

OMEGA

VERSE!



WELCOME

... to the Omegaverse, we are the Omegafour (Awoooo!) and we want to take you on a journey into the heart of the infamous fanfiction genre.

But what exactly is the Omegaverse? It is a fanfiction genre where humans possess “wolfish traits” (Busse 2013 in Entrikin 2022) and “canine-adjacent anatomy” (Entrikin 19, 2022); they are divided into Alphas, Betas, and Omegas (where Alpha and Omegas take center stage).

Entrikin, Kelsey. “Romancing the Beast: Intersections of Power, Gender and Sexuality in Omegaverse Fanfiction”, 2022, Glasgow

AIBIO DYNAMICS

OMEGAVERSE

I AM
DAS!

HEY I
AM CEAN :3

AND I AM... NOT
REALLY
INVOLVED IN THIS

The roots of the Omegaverse trope lie deeply buried within the Supernatural fandom and its flair for the animalistic (Alpha/Beta/Omega). However, it quickly spread across different fandoms and is now a staple trope on fanfiction websites, and can be found under different hashtags, for example #a/b/o dynamics; #omegaverse

On A03, Omegaverse fanfiction is predominately m-slash (men on men) fanfiction, most of which is tagged as explicit content (destinationtoast) However, as we started our descent into the Omegaverse, we discovered that some of those relationship dynamics appeared to mirror some all too familiar patterns, and began to investigate.

During our research we read 8 different Omegaverse fanfictions (tags a/b/o dynamics on A03, sorted according to Kudos) each from a different fandom, to see if we could observe some similarities between them.

#spoiler! We did!

So we want to take you on a journey through the Omegaverse to shed some light on what the Omegaverse is, how Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics work, and how all of that connects to gender, gendered norms, and consent.

So let's dive in and learn about the Omegaverse.

1

BIOLOGY

2

BEHAVIOR

Biology & Behaviour lay the foundation for our deep dive and analysis of the Gender Representation and Dynamics that encompass the Omegaverse characters...

3

GENDER REPRESENTATION

4

DYNAMICS

And after all that we will wrap it up with a good old trusty:

5

CONCLUSION



BIOLOGY

Generally, all humans in the Omegaverse possess so called scent glands, located at the base of the neck and on the wrists. They release pheromones that are used to identify and entice the other sexes. Alphas can also use their pheromones to dominate and control an Omega.

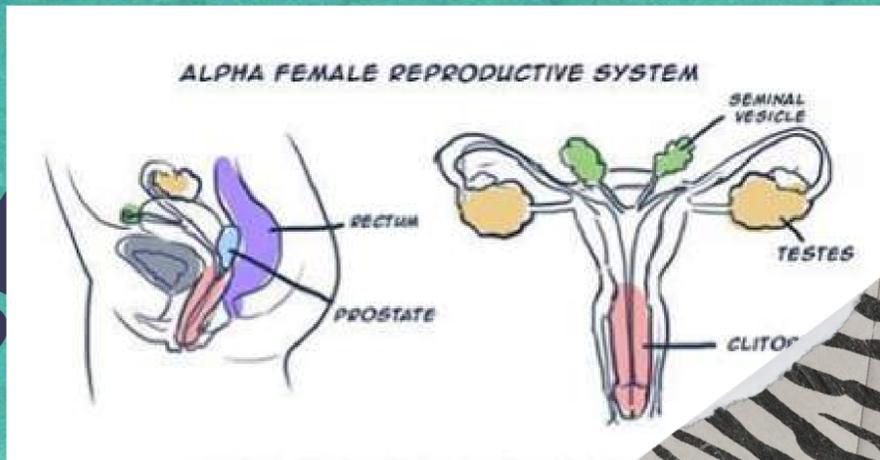
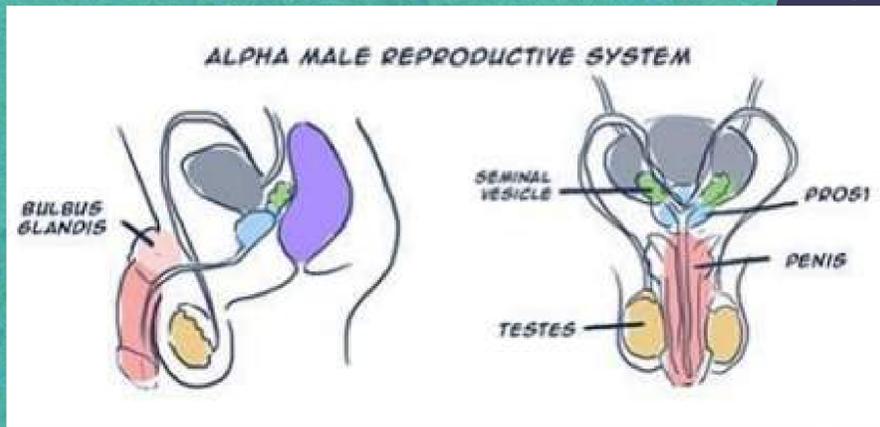


