

The Curiosity and Curse of Canon

Dash L. Duke 11/11/2021

I'm a basilisk of startling similarity to both canon and some fanon appearances of basilisks from the Wizarding World or Harry Potter universe created by J. K. Rowling.

Within the canon, basilisks are said to have magic-resistant hide comparable to that of a dragon, with deadly venom and a gaze which could kill any living entity who make eye contact with it—save for phoenixes. Males were said to have a scarlet plume, and basilisks are described as green with bright yellow eyes with functionally no pattern or color morphs that are ever mentioned. They have a lifespan of 900-1000 years. A basilisk egg can only be created from a toad incubating the egg of a chicken. Spiders are terrified of them, and roosters can kill the basilisk with its crows.

This is, while not an *exact* match, unnervingly close to my own species. Perhaps the only immediate differences are that my species of basilisk does indeed come in different patterns and morphs based on, I suspect, subspecies and ritual differences, and that the ritual to create a basilisk egg is not so simple as it is described. Spiders and roosters are also not, as far as I understand it, especially important to my species either—rather, I am more familiar with our hatred of phoenixes and certain magical mustelids. I also do not know the if the lifespans match, though I would not be entirely surprised if 1000 was the upper limit of a basilisk's life. There's also the fact that some females and intersex basilisks may have plumes as well, though it is not nearly as common as males' feathers. Like in some fanon stories, I also have a semi-transparent secondary eyelid to utilize when I want to prevent my gaze from killing someone while still retaining some semblance of sight.

It is curious, given that I do remember my previous life with clarity, but can find no record within the Harry Potter nor connected canons of any tyrant wizard kings who terrorized muggle and magical citizens alike somewhere in the modern United Kingdom, who would likely have existed prior to the 1692 International Statute of Wizarding Secrecy. It seems such a classic story to tell, of an evil mage who uses his diabolical minions and villainous(ly handsome) serpent to keep the population and dissenters in-check while he steals all their tax money, and of the rebel (asshole) hero

and his mighty (asshole) phoenix partner which thwarts the tyrant in the end—I'm almost surprised I can't find anything which even resembles it, given the seeming bizarre closeness of everything else.

I've talked with a partner of mine, who is also from a magic-oriented world which contains basilisks, and while his and I's world are similar in certain aspects—such as magic primarily being sympathetic in its designs—it makes me wonder where exactly I come from, and how useful it might potentially be to label myself as a “Wizards World-adjacent fictionkin/fictive.” On one hand, it might be the best and most fitting descriptor for me now and looking into spaces centered around that identity could be useful in potentially limiting down whether or not it's just happenstance that there's so many similarities.

On the other hand, when it comes to discussions which relate to or mention this fictional universe there's one thing that immediately jumps out at people before all else, content of the topic included: the author, J. K. Rowling, a well-known figurehead (and dare I say leader) within several hate groups, and an individual who is currently spearheading the effort in the UK to criminalize transgender healthcare and whittle down queer rights overall. A despicable person on all fronts and especially embarrassing to be connected to in even involuntary forms when one themselves is transgender and queer, as my system is.

Given the rightful animosity toward Rowling, there's an unfortunate possibility that using the label would result in misdirected dislike and hatred towards myself as well. Even transgender individuals who are utilizing what remains of the related fandom in transformative, pro-queer, “TRANS RIGHTS!” ways have been attacked online and accused of indirectly supporting the queen of TERF island herself. All I'm doing by comparison is existing, which is sin enough in the eyes of some. Overall, quite a frustrating situation to be stuck in, and something I'd like to avoid. Internet attitudes that assign blame over fictotype associations just don't jive with me and never have.

It's a bit of head scratcher, to say the least. I honestly might just try to take a middle position and occasionally utilize the terminology to better find the resources I want, without publicly aligning myself in any sort of fashion that could have consequences foreseen or otherwise.

But even with that said, the idea of “canon” itself in how it’s viewed by others as a wider concept is a bit puzzling to me. Is there a way my universe was “supposed” to be or “meant” to be? Is there some sort of mold that I would be or am expected to fit into, because of how the Wizarding World functions in games and books?

I suppose there’s a major benefit in the fact that I can find no trace of my life in fictional literature, Wizarding World-related or otherwise. As I’m not even a side character, much less a main character, there’s no preconceived notions about who I should be, or how I should act, outside perhaps the thinnest of connections to Salazar Slytherin’s basilisk by virtue of species. And even then, the basilisk who was imprinted on Salazar Slytherin is not an individual we ever seen speak: they are more comparable to a tool than an actual character within the novels and movies, which is, admittedly, accurate for how humans historically have treated basilisks within my world as well. Still, I find it odd and off-putting that people might judge me before even meeting me, based purely on what they know about a world I might hypothetically be from.

It bothers me quite a bit when I see fictionkin and fictives attacked for things they’re supposedly responsible for, by virtue of being part of a specific world or by existing within a particular canon. Not only because I think it’s frankly an immoral thing to do, but because I also feel like it reduces and misunderstands that each individual’s relationship to the world or universe they hail from is going to be multifaceted and unique. The opinions, feelings, and actions they have and connect *now* to their former (or parallel, or psychological, or etc.) home may not line up in any way with what non-fictionkin/fictives expect or assume. Somehow it seems like people cross the lines of “endorsement of” with “have an involuntary relationship with or connection to.”

For me, I interact largely with perspectives and memories of my home by creating fictional textbooks, memoirs, and similar in connection to and inspired by it, both to honor it and to reclaim the part of my life lived there. But that’s not how my systemmate Stormy (“Page”), who is a Mass Effect character interacts with the Mass Effect world and her memories, nor how my systemmate Noel interacts with her possible Temeraire-adjacent home and memories, which I feel just further illustrates the point I’m driving home here about the complexities of where one person might see themselves in relation to their canon or canon-divergence. It gets even more complex in

cases like Noel and I's, where the worlds are suspiciously similar but due to factors of existing in wholly different time periods and regions than what is described within the canon, it's impossible to know if they really are *our* canon. But if we lay any sort of claim or connection, even on the caveat that this is not based off absolute knowledge and is instead merely due to similarities and the usefulness of doing so within public spheres, we're liable to get completely misunderstood and misinterpreted.

It's an aggravating situation to be in, and not one I'm entirely sure of how to tackle outside of just jumping right in and navigating to the best of my ability, changing things as needed or useful or relevant. Despite everything, it'd be so nice just to have somewhere to belong to, even if I don't perfectly fit the mesh. It'd be so incredible to meet others like me. And I think that's worth the risk.