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Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Metamorphosis of Relationships in *Harry Potter* Fanfiction

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Závěrečná diplomová práce se bude věnovat současnému fenoménu fanfiction a soustředí se na potterovskou fanfiction. V úvodu práce studentka charakterizuje fanfiction, stručně nastíní historii fenoménu včetně historie kritického studia fanfiction, vysvětlí pojmy s fanfiction související (včetně žargonu této komunity) a teorii s tímto fanfiction spojenou (participatory culture, convergence culture, etc.) Zvolený druh fanfiction zařadí do tohoto kontextu a stručně uvede původní dílo (Harry Potter), od níž je odvozená. Dále diplomantka uvede kritéria, podle nichž vybírala primární texty pro své analýzy.

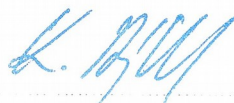
Jádrem práce bude analýza vybraných textů, v nichž se studentka zaměří především na analýzu charakterů postav, proměnu jejich vzájemných vztahů a rolí. Zreflektuje rovněž literární úroveň zvolených textů a použité literární prostředky. Svě vývody bude ilustrovat primárními zdroji a opře je o zdroje teoretické (sekundární).

Závěrem své analýzy přehledně shrne a vysloví obecnější závěry o způsobu zobrazení vztahů hlavních postav v potterovské fanfiction a posunech proti původnímu textu Rowlingové.

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15. —. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000.
- 16.—. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003.
- 17.—. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005.
18. —. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007.
19. Selected corpus of fanfiction texts.

Prohlašuji:

Tuto práci jsem vypracovala samostatně. Veškeré literární prameny a informace, které jsem v práci využila, jsou uvedeny v seznamu použité literatury.

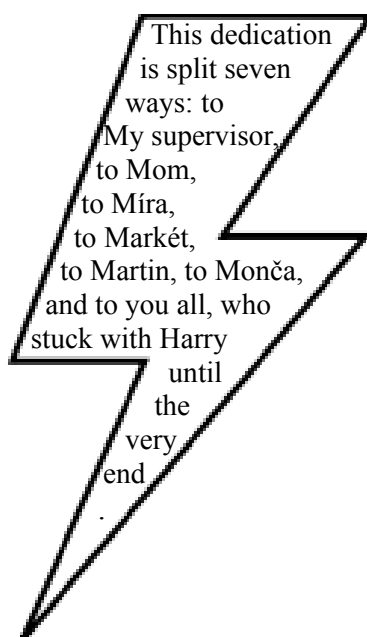
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Poděkování:



NÁZEV

Metamorfóza vztahů v Harry Potter fanfiction

ANOTACE

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá fanouškovskou subkulturou, konkrétně se pak zaměřuje na fenomén literární fanouškovské tvorby zvaný fanfiction. Práce fenomén charakterizuje a uvádí do historicky-kulturního kontextu. Další část uvádí přehled studia fanouškovství a odborných publikací vydaných na toto téma. Práce dále vysvětluje žargon, který fanouškovská komunita používá. Literární analýza se zabývá fanfiction napsanou o britské knižní séze Harry Potter od Joanne K. Rowling a zkoumá posun ve vyobrazení vztahu mezi postavami Harrym Potterem a Severusem Snapem oproti své literární předloze.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Harry Potter, fanfiction, studia fanouškovství, vztahy, slash, Severus Snape, fanouškovská tvorba

TITLE

Metamorphosis of Relationships in *Harry Potter* Fanfiction

ANNOTATION

This master thesis focuses on fan subculture and specifically on the cultural phenomenon of fanfiction, a type of literary fanwork. The phenomenon is defined and put into cultural and historical context. The next part of the thesis outlines the history of fandom, fan studies and lists the most influential works in the field. In the following part, fandom terminology is explained. The analytical part of the work focuses on fanfiction written about the British literary saga *Harry Potter*, written by Joanne K. Rowling. The analysis examines the metamorphosis of relationship between Harry Potter and Severus Snape in fanfiction as opposed to its depiction in the source narrative.

KEYWORDS

Harry Potter, fanfiction, fan studies, relationships, slash, Severus Snape, fanworks

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0 Introduction

Most people are fans of something. Sports fans, music fans, motorcycle fans, movie fans, or book fans, the list can go on and on. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a fan as “an ardent admirer or enthusiast”¹. These fans are not solitary, they proceed to create fan communities called *fandoms*, centred around their favourite source material. It is the last category of fans that was mentioned, book fans, that gave an impetus for writing this thesis, and the interest lies specifically in the means of fannish artistic expression in the form of writing. To be exact, it is *fiction* written by *fans* and it is conveniently called *fanfiction*.

Fanfiction could be characterised as a transformative artistic work written by fans and for fans, based on existing source material, most commonly originating from mass popular culture. Fanfiction adopts original characters, setting, and narrative arcs to create its own versions of original stories. Fanfiction generally explores alternative plotlines, fills in gaps in original narratives, and examines relationships between characters. Anyone who has ever imagined an alternate ending to their beloved movie or a book, perhaps wished their favourite character had not died after all, was essentially creating fanfiction in their head. Despite fanfiction existing for decades, and even centuries before it was named as such, the academic interest in the field cannot boast with equally rich history.

Although academic interest in the field of fan studies can be traced back to 1980s, it has been primarily focused on the second half of the 20th century and so called “zine culture”. This past research studied fanfiction in a larger context on the intersection of fan studies and media studies. To supply this earlier research, this master thesis explores fanfiction as a proliferating valid literary genre in the 21st century. The dawn of the Internet brought a new technological era which significantly changed the means of production and distribution, and transformed fannish communities producing these fanfiction texts. As a result, there is a disproportionate amount of academic research which was mostly carried out about the pre-Internet era and zine culture, but is no longer applicable to the recent Internet era. Therefore, this thesis concentrates on the recent era of fanfiction, which is studied as an independent emerging literary genre growing in popularity. Specifically, the

1 “Fan,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed February 3rd, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fan>.

main interest lies in fanfiction written and distributed via the Internet since 1990s-00s until now and its presence across the world wide web. The goal is to provide a comprehensive guide to the phenomenon of fanfiction and to supply research on the contemporary online fanfiction era.