An Alpha's scent is especially enticing to an Omega and vice versa.

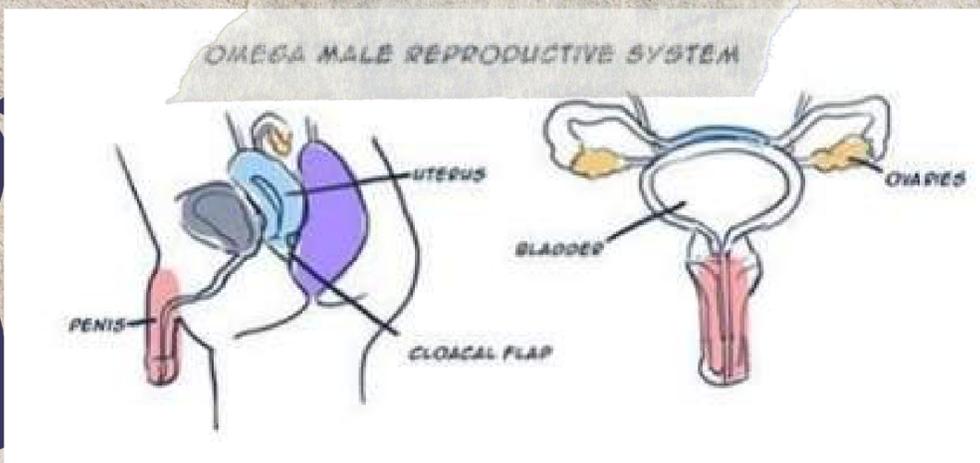
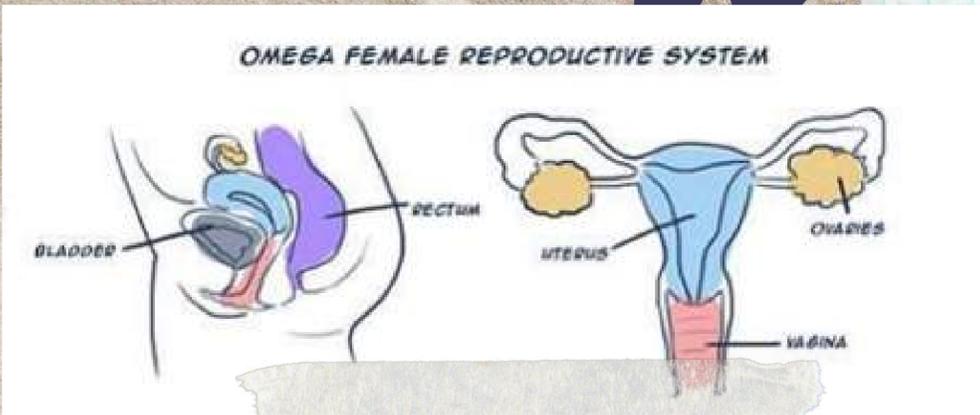


The sexes also produce hormones which make them go into ruts (Alphas) and heats (Omegas). These are special occurrences in an individual's reproductive cycle and will be elaborated on on a later page.

