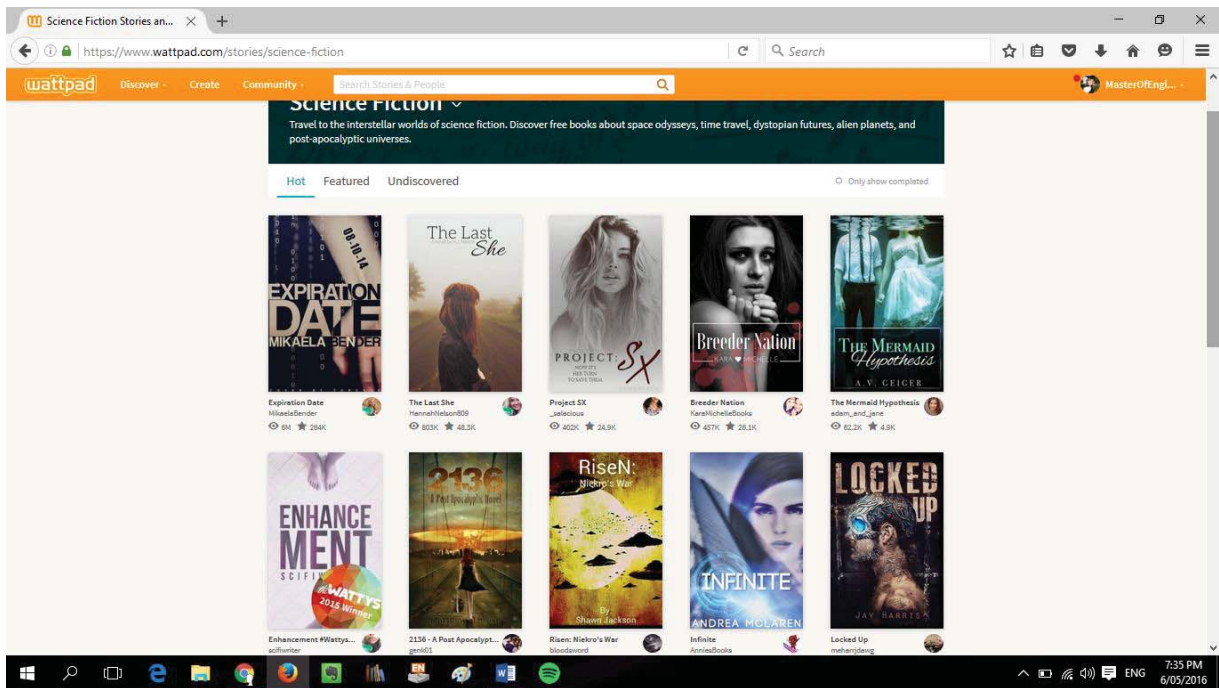


Fig. 2.8: Top ten SF books on 7 May 2016

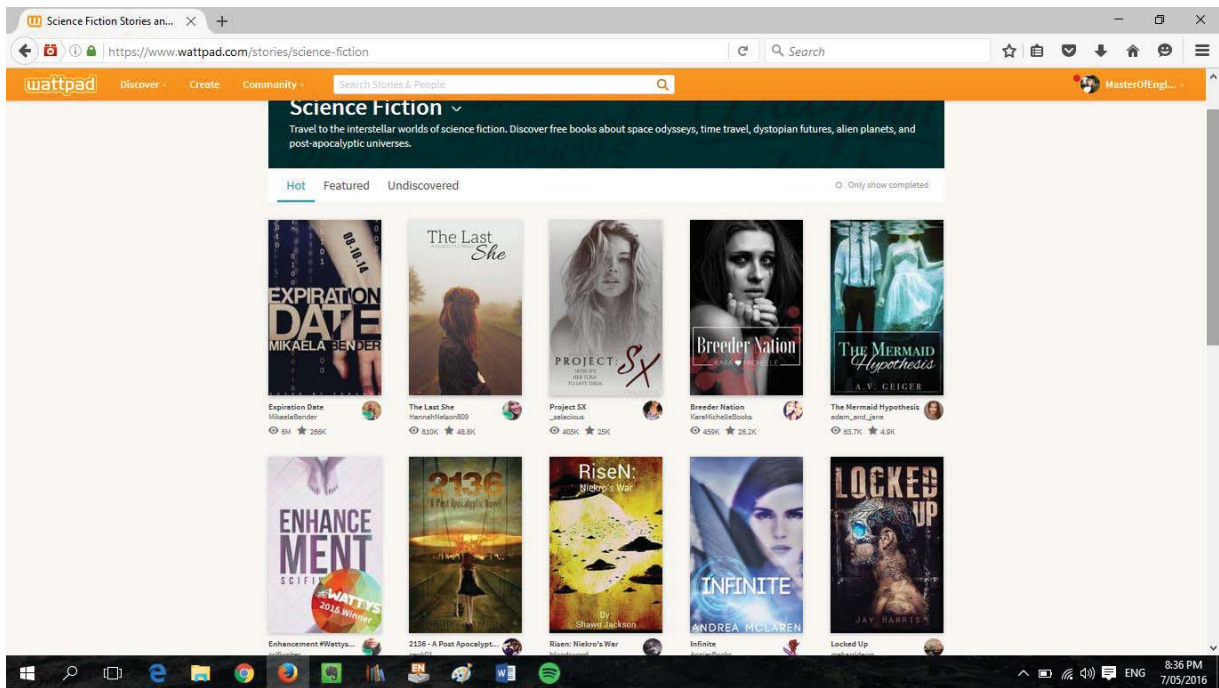


Fig. 2.9: Top ten SF books on 8 May 2016

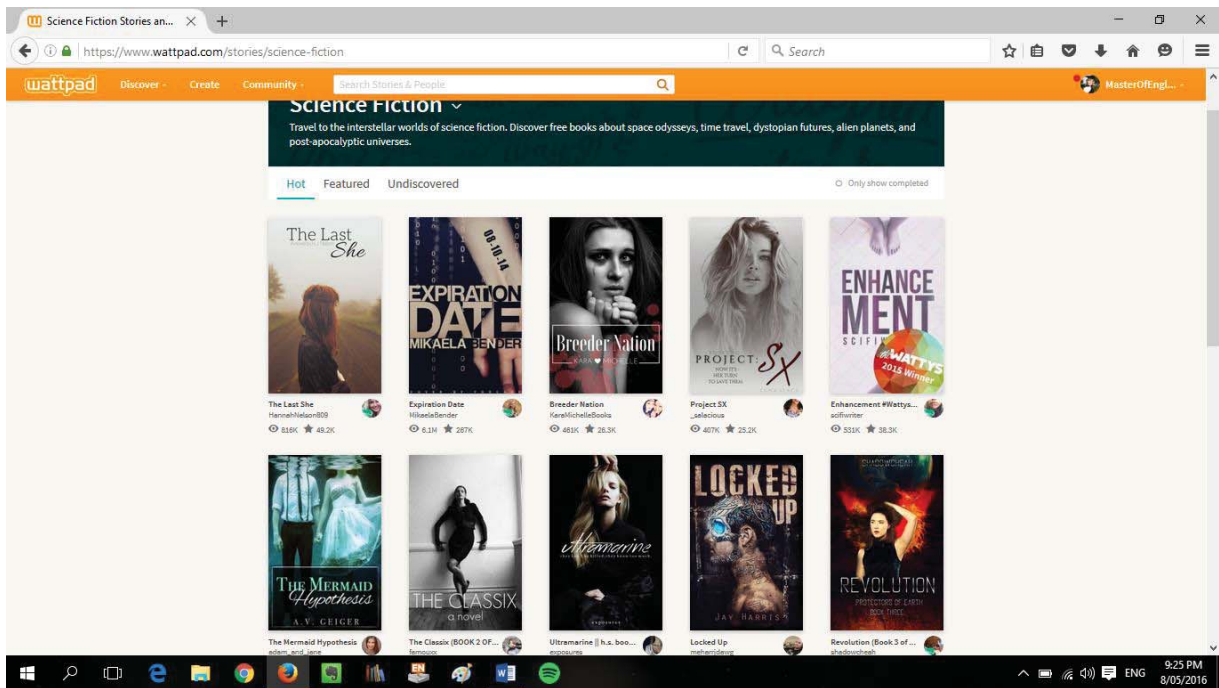


Fig. 2.10: Top ten SF books on 9 May 2016

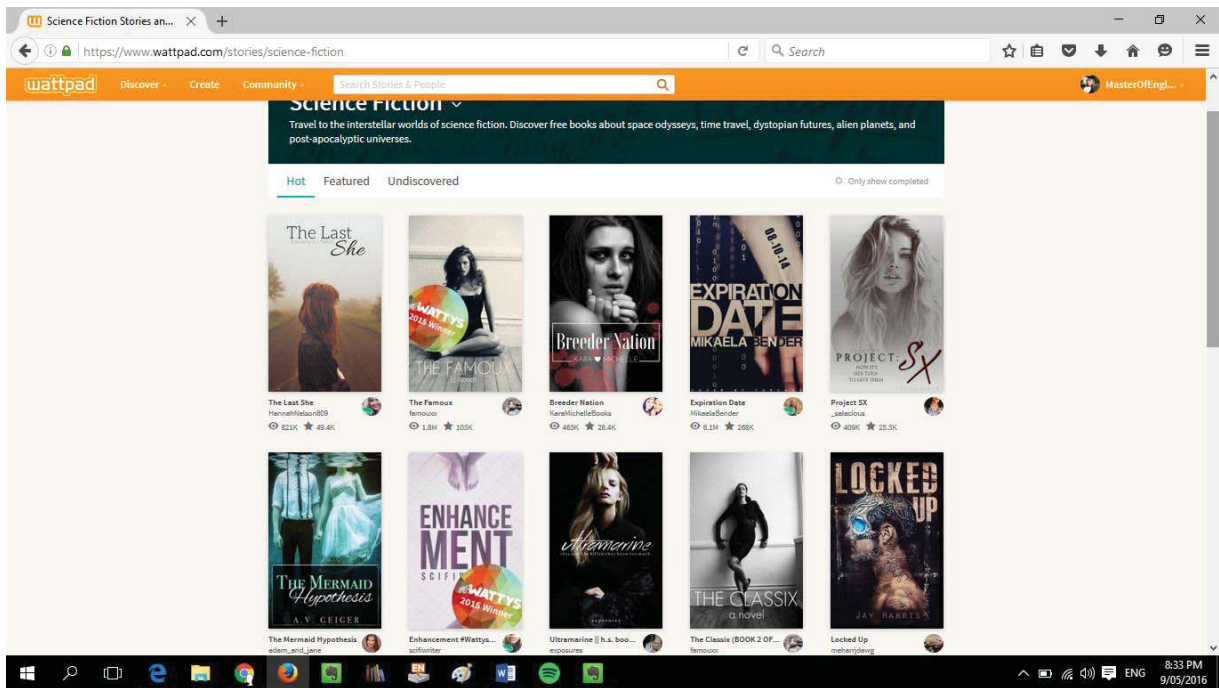


Fig. 2.11: Top ten SF books on 10 May 2016

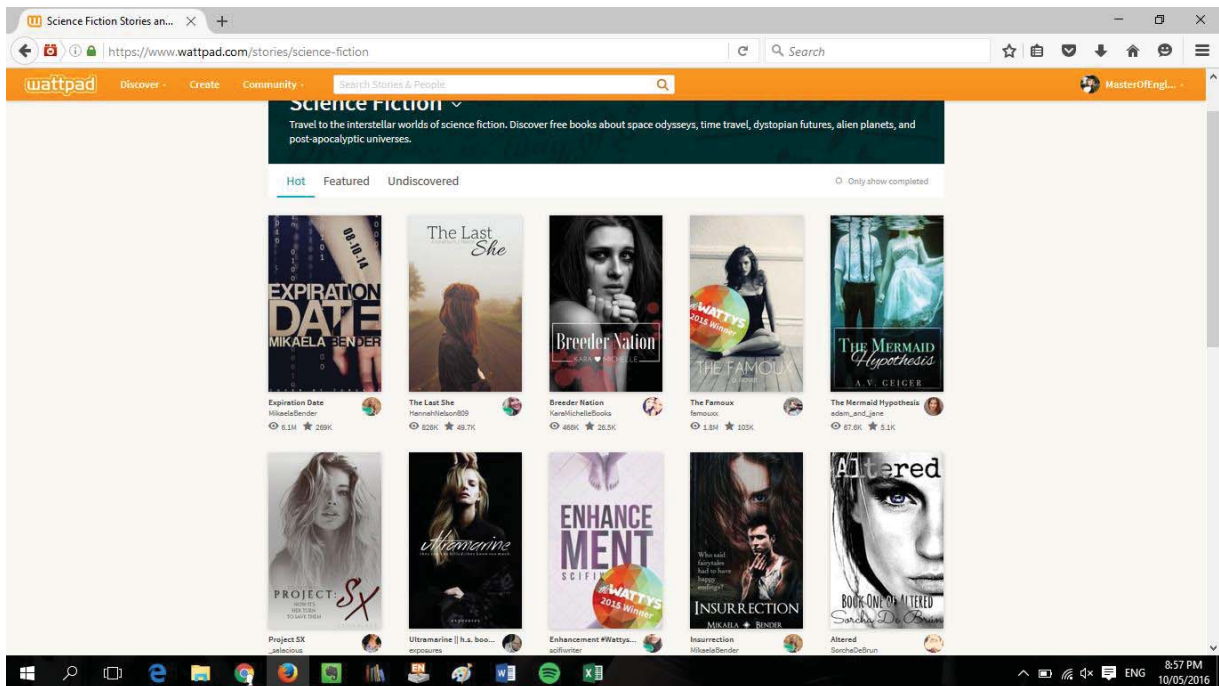


Fig. 2.12: Top ten SF books on 11 May 2016

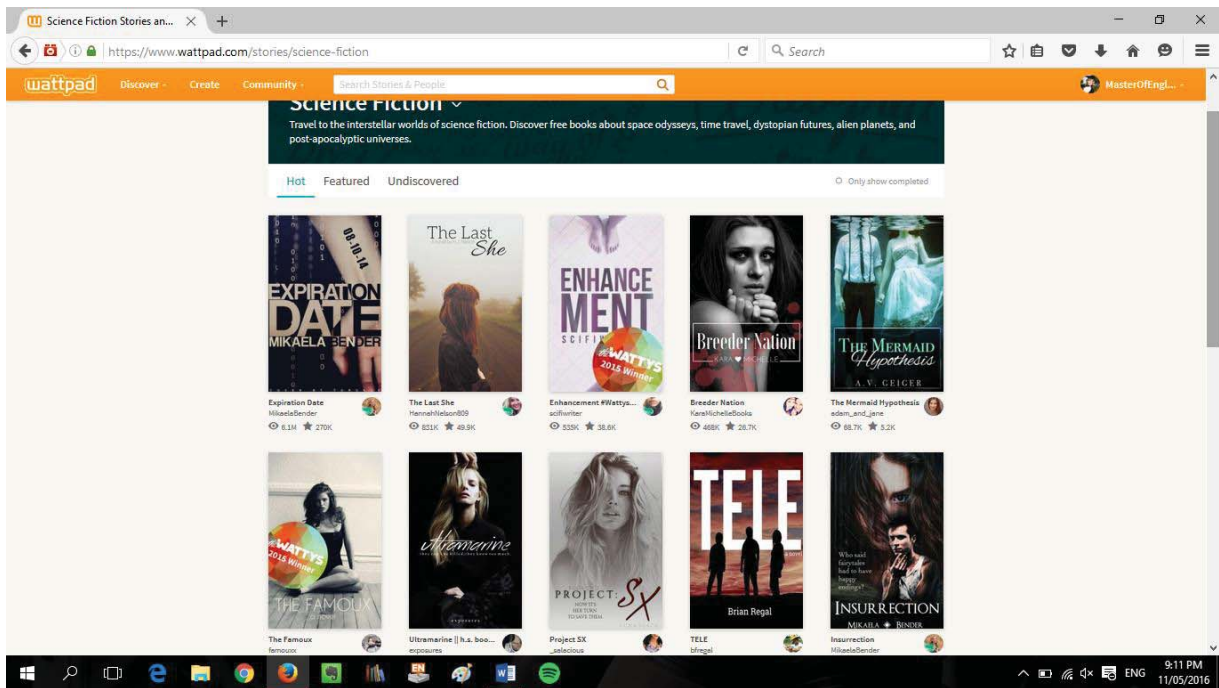


Fig. 2.13: Top ten SF books on 12 May 2016

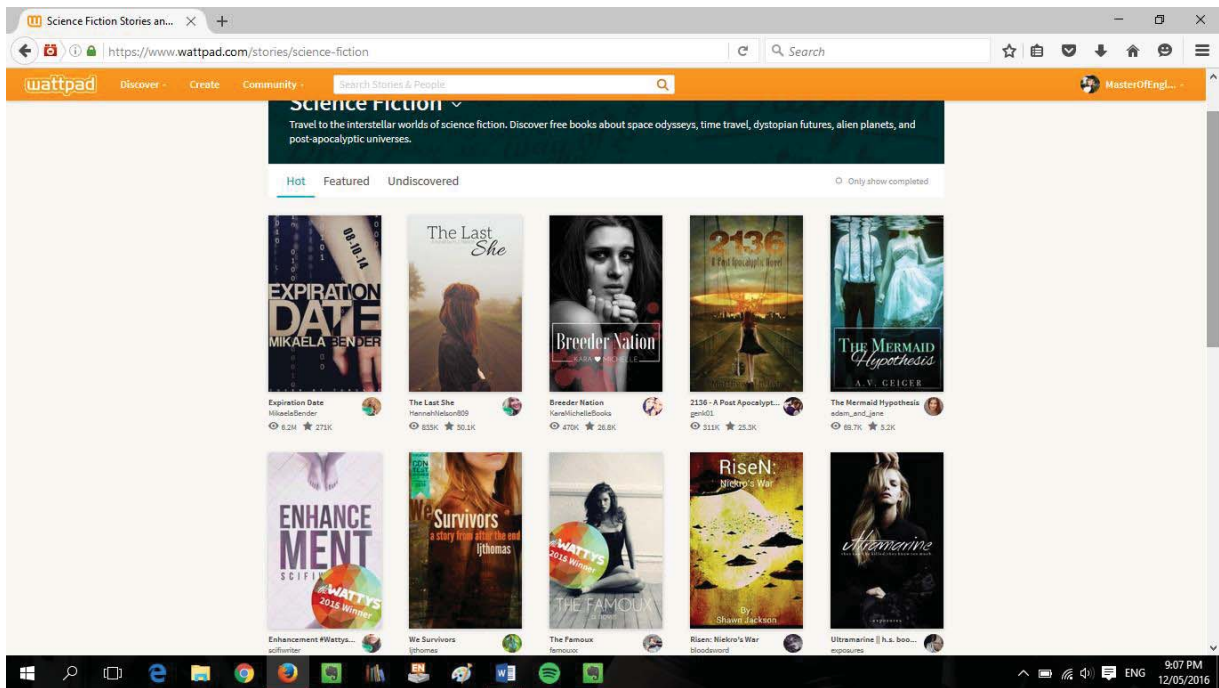


Fig. 2.14: Top ten SF books on 13 May 2016

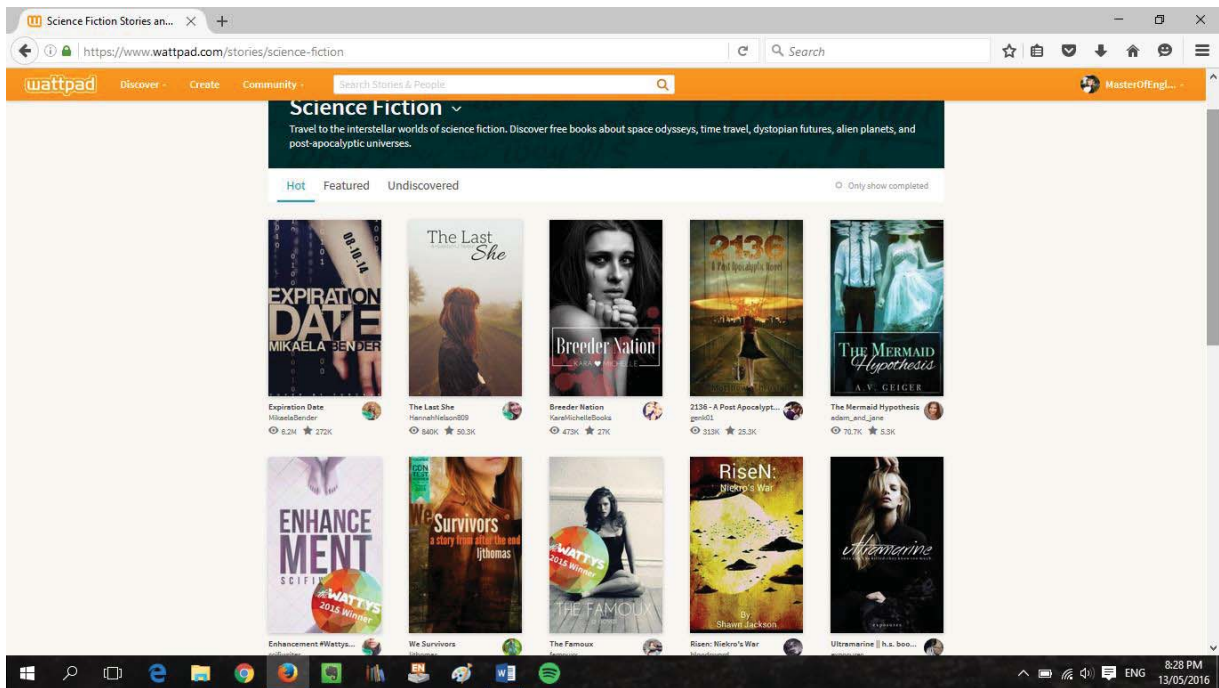


Fig. 2.15: Top ten SF books on 14 May 2016

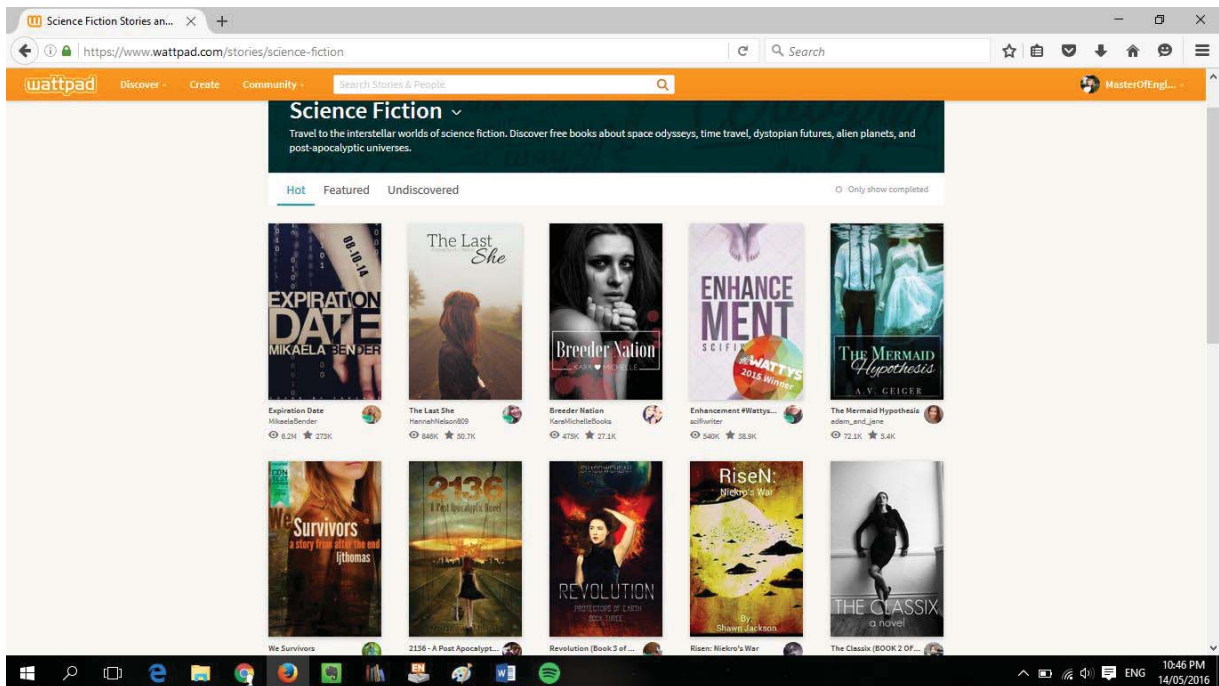


Fig. 2.16: Top ten SF books on 15 May 2016

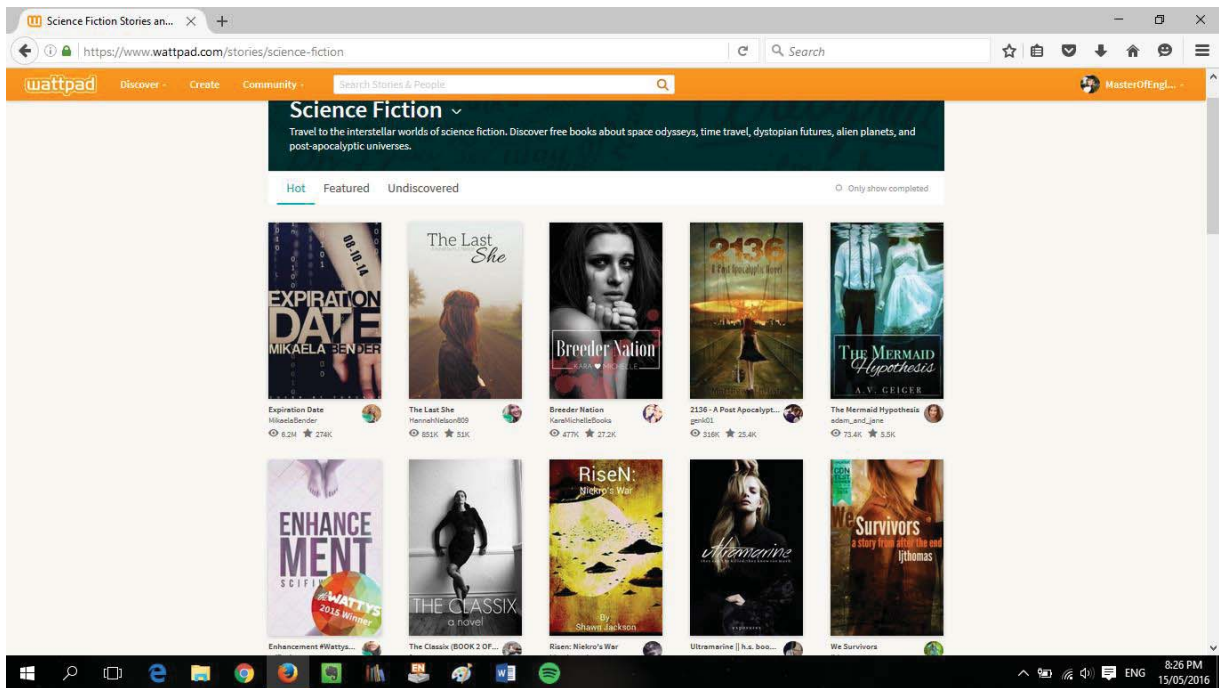


Fig. 2.17: Top ten SF books on 16 May 2016

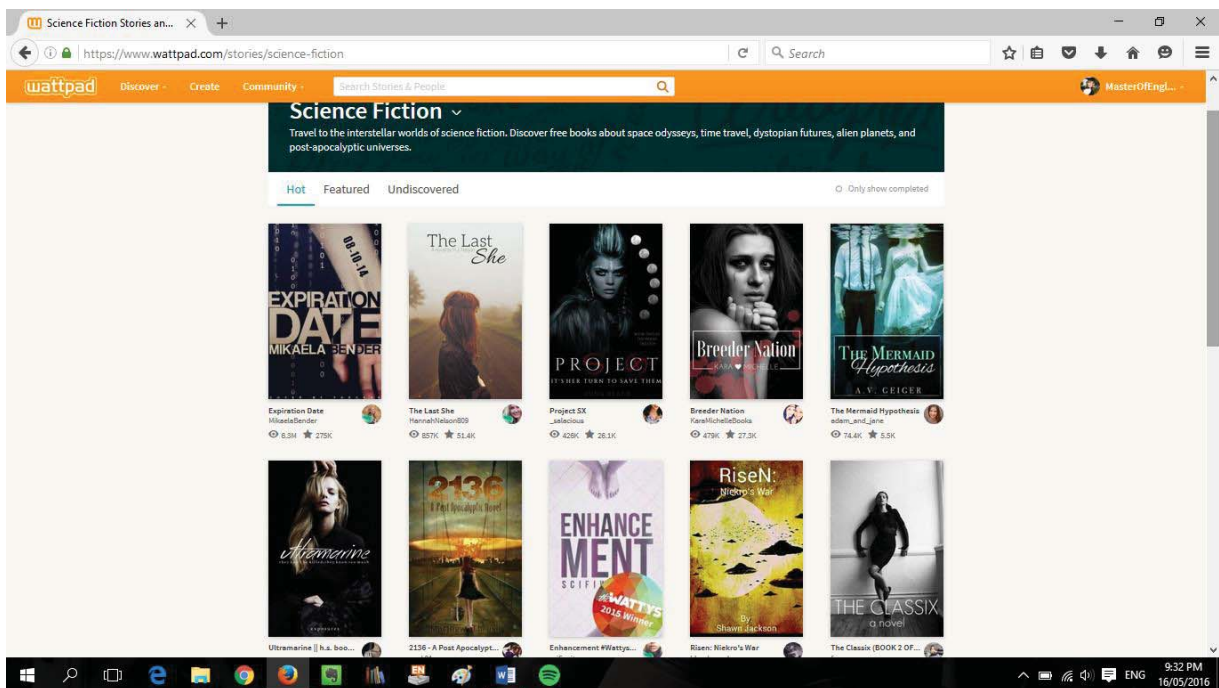


Fig. 2.18: Top ten SF books on 17 May 2016

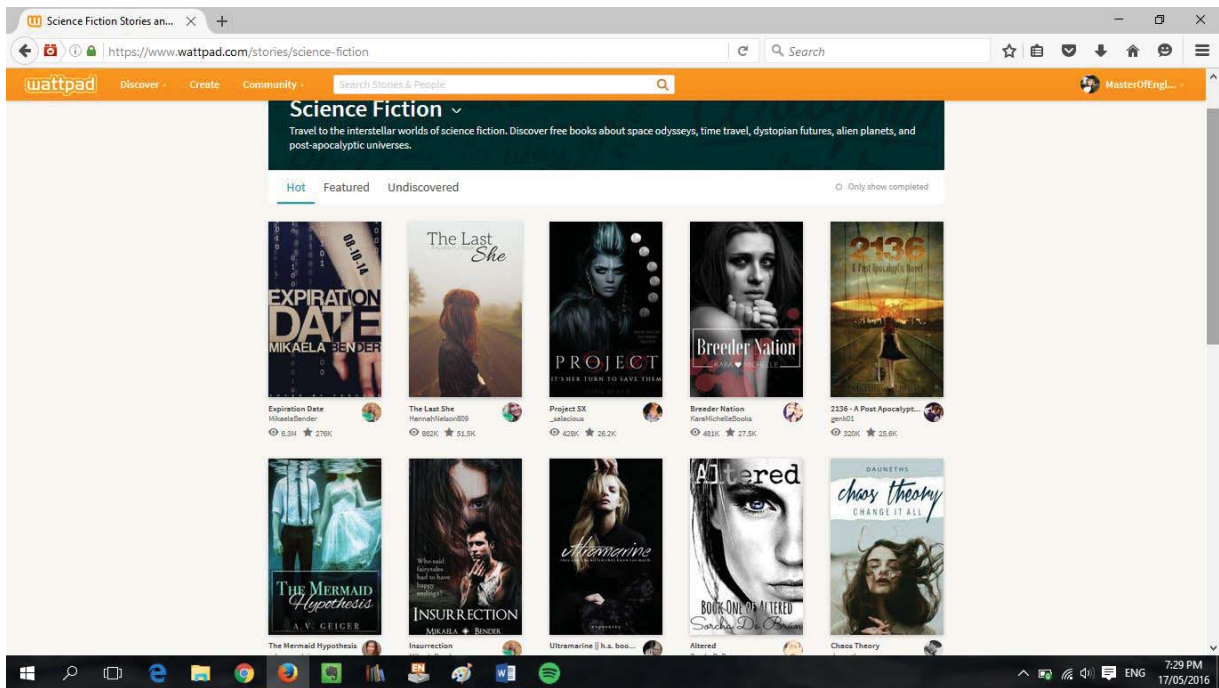


Fig. 2.19: Top ten SF books on 18 May 2016

