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### **Discussion of Addison Cain's *Alpha's Claim*, and Zoey Ellis's *Myth of Omega***

The two series in question encompass three books each. Addison Cain's *Alpha's Claim* (AC) trilogy features *Born to be Bound*, *Born to Be Broken*, and *Reborn* (Blushings Books 2016). Zoey Ellis's *Myth of Omega* (MoO) features *Crave to Conquer*, *Crave to Capture*, and *Crave to Claim* (Createspace 2018). On the reader-driven social networking book review site GoodReads.com, both series are tagged by readers under Fantasy, Paranormal, Dark, Romance, Adult Fiction, Erotica, and Omegaverse. On Amazon.com's Kindle Store, both *Born to Be Broken* and *Crave to Conquer* appear on the first page of a search for "omegaverse." In the paratextual material, both series are described as dark, sexually explicit omegaverses, only differing slightly in their emphasis on complete power exchange (in Cain's case) and traditional romance (in Ellis's):

... Addison Cain's exciting, raw, and suspense-filled Omegaverse series is a dark tale with explicit sexual themes and complete power exchange. Though situations may be interpreted as romantic, this is a... not a standard romance. [Alpha's Claim]

Myth of Omega serial [is] a dark, erotic, Omegaverse romance. ... [It] is an explicit reading experience from sexual scenes to violence and language. Includes disturbing situations and romance of a dark nature. [Myth of Omega]

Any question as to how closely the two series resemble one another in terms of plot, setting, characterization, and diction must be understood within the contexts of the specific genres and tropes in which these books position themselves and are positioned by their readers. Counsel asked me to read the six books in question and situate them within the genre categories and accompanying tropes of (Dark) Romance and Omegaverse in particular. Genre theory is a theoretical approach that looks at the creation and use of genre in terms of production, dissemination, and reception as well as an interpretive tool. Tropes are used here not in the meaning of rhetorical figures of speech but rather as a recurrent theme and conceptual narrative shorthand that often function as a subgenre.

## MY BACKGROUND

I have a Ph.D. in English from Tulane University (2002) and have been teaching various forms of literature, literary analysis, literary theory, and gender studies at the university level for nearly 25 years. I currently teach in the Department of Philosophy and the Department of Gender Studies at the University of South Alabama. My primary research focus for more than 15 years has been fan fiction and fan communities. Most generally, fan fiction is the fictional extrapolation of an established universe. Such a broad definition would include many literary texts from Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which he takes a minor character from the *Illiad* and *Odyssey* and fashions him into the hero of his own epic to Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966), in which the comic relief from Shakespeare's Hamlet get to have their own adventures. More conventionally, fan fiction tends to describe not any derivative work but instead the amateur works of fans of commercially owned intellectual properties, in particular genre TV shows such as science fiction and police procedurals. Often its history is seen to start in the late 1960s with the first narrative responses to *Star Trek: The Original Series* in self-published and distributed fan zines. The rise of the Internet, facilitated fan communication and fan fiction dissemination, and by now fans can easily access and share fan stories in a variety of online forums and archives.

I have published more than 20 essays on the topic in peer-reviewed journals and essay collections. I am co-editor of three essay collections on fan fiction and author of one monograph that connects literary and social aspects of fan fiction.<sup>1</sup> I am founding editor of *Transformative Works and Cultures* (2008–), the first international peer-reviewed fan studies journal and have been primary reader on all submissions for the past decade. In 2013 I wrote the first academic discussion on the trope of omegaverse fan fiction.<sup>2</sup> In it I studied the various tropes and influences that led to the rise of literary subgenre that had recently become popular in a variety of fandoms called Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamic, A/B/O, or omegaverse. My current interest continues to be the historical development of fan fiction genres and tropes with a particular focus on influences between different fandoms and on tropes that seem to arise from fannish conventions and not outside cultural influences. I am co-authoring a book that has chapters on mind and soul bonds, on BDSM societies, and on Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics, all of which are widely shared popular tropes within fan fiction communities on and offline.

## GENRE AND TROPES

Reading the two trilogies within this context, it is obvious that both follow a number of characteristics that have become popularized under the shorthand omegaverse. In fact, though

1 Kristina Busse. 2017. *Framing Fan Fiction: Literary and Social Practices in Fan Fiction Communities*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, ed. 2014. *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. Louisa Ellen Stein and Kristina Busse, ed. 2012. *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland. Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, ed. 2006. *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland.