THE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM



- Alphas form knots at the base of their penis when aroused
- This process is called “knotting” and used to satisfy Omegas during their heats and/ or to impregnate
- The characteristics of the secondary sexes can be found in male and female anatomy
 - Alphas can impregnate regardless of primary sex while Omegas can get pregnant regardless of primary sex



HEATS

As mentioned above, Omegas can go into “heats”, which can occur regularly every three months or are induced due to close proximity to an Alpha, and last for several days.



- Omegas become fertile and especially sexually receptive during their heats
- They experience excruciating pain during their cycle, which can only be alleviated through intercourse with an Alpha
- An Omega’s body produces “slick” which makes penetration and knotting easier and less painful



- Heats prime the Omega’s body to be able to carry children
- Once impregnated, heats stop until the Omega has given birth
- So called “Heat Suppressants” can, as the name suggests, also help suppress symptoms or even entirely negate heats in some fanfictions
- The Alpha’s equivalent to a “heat” is called a “rut”.
- During the rut, the Alpha releases more pheromones and displays more aggressive behavior. Contrary to an Omega’s heat, a rut and its effects can be controlled by the Alpha

Behavior

OMEGAS...



Omegas are typically the more submissive of the two sexes especially around Alphas they can be left feeling submissive. They often occupy secondary positions in society. Omegas might need to hide their sex and do so by covering their pheromonal scent with special products. This affords them safety from being spotted by Alphas.

When Omegas approach their heat, they become hormonal and develop domestic tendencies, they begin building nests to spend their heat in. Omegas view their nests as safe spaces, designed for maximum comfort. They will build their nest with materials that carry comforting scents and emotional value.

During heat Omegas experience symptoms like cramps and strong sexual urges; their heat leaves them in a confused and dazed state. For the duration of their heat, they often depend on an Alpha to take care of them.



HELLO

MY NAME IS CEAN
I AM AN OMEGA

"He didn't exactly know why, but when praised, he just got really... omega. Praise made him needy and desperate to please, especially when it was from an alpha. (...) When an alpha did it (...) he just felt submissive"
(MilkTeaMiku)

...ALPHAS...

Alphas on the other hand are usually the dominant sex. They are seen as tough, protective, and often portrayed to be more competitive and assertive. Thus they are often portrayed as natural leaders within Omegaverse society and as the providing, dominant partner in Alpha/Omega relationships. Alphas seek out Omegas due to their scents and their physical attributes.

Alphas experience ruts, which leave them sexually aggressive and exuding more pheromones, they can occur naturally or be triggered by an Omega's heat. When Omegas are in heat, Alphas can provide for an Omega in emotional or purely physical/sexual ways. Their knot is usually portrayed as the only thing that can ease the symptoms of an Omega's heat.

When a bond between an Alpha and an Omega is established, Alphas will often mark their partner with 'bite marks' to signify their status of belonging.

"[He] would be a really good alpha (...)
He cared for [him],
offered him a home,
wanted to protect
him (...)"
(MilkTeaMiku)