This work builds on the notion that fanfiction is primarily focused on depicting relationships. The interpretative aspect of fanfiction leads to a discrepancy between how relationships are depicted in the source material versus how they are depicted in fanfiction. In other words, the texts demonstrate the difference between fannish understanding of relationships as opposed how they were originally written and intended by an original author. This difference, this metamorphosis of relationships, is a great tool to ascertain the interpretative power of fanfiction. These texts transform the relationship into either dreamed and desirable forms (fans, for example, feel that this character should have married someone else), or into forms they perceive are more fit for the characters in question. By focusing on what fandom holds in the highest regard, i.e. relationships, academics are able to come closer to understanding fandom dynamics and fannish treatment of the material as a whole.

This thesis chose to focus on the *Harry Potter* series written by Joanne K. Rowling and the corresponding fandom production in the form of fanfiction. Specifically, the comparative analysis in the second half of the work selects two characters, Harry Potter and Severus Snape, and investigates their relationship as depicted in the original series and in its fanfiction. The thesis presupposes good knowledge of the *Harry Potter* universe, but does not require any further knowledge of its fanfiction, as explanations of key concepts are supplied.

The thesis is thematically divided into following sections:

The first chapter defines fandom and fanfiction as a cultural phenomenon, further develops the idea of fanworks as an umbrella term, and then introduces defining features of fanfiction, such as intertextuality and copyright issues. The second chapter deals with two notions connected to fan studies, and that is participatory culture and convergence culture. These notions are important for understanding the modern face of fandom. The third chapter looks into fandom history and overviews fan studies history as well, including the most influential works in the field. The fourth chapter is a fandom glossary and it explains

fandom-specific terminology and defines various subgenres of fanfiction found on the Internet. The fifth chapter elaborates on one of the three main types of fanfiction, slash, and its specifics within fanfiction community and its reception by public sphere. The sixth chapter finally delves into the *Harry Potter* universe and examines the relationship between Harry Potter and Severus Snape as depicted in the original series. The next chapter, number seven, is a comparative analysis of selected fanfiction corpus as explained above. This chapter also details criteria and methodology for choosing fanfiction corpus for a comparative analysis. The final chapter is a conclusion, which provides overview of the entire work, summarises general findings and draws conclusion about the metamorphosis of relationships in *Harry Potter* fanfiction. The final part of the thesis is Résumé and Bibliography, which cites all sources consulted during writing the work.

The author of the thesis herself has been a book fan and a member of a fan-based community for nearly thirteen years now. At last, it is time to take on the challenge of becoming a fan studies critic as well. To study fandoms and fanfiction in depth, it does not suffice to be just one of these two; one must strive to be both. So in writing this thesis, the author is putting herself on the intersection of both academic and fannish approach, as one complements the other. It is a meeting of two worlds, and each of these worlds has its strengths and weaknesses. Purely fannish approach threatens to treat fandoms subjectively and uncritically and therefore has no academic value. On the other hand, strictly academical approach might lead to misconceptions as well. Fandoms cannot be clinically studied in a Petri dish and have rules and structures applied by a distant observer. Limited insight easily leads to misconceptions. In order to understand fandom and its fans, it is necessary to combine those skills.

On top of that, it would be erroneous to talk of a single fandom entity or a single voice in the community, because what is applicable to one fandom, is not necessarily true for another. Fans and fandoms are ever-evolving, constantly renegotiating and revising content. Therefore, it is also a story of one particular fan experience. Fannish environment is so incredibly diverse and complex that it does not allow any simplifications or reductions to clear-cut truths. It is important to understand that fans are not a single voice, rather a multitude of voices, multitude of fannish experience. So while one fandom experience is used in order to understand and further explain underlying rules and

structures, it is not exclusive or representative template that can be uniformly applied on all.

1 Fan Produced Transformative Works: The Cultural Phenomenon of Fandom and Fanfiction

1.1 Fanworks

Fanfiction belongs to a greater family of fan produced transformative works, or simply fanworks. Fanworks are creative works produced usually by fans for fans.

“In fanworks, some element of the source text or event is taken and incorporated into a new creative piece. The taken element can be the characters, world setting, plot, stories, still images, video clips, or something else from the source.”²

There are numerous types of fanworks: firstly written, spanning from aforementioned fanfiction and poetry to meta (analysis of source material, discussions and theories), secondly visuals, which is mainly represented by fanart (traditional and digital drawings and paintings), thirdly cosplay (dressing up as favourite characters and attending conventions), followed by fan videos (fanvids) or even entire fan films, fan graphics (such as creating GIFs, icons and banners), printed materials such as fanzines (fan magazines, printed anthologies of selected works), audio works and other miscellaneous fancrafts. Fandom is a subculture, a fan community that is based around a given source material and which produces these types of fanwork related to it. Fans actively participate in community activities and interact with each other within the community.

Fanfiction (alternatively fan fiction, abbreviated as fanfic, or even fic) specifically is defined as “a genre of amateur writing based on characters and events from mass entertainment or popular culture”³. That includes books, TV shows, movies, comics, animated series and other media. Fanfiction usually “borrows” characters, setting, and/or plotline from the original source.

Fanfiction publication is very easy and open by nature - anyone with a computer and internet access may publicly display their work in no time. This consequently affects its overall quality, which may wildly vary from beginner’s writing to elaborate quality pieces. The self-publication system has no filters judging for literary quality and the result is a

2 “Fanwork,” Fanlore.org, last modified September 12th, 2015, <https://fanlore.org/wiki/Fanwork>.