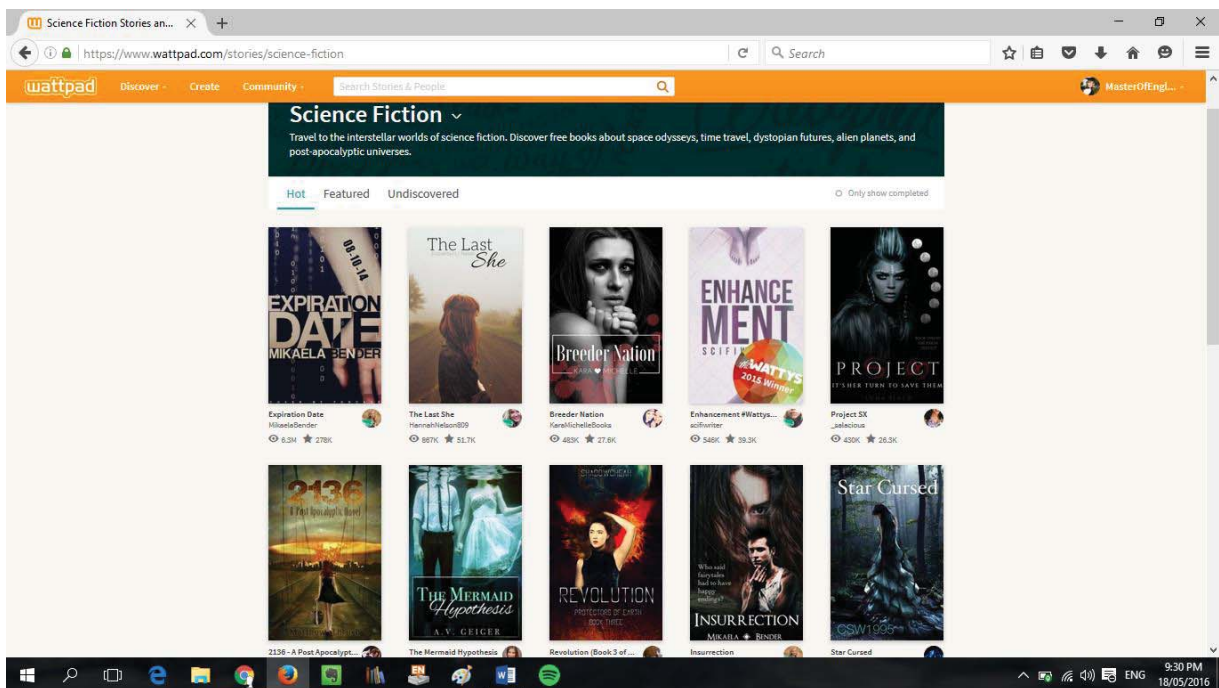


Fig. 2.20: Top ten SF books on 19 May 2016

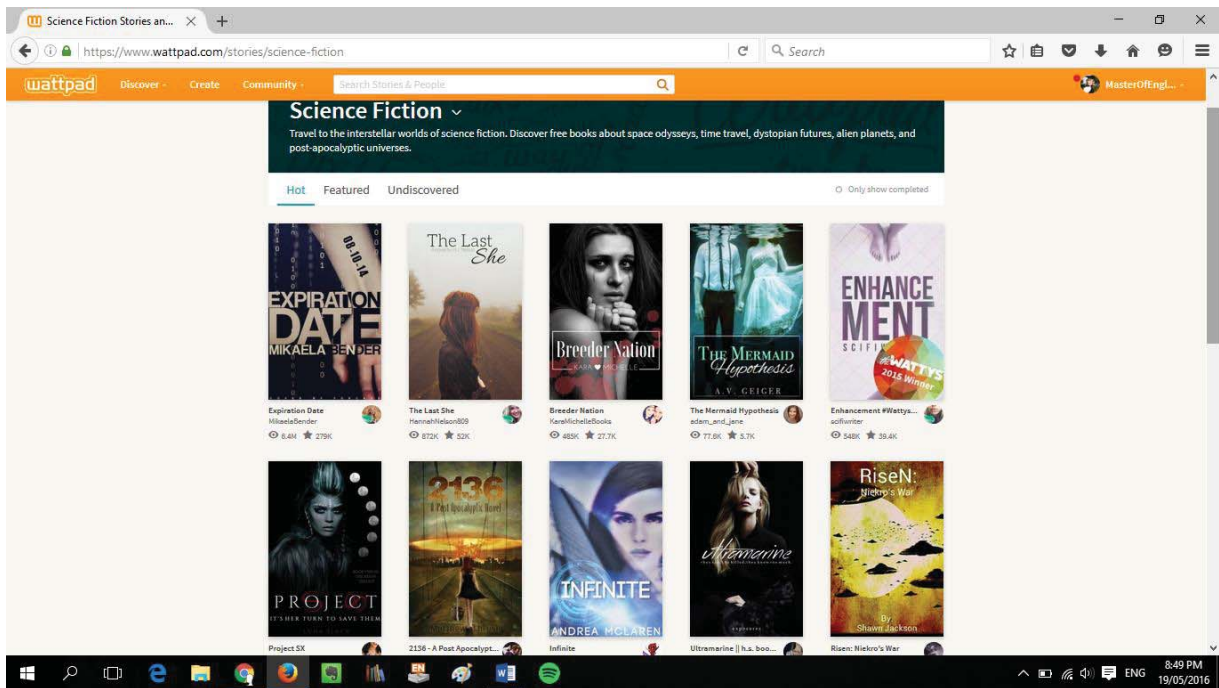


Fig. 2.21: Top ten SF books on 20 May 2016

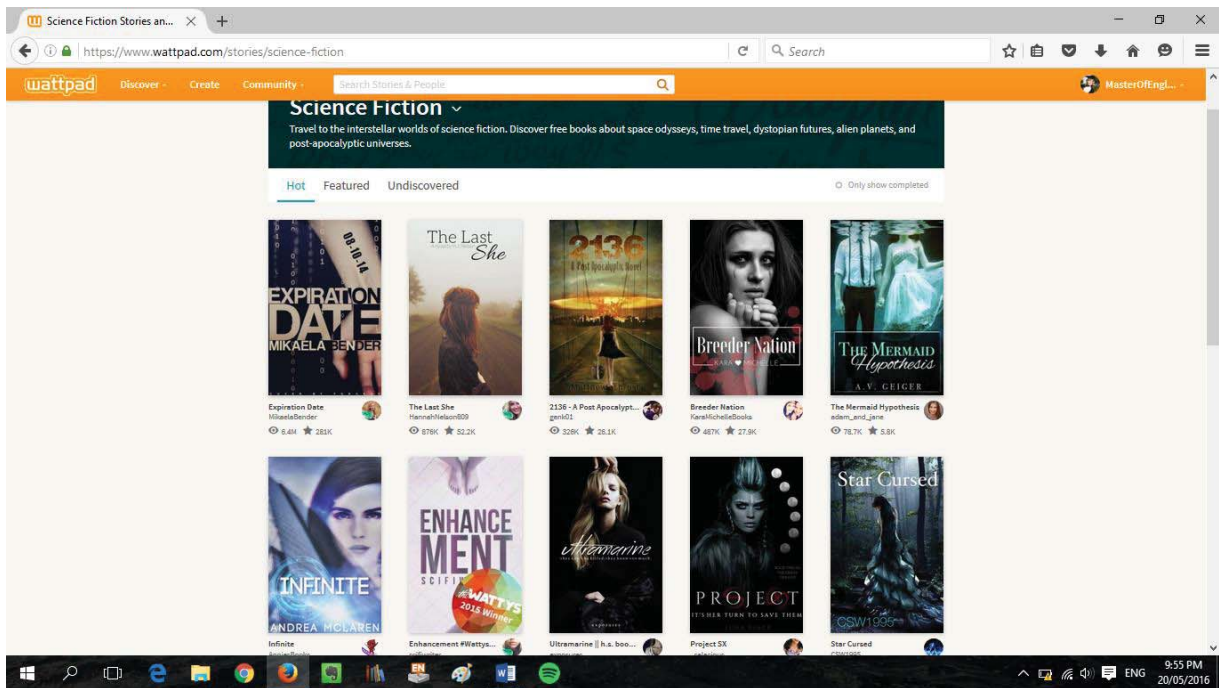


Fig. 2.22: Top ten SF books on 21 May 2016

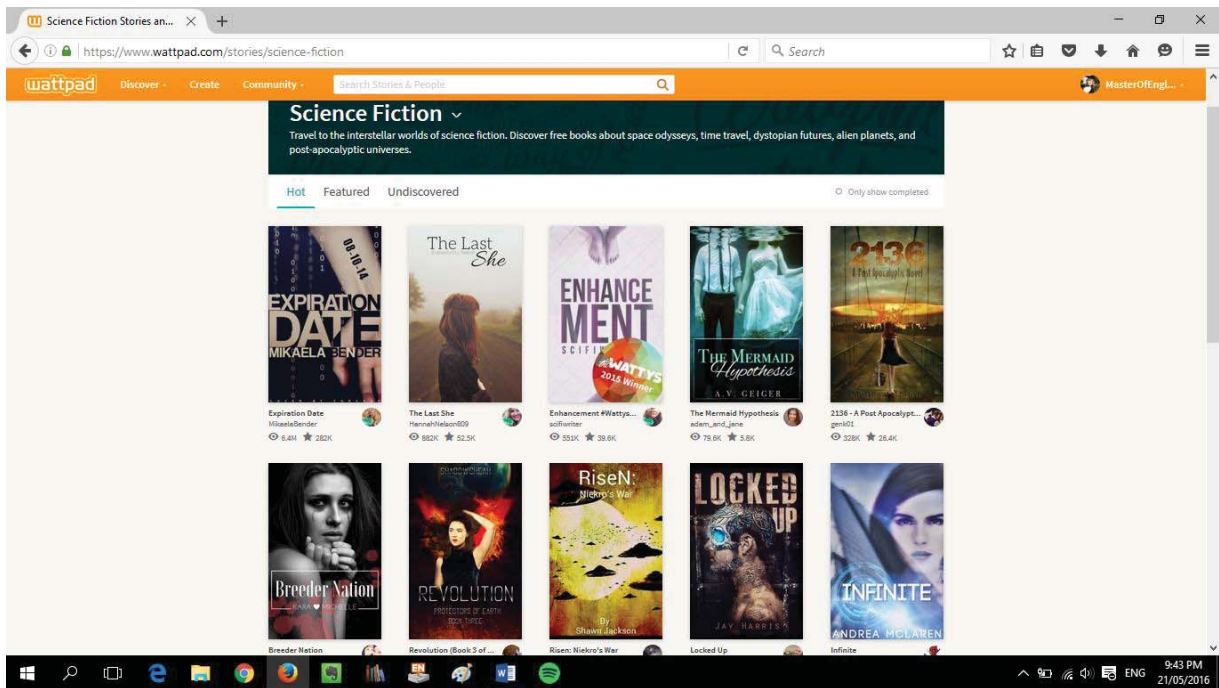


Fig. 2.23: Top ten SF books on 22 May 2016

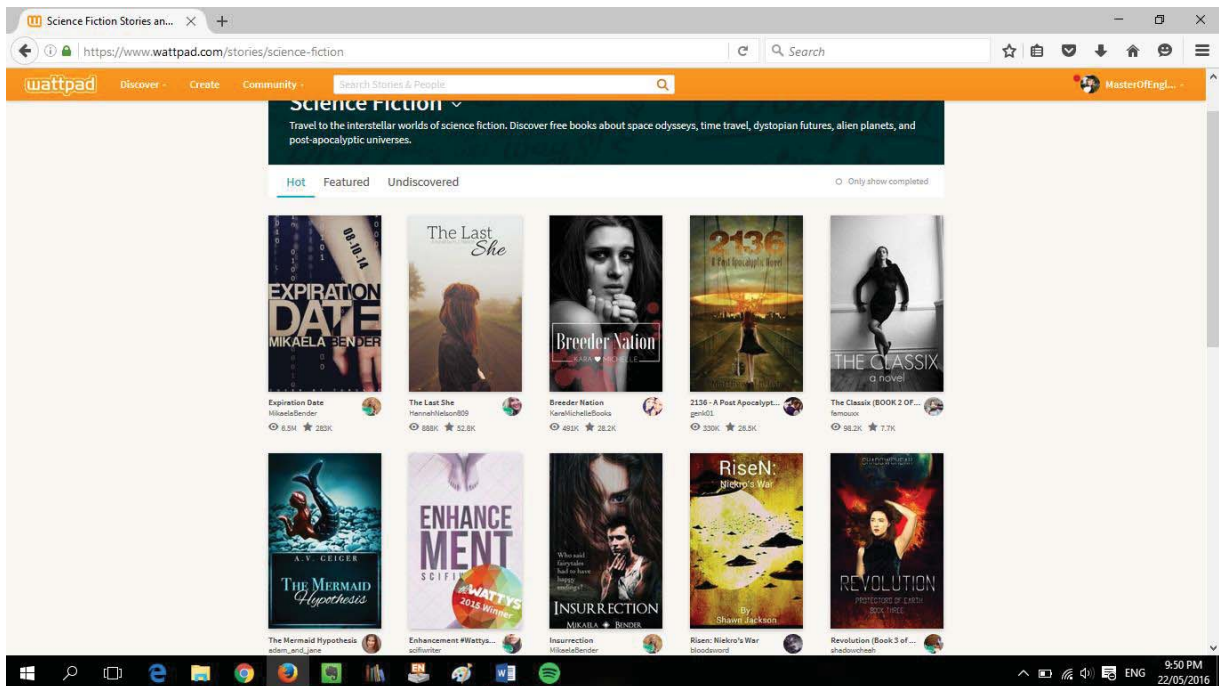


Fig. 2.24: Top ten SF books on 23 May 2016

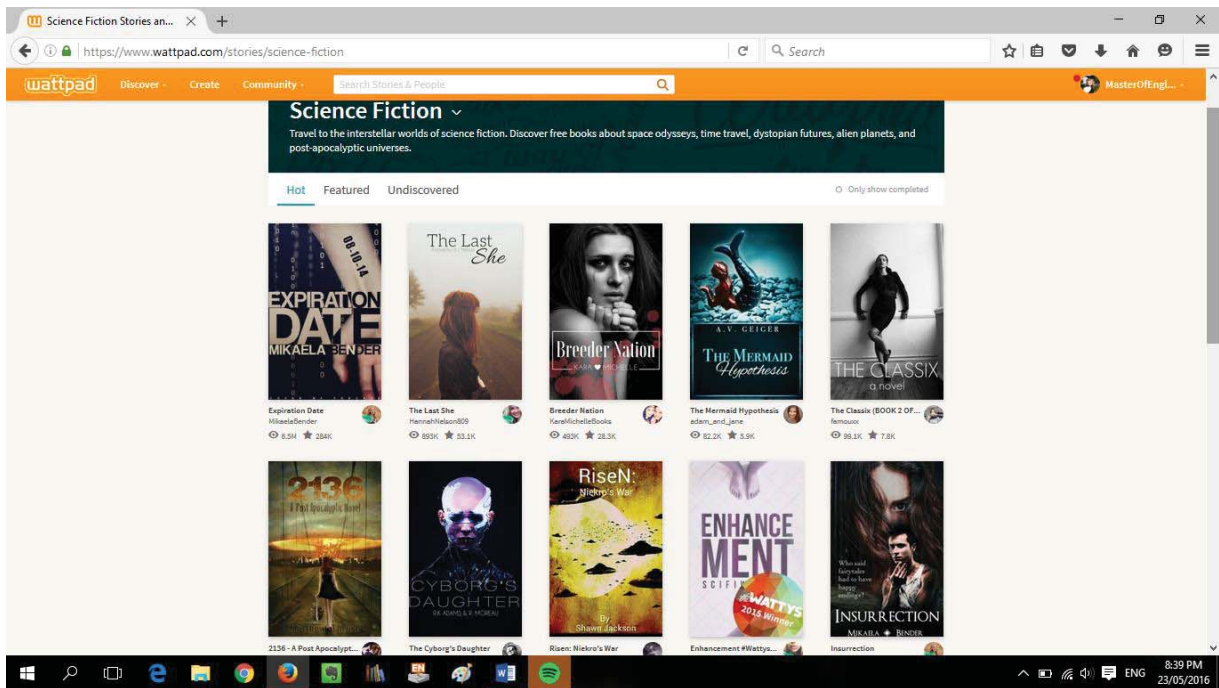


Fig. 2.25: Top ten SF books on 24 May 2016

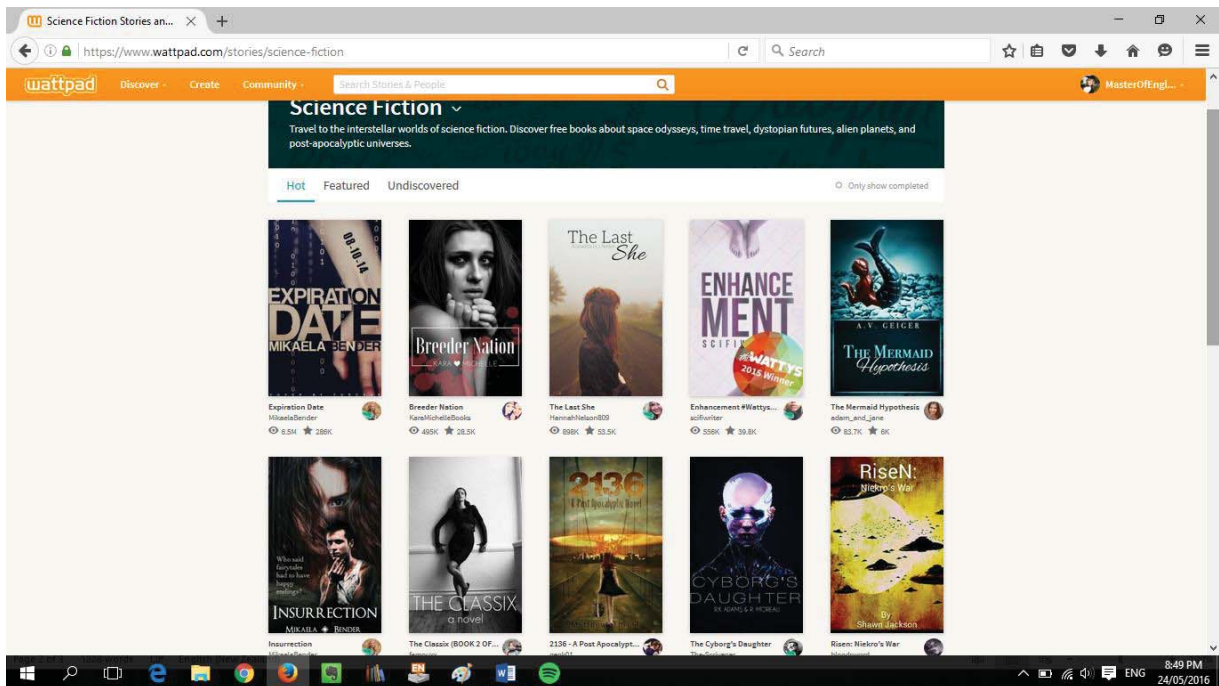


Fig. 2.26: Top ten SF books on 25 May 2016

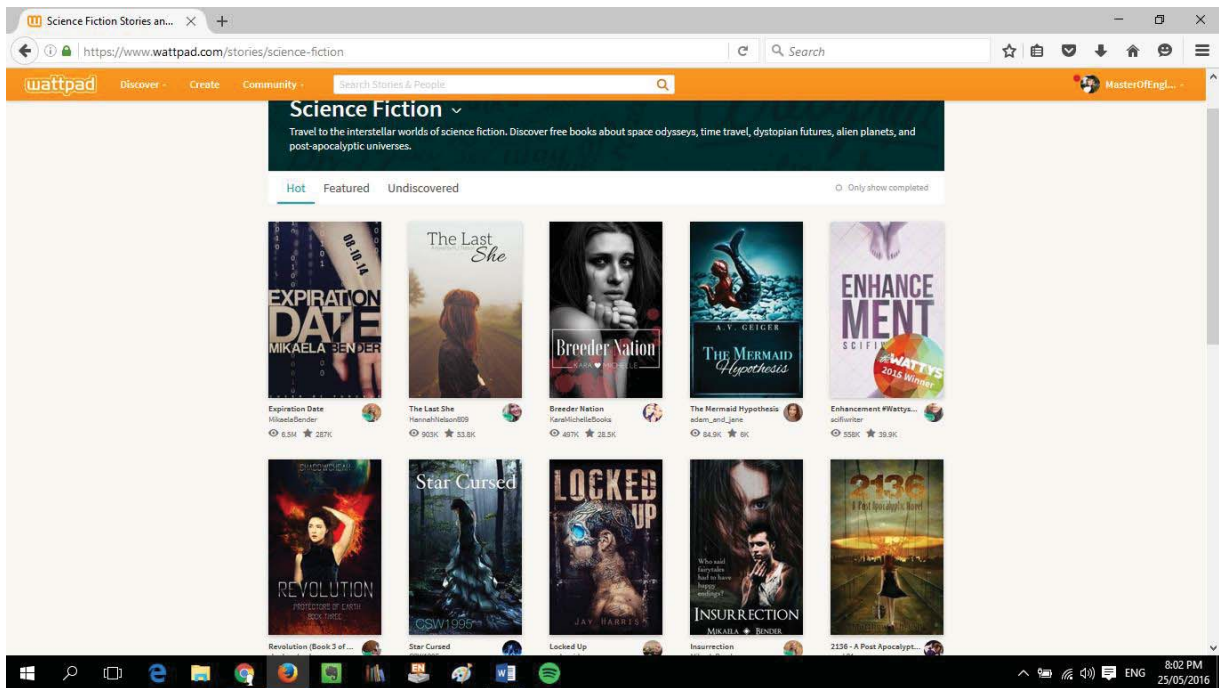


Fig. 2.27: Top ten SF books on 26 May 2016

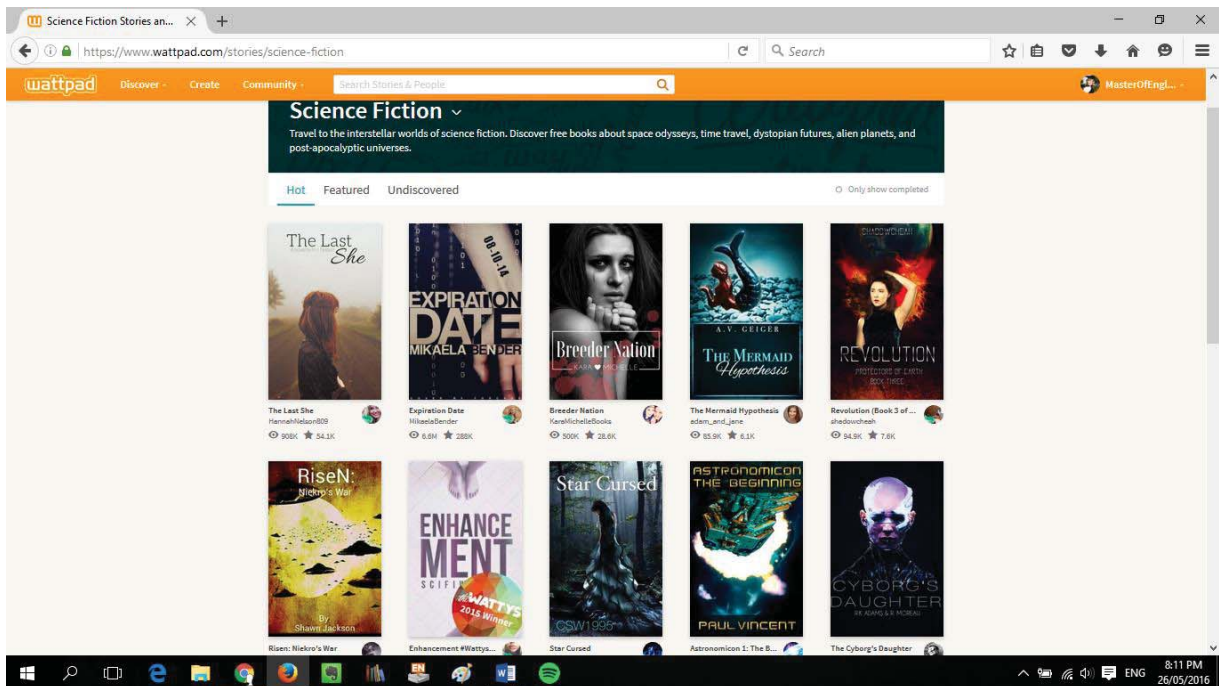


Fig. 2.28: Top ten SF books on 27 May 2016

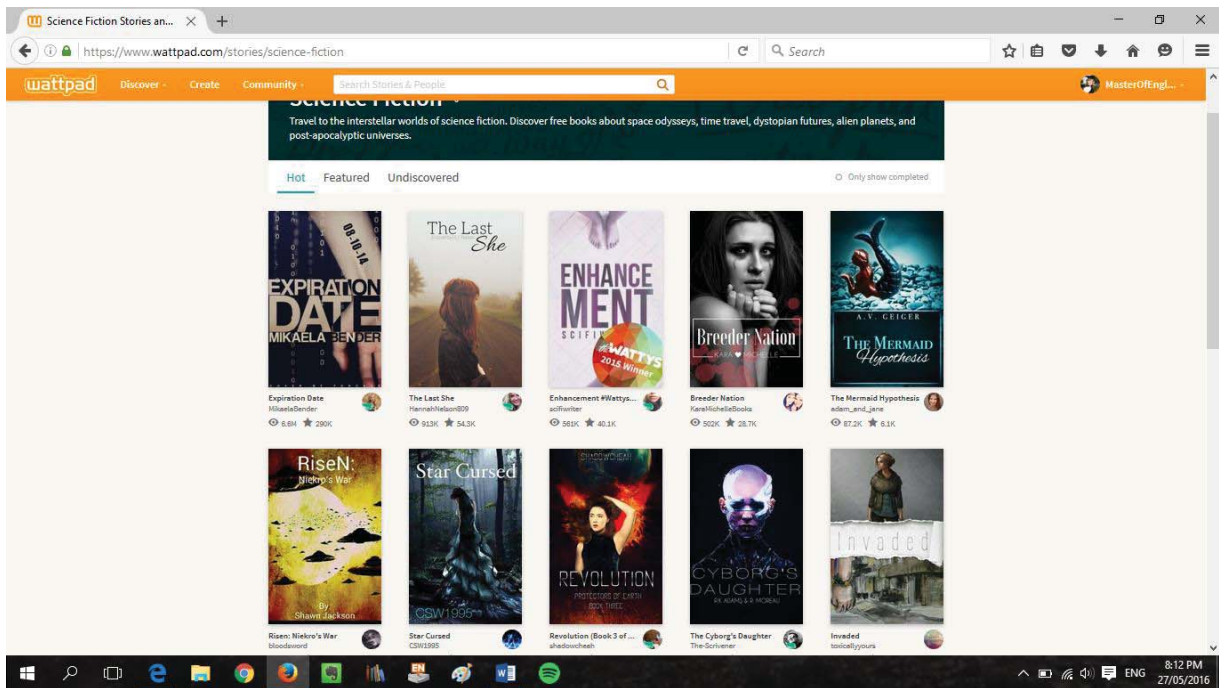


Fig. 2.29: Top ten SF books on 28 May 2016

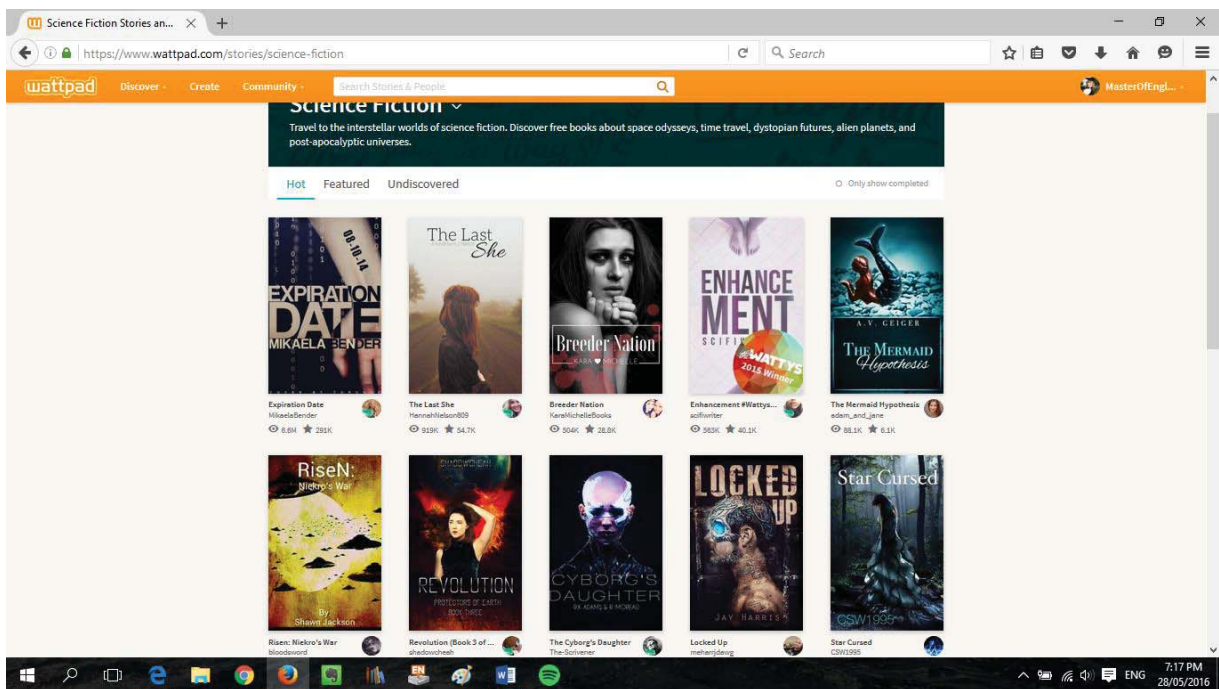


Fig. 2.30: Top ten SF books on 29 May 2016

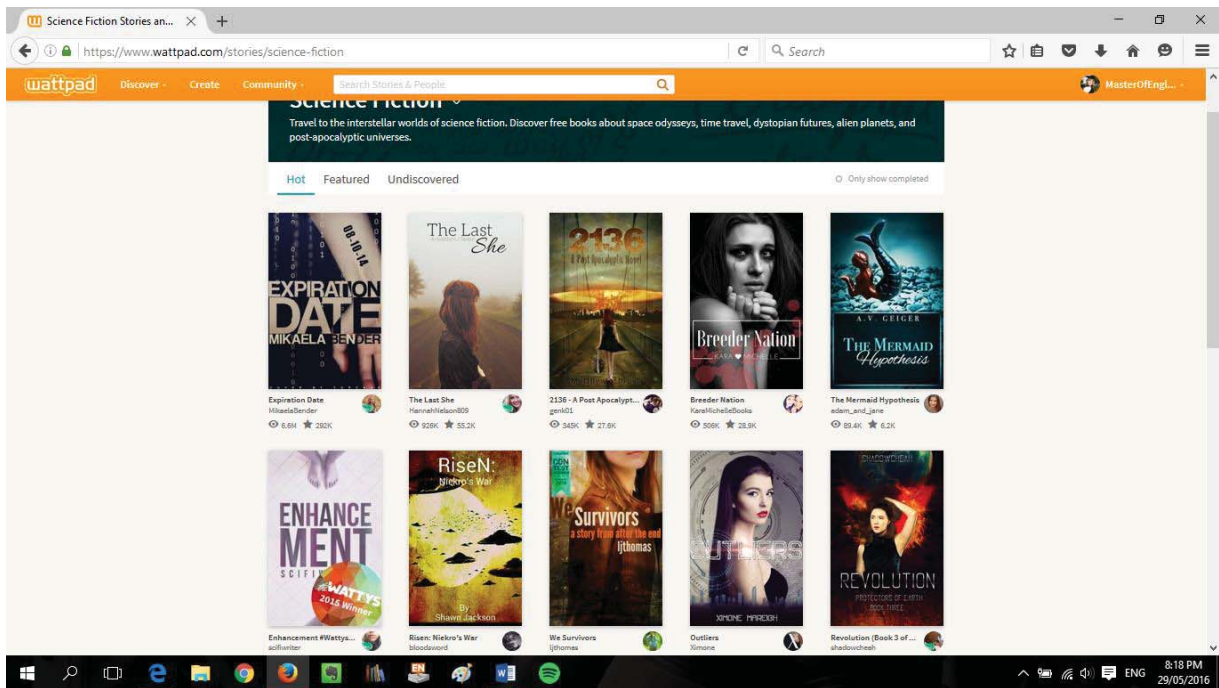


Fig. 2.31: Top ten SF books on 30 May 2016

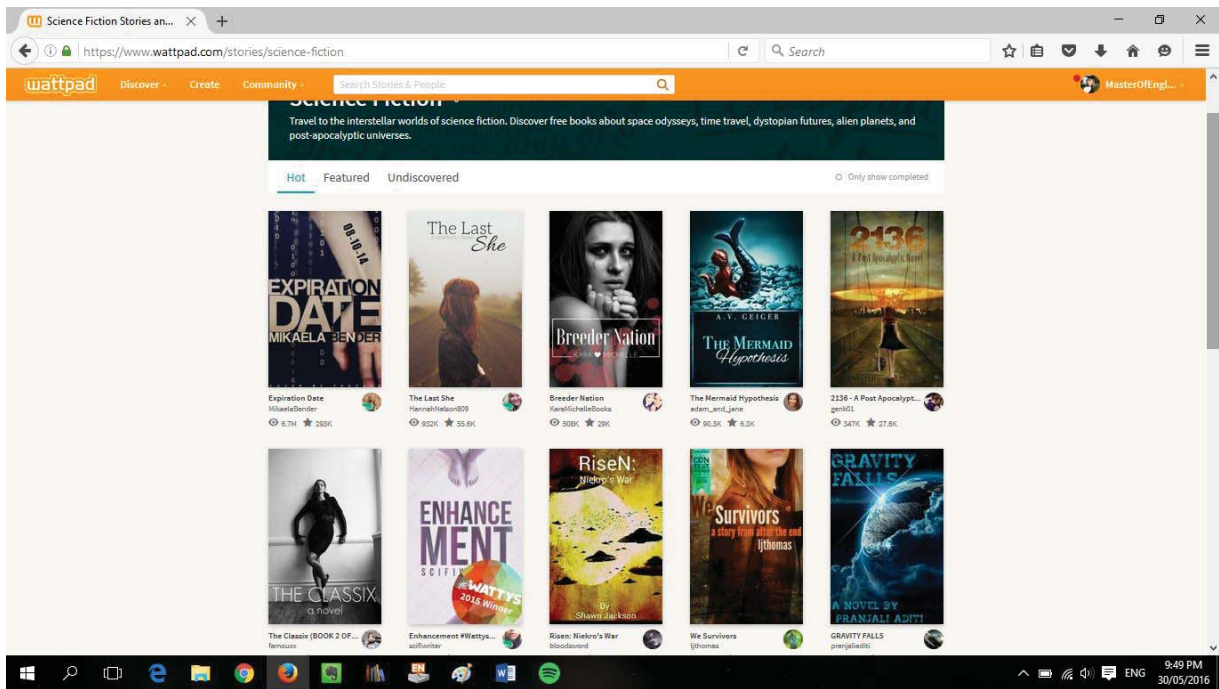