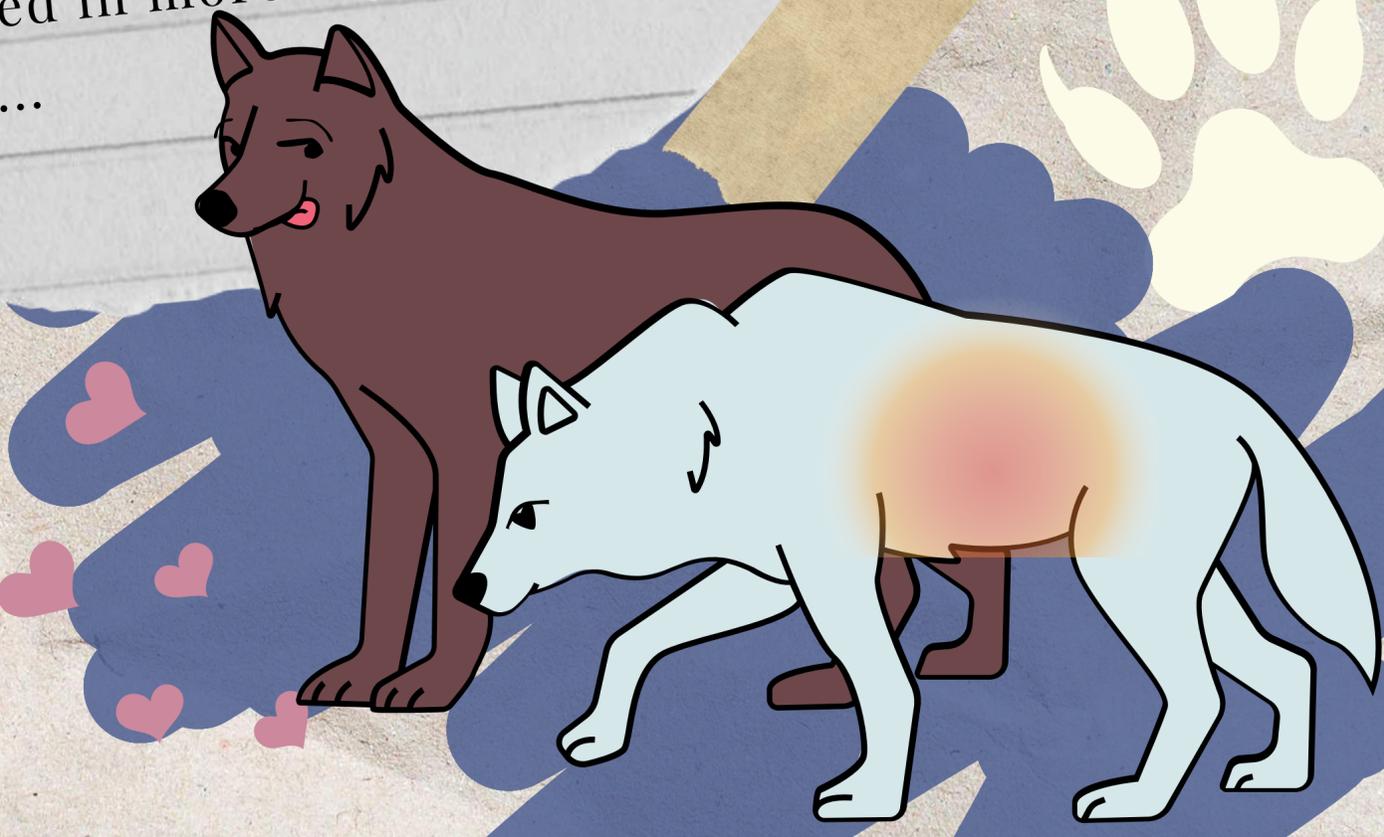
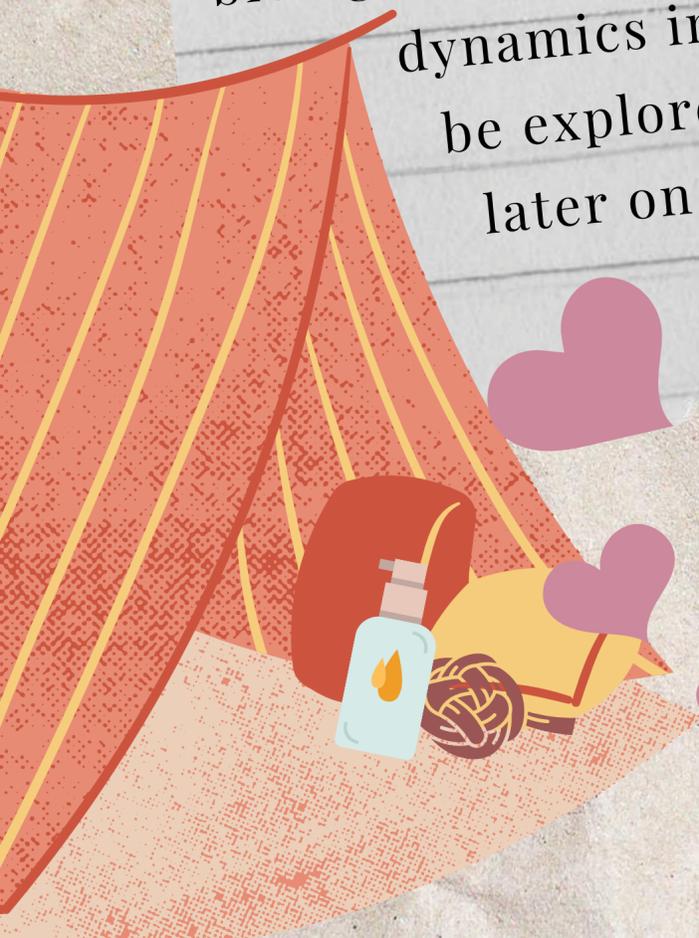