3 Jacqueline D. Lipton, “Copyright and the Commercialisation of Fanfiction,” *Houston Law Review* 52, 2 (December 2014): 428. <https://houstonlawreview.org/article/3989-copyright-and-the-commercialization-of-fanfiction>.

somewhat shaky reputation of fanfiction as an inferior genre. The fact remains that, while a portion of fics written is indeed of beginner quality, there can be found some truly skilful narratives. For many aspiring writers, fandom environment serves as a learning space providing peer-reviewed feedback, called *beta reading*. This is connected to a participative nature of fandom which is the topic of the next chapter.

Fanfiction and fanworks as a whole can be studied in a double context. Each context produces an equally valid and suitable definition for its scope of usage. In the broadest sense possible, any transformative value, any inspiration by pre-existing material is considered a form of fanwork. No author is able to conceive a completely original universe of their own, even J.K. Rowling herself famously incorporated plenty of Greek mythology into her books. So if the only criterion to qualify as fanfiction is a transformative value, any existing literary piece would be classified as fanfiction. (Virtually the whole western culture and therefore literature is deeply influenced by Christian morals and values contained in the Bible.) By this measure, any Renaissance art depicting scenes from the Bible would be considered a fanwork. Alternatively from a different point of view, movie adaptations of famous novels like Sherlock Holmes are, as Emma Cueto puts it, just “fanfiction with a budget”⁴. This understanding is often presented when arguing fanwork’s quality, legitimacy and creativity as a genre.

The other understanding sees fanwork (and fanfiction by extension) in a much narrower context, as a modern cultural phenomenon. The origin of modern-type fanfiction is linked with the cultural shift recognizing authors’ intellectual property rights (which could be roughly dated to the 18th century at earliest⁵). “Until the eighteenth century, masterful borrowing was acknowledged as the normal path to artistry”⁶, but once it was possible to claim ideas and original elements as one’s intellectual property, originality took on new importance and transformative works became a distinctive category in a way that has not been thought of before. It led to creation of a dichotomy between copyrighted original material and non-copyrighted fan writing, sentencing fan writing to a legal grey zone. The

4 Emma Cueto, "Fan Fiction Has a Bad Name, But Do People Really Understand What It Is?" Bustle, published January 27, 2014, <https://www.bustle.com/articles/12548-fan-fiction-has-a-bad-name-but-do-people-really-understand-what-it-is>.

5 Note: The British Statue of Anne of 1710 is considered to be the first copyright law.

6 Marko Juvan, “Towards a History of Intertextuality in Literary and Culture Studies,” CLCWeb: *Comparative Literature and Culture* 10, 3 (September 2008): 2. <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1370&context=clcweb>.

modern notion of fanfiction also accommodates concepts of fannish participation and cultural convergence, as fannish behaviour plays a major role in fanfiction production. Active participation and presence across various media platforms is quite typical for modern-type fan spaces. These fanworks should be studied in the context of the fandom they originated from. In other words, the second understanding sees fanworks as derivative works produced and consumed within a community of fans.

To summarise, two “versions” or understandings of fanworks are recognized. The first broader understanding sees any creative works that are taking inspiration from or transforming a pre-existing source as fanworks. The second one understands fanworks as a modern cultural phenomenon legally distinguished by implementation of copyright laws and which is to be studied in the context of a community it originated from. Modern fanfiction could be additionally characterised by mostly exploring alternate plotlines, changing elements in order to create “what if” stories, exploring relationships and generally using the source material as a source of departure for fannish writers’ own narratives.

For the purpose of this thesis, the second, narrower understanding is applied. Furthermore, this thesis uses fanfiction as a primary tool in probing writing fannish community and its interpretations of source material, which is, in this particular case, the *Harry Potter* septology. It specifically concerns itself with the newest era of fanfiction, residing in online spaces.

1.2 The World of Disclaimers and the Copyright Issue: Fan Creation as a Legal Grey Zone

One of the defining characteristics of modern-type fanfiction is the issue regarding copyright laws and legality of fanfiction. Fanfiction is specifically written without a copyright holder’s knowledge or consent. The advent of the Internet brought an exponential rise in the number of published works and thus shifted the issue into public awareness. Nowadays, copyright holders and media companies alike are battling fanfiction authors to define a legal status of fanfiction. In terms of copyright law, fanfiction as a genre is toeing the fine line between copyright infringement and legal use. Most of fanfiction authors write under the Fair Use doctrine, which allows non-commercial use of copyrighted material. While copyright law does protect derivative works, the lines still

remain fuzzy. How much is too much and what exactly can be used without legal consequences? Names, characters, or even plotline? Ownership is another issue. Technically, the names, characters, setting, etcetera is owned by the copyright holder, but is consequently the derivative story as well? Or does it belong to the respective fanfiction author? A fanfiction author who has been (ironically) plagiarised by someone else has no legal ground to claim their work as their own and has no way of legal action.

The world of fanfiction is a world of disclaimers - authors' tool in preventing lawsuit and a form of courtesy towards original authors. Disclaimer typically precedes the main body of fanfiction and declares non-profit nature of the work and renounces any claims of ownership of names, characters, events and storyworld in general. It also clearly credits the rightful author and the original source the work is inspired by. Some disclaimers also state that the story in question is written for entertainment purpose only and is in no way meant to replace or devalue the original work.

While disclaimers have been in popular use for years, they are no guarantees but rather a gesture of good will. Ultimately the decision regarding tolerating fanfiction lies in the hands of original authors or copyright holders. Have you ever wondered why is there so much fanfiction about *Harry Potter* septology by J.K. Rowling and so little about about some other books, like *The Vampire Chronicles* by Anne Rice? That is because some authors, like Anne Rice, simply do not "allow" it. Majority of original authors (assuming it remains non-profit in nature) either tolerate or even encourage writing fanfiction and consider it honour and flattering or at the very least as free advertising. J.K. Rowling herself approves of fanfiction saying that she is "flattered that people wanted to write their own stories"⁷. On the contrary, some authors oppose fanfiction and even actively fight it. Anne Rice publicly stated on her website that she does not allow any fanfiction and the very idea of it upsets her⁸. Anne Rice and her employees used to actively search for individuals writing fanfiction, demanded fanfic removal, harassed the individuals and even threatened them with legal action.