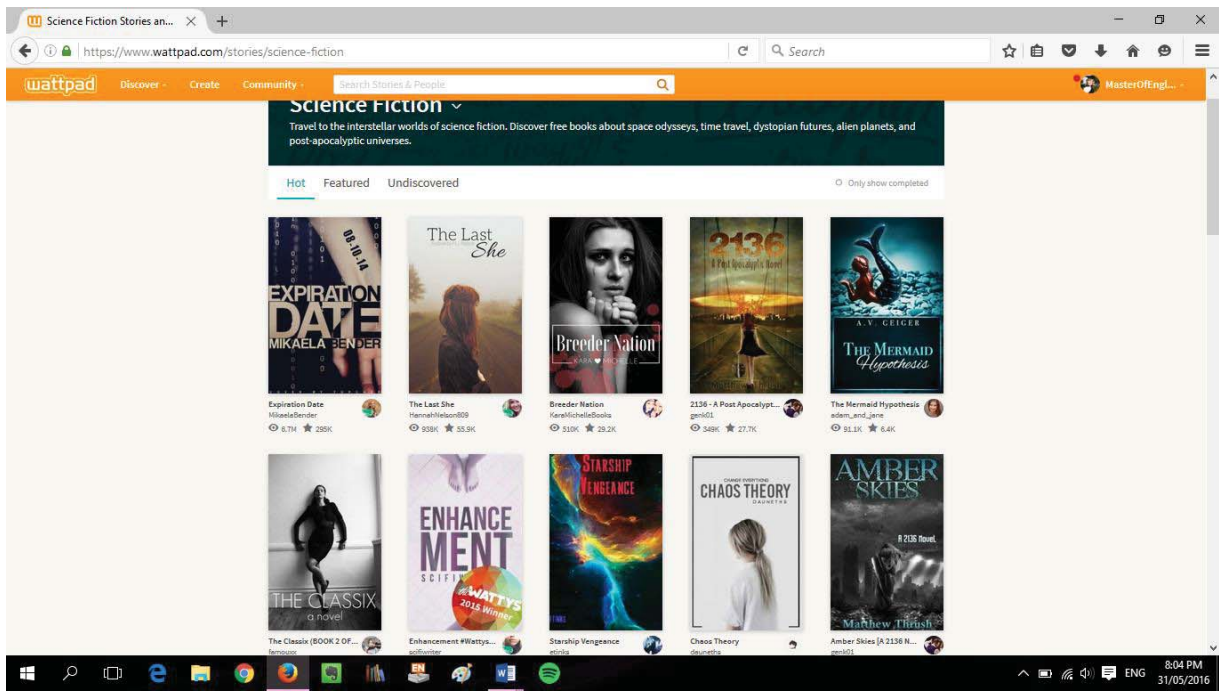


Fig. 2.32: Top ten SF books on 31 May 2016



Appendix 3: Visible Statistics for the Five Primary Science Fiction Wattpad Texts

Fig. 3.1: Visible statistics for *Expiration Date Duology* by @MikaelaBender, taken 4th August 2016

The screenshot shows the Wattpad interface for the story "Expiration Date Duology" by Mikaela Bender. The page features a cover image of a hand with a date stamp "08-10-14" and the title "EXPIRATION DATE MIKAELA BENDER". The story is categorized as "#1 Science Fiction" and has 152 parts, 8.3M reads, and 365K votes. It is marked as "Ongoing - Updated 3 days ago". The text on the page includes a synopsis: "The Society knows when we're going to die. They imprint it on our arms at birth. I was supposed to die yesterday. I'm the girl who's expired." and a quote: "You all are to be weapons against the Society." The page also includes a "Read" button, social media sharing options, and a "You'll also like" section featuring the story "Frankie" by LEPalpreyman.