2 Kristina Busse. 2013. "Pon Farr, Mpreg, Bonds, and the Rise of the Omegaverse." In Anne Jamison, ed., *Fic: Why Fanfiction is Taking over the World*, 288–94. Dallas, TX: BenBella.

neither of the authors articulates a direct dialogue with fan fiction communities, the similarities suggest that they are familiar with fannish incarnations of the omegaverse or any of the widely published summaries and theoretical pieces that describe and explain the genre. The omegaverse genre was coined as (and now defines) a shorthand among readers and writers to describe a shared understandings of a group of associated tropes.

Genres and tropes are literary categories that often follow the “I know it when I see it” model. While structuralist critics have long tried to create a taxonomy of literary, film, and TV genres where genre boundaries are clearly delineated,<sup>3</sup> most current genre theorists discount such attempts.<sup>4</sup> In its stead, they view genre categories as “constituted by cultural discursive practices of definition, interpretation, and evaluation”;<sup>5</sup> in other words, authors and readers/viewers collaborate within a given cultural context in the ever-changing and ever-evolving process of defining genres and labelling texts. While this is true for any medium and genre, it is particularly apparent within fan fiction, where writers and readers occupy the same online spaces and where many fan-created norms actively invite genre and trope labelling.

The fan-created and fan-run central fan fiction archive, Archive of Our Own (AO3), for example, has a complex tagging system of shared metatextual markers. These tags illustrate how communities define their own taxonomies to advertise stories as well as warn for certain contents. What is important to note here is that tags indeed function (maybe even primarily) as advertisement, i.e., the existence of the tags Romance, Sexual Content, or Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics on the AO3 allows readers to filter stories so they will only see those tagged.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, it is important to note that fan fiction readers (and, I’d argue, genre readers in general, including romance readers) search actively for generic tropes in their reading. Many of the most read and commented stories seem to be highly generic and quite predictable with that familiarity being their primary appeal.<sup>7</sup> In other words, they are popular and beloved not in spite but because of their narrative predictability.

3 See Rick Altman. 1999. *Film/Genre*. British Film Institute. London: BFI Press. John Cawelti. 1976. *Adventure, Mystery and Romance. Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Tzvetan Todorov. 1975. *The Fantastic. A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Vladimir Propp. 1968. *The Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

4 See Jason Mittell. 2004. *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*. New York: Routledge. Louisa Stein. 2006. “Fantastic Teen TV: Transgenericism, Television, and Online Reception.” PhD diss., New York University.

5 Louisa Ellen Stein. 2008. “‘Emotions-Only’ versus ‘Special People’: Genre in Fan Discourse.” *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 1. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2008.0043>.

6 “Tags.” *Archive of Our Own*. <https://archiveofourown.org/tags>.

7 See Louisa Stein and Kristina Busse. 2009. “Limit Play: Fan Authorship between Source Text, Intertext, and Context.” *Popular Communication* 7.4: 192–207. Kristina Busse. 2017. “Fan Fiction Tropes as Literary and Cultural Practices.” In Sebastian Böck, Julian Ingelmann, Kai Matuszkiewicz, and Friederike Schruhl, ed., *Lesen X.0: Rezeptionsprozesse in der digitalen Gegenwart*, 127–43. Göttingen, Germany: V&R unipress.

These observations on reading patterns and tag searching patterns are important, not only because fan fiction has been the origin of the concept, term, and generic trope of Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics (A/B/O) and omegaverse, but also because there exist huge similarities between fan fiction and romance readers.<sup>8</sup> Whereas most literary theory dismisses genre fiction because of its formulaic plots, limited range of characters, and lack of originality, it is these very aspects of the familiar without unpleasant surprises that appeal to many genre readers. In an early study of romance readers, for example, Janice Radway describes their implicit understanding of genre rules: readers “exhibit fairly rigid expectations about what is permissible [...] and express disappointment and outrage when those convention sare violated.”<sup>9</sup>

The existence of the industry standard abbreviations for the ending of books with Happily Ever After (HEA) and Happy For Now (HFN) indicate that romance readers actively want information on the ending of the book and often reject books that do not fulfill their clear expectations. This is true not only for endings but also for many other aspects of the novels, including plot arcs themselves. Publishers divide their offerings into ever narrower categories and expect authors to follow very specific guidelines when submitting new books.<sup>10</sup> For readers, knowing the exact genre categories and potential tropes involved is a good indicator as to whether a book may fulfill their expectations and, as a result, whether they may enjoy the book.