Now, nobody tries to deny the public its fascination with vampires, after all, E.L. James's commercially successful *50 Shades of Grey* was initially written as *Twilight* fanfiction as

7 Darren Waters, "Rowling Backs Potter Fan Fiction," *BBC News*, last modified 27 May 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/3753001.stm#top>>.

8 Anne Rice, Anne's Messages to Fans, Anne Rice Official Website, accessed January 15th, 2019, <http://annerice.com/ReaderInteraction-MessagesToFans.html>.

well, but it is difficult to say who is in the right - Anne Rice, who has the right to decide what happens with her books and her characters? Or fans, who have the right to interpret and imagine? The bigger picture of copyright issue is not just about profit, but about moral rights also. Some authors approve of fanfiction in general but draw the line at adult-oriented material, because they cannot accept their characters being “treated” this way (which is why web archive FanFiction.net had all mature fanfiction removed in 2002).

Speaking of web archives, there are three leading websites that act as hosting places for all kinds of fanworks, but mostly fanfiction. The aforementioned FanFiction.net, Live Journal (a blogging platform) and ArchiveofOurOwn.org (usually referred to as “AO3” in short). The last one, AO3, is run by The Organisation for Transformative Works, which is a non-profit, non-commercial, fan-run organisation established to preserve and provide access to fanwork and fan culture. They state on their website that they “believe that fanworks are transformative and that transformative works are legitimate” and continue saying that they are “committed to protecting and defending fanworks from commercial exploitation and legal challenge”⁹. There are numerous other smaller web archives, personal blogs and other hosting social media (Tumblr.com, most importantly, mainly for fanart).

In the long run, there are proponents for both sides of the argument. As we can see, there are organisations dedicated to protecting fanworks, as well as authors arguing against fanworks claiming copyright infringement. The copyright issue is a core issue for fannish communities worldwide and the legal position of fanfiction has not yet been sufficiently determined.

1.3 Intertextuality

Contemporary literature is very careful of confirmation of external influence that alters or inspires new texts. This is partially given by the copyright issues that have been explained above; financial capitalism has successfully managed to monetize influence by assigning ownership of ideas. Moreover, admitting influence and the resulting derivativeness is considered somewhat depreciative. Fanfiction lies at the far end of the derivative spectrum, openly admitting derivativeness and placing it as its central feature. In order to be identified as fanfiction, the text must clearly derive from other texts or media.

⁹ The Organisation for Transformative Works, “About the OTW”, accessed January 15th, 2019, <https://archiveofourown.org/about>.

Fanfiction is intertextual. Intertextuality is “a relationship of co-presence between two texts or among several texts: [...] typically as the actual presence of one text within another”¹⁰. Fanfiction typically adopts characters (along with characterisation and background story), names, plotline and universe setting. The source narrative is called a hypotext and the derivative narrative a hypertext. A French literary theorist Gérard Genette says that hypertextuality is “any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary”¹¹. (In Genette’s classification the commentary aspect is carried by metatextuality and evolved into a fanfiction form known simply as *meta*.) Fanfiction draws its legitimacy from the hypotext and offers new interpretations.

Reading fanfiction is essentially reading two texts at once, both hypertext and hypotext. The close relationship between them is crucial, because in order to understand fanfiction, a reader needs to be intimate with its source narrative. That is because fanfiction is elliptical, it lacks narrative exposition. Since fanfiction relies on previous knowledge of source text, explaining character background or plotline events is redundant. Any typical *Harry Potter* fanfiction presumes that a reader knows who Lord Voldemort is and what are his goals and his relationship towards the protagonist (with the exception of alternate storylines, where the difference is changing some features of a narrative).

There are two reasons as to why fanfiction got so popular. Firstly, from a reader’s point of view, there is a general desire to consume more content about their favourite characters, set in their favourite universe, and exploring their favourite story. I love the character X, therefore I want to see more content featuring them. Secondly, from a writer's point of view, it is all of the above plus the possibility of using ready-made characters and universe setting, without the need to invent a whole original universe. That is connected with well-established broad readership concentrated within a fandom and simplicity of the whole publication process.

It is important to note that fanfiction does not aim to imitate or copy the source narrative, its aim is rather to expand it and reinterpret it. The copyright issue is an inevitable outcome of overt usage of legally protected materials. Although fanfiction claims to be non-profit

10 Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 1–2.

11 Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, 2.

and operates under Fair Use doctrine, the usage on its own is enough to antagonize some authors.

Intertextuality is a key feature of fanfiction. It is basically reading “two texts in one”. But writing fanfiction contains a touch of subversion as well. After all, fanfiction is all about exploring the “what ifs”, alternate plotlines, fixing inconsistencies and filling in the gaps.

2 Participatory Culture and Convergence Culture

2.1 Participatory Culture

Henry Jenkins devoted most of his professional career to studying fans and fan culture. Participation and interactivity is one of its key notions. Jenkins explains participatory culture in a nutshell: “Participatory culture describes a world where everyone participates, where we take media in our own hands, where we have the capacity, often, to produce media, share media.”¹² In other words, this modern social nature of media consumption effectively blurs the line between a fan and a creator. There is a sharp contrast between the “old” notion of media consumption and the “new way”. The old notion builds on two strictly separate roles: the creator and the fan, where the original content is consumed by fans passively. It may be symbolically perceived as a one-on-one relationship - a sole fan versus a creator. In contrast, the new way sees fans actively interacting with one another, functioning as a hive mind, and interpreting and reinventing the original content. Fans produce content to share amongst them, whether it is in form of fanfiction, fanart, fanvids or various fan theories called *meta*. Participatory culture is a kind of fusion, where consumers become fans and creators at the same time. It is active media consumption, where the roles are intermingling.