Fig. 3.2: Visible statistics for *The Last She* by @HannahNelson809, taken on 4th August, 2016

The screenshot shows the Wattpad interface for the story "The Last She (#Wattys2016)" by Hannah Nelson809. The page features a cover image of a woman with long hair and the title "The Last She". The story is categorized as "#2 Science Fiction" and has 65 parts, 1.3M reads, and 80.7K votes. It is marked as "Ongoing - Updated 5 days ago". The text on the page includes a synopsis: "A plague has swept over the Earth, killing the majority of the population and every female. Except one. Ara witnessed the horror and destruction, but for the last three years has somehow survived." and a quote: "Now desperation and hunger force Ara out of the mountains and onto a dangerous path; she must return to her home city. Across the flooded downtown and through the gangs of survivors Ara believes there is hope, one small leftover clue, that could save her." The page also includes a "Read" button, social media sharing options, and a "You'll also like" section featuring the story "Flawless" by chancelsawriter.

Fig. 3.3: Visible statistics for *Breeder Nation* by @KaraMichelleBooks, taken 4th August, 2016

Breeder Nation (#Wattys2016)
48 Part Story 850K Reads 45.8K Votes

By **KaraMichelleBooks**
Completed

Read +

Living in a world where the human race is dying off faster than it can reproduce, sixteen year old Maddie Ryan has started her period, an almost guaranteed sign of fertility. Knowing it's only a matter of time before the government finds out and forces her into the life of a Breeder, where her sole purpose will be to help repopulate the earth, she is faced with a harrowing decision. Does she willingly accept her fate or take matters into her own hands and run? Both options will tear her away from the life she has always known and from those she loves most, her parents and her best friend Travis, the boy who owns her heart.

For nineteen year old Travis Brennan there are only three people in this world who matter... his mother, his little sister Grace, and his best friend Maddie. Maddie's sudden disappearance not only forces him to confront his feelings for her, but leads to a chain of events that will forever alter the course of their lives.

As truths are revealed and lies are uncovered, Travis and Maddie will learn that there is much more at

#3 Science Fiction
All Rights Reserved
Report this story

You'll also like

The Alpha's Mermaid [COMPLETE]
By CosmicAlpha
56.1K ★ 2.9K 577

Fig. 3.4: Visible statistics for *The Mermaid Hypothesis* by @adam_and_jane, taken 4th August 2016

The Mermaid Hypothesis
30 Part Story 153K Reads 10.6K Votes

By **adam_and_jane**
Ongoing - Updated a day ago

Read +

In the year 2020, the music industry is dead. A new technology called SirenSong has gone viral and wiped out every major record label on the planet. (Justin Bieber? Long forgotten. One Direction? Went on hiatus and never came back...)

An out-of-work record exec and his grandson Zac are on a crusade to find the one voice that can break the SirenSong spell and save the music business. When Zac encounters a girl named Ari, the connection between them is instant. There's something very different about her. Something special. Could Ari be the girl that they've been seeking? If only he could find a way to hear her sing. . . .

Unfortunately, Ari has suffered her whole life from a condition called Selective Mutism. She can speak (and sing) when alone, but not around other people. Her doctors attribute her condition to anxiety in the wake of a childhood trauma. But Ari isn't so sure about that diagnosis. If her problem is really an anxiety disorder, then why has every psychiatric treatment in the book failed to help her? She can't help but

#8 Science Fiction
All Rights Reserved
Report this story

You'll also like

Life After The War (Lunar Chronicles Edition)
By ChildOfAthena101
11.8K ★ 401 200

Fig. 3.5: Visible statistics for *Enhancement* by @scifiwriter, taken 4th August 2016

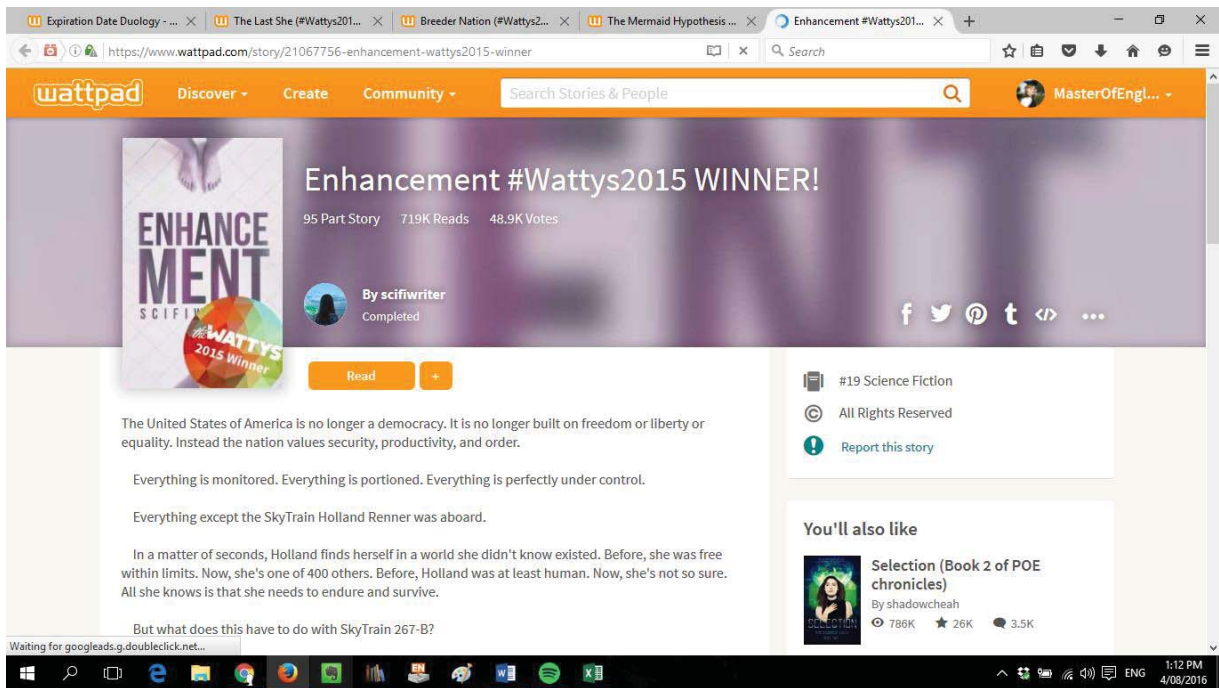


Fig. 3.6: Visible statistics for Chapter 1 of *Expiration Date Duology*, taken on 4th August, 2016

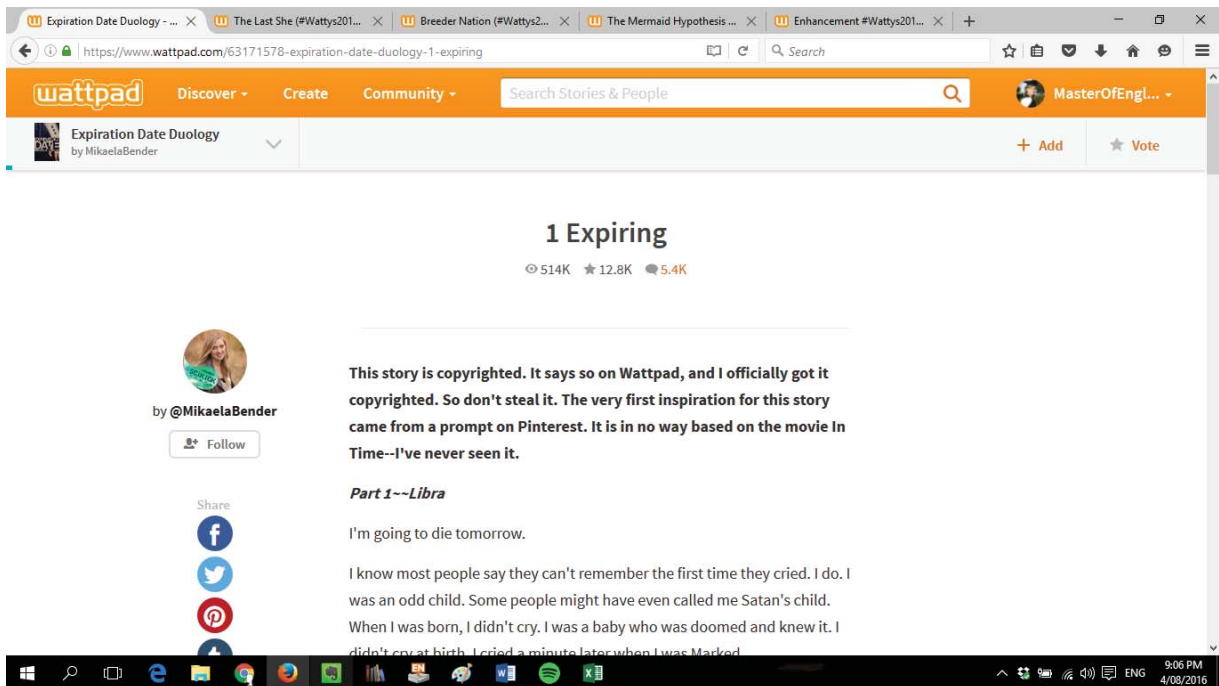


Fig. 3.7: Visible Statistics for Chapter 2 of *Expiration Date Duology*, taken on 4th August, 2016

The screenshot shows the Wattpad interface for Chapter 2 of *Expiration Date Duology*. The chapter title is "2 Headlights" with 287K views, 8.4K likes, and 2.7K comments. A promotional tweet from @MikaelaBender is displayed, asking for votes for the People's Choice Award on Monday, August 1st, 2016. The tweet includes a photo of the characters Fletcher, Vaughan, and Megan. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows the time as 9:08 PM on 4/08/2016.

Fig. 3.8: Visible Statistics for Chapter 3 of *Expiration Date Duology*, taken on 4th August, 2016

The screenshot shows the Wattpad interface for Chapter 3 of *Expiration Date Duology*. The chapter title is "3 A Stuck Up Farmer?" with 219K views, 7.1K likes, and 3.5K comments. The text of the chapter begins with: "I pull open the front door of Chester's, the smell of fried food initiating the grumble from my stomach. Due to the inclement weather and the lunch rush, the restaurant is crowded. The separate conversations join together in a mush pot of words-- you're not really sure what you're hearing. I focus my eyes on an empty booth in the back room and guide--whatever his name is--under the wooden archway to a green checkered table." The text continues: "His hands are shoved deep into the pockets of his ripped blue jeans. I'm not sure if the cuts, one across his thigh and the other below his knee, are for style. They seem...ummm...realistic. A little too realistic." The chapter ends with the line: "Is that blood?" The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows the time as 9:09 PM on 4/08/2016.

Fig. 3.9: Visible Statistics for Chapter 5 of *Expiration Date Duology*, taken on 4th August, 2016

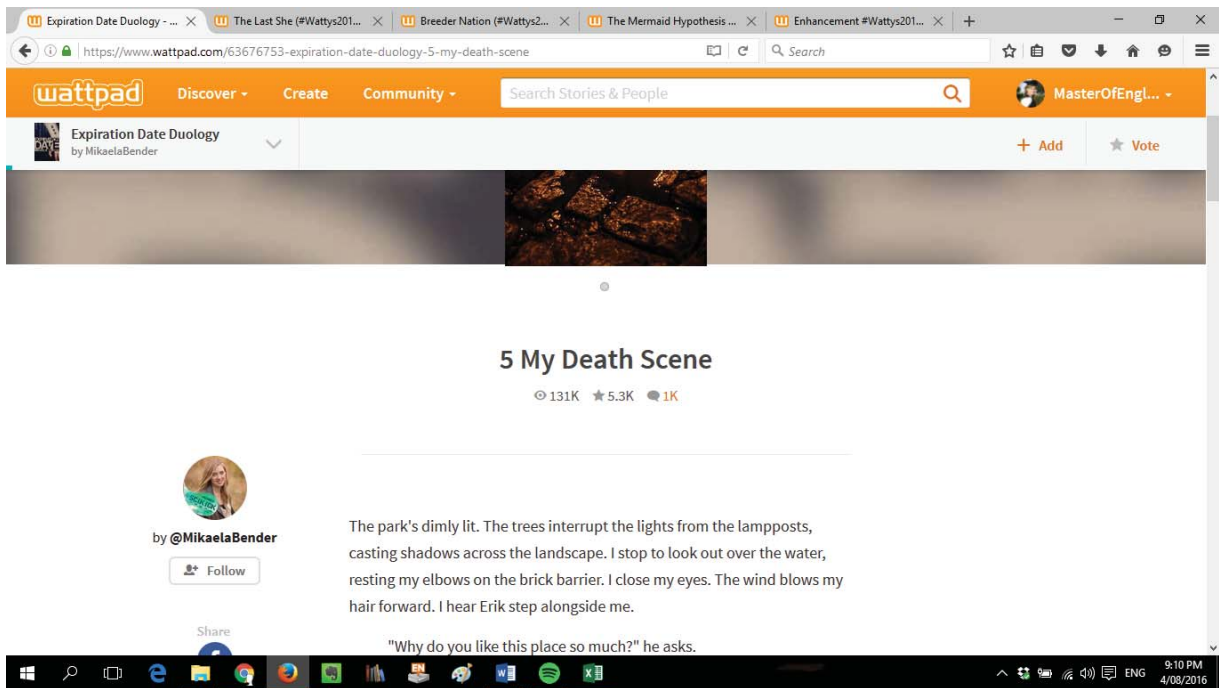


Fig. 3.10: Visible Statistics for Chapter 10 of *Expiration Date Duology*, taken on 4th August, 2016

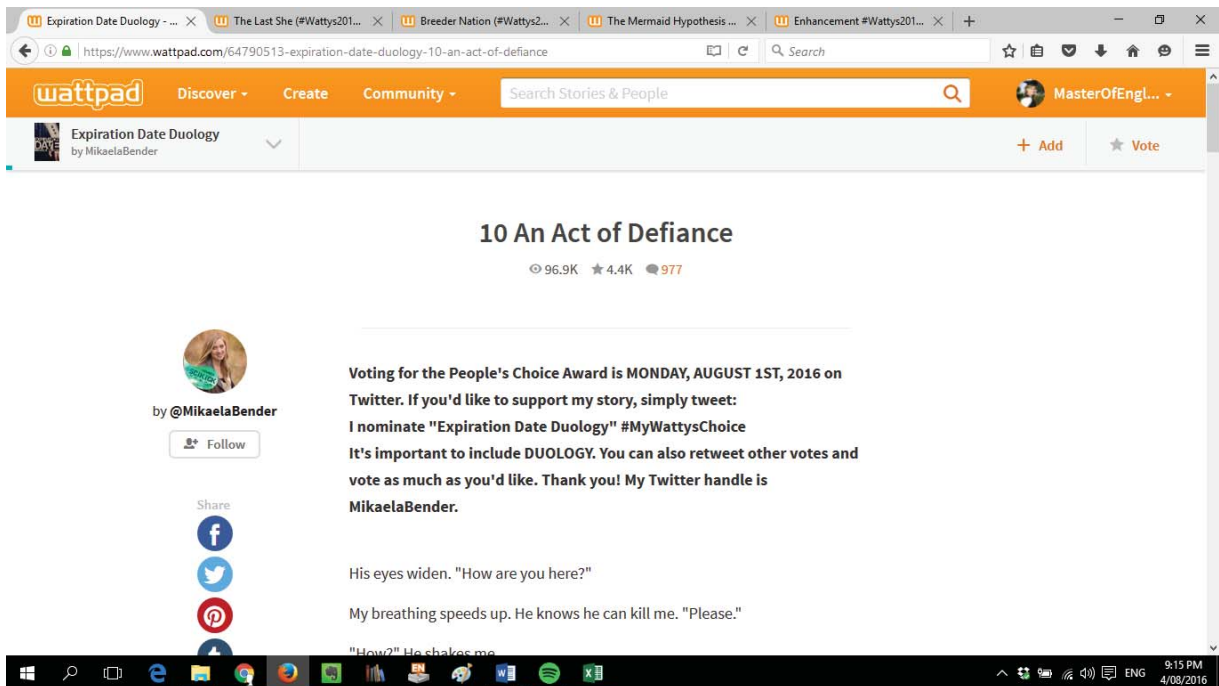


Fig. 3.11: Visible Statistics for Chapter 20 of *Expiration Date Duology*, taken on 4th August, 2016

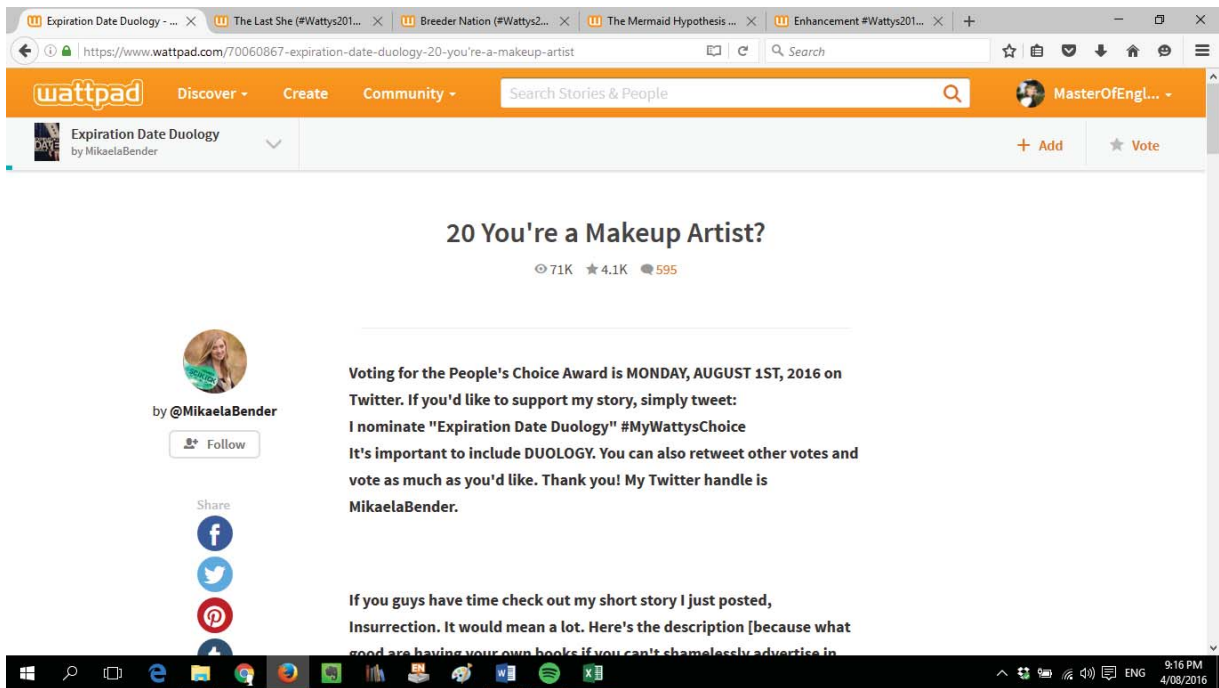


Fig. 3.12: Visible Statistics for Chapter 89 of *Expiration Date Duology*, taken on 4th August, 2016

