

# THE BULL



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Edition 23, Week 10 Semester 2.6 – 12 September 2008. [www.usuonline.com](http://www.usuonline.com)

## QUIRKS & QUIBBLES

Fanfiction :: Etiquette Hell  
Celebrity Baby Names  
Sound of Slurping

PLUS State of the Union,  
Campus News, Reviews,  
What's On & More!

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The information contained within this edition of *The Bull* was correct at the time of printing.

Many of the images used in *The Bull* have been sourced from [www.sxc.hu](http://www.sxc.hu)

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 **The USU likes this Planet.**  
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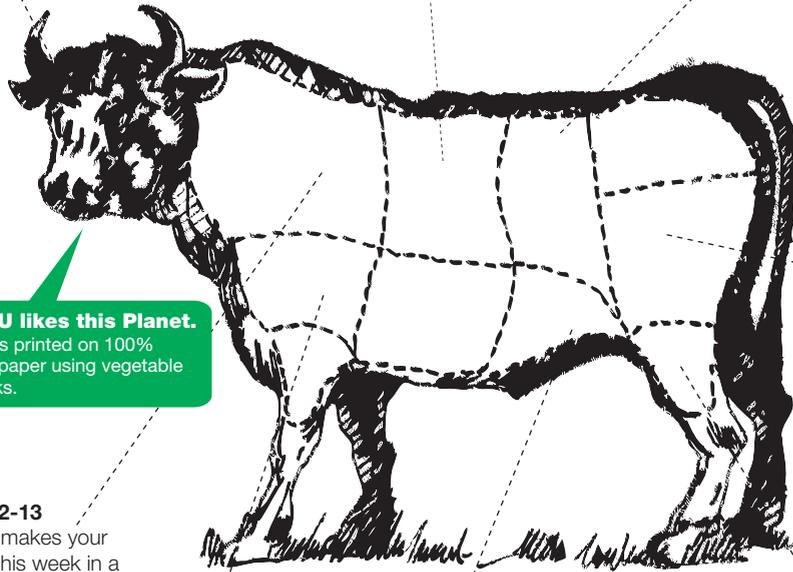
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Alexandra Roach enjoys a bit of fanfiction, minus the multitude of copyright quibbles surrounding the genre.



PRESENT THE



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# COPYRIGHT QUIBBLES

Alexandra Roach supports the rights of fanfiction writers

Fifteen years ago, personal computers were a relatively rare household item. Expensive, cumbersome and possessing less memory, power and computational ability than today's digital wristwatches, computers did not seem like the kind of machines that would one day be present in almost every school, workplace and home in the Western world, let alone alter the entire landscape of copyright law.

Before YouTube caused so much irritation, arguments about the conflict between creative freedom and profits, raged. Copyright holders alienated the fans of various television programs, movies, and books, by dragging them into court over petty copyright quibbles relating to fan-made works derived from copyrighted properties.

I'm sure that almost anyone reading this can either remember, or has heard about, the downfall of Napster; the first peer-to-peer file-sharing program. Napster had the music industry – and, later as technology advanced, the film industry – furious over large-scale copyright violations. While suing Napster was an understandable move by profit-seeking record companies, it was also a stupid one: when Napster was first sued in December 1999, it did nothing but increase awareness of Napster's existence. People who had never heard of Napster flocked to download the program.

But the copyright quibbles I am referring to do not relate to a copyright violation, such as Napster's free music downloads. Nor does it relate to the sharing of copyrighted video, as often happens on YouTube. The quibbles I refer to are not about works that openly violate a copyrighted text by plagiarising it and then selling it for a profit. These copyright quibbles refer to profitless written expressions of a fan's adoration.

'Fanfiction', as defined by urbandictionary.com, is "a piece of fiction within a fandom utilising characters and situations from a pre-existing work. Pre-internet, fanfiction existed in the public sphere only in fan-printed zines. With the rise of the internet, came the rise of internet fanfiction archives, which left lawyers rubbing their hands together in glee as the copyright holders of such 'intellectual' properties as Harry Potter and The Vampire Chronicles, jumped up and down in indignation.



According to American copyright law, copyright holders have the right to control the publication of works derived from or based upon their intellectual properties, but do not receive legal ownership of such works. A few minor legal quibbles had occurred on a small scale in the early days of fanfiction, and some Cease and Desist orders were bandied about by anti-fanfiction copyright holders such as Vampire Chronicles author Anne Rice. But it was not until major fanfiction websites appeared, and everyone with access to an internet connection could access these stories that the real legal squabbles began.

These copyright quibbles refer to profitless written expressions of a fan's adoration.

In 1998, FanFiction.net was launched. It provided new freedom for fans wishing to express themselves, and their love for fandom. It also created a headache for copyright holders. But unlike YouTube and Napster, FanFiction.net is not used for the illegal posting and sharing of videos or other copyrighted material: fanfiction sits in a legally acknowledged 'grey area' between copyright infringement, and the 'fair use' rights of the public.

In 1999, the scent of hype and money surrounding the Harry Potter book series was thick in the air, and film studio Warner Bros. paid author J.K. Rowling £1 million for the film rights. While that may seem like a paltry amount considering the fact that the five Potter films released to date have earned Warner Bros. \$4.5 billion at the box office, at the time of the sale, it was a wise move for Rowling.

But there was a problem.

Some of the very fans who were sure to make such these films a success were writing Potter fanfiction. That left the studio heads at Warner Bros. extremely uncomfortable. While Rowling herself finds Potter fanfiction "flattering", Warner Bros. threatened serious lawsuits after they discovered that much of the Potter fanfiction on the internet contained adult themes such as drug use and sexuality. A vast number of Potter fanfictions are 'slash': where the homoerotic subtext perceived by the fanfiction writer in the source text, becomes the context for their comments. Warner Bros. were not pleased that a young fan might go searching for a Potter website, and end up reading a fanfiction about Harry and Draco's Wacky Wizard Wedding, or Ron's experimentation with drugs after Neville Longbottom turns him down to have a threesome with Snape and Hermione instead.