The degree of participation is varied: some fans only like to consume the transformative works but not to actively produce it, on the other hand some fans like to define themselves by their active roles in a fandom, be it as writers, artists, beta readers, or something else. One way or another, it is active engagement beyond originally intended boundaries of the original source. Where can we see participatory culture at work? To give an example, at any convention, where fans cosplay and participate in role-playing. Another one is fanzines publication, but the presence is seen mostly at the Internet: there are thousands of fan-made videos on Youtube.com, DeviantArt.com is full of fanart and Fanfiction.net is full of, well, fanfiction. Participatory culture heavily relies on the ability to share content with others, on being available. The creative atmosphere is community-related and community-mediated.

¹² “Henry Jenkins on Participatory Culture (Big Thinkers Series),” Edutopia, published May 7, 2013, <https://www.edutopia.org/video/henry-jenkins-participatory-culture-and-media-education-big-thinkers-series>.

As shown above, fans actively engage with a fandom in a variety of ways and they consequently inhabit a number of unique fan spaces. “Different spaces meet different needs, and attract different types of fans, offering validation, inclusion, artistic inspiration, escape, freedom of expression, or whatever an individual fan is (subconsciously at least) seeking.”¹³ Writers will naturally gravitate together, just like digital artists or graphic makers would. For fans, different fan spaces or communities serve as safe spaces, they evoke a sense of belonging or even family. Fans self-identify as a part of a fandom or its respective part. They support each other, inspire each other and in a way provide a route to escapism. It is not uncommon to create firm long-lasting friendships originating from fandom grounds. Additionally, this environment provides a mentor-student relationship, where more experienced and/or skilled members of community teach less experienced members and transfer their knowledge onto them. I personally know two fanartists, whose fandom experience and drawing skills practised through fanart eventually gained them a prospective job at prestigious animation studios.

Participatory culture also exists outside fandom boundaries, in terms of active civic engagement. Jenkins shows how participatory culture can be transferred to our daily life; that we do not merely passively consume mainstream media and public events, but that we can actively take part of it, whether in practising democracy, fighting for civil rights or simply discovering our own voice.¹⁴

Participatory culture and fandom experience as a whole is equally about producing and consuming fannish content and the community behind it. Fans like to confine themselves in the safety of fandom boundaries - where their friends and beloved fictional characters are. In this safe space, fans are understood and most of all, belong somewhere. Sharing passion is a powerful bonding experience. Active media consumption promotes critical thinking, creative mindset and active engagement with original content.

2.2 Convergence Culture

Convergence culture is a related notion to participatory culture. It is a phenomenon pertaining to our contemporary culture. The common concepts with participatory culture

13 Lynn Zubernis, Katherine Larsen, *Fandom at the Crossroads: Celebration, Shame and Fan/Producer Relationships* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 19.

14 Edutopia, “Henry Jenkins on Participatory Culture (Big Thinkers Series).”

are a circulation of content across media platforms and the relationship between a consumer and a producer. Unlike participatory culture, where fan activities (media based or not) are in the spotlight, convergence culture is a bit more concerned with media consumption and the media itself and puts audience behaviour as secondary (although not unimportant). Even so, it would be erroneous to attribute this “convergence” exclusively to fan culture. Convergence as a cultural experience impacts the whole society and more than anything represents a general shift in media production and consumption. Convergence is a broad term encompassing several notions at once. According to Jenkins,

“by convergence is meant the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want. Convergence is a word that manages to describe technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes depending on who’s speaking and what they think they are talking about”.¹⁵

As Jenkins’ book title aptly suggests, the convergence culture is all about colliding or clashing of “passive old and interactive new media”. The status and function of old media is shifting with the arrival of new emerging media, and as a consequence, old mainstream popular media become marginal (like in 1970s, when fanzines were hugely popular, but are nowadays largely replaced by online web archives and lost their initial status). But at the same time it does not mean that the old media are displaced and cease to be used at all; instead, they learn to adapt and coexist with the new media in a complex relationship. In the end what we witness is not a sharp shift in media production and consumption, but rather mingling of functions, mutual influence and change of prominence.

What we need to beware of is “reduction of convergence to the merging of technological and specifically digital devices or to the substitution of established media by new hyper-media”¹⁶. The collision of old and new media is not to be reduced to technological advancement only; to be more specific, it is not about printed newspapers being replaced by online news websites. It is about mutual interaction and affection, not substitution. Both old and new media are adapting and reacting to each other and changing consumer habits.

15 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 2-3.

16 Claudia Georgi, “Reconsidering Convergence Culture and Its Consequences for Literary Studies,” in *Convergence Culture Reconsidered*, edited by Claudia Georgi and Brigitte Johanna Glaser (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2015), 15.

In other words, convergence is first and foremost a process, but never a result. It is a constant negotiation between producers and consumers, and among different media industries.

Fans are actively encouraging convergence in the sense that they are following their desired content across various media platforms (which illustrates nicely audience migratory behaviour). Convergence is realized through their social interactions. The very beginnings of fandoms were quite different from what they look like now. Fandoms were (using contemporary perspective) offline-based and their interactivity involved mostly printed sources (such as fanzines or the source material itself) and conventions. Contemporary fandom accommodates not only “old” (offline) media, but also “new” (online) media, and allows their convergence through fannish interactions. The community nature of fandom provides a platform where the media “meet and greet”. To conclude, “these [new] streams of cultural information have increased cultural participation and, more importantly, they have changed the nature of such participation”¹⁷.