#### OMEGAVVERSE

Omegaverse (or A/B/O or Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics, as its slightly broader category is called) is less a well defined genre as it is a collection of related tropes that tend to correlate in many stories. Alpha/Beta/Omega defines stories in which humans are not only categorized by gender but also by a second dynamic, namely whether they present as alphas (dominant, physically large, quick-tempered, natural leader) or omegas (submissive, delicate, calm, peace maker), with an undetermined number of humans being default betas. Kristina Busse describes omegaverse as a “perfect storm” of a number of popular fan fiction (and romance) tropes,<sup>11</sup>

8 See Katherine Morrissey 2008. “Fanning the Flames of Romance: An Exploration of Fan Fiction and the Romance Novel.” M.A. Thesis, Georgetown University.

9 Janet Radway. 1984. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 63. See also Tania Modleski. 1982. *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women*. London: Routledge. Ramsdell, Kristin. 1999. *Romance Fiction: A Guide to the Genre*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited. Pamela Regis. 2003. *A Natural History of the Novel*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Katherine Morrissey. 2016. “Romance Networks: Aspiration and Desire in Today’s Digital Culture.” Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

10 For a discussion on “the romance industry’s own discussion of what constitutes a successful romance novel,” see An Goris. 2012. “Loving by the Book: Voice and Romance Authorship.” In Sarah S. G. Frantz and Eric Murphy Selinger, ed., *New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction*, 77–83. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland. For a discussion of the industrial impact of digital publishing on erotic romance, see Katherine E. Morrissey. 2015. “Steamy, Spicy, Sensual: Tracing the Cycles of Erotic Romance.” In Kristen Phillips, ed., *Women and Erotic Fiction: Critical Essays on Genres, Markets, and Readers*, 42–58. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland.

11 Busse 2013, 293. *Supra*.

including shifters (especially werewolves), soulmates, breeding and hypersexuality, empathic or telepathic bonds, and biologically deterministic hierarchical societies.

Fan author Nora Bombay begins her “Alphas, Betas, Omegas: A Primer” with the disclaimer that “omegaverses ... are a shared idea, interpreted differently by each author.”<sup>12</sup> As a term of folksonomy (rather than taxonomy), it is collectively created and used by fans, who are at liberty to include or exclude any aspect they like. However, in order to be recognized as an omegaverse, at least some of a vast number of potential characteristics need to be present. These include

- \* omega heat cycles and alpha rut  
(a biologic necessity to procreate taken directly from animals)
- \* scenting  
(pheromones are excessive for alphas and omegas often displaying their moods but are excessive during heat where they can often heat can smell their prospective partner)
- \* imprinting  
(mythology within omegaverses often assumes that there are true alpha/omega mate pairings, a perfect love match, and the alpha often imprints on his mate)
- \* claiming bite  
(Often assert their dominance the alpha bites the omega during intercourse)
- \* mate bonding  
(a permanent bond between the partners, often as a result of imprinting and claiming bite)
- \* knotting  
(a swelling at the base of the penis found in canines after ejaculation that forces the penis to stay inside to ensure impregnation, for alphas it tends to enlarge their already supersized penis)
- \* mpreg  
(male pregnancy in which omega may have altered sexual organs allowing him to become impregnated by an alpha)

In addition there are commonly used terms and ideas, such as nesting, the need to prepare a place for heat and conception), heat suppressants (often used to hide one’s omega status or simply to not have to deal with heats), and omega sanctuaries (a place where omegas may experience their heat without the intrusion of alphas). It is important that not every story must use all the characteristics so that two stories tagged as A/B/O Dynamics may share little in common. One A/B/O story may be a short pornographic account of a male omega, whose suppressants fail him, whereupon he going into heat, releasing pheromones and becoming senseless. A male alpha scents the omega, is driven wild and goes into rut, knotting and impregnating the omega. Another story might feature a world in which omegas are cherished and their first heat cycle

12 Nora Bombay. 2013–15. “Alphas, Betas, Omegas: A Primer.” *Archive of Our Own*.  
<https://archiveofourown.org/works/403644>.

outside of the sanctuary is a coming of age. At a choosing ceremony the alpha imprints, takes the omega to nest, then he mates, knots, claims by bite, and soul bonds.