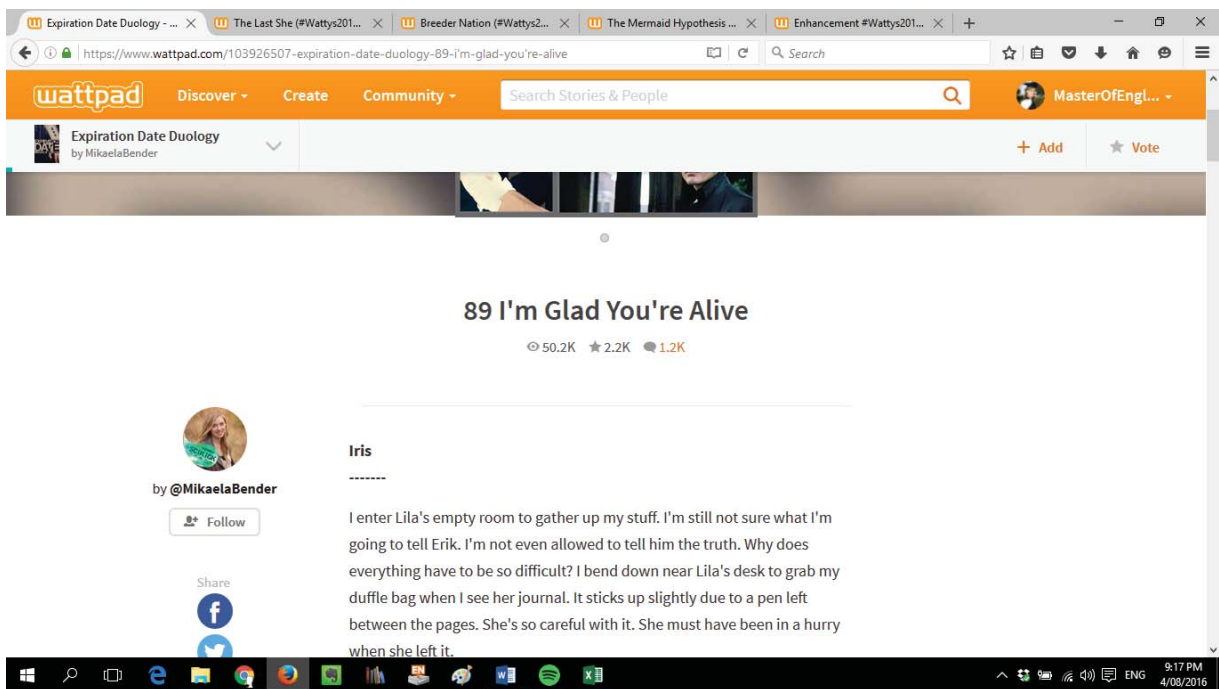


Fig. 3.13: An excerpt of the Table of Contents for *Expiration Date Duology*, showing the split between the first and second books in the series under the same Wattpad listing, taken on 4th August, 2016

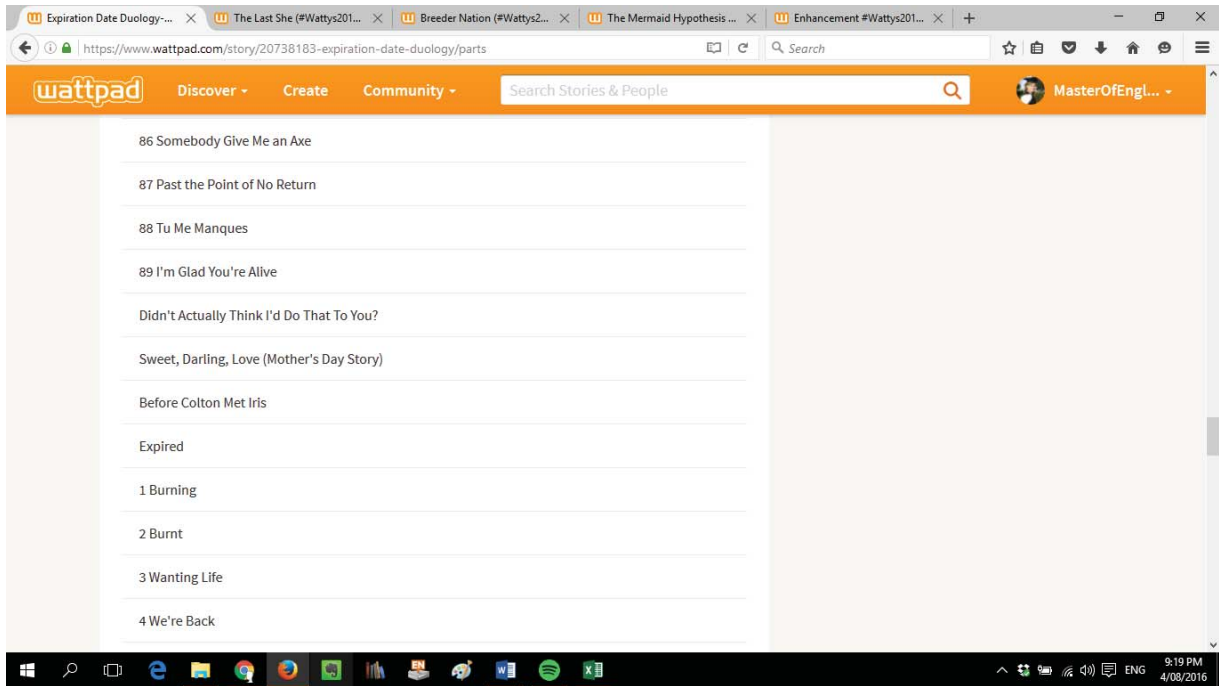


Fig. 3.14: Visible Statistics for Part 1 of *The Last She*, taken on 4th August, 2016

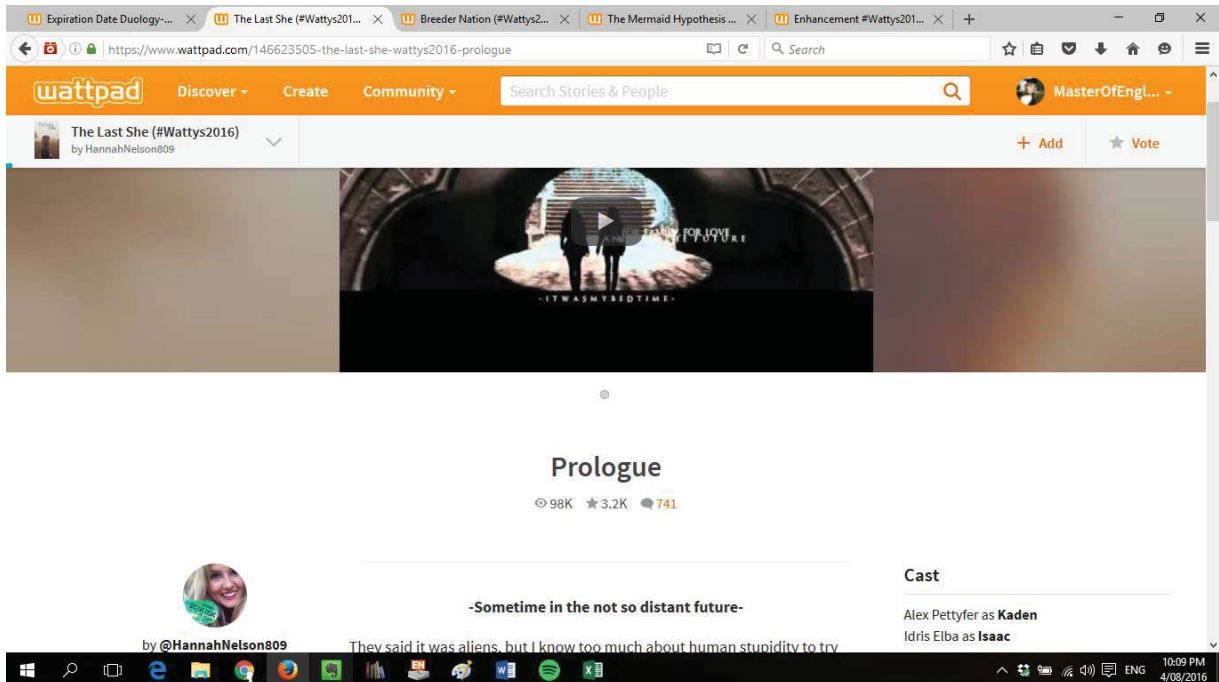


Fig. 3.15: Visible Statistics for Part 3 of *The Last She*, taken on 4th August, 2016

Expiration Date Duology... | The Last She (#Wattys2016) | Breeder Nation (#Wattys2016) | The Mermaid Hypothesis... | Enhancement #Wattys2016... | +

https://www.wattpad.com/147889409-the-last-she-wattys2016-forgive-us-ch-2

wattpad Discover Create Community Search Stories & People MasterOfEngl...

The Last She (#Wattys2016) by HannahNelson809 + Add Vote

Forgive Us, Ch. 2

49.6K 2.5K 751

by @HannahNelson809 Follow

Share

The morning came swiftly. I awoke stiff, covered in a cold dew, and hungry. The sun wasn't yet over the horizon but already the land awakened. Lifting bird songs wove together and I wished for the bow I had lost several weeks ago crossing a swollen river. I had nothing left to eat, so it only took a few moments to pack my things and leave the camp. Hunger and unease drove me to be more reckless than usual, and I began to follow a game trail packed

Cast

- Alex Pettyfer as **Kaden**
- Idris Elba as **Isaac**
- Steve Buscemi as **Jeb**
- Jesse Williams as **Gabriel Castellano**
- Saoirse Ronan as **Ara Edana**

View more

10:10 PM 4/08/2016

Fig. 3.16: Visible Statistics for Part 5 of *The Last She*, taken on 4th August, 2016

Expiration Date Duology... | The Last She (#Wattys2016) | Breeder Nation (#Wattys2016) | The Mermaid Hypothesis... | Enhancement #Wattys2016... | +

https://www.wattpad.com/149159342-the-last-she-wattys2016-prisoner-ch-4

wattpad Discover Create Community Search Stories & People MasterOfEngl...

The Last She (#Wattys2016) by HannahNelson809 + Add Vote

Prisoner, Ch. 4

39.6K 2.2K 716

by @HannahNelson809 Follow

Share

"Do you think he's here with anyone else?" Boots moved heavily across the wood, the noise reverberating in my ear.

"If they were here, they already left. They know this is our turf. We should check him for weapons."

My stomach tightened. What did checking for weapons entail? There were a

Cast

- Alex Pettyfer as **Kaden**
- Idris Elba as **Isaac**
- Steve Buscemi as **Jeb**
- Jesse Williams as **Gabriel Castellano**
- Saoirse Ronan as **Ara Edana**

View more

10:10 PM 4/08/2016

Fig. 3.17: Visible Statistics for Part 10 of *The Last She*, taken on 4th August, 2016

The screenshot shows a Wattpad browser page for the chapter "Quarantine, Ch. 9" by author HannahNelson809. The page features a header with the Wattpad logo and navigation options. Below the header, there is a banner image with the name "Sam" written in a cursive font. The chapter title "Quarantine, Ch. 9" is prominently displayed, followed by statistics: 33K views, 1.9K stars, and 381 comments. The author's profile picture and name "@HannahNelson809" are visible on the left, along with a "Follow" button. The main text of the chapter begins with "The rain came down in sheets, and perhaps had it not been storming, had it been a clear night with a full moon, I might have ran a different way. But fate is a tricky thing. Instead I ran down the street, whipped around a corner at full speed and smashed into a living human being." On the right side, there is a "Cast" section listing characters and their actors: Alex Pettyfer as Kaden, Idris Elba as Isaac, Steve Buscemi as Jeb, Jesse Williams as Gabriel Castellano, and Saoirse Ronan as Ara Edana. A "View more" link is provided below the cast list. The browser's address bar shows the URL: https://www.wattpad.com/157829793-the-last-she-wattys2016-quarantine-ch-9. The Windows taskbar at the bottom indicates the time is 10:13 PM on 4/08/2016.

Fig. 3.18: Visible Statistics for Part 20 of *The Last She*, taken on 4th August, 2016

The screenshot shows a Wattpad browser page for the chapter "Lost in the Wind, Ch. 19" by author HannahNelson809. The page features a header with the Wattpad logo and navigation options. Below the header, there is a banner image showing a landscape with a tree. The chapter title "Lost in the Wind, Ch. 19" is prominently displayed, followed by statistics: 22.4K views, 1.4K stars, and 753 comments. The author's profile picture and name "@HannahNelson809" are visible on the left, along with a "Follow" button. The main text of the chapter begins with "I touched my nose with the back of my hand, wiping it to check for blood. Kaden was a fool, and arguing with him would only make fools of us both. I'd often wondered if I'd made a mistake accepting Kaden into the clan. I remember the day I first met him. He rode in on an angry red horse, that" On the right side, there is a "Cast" section listing characters and their actors: Alex Pettyfer as Kaden, Idris Elba as Isaac, Steve Buscemi as Jeb, Jesse Williams as Gabriel Castellano, and Saoirse Ronan as Ara Edana. A "View more" link is provided below the cast list. The browser's address bar shows the URL: https://www.wattpad.com/175732259-the-last-she-wattys2016-lost-in-the-wind-ch-19. The Windows taskbar at the bottom indicates the time is 10:13 PM on 4/08/2016.

Fig. 3.19: Visible Statistics for Part 1 of *Breeder Nation*, taken on 4th August, 2016

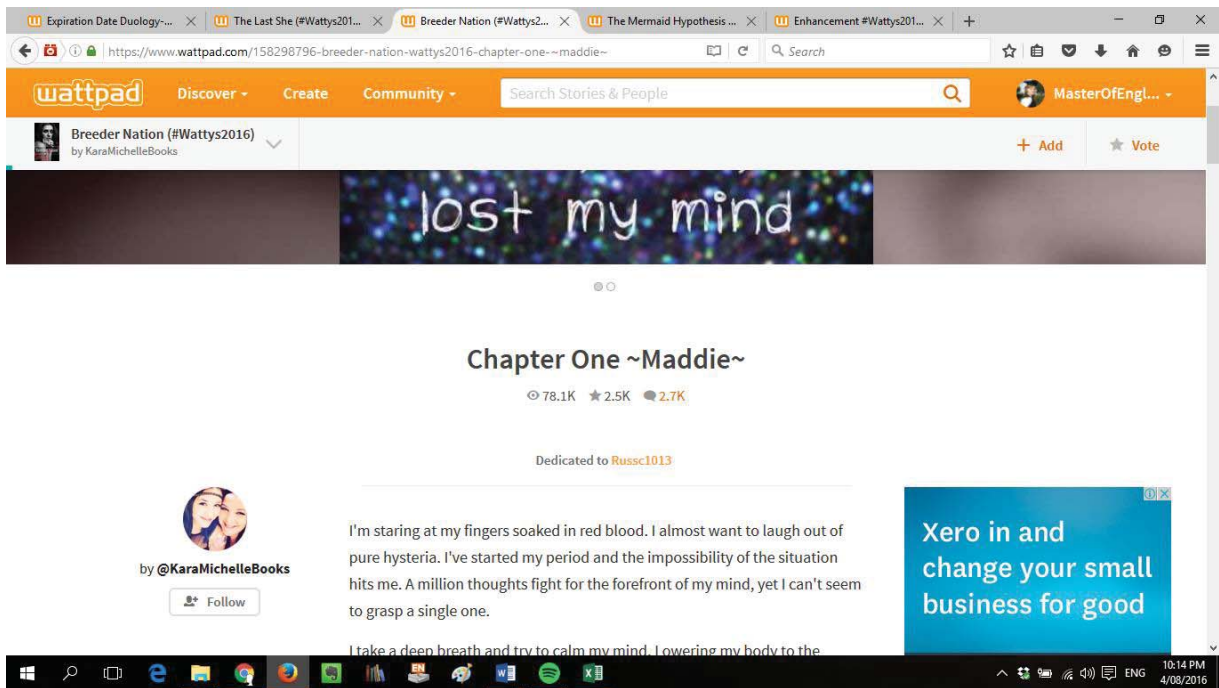


Fig. 3.20: Visible Statistics for Part 3 of *Breeder Nation*, taken on 4th August, 2016

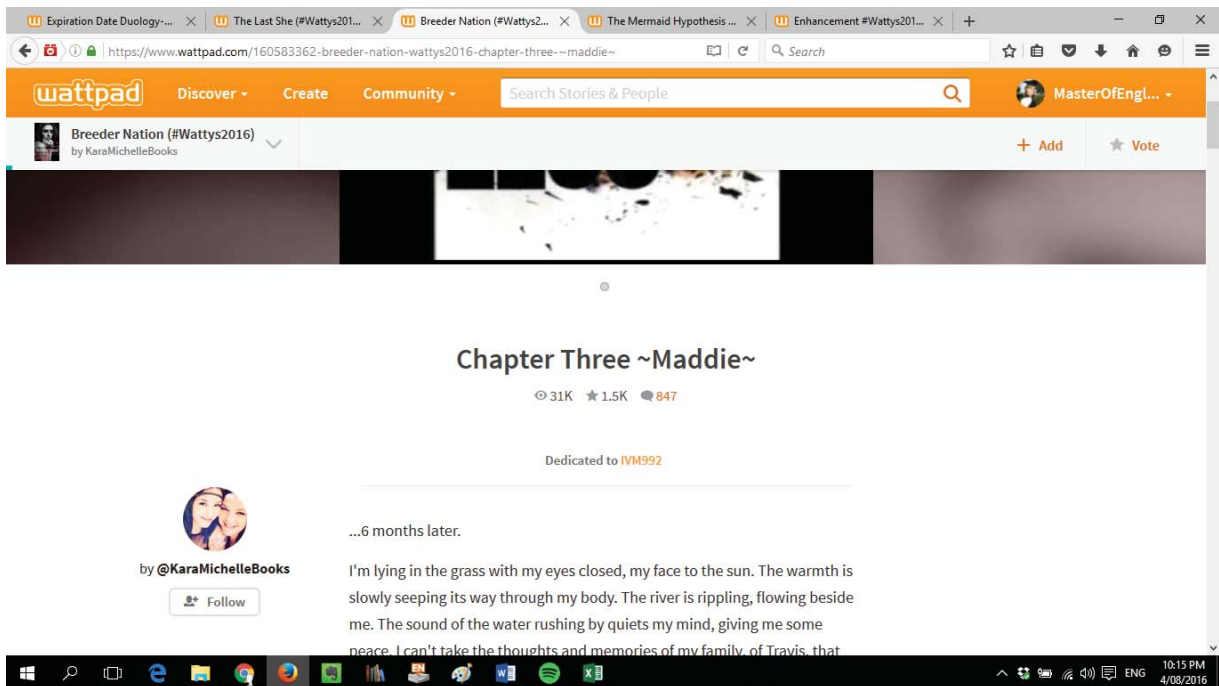


Fig. 3.21: Visible Statistics for Part 5 of *Breeder Nation*, taken on 4th August, 2016

The screenshot shows a Wattpad browser page for 'Chapter Five ~Maddie~' by KaraMichelleBooks. The page features a header with the Wattpad logo, navigation tabs (Discover, Create, Community), and a search bar. Below the header, the book title 'Breeder Nation (#Wattys2016)' is displayed. The chapter title 'Chapter Five ~Maddie~' is prominently shown, followed by statistics: 28.5K views, 1.4K stars, and 1K comments. The author's profile picture and name '@KaraMichelleBooks' are visible on the left. The main text of the chapter begins with 'I wake up in a panic, hearing voices outside my window. With my entire body shaking, I slowly climb out of bed and tiptoe over to the window. The voices have stopped, but I can hear light footsteps. A twig snaps outside and I tense, screwing my eyes shut, holding my breath. *Shit shit shit.*' A video advertisement for 'SING WITH CONFIDENCE & FREEDOM' is on the right. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the time as 10:15 PM on 4/08/2016.

Fig. 3.22: Visible Statistics for Part 10 of *Breeder Nation*, taken on 4th August, 2016

The screenshot shows a Wattpad browser page for 'Chapter Ten ~Travis~' by KaraMichelleBooks. The page features a header with the Wattpad logo, navigation tabs (Discover, Create, Community), and a search bar. Below the header, the book title 'Breeder Nation (#Wattys2016)' is displayed. The chapter title 'Chapter Ten ~Travis~' is prominently shown, followed by statistics: 21.5K views, 1K stars, and 1K comments. The author's profile picture and name '@KaraMichelleBooks' are visible on the left. The main text of the chapter begins with 'The last place I want to be on my birthday is back at the Breeder Compound, but here I am. This is my first time returning since interrogating Danielle and witnessing the death of her best friend Amanda. To say it's been difficult to process would be an understatement. Being here is more difficult now, because the memories of that day are tied to this place.' A video advertisement for 'Singing Dreams CAN Come True' is on the right. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the time as 10:16 PM on 4/08/2016.