Participatory culture and convergence culture function in a mutual relationship and together they enhance cultural participation and modify the way media is produced and consumed. Both terms can be studied from a double perspective - a fandom one and a general public one. Especially in the fandom sphere, the blurring line between a fan and a creator challenges up to the presents indisputable concepts of authorship and intellectual property. That does not mean that the power dynamics in media industry reversed in favour of fans - corporate media still exert greater power. Nevertheless, there are certain areas of interest where individual consumers prevail. Fandom and its production of transformative works is a great example of such partial reversal. At the same time, we have to keep in mind that this is a very specific case and these conclusions cannot be applied on cultural behaviour and the general public as a whole.

17 Bjarki Valtýsson, “Access Culture: Web 2.0 and Cultural Participation,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 16, no. 2 (May 2010): 200.

3 Fandom History and Fan Studies

3.1 From Offline to Online Fandom

Although the focus of this thesis lies primarily on online fandom, fandoms have been in existence for many decades. Technological advancement affected the nature of fandom, types of production, distribution and consumption of fanfiction and least but not last, interaction among fandom members.

The first fannish community fitting our modern concept of fandom was centred around Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's work, specifically Sherlock Holmes stories. This era could be dated from 1900s to 1920s, although the Holmesian dedication is regularly sustained by various Sherlock Holmes remakes until today. The community members called themselves "Baker Street Irregulars"¹⁸ and their activities very much gave rough shapes to the modern face of fandom. The participatory nature of Sherlock fandom relied predominantly on mail - fans would communicate via letters, create "subscription lists" for mailing their fanfiction (or parodies or pastiches¹⁹, as they would call them then) to the others, and would regularly meet up at what we would call today small-scale conventions or rather group meetings. Sherlock Holmes fans even famously wore black bands on their arms when Doyle killed off his most popular character and eventually forcing Doyle to revive Holmes once again.

Holmesian fandom is (through the contemporary lens) a typical example of an "offline" fandom. Communication was private, meetings were face to face. A fan would likely to have a private, one-on-one personal relationship with the author. The onset of technology, be it a telephone, television and eventually the dawn of the Internet, meant the transitioning stage from "offline" to "online". This is also the time when a fandom crosses the boundaries between a private and a public space, as media are introduced into every household. This allowed a large group of people become obsessed with the same thing at the same time.

18 "The First Modern Fandom Brought Sherlock Holmes Back from the Dead," Ryan Britt, Inverse, last modified August 29, 2016, <https://www.inverse.com/article/19987-sherlock-holmes-and-the-birth-of-fandom>.

19 Note: The distinction between fanfiction and pastiche is subtle, yet very important. While fanfiction clearly declares original author and renounces any copyright claims, pastiche was written to imitate the original text as closely as possible, to the point the original material and pastiche were indiscernible.

The post second world war world turned its head towards different genres and they were quickly gaining in popularity - we are talking about fantasy and science-fiction. It was science-fiction and fantasy communities which produced first public, organised and thriving fandoms. The 1960s and 70s might as well be named the *Star Trek* decades. Television entered every average household, and the Internet only just starts to exist in the form of its predecessor ARPANET in 1969 and remains marginal until the boom in 1990s and the turn of the millennium.

The second half of the 20th century is often dubbed as “zine” culture; telephone calls and conventions remained and significantly grew in volume, but most importantly, zines came into prominence. Zines see the light of day for the first time in 1930s and flourished from 70s through to 90s. “Zines” (or “fanzines”), short for magazines, were fan-produced, self-published and fan-consumed compilations of artwork, including fanfiction, fanart, commentaries, fan theories, even interviews and much more. The zines were generally produced by dedicated fans in their free time, in small-scale and with no profit for the creators. Zines played a very influential role in uniting fans and served as mediators in fans-creators discussions. Meanwhile, Internet beginnings manifested as basic mailing lists and message boards. The 90s brought a revolutionary change when computers were introduced into every home and the Internet era effectively begins. This would be the end of the transitional era and the era of online fandom takes reign.

The 90s were in the name of big influential fandoms, such as *Star Trek*, newly *Star Wars*, *X-files*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or very popular *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Fans began create small communities, private archives and blogs online. Fandom content became readily available and the publication process was as easy as never before. However, the content was fragmented and scattered across many independent websites. GeoCities established in 1994 was the first hosting fansite centralizing artworks. The fragmentation issue was solved by first dedicated fanfiction web archives, where individual authors with profiles published all their stories in one place. The first archive to launch in 1998 was FanFiction.net, and introduced an early system of categorisation. The following year, LiveJournal came into existence, this time introducing a blogging platform and allowing users to manage their own blogs or journals. LJ functioned in a slightly different way - personal blogs served as personal fanfiction archives, all under patronage of one main domain. In the following years, FanFiction.net introduces stricter rules for publishing due

to legal concerns and bans all adult content. As a reaction to this step, ArchiveOfOurOwn is founded in 2007 and offers a more organised website, better review and rating system and overall acceptance of all kinds of fanfiction, including adult rated content. Many authors made the transition to the new archive or began simultaneously post on both. The same year 2007 is when Tumblr.com is founded, a social blogging network, which becomes a hosting place for a big part of fandom community. These websites nowadays host an endless number of fandoms, interested in wide range of books, anime series, TV Shows, to music bands and much more.

This is the overview of fandom history: from early Sherlockians exchanging letters and meeting up over their favourite books, to passionate *Star Trek* fans writing stories about their television heroes to thriving online communities and fanfiction web archives. To conclude, perhaps an interesting fact would be that many of the dedicated fans became early adopters of communication technologies and learned to code in order to create functioning digital fan bases. Who said being a fan is a waste of time?

3.2 Fan Studies

Fan studies or fandom studies is a relatively new area of academic study that examines fans and fannish community, known as a fandom. Fan studies are interdisciplinary and draw from a multitude of fields, including literary studies, cultural studies, media studies and tinkers with sociology and feminism as well. In a broader sense, fan studies focus on fannish interactions with any cultural phenomena, including sports or politics. In a narrower sense, fan studies have been always closely tied to media studies and formed a very specific study area of their own, focusing on popular media fans and fan culture emerging from the second half of 20th century. Although fan studies are not commonly studied or taught in academia, the field has respected authors and notable research nevertheless. Fandoms have also been treated with journalistic interest on many occasions, overwhelmingly interested in certain types of fanworks, mostly of adult content.