By most accounts created as a specific trope in 2010/11 and named in late 2011, A/B/O started in an anonymous fan fiction community for the TV show *Supernatural* and quickly became popular enough to become a named and recognizable trope.<sup>13</sup> Within two years, the trope had spread to dozens of other fandoms and grown to a substantially sized trope.<sup>14</sup> On the multi-fandom archive *Archive of Our Own*, for example, by 2013 about 2,000 stories were tagged Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamic (though that number dwarves when compared to the more than 40,000 works tagged 5 years later).<sup>15</sup> Fan statistician Destinationtoast, who gathered Omegaverse statistics for *Archive of Our Own* in 2013, shows that about 10% of these are labelled male/female, and netweight's 2013 omegaverse time line lists a June 13, 2011 story as the first male/female story that followed clear omegaverse tropes and terminology.<sup>16</sup> *Archive of our Own* hosts several longer omegaverse stories with alpha males and omega female 2012,<sup>17</sup> and several novel-lengths stories by 2014.<sup>18</sup> In fact, 2014 mainstream feminist blogging site *Jezebel* already features an article explaining omegaverse to its readers.<sup>19</sup>

The quick dissemination of omegaverse across most popular fan fiction fandoms helped spread the popularity of omegaverse to male/male commercial romances (often written by fan fiction authors). Meanwhile, some established male/female commercial romance tropes grew in popularity in the 2000s included that of the shifter (often werewolves, such as Patricia Briggs' Alpha and Omega Series [2007–15]) and that of the hypermasculine Alpha hero, which romance writer Doreen Owens Malek describes as a "strong, dominant, aggressive male brought to the point of surrender by a woman."<sup>20</sup>

13 See "Alpha/Beta/Omega." 2012–. Wiki Entry. *Fanlore*. <https://fanlore.org/wiki/Alpha/Beta/Omega>. Netweight. 2013. "The nonnies made them do it!" *Archive of Our Own*. <https://archiveofourown.org/works/1022303>.

14 Destinationtoast. 2013. "It's Time for Fandom Stats: Omegaverse edition in." Blog entry. *Tumblr*. <http://destinationtoast.tumblr.com/post/59371807212/its-time-for-fandom-stats-omegaverse-edition-in>.

15 See *Archive of Our Own*. [https://archiveofourown.org/tags/Alpha\\*s\\*Beta\\*s\\*Omega%20Dynamics/works](https://archiveofourown.org/tags/Alpha*s*Beta*s*Omega%20Dynamics/works).

16 Tebtosca. 2012. "Just Keep Breathing With Me." *Livejournal*. <https://tebtosca.livejournal.com/20794.html>.

17 Tristesses. 2012. "All Reason Aside, I Just Can't Deny." *Archive of Our Own*. <https://archiveofourown.org/works/583600>. Hotchoco195. 2013. "Strangers and Soulmates." *Archive of Our Own*. <https://archiveofourown.org/works/605274>.

18 Rector. 2014. The Encounter Series. *Archive of Our Own*. <https://archiveofourown.org/series/106793>. KristinStone. 2015–. Living and Breathing in Flint Series. *Archive of Our Own*. <https://archiveofourown.org/series/618040>.

19 Mark Shrayber. "'Knotting' Is the Weird Fanfic Sex Trend That Cannot Be Unseen." *Jezebel*. June 18. <https://jezebel.com/knotting-is-the-weird-fanfic-sex-trend-that-cannot-be-u-1606931767>.

20 Doreen Owens Malek. 1992. "Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know: The Hero as Challenge." In Jayne Ann Krentz, ed. *Dangerous Men and Adventurous Women: Romance Writers on the Appeal of the Romance*. University of Pennsylvania Press. 74.

## COMPARISON BETWEEN THE TWO SERIES

In order to compare the two series and to respond to the allegation of plagiarism or in the context of plagiarism, it is important to find similarities above and beyond the characteristics mandated by genre. As **Male/Female Fantasy Omegaverse Dark Romance** stories, both contain a large number of similarities that are already determined by their various genre categories. In fact, the similarities found between the two series lie exhaustively in their generic similarities.

### I. Setting

As fantasy novels, both novels are expected to feature elements beyond our contemporary worlds, though the particular setting of the two series is quite different. As omegaverses the societies of AC and MoO both are structured as hierarchical cultures, in which omegas are rare and segregated (justified as protection). This is a fairly common setup for omegaverses, which authors often use to explore intrinsic gender imbalances.<sup>21</sup>

The fantasy world in AC follows the trope of a futuristic dystopia, in which the society lives in domes on an unspecified Earth after a cataclysmic event and, on top of that, deals with the aftermath of a biological plague. The novel is set in one of the domes shortly after the successful prisoner revolution spearheaded by the main alpha protagonist. Omegas are common in this world, but the recent social upheavals have created chaos ripe for abuse and exploitation of the physically weaker.