Fig. 3.23: Visible Statistics for Part 20 of *Breeder Nation*, taken on 4th August, 2016

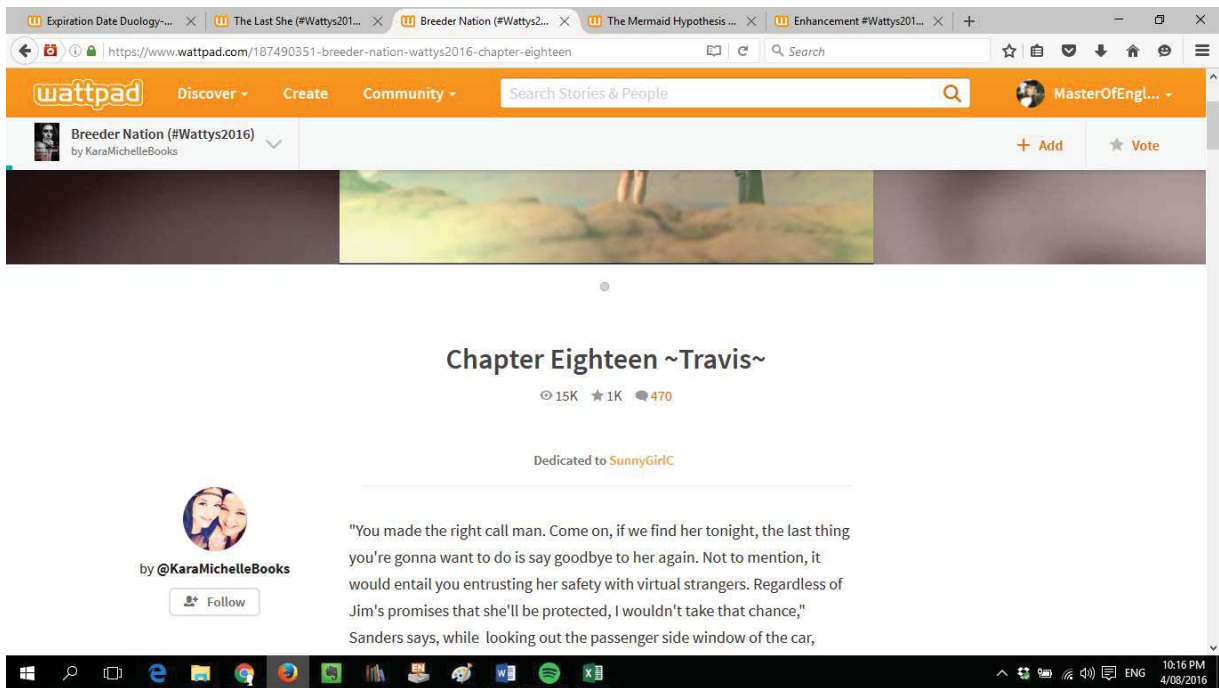


Fig. 3.24: Visible Statistics for Final Part of *Breeder Nation*, taken on 4th August, 2016

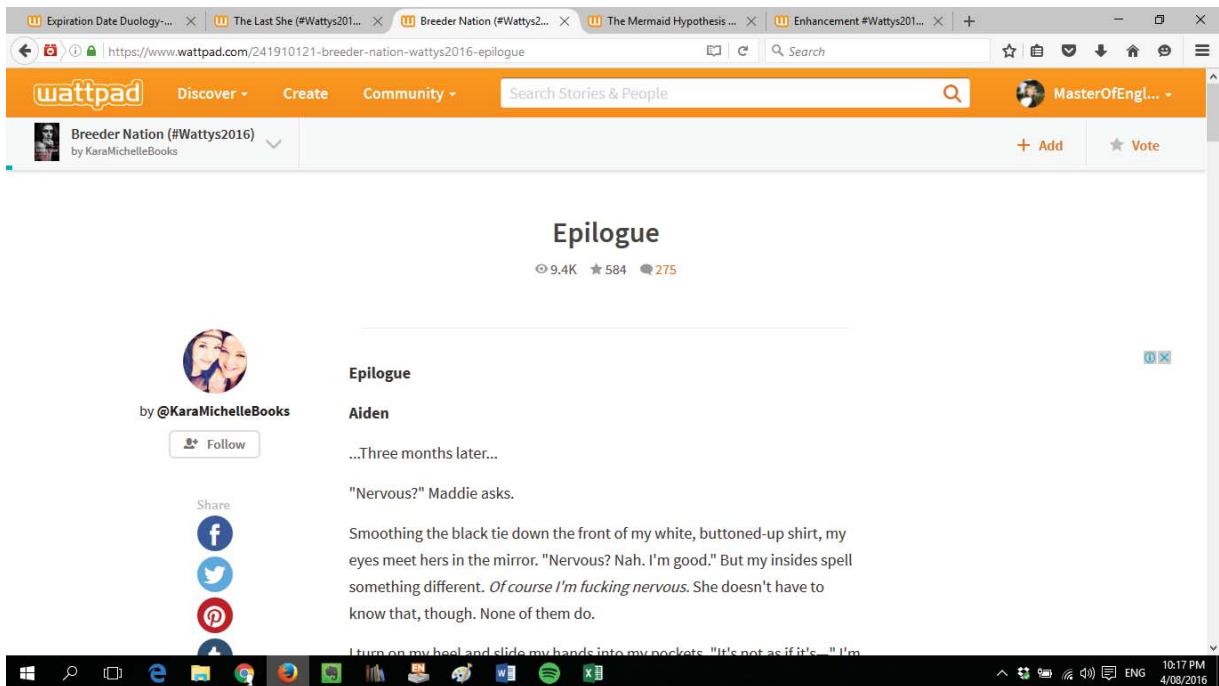


Fig. 3.25: Visible Statistics for Part 1 of *The Mermaid Hypothesis*, taken on 4th August, 2016

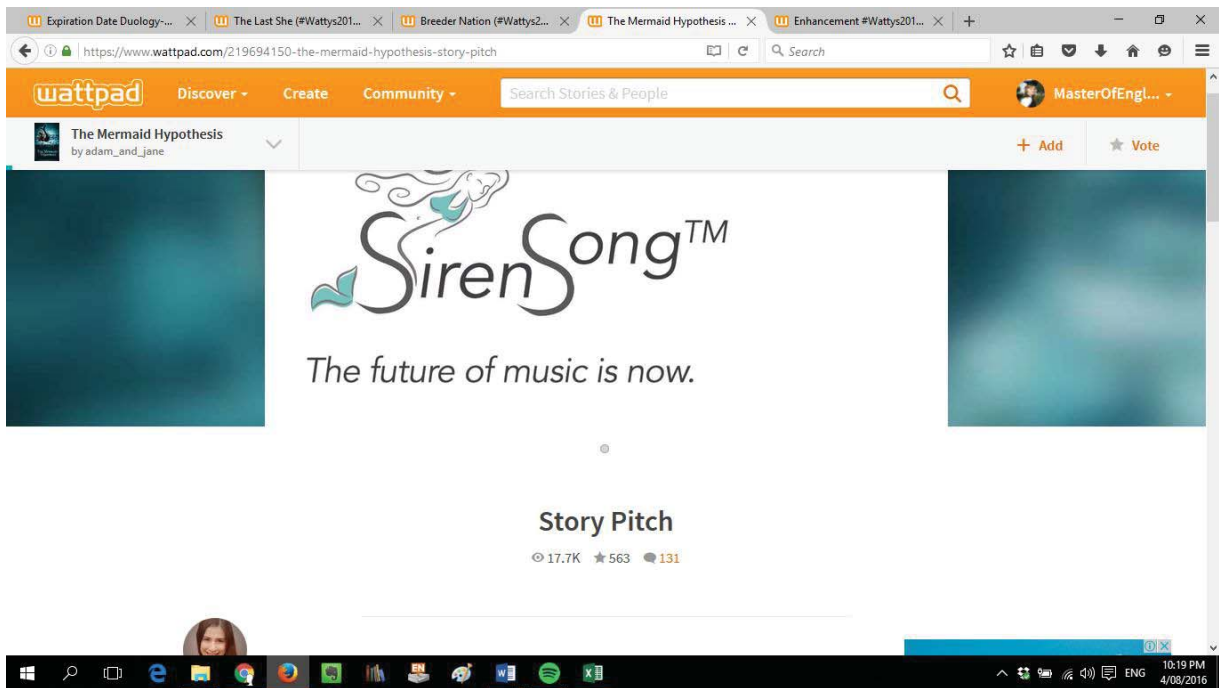


Fig. 3.26: Visible Statistics for Part 3 of *The Mermaid Hypothesis*, taken on 4th August, 2016

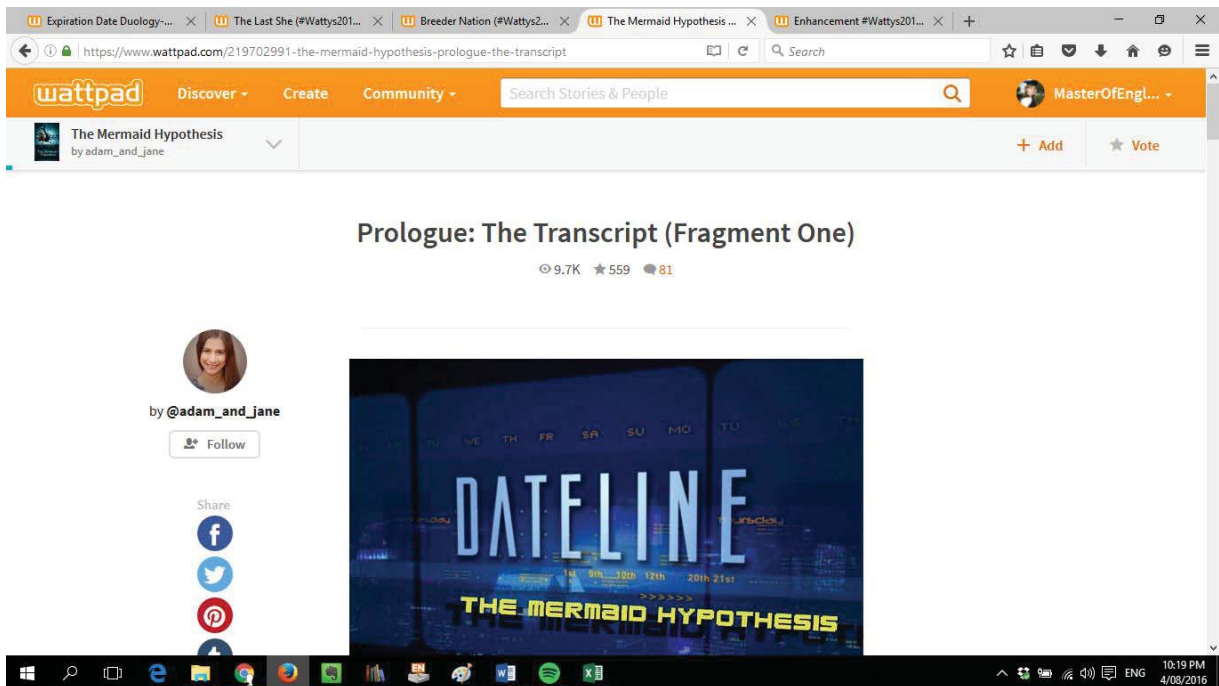


Fig. 3.27: Visible Statistics for Part 5 of *The Mermaid Hypothesis*, taken on 4th August, 2016

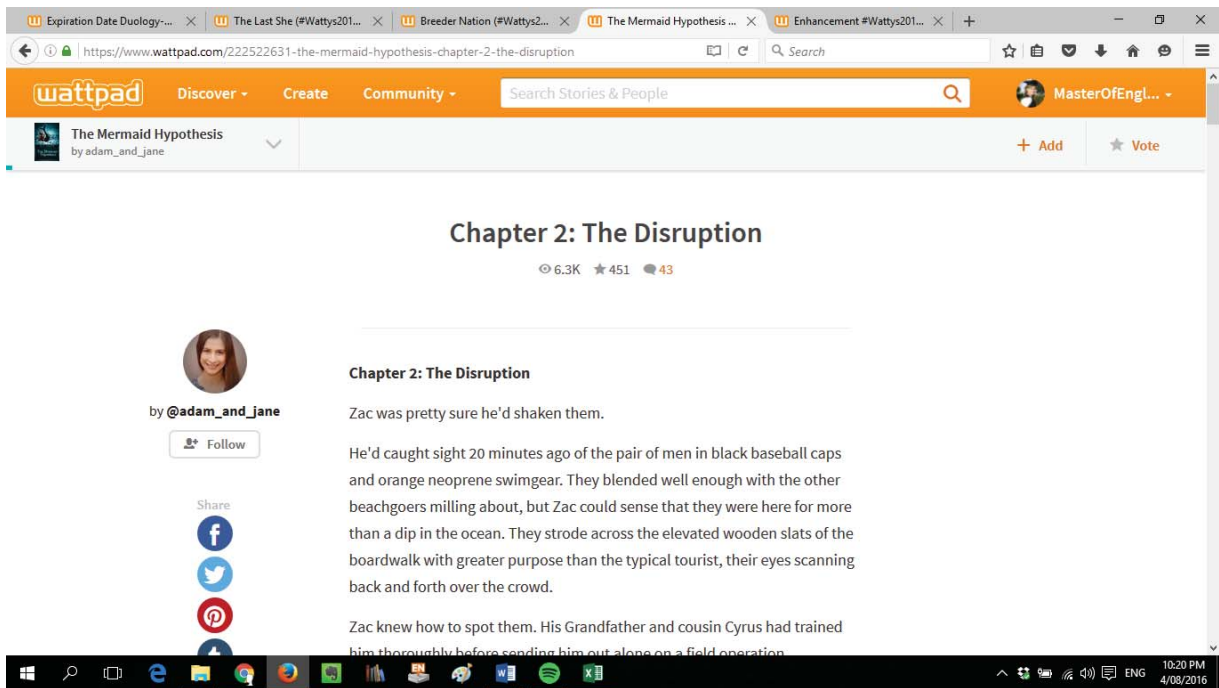


Fig. 3.28: Visible Statistics for Part 10 of *The Mermaid Hypothesis*, taken on 4th August, 2016

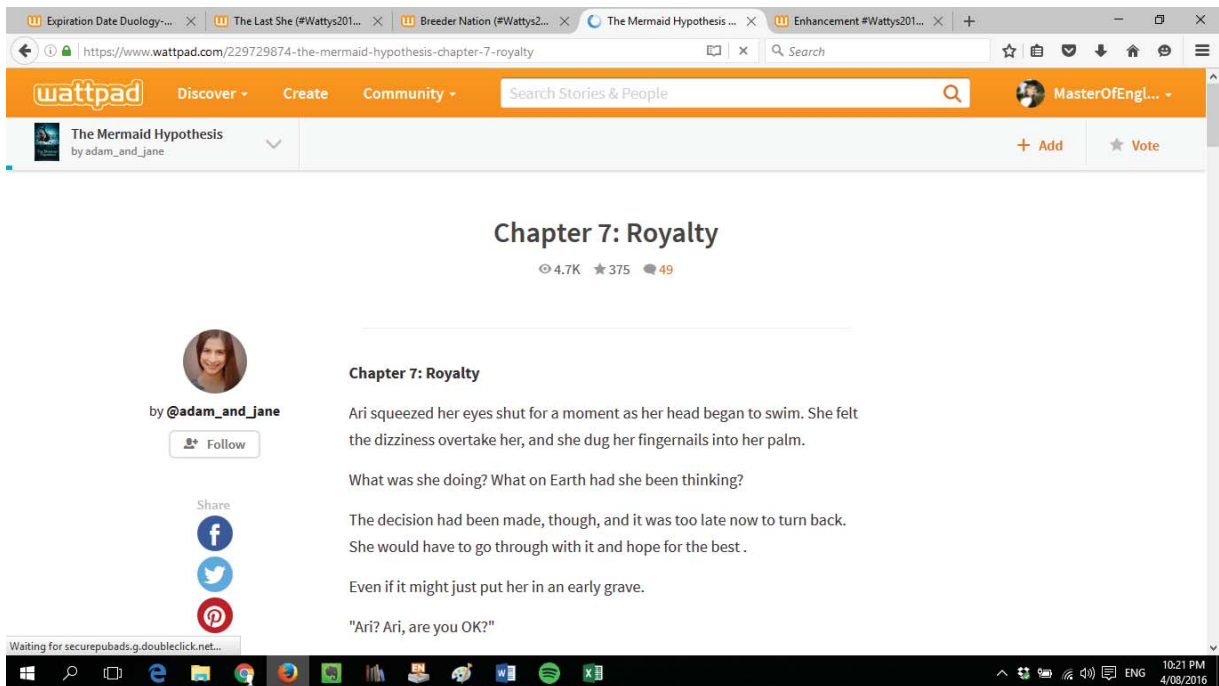


Fig. 3.29: Visible Statistics for Part 20 of *The Mermaid Hypothesis*, taken on 4th August, 2016

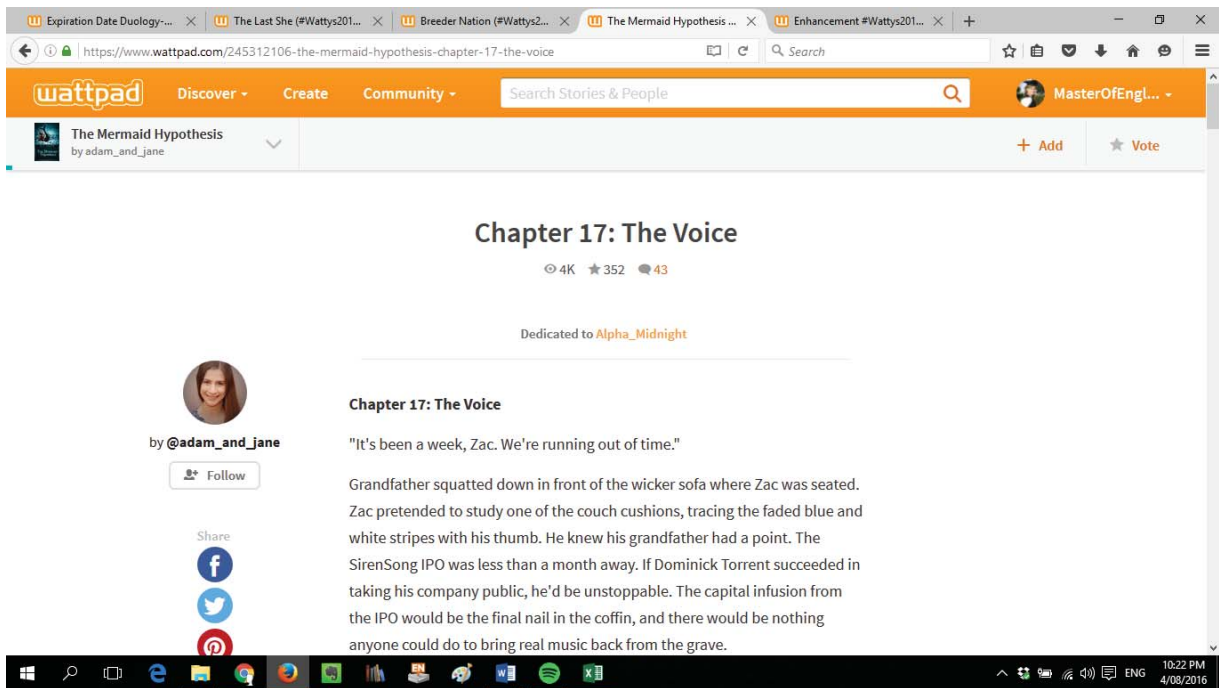


Fig. 3.30: Visible Statistics for Part 1 of *Enhancement*, taken on 4th August, 2016

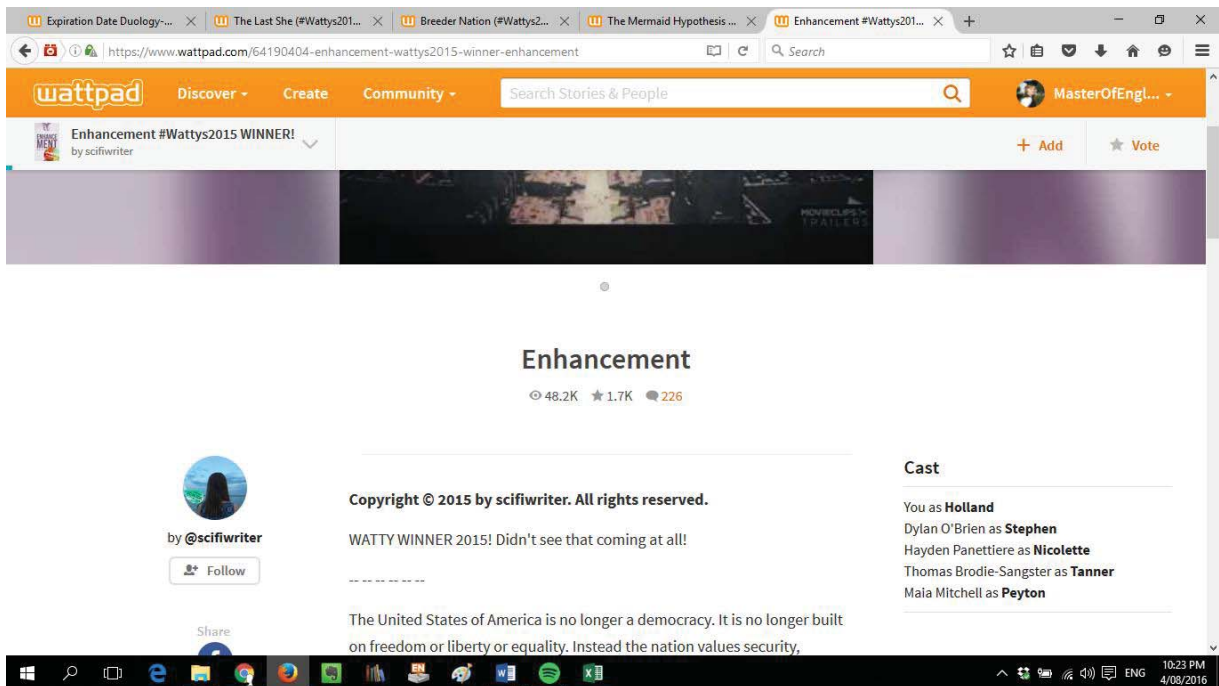


Fig. 3.31: Visible Statistics for Part 3 of *Enhancement*, taken on 4th August, 2016

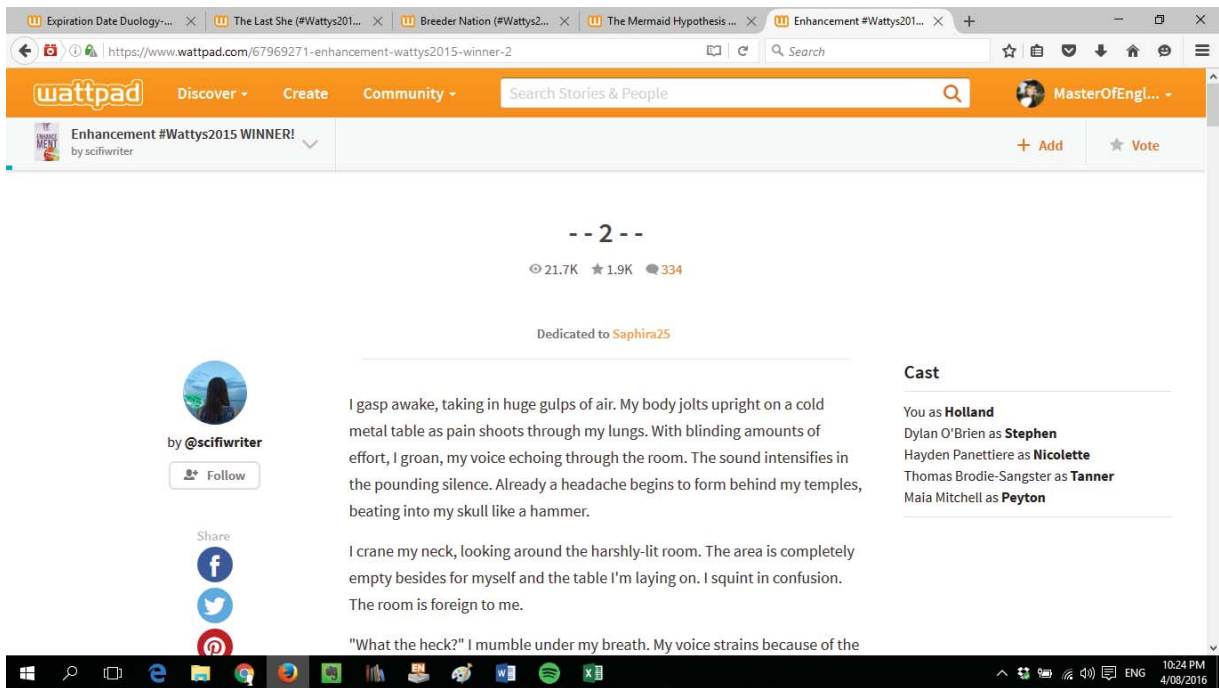


Fig. 3.32: Visible Statistics for Part 5 of *Enhancement*, taken on 4th August, 2016