Academic interest in fan studies can be traced back to 1980s. The first works are rooted in feminist theory and are ideologically set in the second wave of feminism²⁰. Joanna Russ

²⁰ *Note:* In short, first wave of feminism fought for women to be equal de iure, by gaining right to vote and own property, second wave demanded equality de facto, by acquiring equal social status and third wave feminism, what we have today, is mostly about inclusivity. Partly just confusion.

wrote in 1985 “Pornography by Women, for Women, with Love”. It reads fanfiction as a feminine take on pornography, which is investigated further in chapter number 6 of this thesis. Another work is written by Patricia Frazer Lamb and Diane Veith and it is called “Romantic Myth, Transcendence and *Star Trek* Zines”, published a year later, in 1986. Both pieces are chapters in larger anthologies of essays. The second one already focuses on then-favourite television hit *Star Trek*, and explores fictional romantic involvement between the show protagonists and touches on the subject of *Star Trek*- oriented fanzines issued. Their work will be also discussed in more detail in chapter 6. Kirk-Spock relationship inspired a number of other publications not as significant for fandom studies history.

The 1990s may be considered a decade in which fan studies were founded and gained theoretical background. Henry Jenkins’ *Textual Poachers* of 1992 were methodologically a turning point in fan studies. It is a comprehensive publication characterising the field, situates fan studies at the intersection of media studies and cultural studies and provides academical theoretical background. Jenkins describes himself as a fan first and proposes studying the field as both academic and a fan at the same time. Camille Bacon-Smith chose the exact opposite approach in writing her *Enterprising Women* (also 1992). She studies fandom from the position of a bystander, completely objective. As opposed to Jenkins, Bacon-Smith prefers to separate the role of an academic and a fan. The third influential 1992 text was written by Constance Penley and is called “Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Study of Popular Culture”. Penley once again derives from feminist theory and employs psychoanalysis to explore relationships in fanfiction. Also in 1992, fan studies anthology called *The Adoring Audience* was published, edited by Lisa Lewis. Naturally, these sources pertained to “offline” fandoms, pre-digitized fandom environment.

The 90s saw publication of specialized studies focusing on individual big fandoms of the time, like *Xena* (Christine Boese, Jeanne Hamming), *Buffy* (Kristina Busse), or *Star Wars* (Will Brooker). Another wave of works on fan studies came with the turn of the millennium. Camille Bacon-Smith expanded her earlier work and described the science-fiction community in *Science Fiction Culture* (2000). *The Democratic Genre* (2005) by Sheenagh Pugh lets fan writers say their bit and presents thoughts and ideas from within the community of fan writers. Henry Jenkins wrote another influential piece in 2006, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, where he introduced the

concept of media convergence and its consequences for fan culture. The duo of Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson produced two works worth mentioning; firstly *Fan Fiction and Fan Studies in the Age of the Internet* (2006). It is a careful collection of essays that were significant for fan studies and summarises all major ideas and approaches. Likewise *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader* (2014) is a skilful collection of core debates. These two works at last consider also the online phase of fandom culture.

There is natural disproportion between works about pre-digitized era and digitized era, which is only slowly compensated. This, along with other reasons, is why this thesis aims to describe contemporary online fandom and its specifics and tendencies.

4 Fanspeak to English and Vice Versa

The previous chapter brought us closer to the understanding of fan culture in terms of history through the eyes of both fans and academics. The next chapter is, however, dealing with something inherently fannish; i.e. fandom terminology, or so called *fanspeak*. The Fanlore.org website defines fanspeak as the specialized vocabulary which is used in fandoms and whose meaning might not be immediately obvious to people outside fandom.²¹ Over decades, fans have developed their very own distinctive talk tailored precisely to fandom needs. First mention of fanspeak appears as early as 1952, and a few years later, in 1959, the term is verified by an independent entry in Richard Eney's *Fancylopedia II*. Its origins are tied to the science fiction community but has long since spread across all fan communities.

Fanspeak is a highly complex system of terminology, coined words, adopted expressions, abbreviations, genres and subgenres, and ratings and warnings, allowing for a very specific categorisation of fanfiction and a very efficient system of search filters. There is a common terminology shared generally amongst all fandoms and then there are fandom-specific terms as well. All of the vocabulary is a product of fandom evolution and as such has been a subject to a diachronic change. The fanspeak constantly evolves and individual terms are replaced by newer ones, thus at times the old and new co-exist in the fandom at the same time, used simultaneously. The shift from offline to online fandom also saw the change of prominence - some terms became obsolete and ceased to be used, while other terms were coined to adapt to a new environment.

For fans, fanspeak is a way to express creativity, uniqueness and strengthens the sense of community. Last but not least, it is a very efficient tool to navigate the sheer amount of fanfiction available these days, especially in an online sphere. The online sphere is also where most of these terms could be found nowadays. As already mentioned above, online web archives and authors themselves use them to categorize their creations for easier orientation and targeted searching.

While many terms may sound straightforward and familiar to an ordinary reader, a number of them is nearly unintelligible to a mundane observer. For example, *comedy* is known perfectly well as a quite common genre, and rightfully so. *Role play* fiction is decipherable

²¹ "Fanspeak," Fanlore, last modified March 19, 2015, <https://fanlore.org/wiki/Fanspeak>.

as well if we rely on the phrase semantics. On the contrary, a fan-specific term *lime* certainly does not refer to a piece of citrus fruit, just as *watersports* does not refer to any aquatic sport, or any sport for that matter. Readers well versed in fanspeak are able to decode these labels and choose stories accordingly, after their personal preferences.