It could be argued that it is this 'slash' sector of fan culture which really offends copyright holders such as Anne Rice, who objects to her characters Lestat and Louis being portrayed as a couple. According to Rice, fanfiction "rapes" her characters, but anyone who has read her work, Queen of the Damned, can say that if anyone 'raped' Lestat and Louis, it is Rice herself. When one considers that Louis and Lestat spend most of Interview with the Vampire sharing coffins and blood, and there is a scene in the Rice-approved film adaptation of Interview, wherein Tom Cruise's Lestat slobbers all over the neck of Brad Pitt's Louis while they spin around in mid-air, Rice's actions seem hypocritical and nonsensical.

While Anne Rice gripes about her 'masterpieces' being "violated", she suffers serious downturns in sales (because of both her actions towards her fans, and the declining quality of her writing). If one fanfiction site is ordered to close, the authors merely pick up their wares and post it elsewhere on the ever-expanding, unstoppable entity that is the internet, taking their creativity with them.

If anyone can learn anything from Anne Rice, it is this: be nice to your fanfiction-writing fans. They're the ones who keep you in business, and the concepts of creative independence and free speech alive.

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## The Bull watched WALL•E

Directed by: Andrew Stanton

In 2815 A.D. humanity vacates their rubbish-strewn world, leaving an army of trash-compacting robots called WALL•Es (acronymous for Waste Allocation Load Lifter Earth-Class) to clean up their mess while they go on a five-year pleasure cruise in space. Centuries later, humans have not returned, the planet is still a mess, and WALL•E and his cockroach friend appear to be the only signs of life. The last of his kind, WALL•E has developed a propensity for collecting knick-knacks, and a consciousness that borders on sentience.

WALL•E watches a video cassette of *Hello, Dolly!* over and over, fascinated by the colourful images of humans dancing and singing. With only a cockroach for company, WALL•E is lonely, and longs to be loved. The perfect Disney protagonist, WALL•E is cute, curious and likable. Like Bambi, Simba and E.T., WALL•E is alone in the world, and his isolation is heart-breaking.

But when a mysterious spaceship lands on Earth, WALL•E's loneliness comes to an end: aboard the ship is EVE (an Extraterrestrial Vegetation Evaluator robot). EVE is sleek and sophisticated where WALL•E is boxy and utilitarian, and he is immediately in love, only too happy to show her his treasures and protect her from the elements. Though WALL•E and EVE say few words, their love story is sweetly enchanting, their body language and chorus of emotive beeps more effective than pages of dialogue.

When EVE's ship returns, WALL•E cannot bear to be separated from her, and unwittingly finds himself aboard the space cruiser humans first boarded seven hundred years before. Fat, lazy and suffering from a learned helplessness, humankind needs the charming, loveable WALL•E – the creation of their wasteful ancestors – to remind them of their own humanity.

Beautifully animated, *WALL•E* is a welcome return to classic Disney films like *Beauty and the Beast* that didn't rely on marketing gimmicks such as celebrity voices to sell the picture. While a cynic might consider *WALL•E* emotionally manipulative –



how can you *not* feel sorry for lonely little WALL•E who wants nothing more than to hold someone's hand? – the film is genuinely touching without being overly sentimental.

While the film has been criticised by some as blatant eco-propaganda, I disagree. Hopefully, such a future will not come to pass, but it is a frightening reminder of the possibilities. Suitable for all ages (although adults will arguably appreciate it more than children will), *WALL•E* is a beautiful, poignant little film that will stay with you – and keep you thinking – long after you leave the theatre.



Alexandra Roach

## The Bull watched 21 Directed by Robert Luketic

Gambling fits firmly into the category of things I like but am terrible at (along with pool, basketball, and, you know, life generally).

Loosely based on the nonfiction book *Bringing Down the House* by Ben Mezrich, *21* is designed to appeal to people like me: Ben Campbell (Jim Sturgess) goes on a journey of self-discovery from a bumbling nerd at M.I.T. to a Gucci-clad gambler in the glitz of Vegas, simply by using his mathematic brilliance to count cards.

For the most part, the movie succeeds. But not quite.

This is partly because the movie tends towards tokenistic political correctness—Ben's gang of card-counters is perfectly racially, ethnically and sexually balanced gang – at the expense of

actually developing empathetic characters. Ben is a bit of a blank canvas – the everyday nerd that anyone could identify with, so long as they're also devoid of personality. The two female leads (Kate Bosworth and Liza LaPira) are simply there to fill space, with Bosworth providing the requisite love interest. Micky Rosa (Kevin Spacey) is decent, but this is no where near Spacey's best.

The film did develop some interesting characters, supported by excellent performances - Choi (Aaron Yoo) and Cameron (Sam Golzari) were lovable side-kicks. Both could have used more screen time.

But performances alone don't make or break a movie like this. The success of *Pool Hall Junkies* is testament to that. All *21* really needed was a decent plot. In fairness, the story ticked all the boxes in its conflict-resolution narrative arc. But the details along the way were just a tad too implausible.

The system of mnemonic phrases and silly hand signals employed by the card counting team are all absurdly obvious. The premise of the film - that Ben has some inalienable right to attend Harvard without having his middle-class mother pay a dime - doesn't exactly win hearts or minds. And the overwhelming message that greed corrupts personal morals, is quite trite.

*21* is entertaining enough to warrant a watch, but it's never going to do for blackjack what *Pool Hall Junkies* did for pool sharks.



Daniel Wodak



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