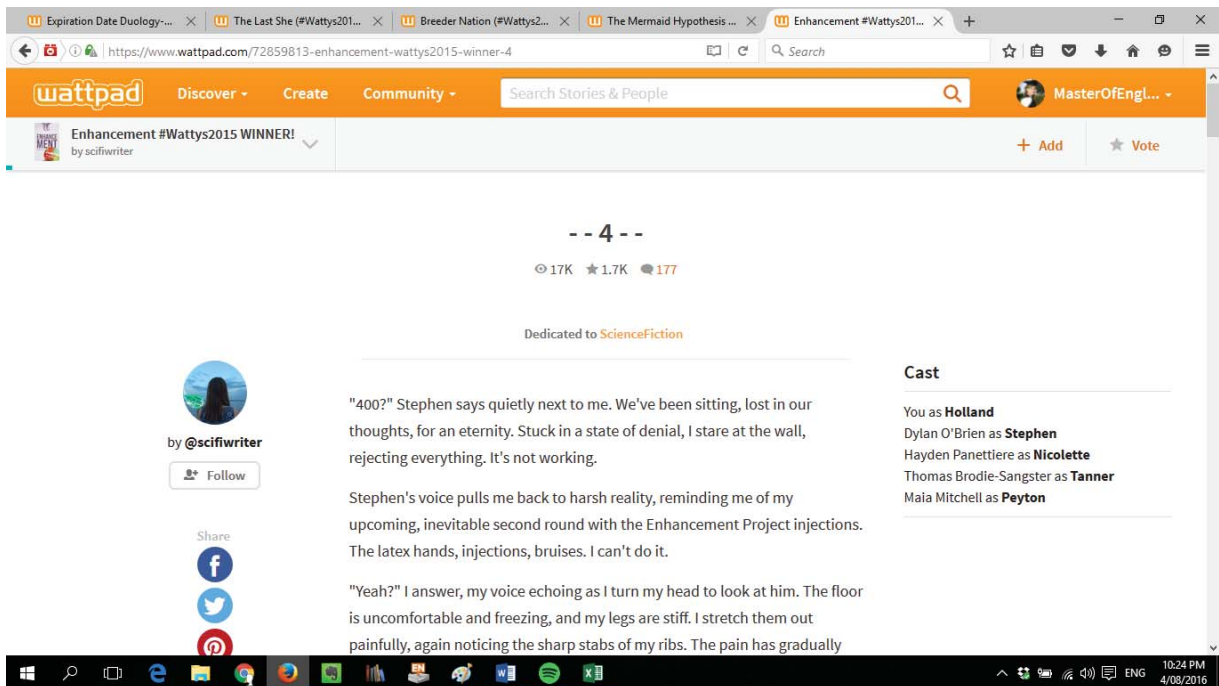


Fig. 3.33: Visible Statistics for Part 10 of *Enhancement*, taken on 4th August, 2016

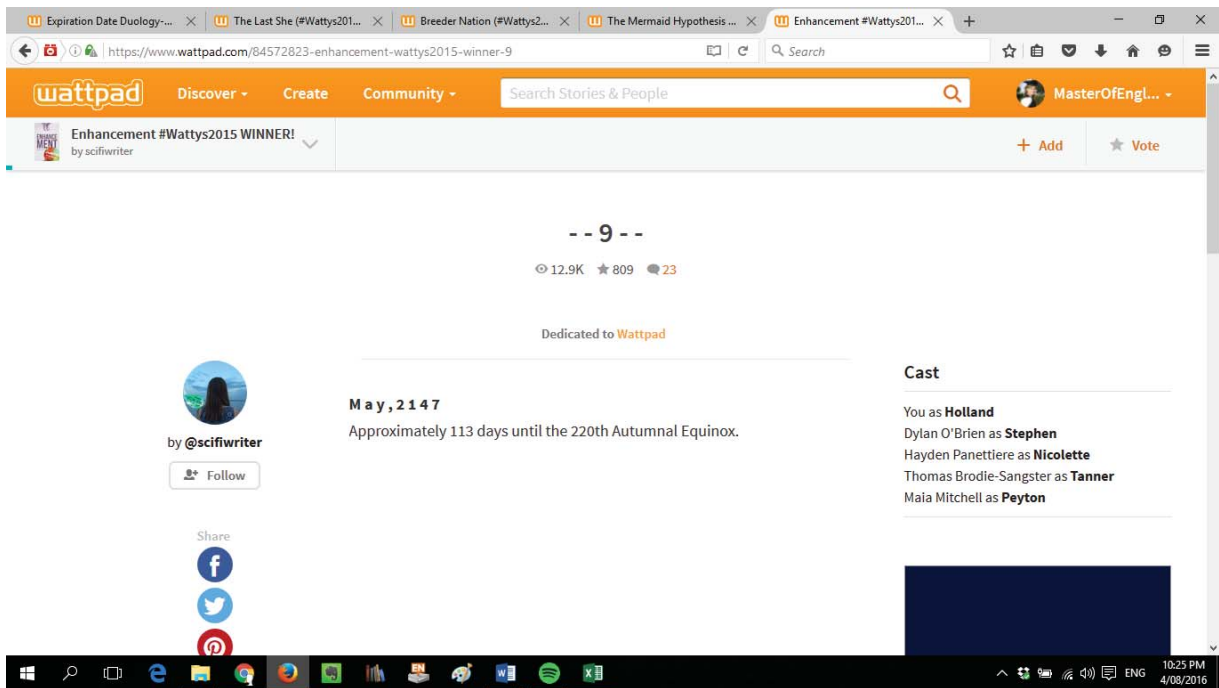
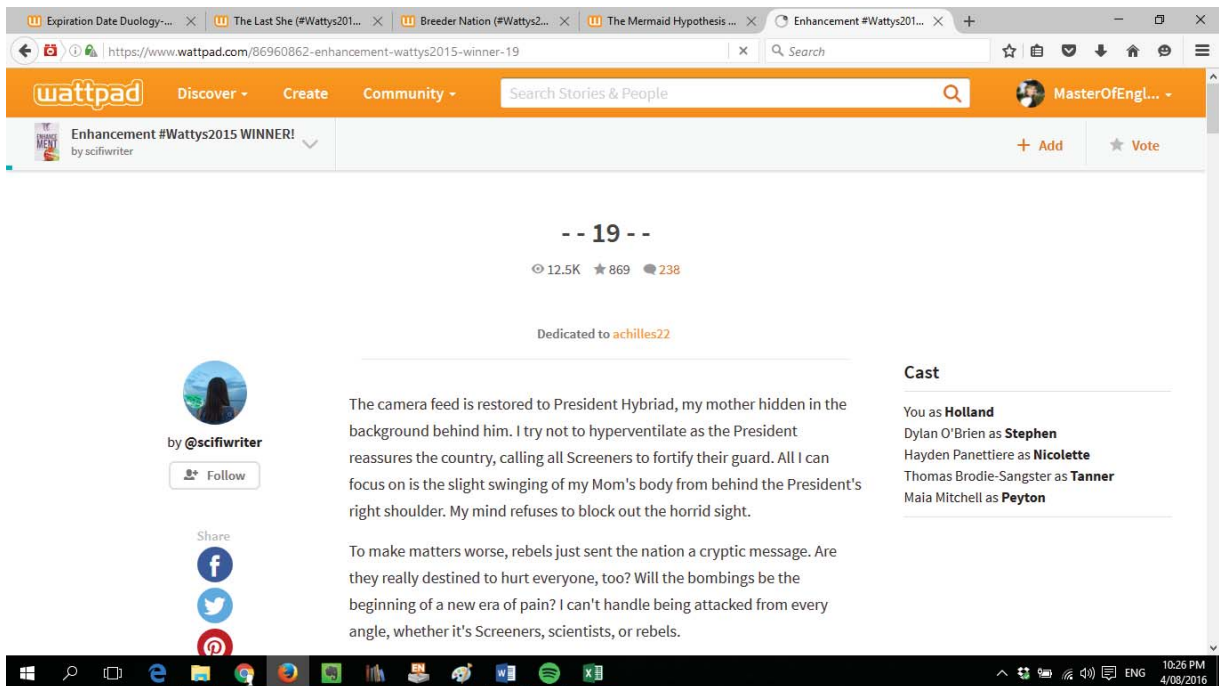


Fig. 3.34: Visible Statistics for Part 20 of *Enhancement*, taken on 4th August, 2016



Appendix 4: Visible Statistics for Examples of Hot Books in Other Wattpad Categories

Fig. 4.1: The #1 Romance book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

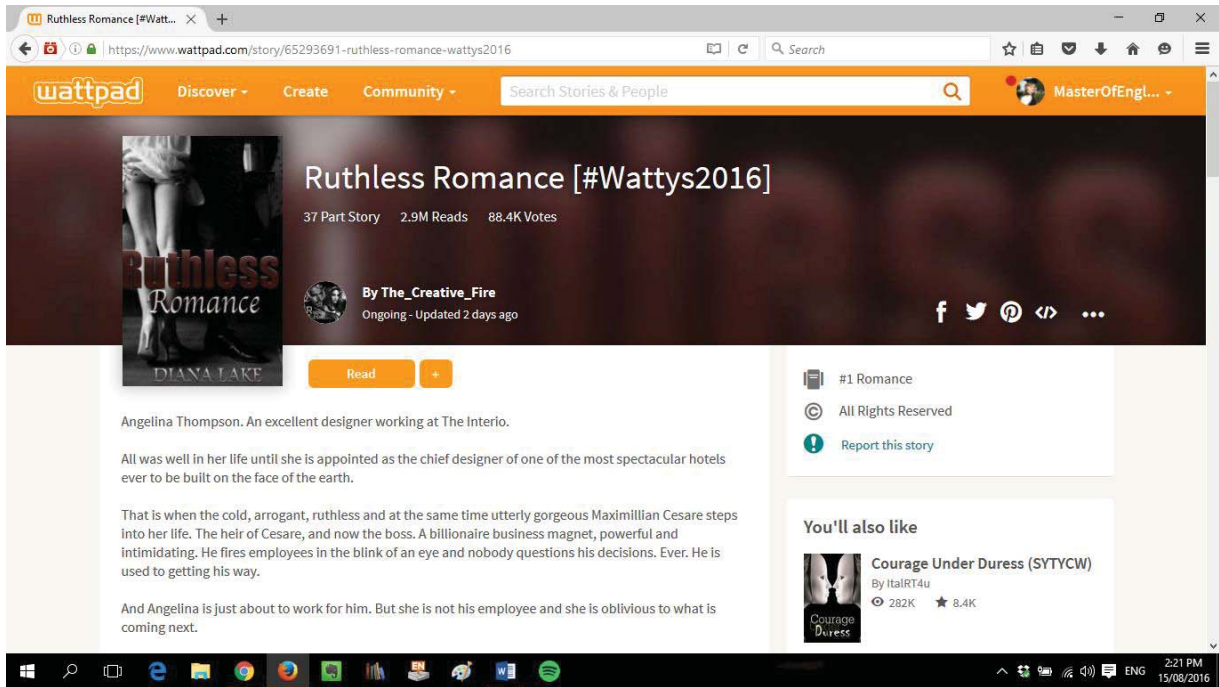


Fig. 4.2: Part 10 of the #1 Romance book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

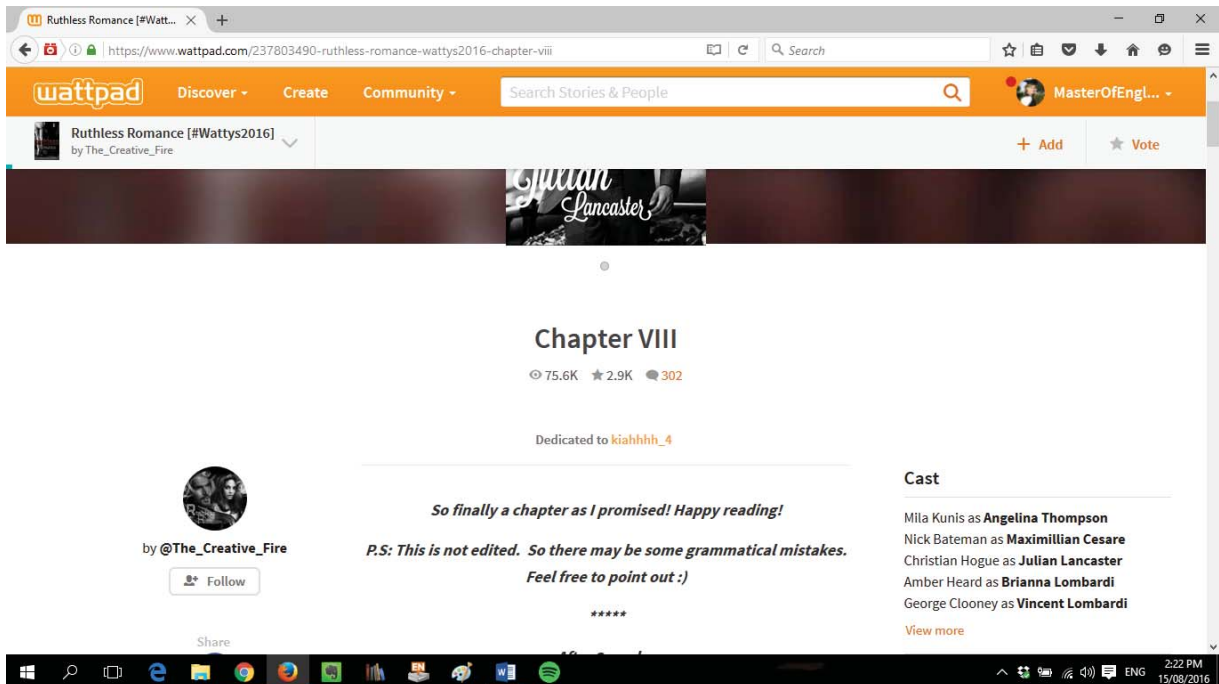


Fig. 4.3: The #5 Romance book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

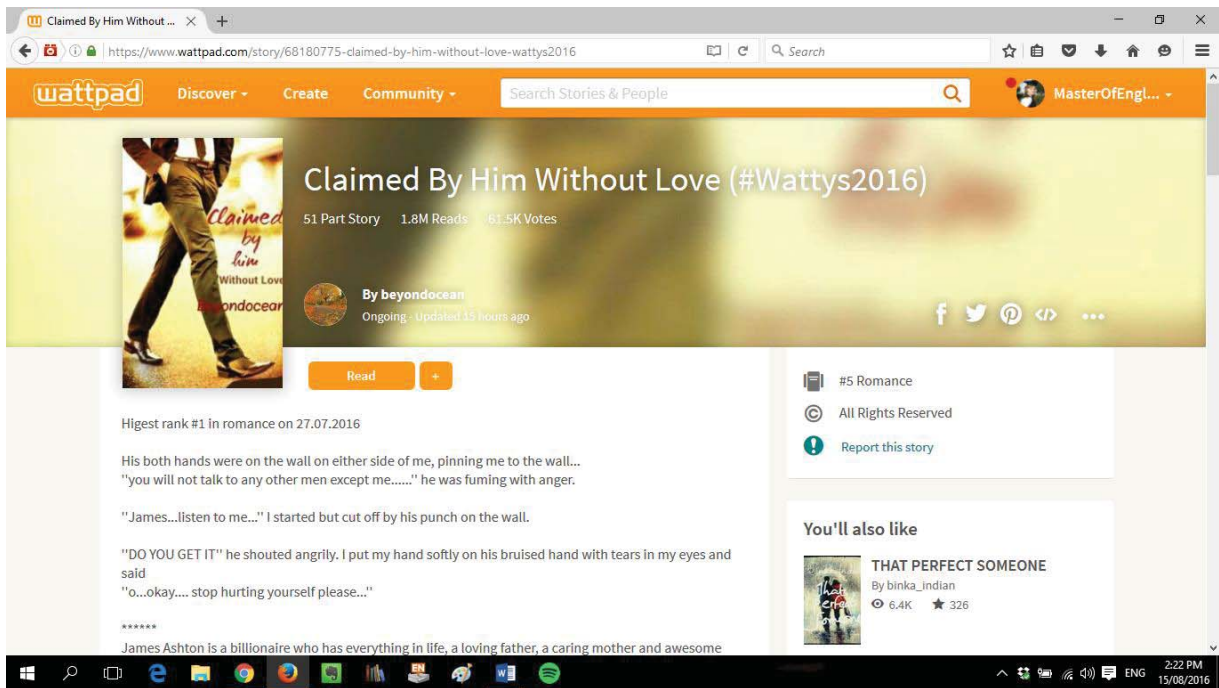


Fig. 4.4: Part 10 of the #5 Romance book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

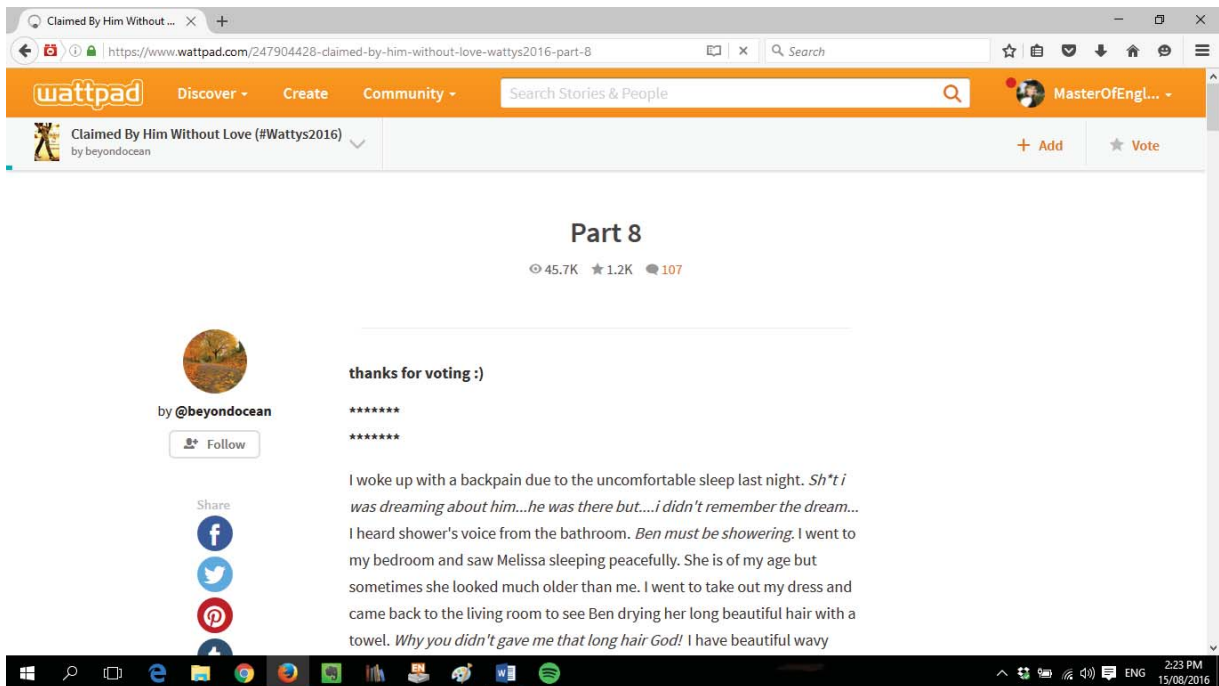


Fig. 4.5: The #1 Fanfiction book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

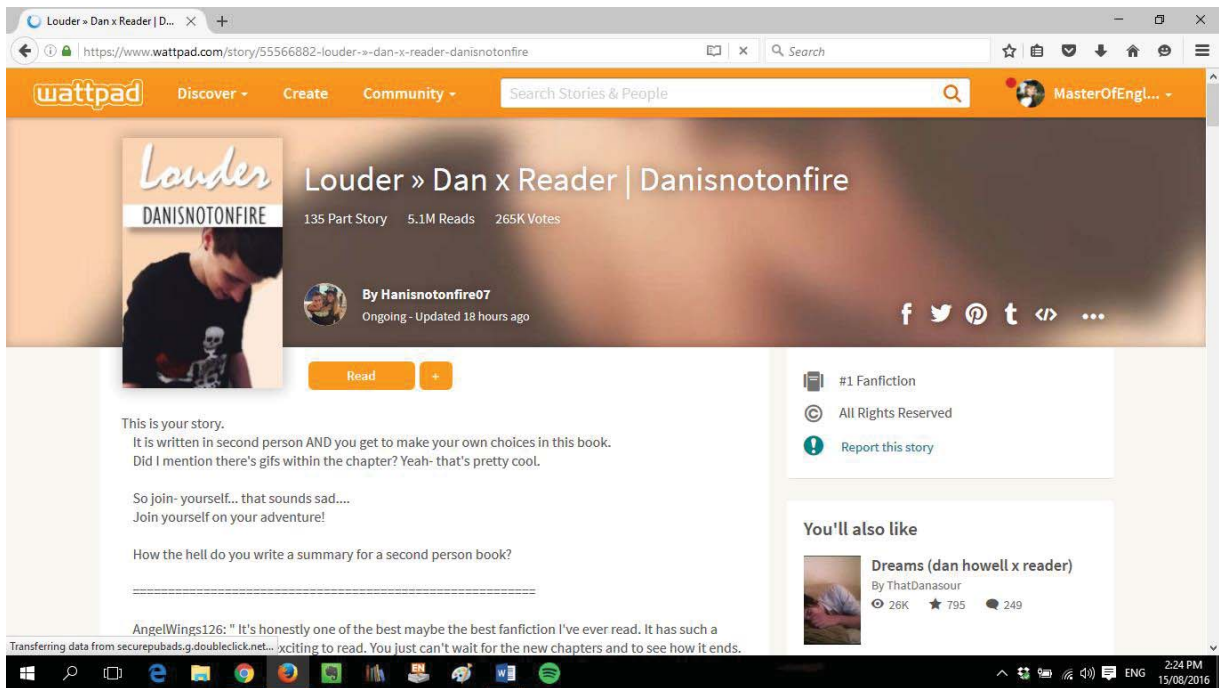


Fig. 4.6: Part 10 of the #1 Fanfiction book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

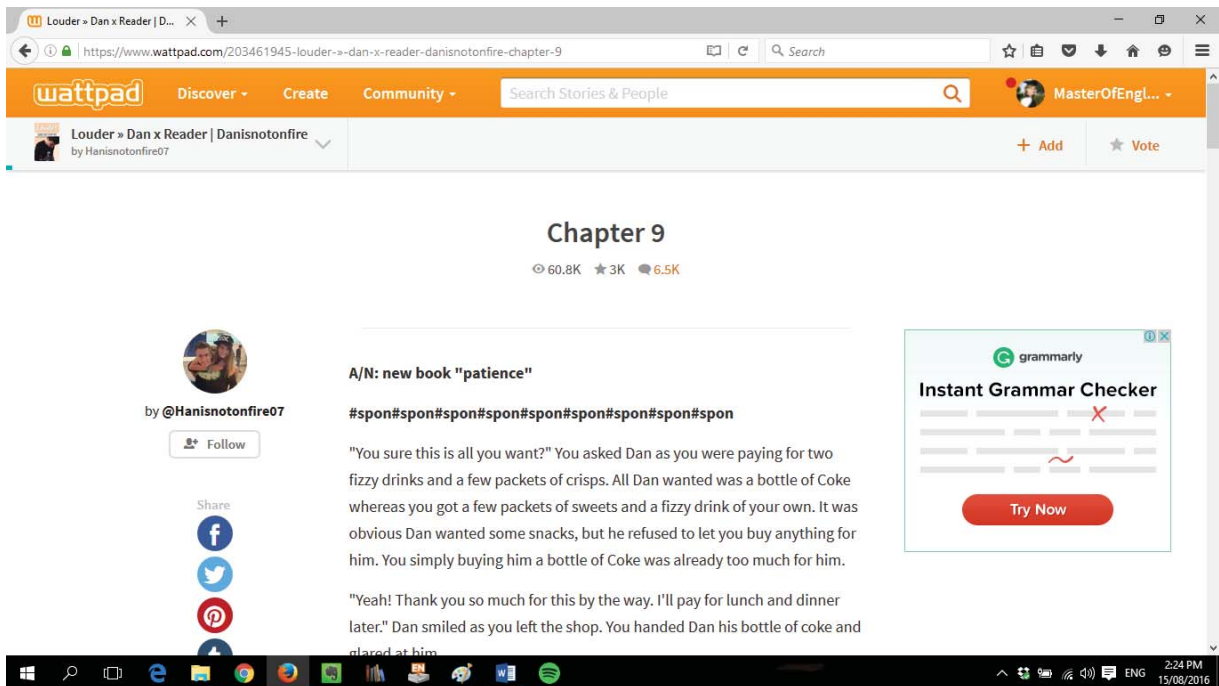


Fig. 4.7: The #5 Fanfiction book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

