

On the Dearth of Otherkin Writings

Who-is-Page 06/05/2019

The decline of personal writings within the otherkin community is a phenomena spoken of often by older members of the community: gone are the days where most otherkin had a personal website and preferred forum of which to lurk, posting thoughts, anecdotes, and guides based on their own observations and experiences. The remnants of many of the articles and writings from this time can be found scattered across the Internet, hoarded by some otherkin as valuable resources and offering glimpses into the community's past.

While we've largely lost many of the small, digital otherkin habitats that produced such works due to the decline of forums and personal websites, it's a mistake to say that otherkin writings as a whole have vanished completely. Through the use of blogging platforms such as LiveJournal, WordPress, and even Tumblr, otherkin haven't stopped writing: if anything, otherkin write just as much, if not more, than they did in the past. What's changed, rather, is the content, intended audience, and format.

Within forums and on personal websites, otherkin were often able to talk about aspects of their identity and personal experiences with a freedom not found elsewhere; other non-human identifying individuals were able to respond in turn, offering their own perspectives, ultimately cultivating a community heavily based on introspection and understanding. This, of course, did not always manifest in positive ways—the modern community is still recovering from the period of time in which “grilling” was popular, a malicious practice of basing the legitimacy of another's kintype on how well the individual could answer pointed, fussy questions and justify their personal experiences. With the rise of social media and the Internet more accessible than ever before, online otherkin found the landscape around them changing: newer otherkin were more oriented towards more popular websites than the forums, which were often in places of uncertainty due to costs of management and fluctuating traffic. Anti-otherkin, as always, were rampant— with some of them having started to realize that otherkin forums were prime spots to scout for mocking meme material and to troll the various otherkin involved.

The otherkin remained stubbornly anti-social and isolationist, continuing to hoard what community-created resources it could. In the slow, but inevitable migration to social media the community endured, however, the otherkin community was put on blast in a way it hadn't been before, and in a way the community largely wasn't prepared for. Though the self-introspective community discourse was still prevalent, otherkin regularly now had to address the loud, ugly voices of self-proclaimed "anti-otherkin," individuals whose unnatural vitriol towards the community was laced with rhetoric that deliberately misrepresented the otherkin community and its members. Individuals who would have, in the past, largely stayed within the realm of kintype-specific or ideologically similar groups were now also entirely exposed to one another, escalating discourse (especially around "otaku-kin") to significantly more visible levels.

The otherkin community's language and writings began to adjust not only to the format that is generally utilized by social media—tending to favor short, intelligent or comedic quips as a rule—but also to start to inevitably assume that the "other" would be present and negatively manifest within the conversation of the writing. This "other" could take many forms, including non-kin, anti-kin, subgroups of otherkin that the writer was personally opposed to (often fictionkin or more niche groups, such as cladotherians, theriomorphics, phytanthropes, and similar). The assumption wasn't entirely misplaced due to popular tagging systems and similar search functions, but it became an underlying portion of virtually all social media writings by otherkin, causing the content to shift dramatically into territory which was generally more defensive, basic, and explanatory. The benefit of this, in a way, was the continuation of otherkin-based Frequently Asked Question pages, but such pages ended up popular for more reasons than merely the prevalence of anti-otherkin and the assumption of the "other".

Another hand in the rise of the FAQ pages was the rising issue many otherkin found themselves having in regards to individuals misusing community terminology. A rising tide of 'wishkin' and 'copingkin,' individuals who typically mislabeled themselves as otherkin despite not holding an involuntary non-human identity, seemed to plague the otherkin community. Some viewed this as a threat to the otherkin community's validity

as judged by non-kin, a foolish endeavor of appeasement to those who openly mocked the otherkin community, while others merely viewed it as an insulting, perhaps even occasionally malicious, annoyance. In the digital cacophony that resulted from something of a tug-of-war over otherkin terminology and the general community, we saw the rise of microforums in the shape of private Discord servers and similar. Private discord servers were a free alternative to the hectic, often aggressive public portions of the otherkin community, allowing for like-minded individuals to come together in a safe environment and speak about their non-human identities while still maintaining a conversational, informal format. As the dust settled over the newly formed copinglinker community (among other newly created groups which existed adjacent to the otherkin community), Discord servers continued to flourish, now offering a private space for the young communities to establish their own unique vocabulary and hash through their individual discourses, and cross-community spaces for people to intermingle and share their experiences.

While we may not have the lengthy, sometimes overtly formal articles and papers of the past, the otherkin community contains a plethora of more temporary writings of which to explore, and these writings do contain a great value unique to themselves. Although I would argue it's truly a loss that more individuals do not write longer pieces addressing thoughts they have or speaking about their experiences, it is beyond me to attempt to drag back the community to such ways. In writing this, I merely wanted to point out the existence of otherkin writings, even if in a more contemporary way. I do encourage those who read this and recognize themselves within this to explore the possibility of creating a longer piece of writing on the otherkin community and submitting it to the Werelibrary or posting it on a free personal website; in many ways our community lives and dies on what we record and maintain. As the otherkin community barrels into the future, fewer and fewer of the resources maintained on long-term otherkin websites remain as applicable as they were ten or more years ago, while the modern resources created on temporary social media sites stay subject to the whims of moderators and corporations. With a dearth of longer pieces of writing in the community and a majority of modern writings existing on Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter,

LiveJournal, and even WordPress, I worry about what we stand to lose in the face of the ambiguous presence of major social media platforms. The otherkin community will adapt and survive, whatever happens, but what of the risk we run of losing knowledge of the valuable, defining moments in our community's history?