...AND BETAS

Betas usually take a minor role in the a/b/o dynamics. They are not affected by the heat cycles, and pheromones like Omegas and Alphas might be, so they are a calming and neutral presence. While they can bond with and engage in relationships with Alphas and Omegas, their behavior is not dependent on their biology like Omegas and Alphas are.

As You Can See

Alphas and Omegas can bond very intimately and deeply with one another, they develop strong emotional and physical bonds in which the Alpha takes the role of the provider. Their relationship dynamics are defined by their biology and can be read as a parallel to gendered dynamics in our society, which will be explored in more depth later on...



Gender Representation

In Omegaverse, behavior seems to be distinctly linked to the character's sex. This also reflects in the way the respective characters are described in the stories.

Alphas tend to present more masculine, and the writers tend to make use of masculine connotated terms when describing them; the same applies to Omegas and female connotation.

» Then [the omega] leans right into it, in a sickeningly sweet purr. "Husband."
"Mn, my wife," [the alpha] returns a smile. «
(Sweetlolixo)

♂

handsome
provider
tall
strong

♀

pretty
beautiful
maternal
delicate



» In romance novel terms, male heroes start out as representative of hegemonic masculinity, displaying traits of dominance, aggression, or emotional unavailability and then gradually learn how to become more expressive and sensitive to the needs of the heroine, are known as “alpha heroes” «
(Gunderson 82)

Gunderson defines the “alpha hero” with the traits

- aggression
- dominance,
- possessiveness
- power
- independence



The “omega” traits in turn portray him as a sort of “damsel in distress” archetype - helpless, naïve, innocent

DID YOU KNOW?

Alpha is the first letter of the Greek Alphabet, while Omega is the last letter!

This implies a hierarchy, in which omegas are inferior to alphas

Character traits, character motivations and even elements of gender expression, such as what the characters wear and how they refer to themselves seem to be entirely dictated by their subsex. Even when the original character displays opposite traits, in many fanfictions that take place in the omegaverse, these subsex-specific traits are implied to be what the character truly wants. These can be described as, for example, an “inner alpha” or “omega instincts”.

» Still, being fed and cared for by an alpha was quite pleasing to the omega instincts [he] had.. « (MilkTeaMiku)



There is nothing reprehensible about gender non-conforming, male presentation; however these elements of expression seem forced on only the Omegas, implying that any preference towards these elements of gender presentation are of a biological nature. With the added notion of Omegas being femininely connotated, and taking on the role of the childbearer and the providee in Alpha-Omega relationships, this aspect can be argued to lend a platform to traditional gender roles and sexism, and in numerous cases, to glorify them.

Power dynamics & Oppression

Omegaverse stories are set in societies with fictional gender constellations. The ternary A/B/O system uses the labels of alpha, beta, and omega. The alpha/omega categories can be seen as exaggerated versions of the male/female gender/sex system and societies depicted in these stories can be interpreted as analogues to patriarchy.
(Gunderson)

speculative
gendered
dystopias

“abstract and remote ideas are brought to
the domain of the concrete and possible”
(Roine 63)

INEQUALITY

The Status and position in society of alphas and omegas are affected by their biological features. Omega biology causes them disadvantages concerning their participation in society and often their worth is determined by their reproductive functions and their ability to conceive and give birth to children. Therefore, gender is a source of inequality and oppression with alphas as the patriarchs and omegas as the oppressed.