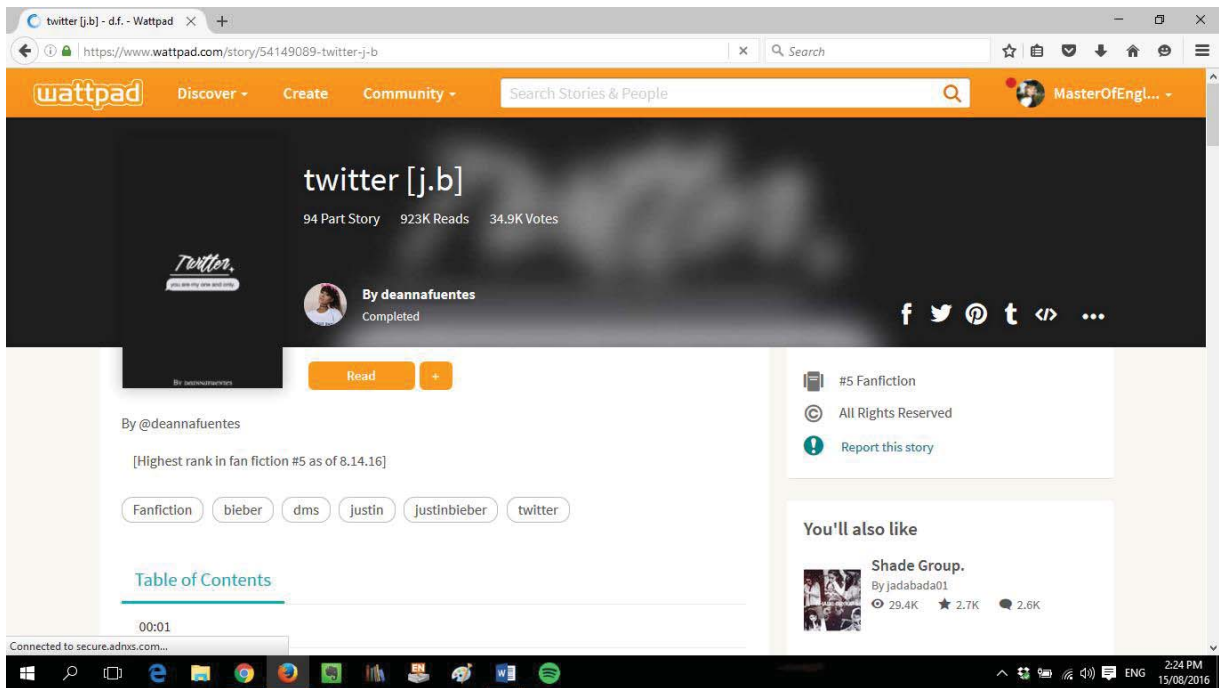


Fig. 4.8: Part 10 of the #5 Fanfiction book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

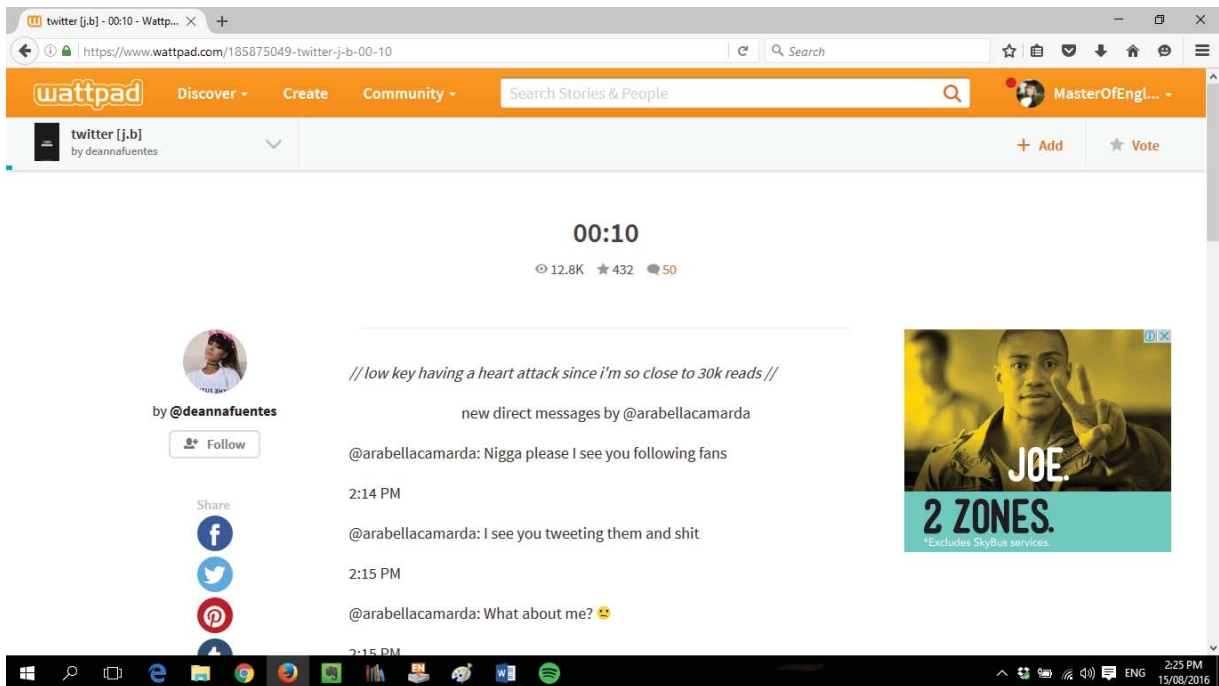


Fig. 4.9: The #1 Teen Fiction book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016



Fig. 4.10: Part 10 of the #1 Teen Fiction book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

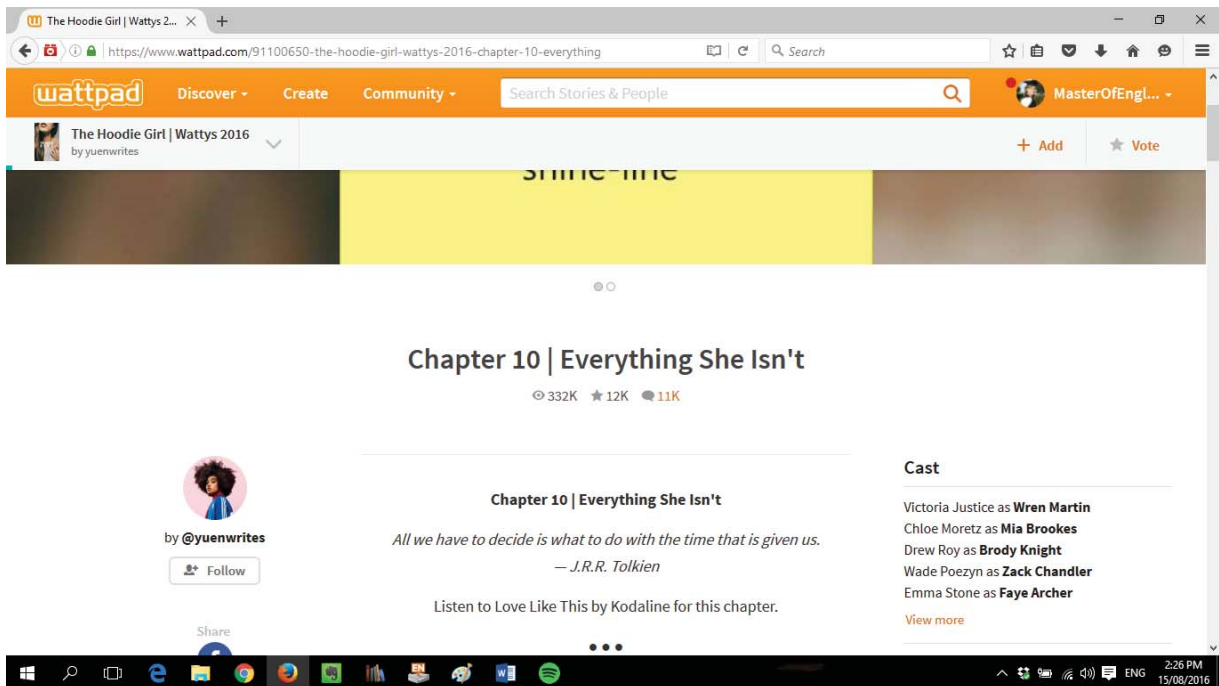


Fig. 4.11: The #5 Teen Fiction book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

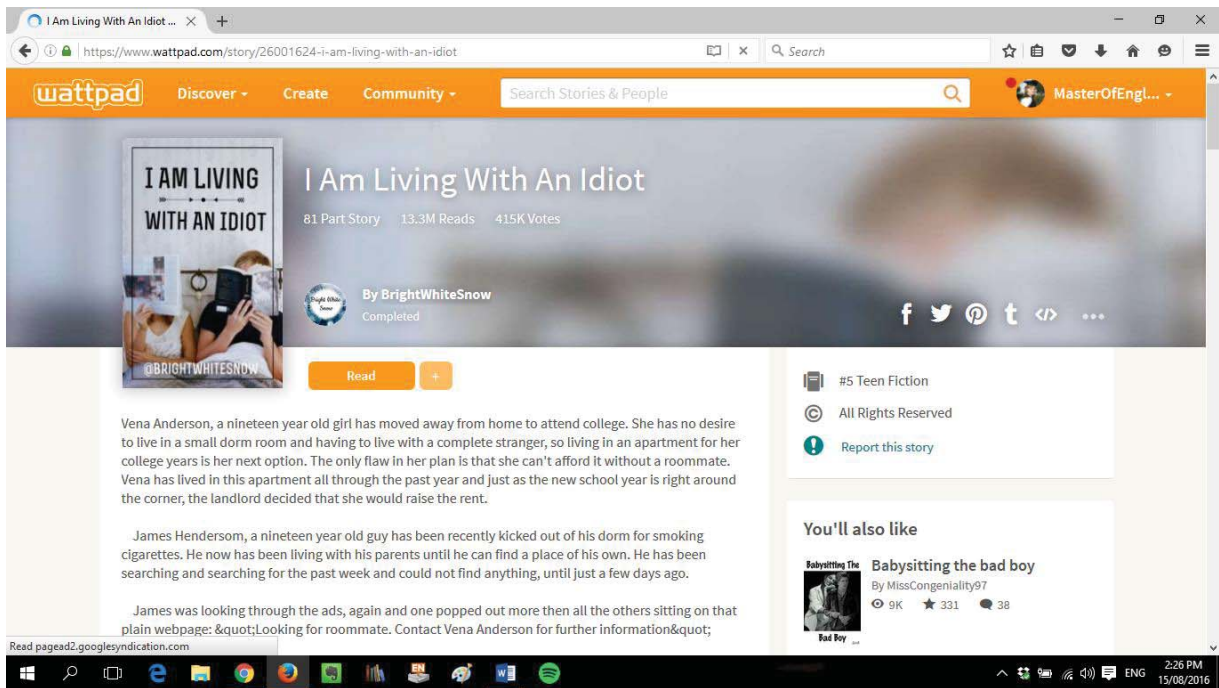


Fig. 4.12: Part 10 of the #5 Teen Fiction book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

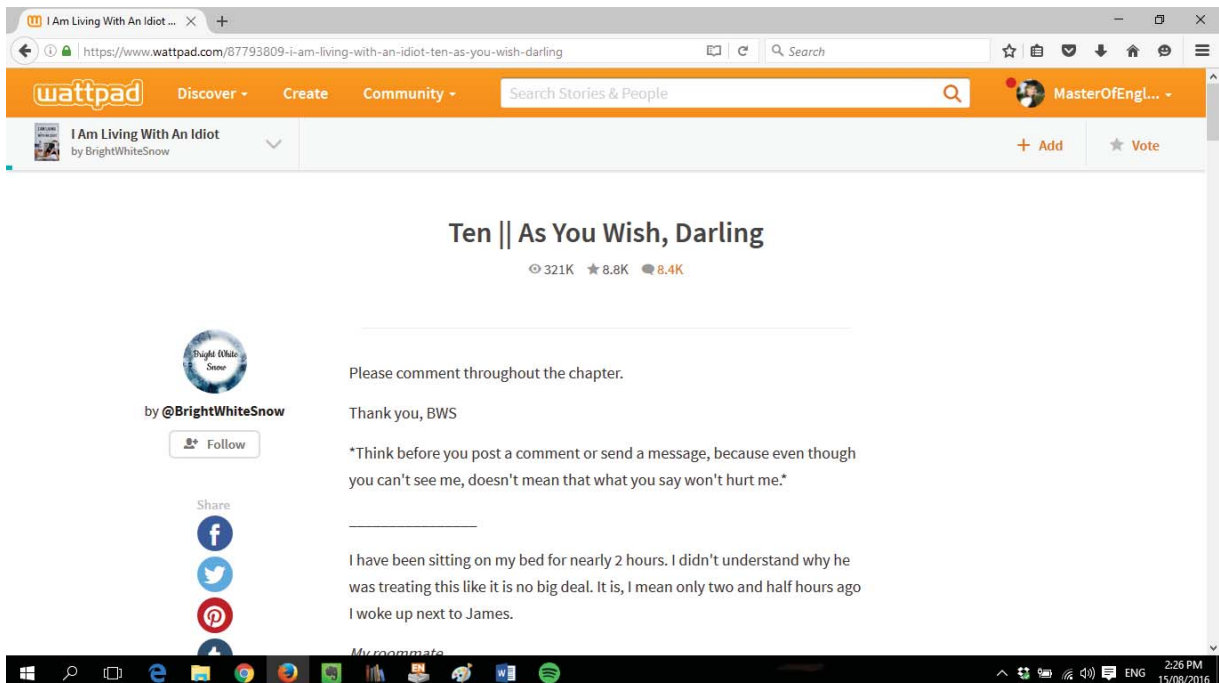


Fig. 4.13: The #1 Action book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

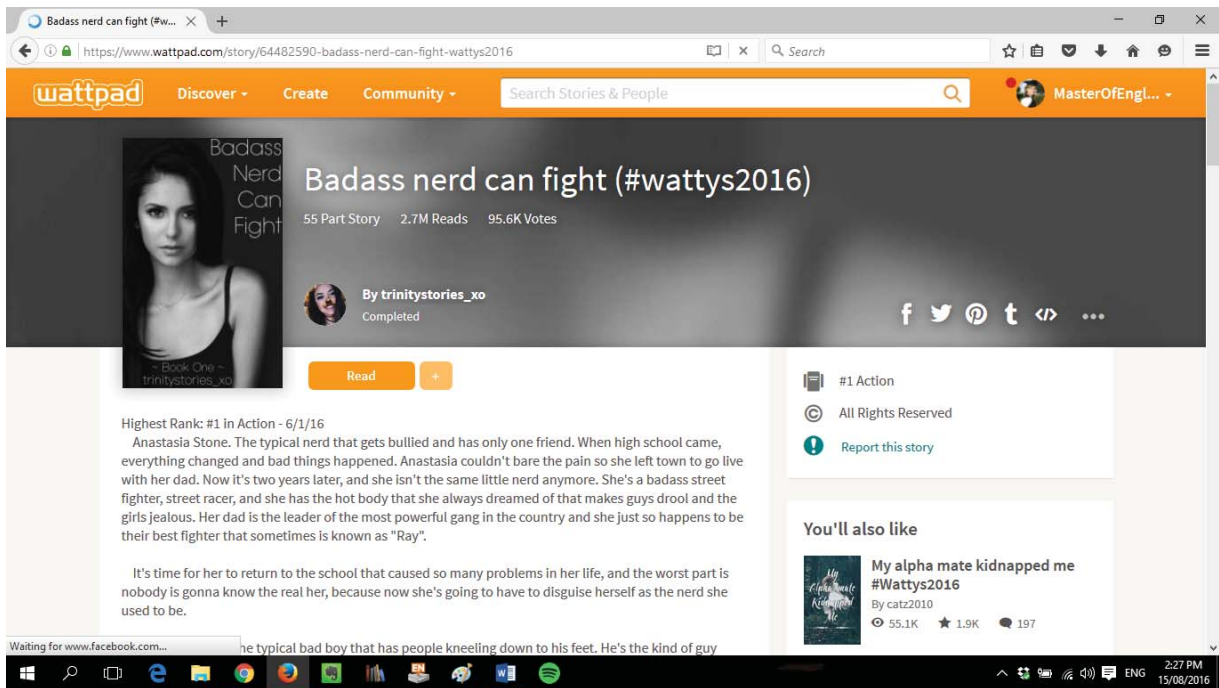


Fig. 4.14: Part 10 of the #1 Action book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

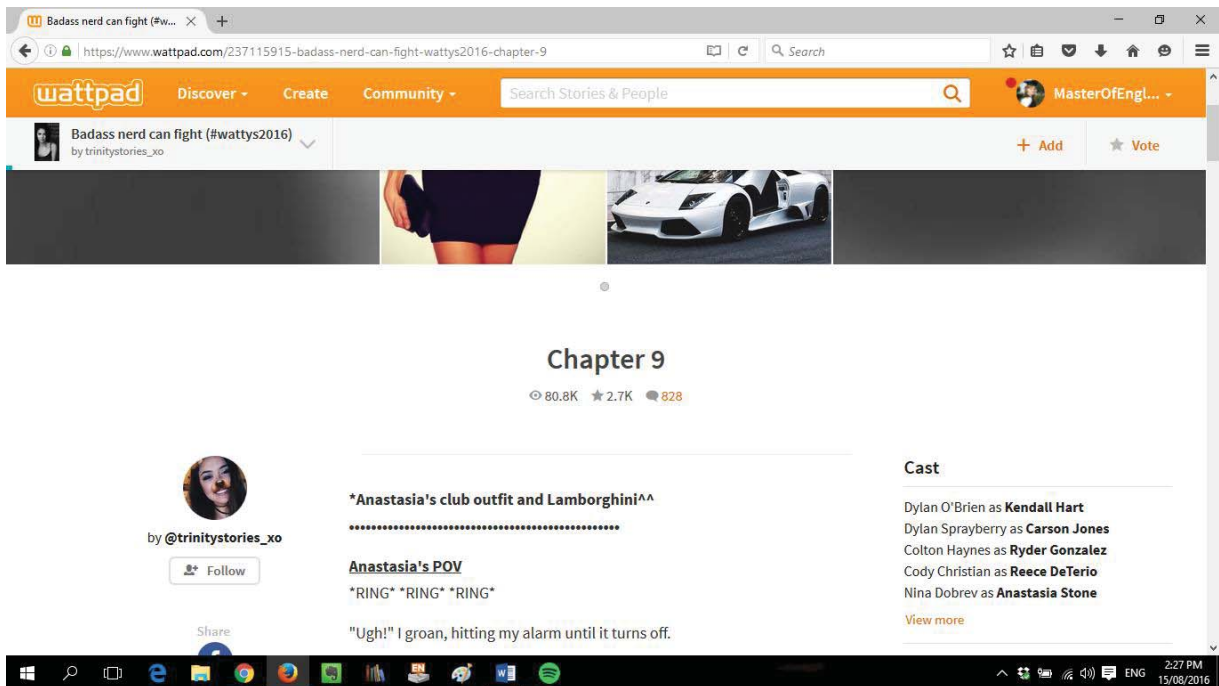


Fig. 4.15: The #5 Action book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

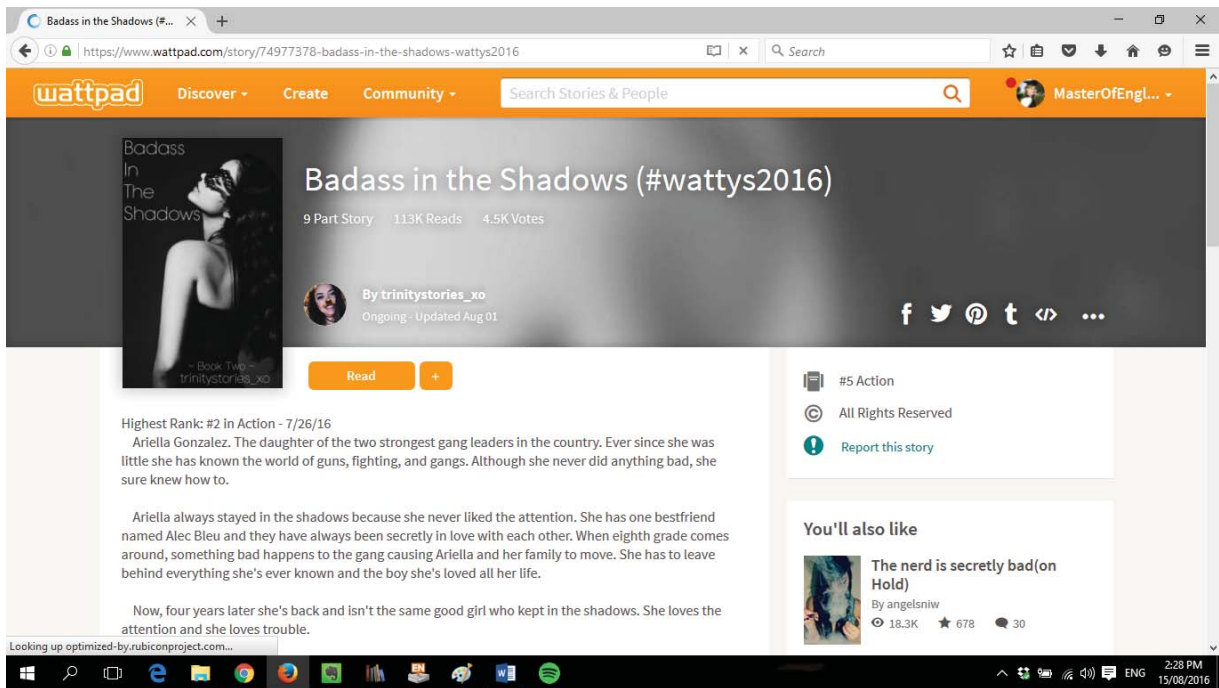


Fig. 4.16: Part 9 of the #5 Action book on Wattpad on 15th August, 2016