MoO is set in an undetermined fantasy setting inhabited by warring aristocratic factions. Omegas are a myth in this world and haven't been seen by the public in more than a century. After having conquered large parts of the known world, the alpha main protagonist is looking to solve the omega mystery. Magic (called "Talent") is known in the world though feared and forbidden by the alpha hero.

### II. Characters

As marketed romance novels, both series are expected to feature a main heterosexual pairing. omegaverse. Both alpha male anti-heroes command over a military structure of alphas, ruling over a dystopian futurist rebellion of prisoners in AC and an expansionist quasi-medieval society in MoO.

In both series, the omega women use suppressants/blocks to hide their pheromones. In AC the omega uses chemicals and dresses in smelly clothes in order to approach the alpha male to ask him for food for her fellow omegas in hiding after the rebellion. In MoO the omega blocks sensory responses on both sides via magic in order to access the library that houses information

21 Elliot Aaron Director. 2017. "Something Queer in his Make-Up: Genderbending, Omegaverses, and Fandom's Discontents." Ph.D. Thesis, Bowling Green State University. Marianne Gunderson. 2017. "Rewriting Sex and Gender in Omegaverse Fanfiction." M.A. Thesis, University of Oslo, Blindern, Norway. Milena Popova. 2018. "Dogfuck Rapeworld: Omegaverse Fanfiction as a Critical Tool in Analyzing the Impact of Social Power Structures on Intimate Relationships and Sexual Consent." *Porn Studies* 5(2): 175–91.

on the disappearance of omegas for the past century. These precautions fail as they often do in omega stories to get the plot going, and the alpha protagonists scent them and realize they are in heat and remove them from the other alphas. (In AC the hero has to fight and kill a number of competitors whereas in MoO the status of the alpha hero allows him to segregate her from the rest of the castle.)

Both alphas eventually claim the omegas by force and knot them; both omegas fight both the alphas and their own biological desires; in both stories the omegas nest and the alphas purr. All of these tropes are tropes that often and repeatedly occur in omegaverse stories. And yet the time lines are quite different as are the specific encounters. Whereas the biological imperatives attributed to both alphas and omegas is fairly common for omegaverse fiction, it is the specific implementations that distinguishes one story from another.

In AC, the first, quite violent encounter occurs within the first chapter, followed by a prolonged imprisonment of the omega during which she nests. The alpha claims the omega by biting her, and establishing the bond forcibly. Thereafter, the omega describes repeatedly the psychological pull of that bond. In contrast, MoO follows more traditional romance tropes by letting the central pair spar verbally for several chapters. Once the omega's blocks fail and the alpha removes her, she creates a magical barrier and waits out her heat. Only toward the end of her heat (called Haze in the series) do the barriers fail and the alpha claims and knots her. While MoO's central alpha/omega pairing will eventually bond and procreate, it is a decision that is much delayed.

Both alphas are exceptionally possessive of their omegas and hostile to other alphas, which is a common feature in omegaverse fiction. Both are morally ambiguous as Dark Romance heroes, and only slowly are revealed as more emotionally appealing characters to readers and the heroines. In AC a lot of the alpha's behavior is explained by his past. In contrast, MoO's alpha hero is mostly conflicted by the competing drives of his warrior and his alpha instincts that he does not understand. Unlike AC, MoO switches points of view every chapter, so that the reader is more aware of the alpha's feelings and reasoning. AC, on the other hand, places the reader at first fully in the position of the omega female, trying to decipher the alpha's actions.

A more important distinction between the two trilogies, however, is the dynamic between the central pairing. While both couples start out hostile and eventually give in emotionally to their biological connection, AC has a much steadier development toward that goal with both characters slowly and repeatedly reconsidering their positions. MoO's central characters, on the other hand, truly hate one another for the majority of the novels as their political struggles often have to take precedence over their relationship. Likewise, the emotional obstacles function differently in both texts with AC's complication of the alpha's original love who continues to boycott the pair's potential love.

### **III. Plot**

Both series are trilogies featuring one central pairing, so it can be expected that there are a number of obstacles before they get together and both admit their love for one another. While



most novels require some form of complication to develop a plot, not all romance fiction finds that complication within the love story itself. The obstacle could be external (shipwreck, going bankrupt, war,...) with the central love pairing strangers or already friends. However, the enemy-to-lovers trope is one of the more popular ones in romance fiction, allowing for an internal narrative thrust in which both need to overcome their resentments and discover their similarities and love for one another. Whether Beatrice & Benedick in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, Elizabeth Bennett & Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, Scarlett O'Hara & Rhett Butler in *Gone With the Wind* or *The Shop Around the Corner* (1940)/*You've Got Mail* (1998).