(Gunderson 65-66)

echoes
patriarchy
and
misogyny

Parallels to patriarchy

The heat cycle that omegas go through every month is used to create biological restrictions on their autonomy and is comparable to menstruation. In the omegaverse, there are biomedical technologies such as “contraceptive technologies” or “biomedical means” that enable omegas to control their cycles. However, legal and societal obstacles often prevent their liberatory potential (Gunderson 65). This parallels the struggle of women throughout history with societal obstacles restricting their control over their own bodies, such as with birth control or abortion rights.

The association of omegas with feminine traits and alphas with masculine traits links the ability to become pregnant with inferior status and the ability to impregnate with superior status.

(Gunderson)



...avia vitae semper s
...us condimentum blandit
...ant, at pellentesque tortor biser
...iet sit amet tempus ut, dictum ut nisl. M
...s lacinia neque. Suspendisse est tortor, la
...giat dapibus quam. Proin non risus eu
...stibulum mattis sollicitudin mattis. Pellentesq
...rhoncus. Nunc pharetra tempus maximus.
...la sua lacus nec lectus commodo cursus. In
...s sit amet semper. Sed ut amet posuer
...alit, id maximus est ultricies ac. Ut ornare n
...dapibus, egestas quam.

umsan ex. Morbi nec vehicula neque. Ali
... Aliquam ac maximus elit. Phasellus in
...t turpis, non interdum sapien. Pellentesq
...an reus, integer non vestibulum nulla. In
...enenatis. Nam et semper ante. Sed
...ringilla ornare vitae dolor. Proin
...tor hendrerit nisl.

sque vel ex eu gra
...erit ante et mi fer

tempus. Cras gravida metus ris
...consectetur. Donec diam veli
...elementum augue. Fusce
...Proin dignissim est turp
...Maecenas vehicula, to

romance & consent

Asymmetrical power relations are also present in the context of romantic relationships. The omegaverse narrative often draws on established conventions of romance novels, which have been criticized for reinforcing traditional, misogynist gender roles, and for promoting marriage as the ultimate goal (Regis). These heteronormative structures and narratives are often incorporated into a/b/o fanfiction, an otherwise mostly queer content.

Heat is not a **YES!**

During their heat cycles, omegas experience an intense and overpowering desire that is often framed as almost impossible to resist. Similarly, alphas are often portrayed as unable to control themselves when tempted by a seemingly willing omega. This poses a serious issue of consent, as the heat cycles can override rational decision-making in both alphas and omegas, choice gets undermined by physical urgency. If both parties are unable to control themselves, neither of them can be held fully responsible for their actions.

(Gunderson 88)

Gunderson, Marianne. What is an omega? Rewriting sex and gender in omegaverse fanfiction. University of Oslo, 2017. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.14405.47849.

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So What?

Let's round up our journey through the Omegaverse. First we took a brief look at the foundations of the Omegaverse and the prevalent dynamics in Omegaverse fanfiction that we found through our research into the Omegaverse. We found that, despite calling into question binary genders through the invention of secondary genders, the Omegaverse still has a tendency to fall into the trap of reproducing or even potentially enhancing preexisting gender roles and turning them into the focal point of the story, instead of criticising them.

In the stories we read in preparation for this zine, the Omega is often portrayed as weak, submissive and passive while Alphas tend to be portrayed as strong, dominant and aggressive. We read some secondary sources that described the application to these traits as subversive and critical. However, since these traits permeate every aspect of the relationship dynamic between the Alpha and the Omega, and often fail to practise legitimate criticism, we find that it makes the notion of them being a genuine subversion heavily debatable.

We shouldn't forget that, at the end of the day, fanfiction is meant to be entertainment first and foremost, and looking at the amount of people creating and consuming a/b/o fanfiction to this day, it clearly does not fail to do that. Not every piece of media we consume has to be subversive or critically engaging, and in a way, this type of creative expression can be viewed as a safe way to cope with real life issues that the readers and writers face in the real world.

We hope this brief introduction left you ready and armed to delve deeper into the Omegaverse (if you should so choose) and shed some light on the aspects and tropes of the genre.



The Omegafour

Sounds intriguing? Find out whether YOU would be an Alpha, Beta or Omega with this fun quiz! Credits to: @omegajohnson on uquiz.com

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