As dark romance, both novels clearly share a dynamic in which the central pairing begins with a contentious if not hostile relationship. Moreover, the dark romance trope also already posits the main male character as an anti-hero, often powerful and outlaw but usually with a sense of inner moral compass, which the heroine will ultimately recognize and which will lead to her accepting her feelings for him. AC and MoO share a variety of scenarios that are fairly common in omegaverse stories. Given that emotional attachment and physical attraction are often not in sync, many scenes in omegaverse fiction will explore the omega (but sometimes also the alpha) battling nature versus nature, mind versus body. Ultimately, however, the biological imperative of mating and bonding will win out, a central aspect of the omegaverse trope. Beyond that internal obstacle of trying to come to terms with the facts of their meant-to-be-ness, their true mate-ness, there are external obstacles of the post-revolution (AC) and warring kingdoms (MoO) settings, respectively. Like much romance, these battles, injuries, misunderstandings, escapes, kidnappings, ultimately serve to impede the true goal of the novels, namely the acceptance of both mates that they are meant to be together and their eventual happily ever after.

Several typical omegaverse plot points occur in both trilogies, but the different setting and, even more so, the extremely different pacing make the two novels quite distinct reading experiences. More importantly, the plot against which the alpha/omega reconciliation plays out differs substantially in small and large aspects. For example, in AC the main omega fights an often lonely battle against the alpha's army and the series ends with the alpha in a standoff with the government he had initially overthrown. MoO's central plot has the alpha fighting against another kingdom and then against a long-term omega conspiracy that has deceived everyone in an attempt to protect omegas. The series ends with the happy couple about to become parents again and overseeing their kingdom.

Finally, Cain's series puts a strong emphasis on nonconsensuality and power exchange, which tilts the overall tone: sexual encounters (often not quite consensual) are extensive and frequent in AC. (Also, they are not always tempered by the alpha's regret as in MoO, where the point of view shifts allow us to see the assailant's immediate regret). The role of the bond is different as well: where AC focuses a lot on the animalistic and physical nature of the bond (such as the fact of the omega feeling the alpha in her mind after he bonds her against her will), MoO uses an interpretation of the soul bond that balances physicality with emotion and must be bilateral to function properly. There is also less focus on monogamous exclusivity in AC, where the alpha male has sex with another woman in front of his omega. Finally, AC focuses heavily on its dark

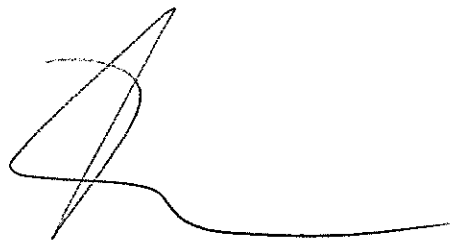
genre aspects: the omega loses her child towards the end of the series and a potential happy ending is delayed beyond the third book.

#### CONCLUSION

Clearly, any similarities between AC and MoO in terms of setting, characterization, and plot must be understood within the contexts of the specific genres and tropes in which these books position themselves and are positioned by their readers. When choosing a book to read, readers are guided by paratextual material, reviews, and genre tags and the tropes associated with them. These together establish a reader/writer contract that allows the reader to anticipate various aspects of the book in broad outlines, an aspect that is of vital importance for genre readers. Rather than wanting to be surprised, genre readers want to know in broad strokes what will happen in a novel and return to a familiar author, named series, or labelled genre for the explicit purpose to read what they signed up (and paid) to read. In order to establish and control those expectations, however, authors, publishers, book sellers, reviewers, and readers collaborate in creating genre categories and generic tropes to have a clearly shared vocabulary. And if an experienced reader decides to read a Male/Female Fantasy Omegaverse Dark Romance, they should expect something quite like Addison Cain's *Alpha's Claim* or Zoey Ellis's *Myth of Omega*. Because both series play out the very tropes a dark omegaverse romance should contain. After having read hundreds of Alpha/Beta/Omega stories and thousands of stories that employ a subset of of omegaverse's myriad tropes, both series satisfyingly fulfilled my expectations set as they were by their genre tags and metatextual description and summaries.

Sincerely,

Kristina Busse

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Kristina Busse', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.