4.1 Fandom Glossary

Essential to the nature of fanfiction texts are the concepts of *canon* and *fanon*. *Canon* is the original source around which a specific fandom is based, such as book, TV series, popular movie or a video game. The canonical source provides setting, universe, characters, timeline and plot that “really happened”. For consistency, all of the examples used from now on in this chapter are taken from the Harry Potter universe and its respective fandom. As an illustration, Draco Malfoy is a canonical character, and likewise Hogwarts in 1998 is the canonical setting for the Battle of Hogwarts. *Canon compliance* is a term describing the relationship between canon and its fanfiction.²² It is a sign that fanfiction was written with canon in mind, it complies with a story timeline, plot, character’s personality, etcetera. Assessment of canon compliance is not an entirely objective measure, it exists rather on a scale dependant on each individual's opinion.

In contrast to canon we define *fanon*, fan created elements or facts that are not based on the original source but are highly popular and frequently repeated within the respective fandom that invented it. Fanon may fill in the gaps of the canonical work or even contradict it. To demonstrate, Hermione Granger’s parents’ names have never been revealed in the original text. It is believed, nevertheless, that they are named Hugo and Rose, based on the names of Hermione’s children. The logic behind this is simple; Harry named his children after his parents out of sentiment, therefore Hermione might have done the same.

The last question regarding the distinction between canon and fanon is what exactly the canon comprises of. It is up to debate whether movie adaptations or other supplementary sources should be accepted as canonical. With this in mind, do we extend the scope of canon to consider *The Cursed Child* or the newest movie saga *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* as a part of the original Harry Potter series? The boundaries are not always

²² “Canon Compliant,” Fanlore, last modified December 26, 2014, https://fanlore.org/wiki/Canon_Compliant.

clear nor agreed on. It is often, again, a matter of personal preferences. In this particular case we might need to distinguish between the entire HP universe and the original HP septology.

Canonicity judgment can be argued in a similar way as with canon compliance; there is the idea of a continuum, opposite ends being canon and fanon. These opposite ends of a continuum are reflecting the underlying principle of fanfiction; (the degree of) transforming the original work. It is the length of the scale that provides endless possibilities for writers. As we will see in a moment, fanfiction can assume many shapes.

We distinguish three main types of stories. Firstly, *gen*, as in *general*, are stories that do not revolve around any romantic relationship among its characters. Secondly, *het* are stories that revolve around *heterosexual* relationships among its characters. And lastly, *slash*. Those are stories that revolve around *homosexual* (or queer) relationships among its characters. The broader understanding of slash includes both male to male and female to female relationships, while the narrow definition would only denote male to male relationships. In this narrow understanding we further differentiate between slash and femslash (female to female). Slash fanfiction is a highly controversial topic outside of fandom and at the same time the most quoted by the general public. Slash fiction will be discussed in a greater detail later on in the next chapter. The romantic relationships may be inspired by canonical couples, by perceived romantic subtext between characters or the coupling may be completely arbitrary, invented by author's creative license. Some relationships are more popular than other.

Those relationships, also known as *pairings*, or in short *ships*, are hugely popular in fandoms. When "this ship sails itself", it is meant that there is enough perceived couple's chemistry or romantic subtext to consider the relationship "real". When I say "I ship it", it means I am a fan of the particular relationship. A fan may have several ships, but only one *OTP*, which is an abbreviation for *one true pairing*. That means that the fan is dedicated to one pairing only. For majority of ships, the fans have created so called ship names. They are portmanteau words coined by fusing the characters' names together. Hence romantical involvement between Ron and Hermione would be referred to as Romione, similarly Harry and Draco would be referred to as Drarry. (Then there are the odd ones. What would you imagine under Drapple? You guessed it, it is Draco and an apple. Take your average

Granny Smith apple and now picture Draco Malfoy falling in love with it. It originally started as a mere joke on a movie scene in which Draco holds a green apple, but fans simply grabbed it and ran away with it. Hilariousness ensues.) The same naming technique may be applied to *crossovers* - stories that combine two or more fandoms together - so in this case Potterlock is a combination of Harry **Potter** and **Sherlock** Holmes fandom. Needless to add, there is a humongous number of Harry Potter crossovers but not all of them have a special name. Generally, exploration of relationships is an integral aspect of fannish writing, exploration of possibilities and “what ifs”. Character interactions often reflect author’s understanding of canon/character and/or wishes for what could have been done differently. Some relationships reflect deeply held views and opinions, while other are written purely for the purpose of entertaining (like Drapple).

If gen, het and slash were the three main story types or genres, the number of subgenres is much higher. Fanfiction authors use a universally understood set of labels categorizing the story types. Even though the following list is not exhaustive, it is sufficient for our purposes of understanding. Familiar to an outsider would be *drama* and its variations, *adventure*, *horror*, *crime* or *mystery*. An equally well-known subgenre is *comedy*, for which has been invented an additional form called *crack*, or *crackfic*. That is a humorous story driven to an extreme, often absurd or built on a ridiculous premise. And then there are *general* stories about family and friendship, written for general audience.

So far these were common subgenres (admittedly with the exception of crack). Following subgenres require longer explanations, because the meaning is not immediately obvious to a mundane observer. *Fluff* is a pleasant, sweet, warm, feel-good story. It displays positive affection between characters, romantic or not.²³ In contrast to fluff we define *angst*, a dramatic, sad story, inducing feelings of sadness, anxiety, even inner pain. Its characters often suffer a misfortune. The next one, *hurt/comfort*, is essentially a blend of the two. It contains exactly what it claims in the title; one character is being hurt in some way and the other is there to comfort them. The hurting may be of both emotional and physical nature. The caregiver-cared for relationship serves to highlight and explore their mutual feelings, and consequently the relationship becomes the focal point of the story. It may be a story of bonding, establishing mutual trust, or it may become a story of mutual dependency, too.

23 “Fluff,” Fanlore, last modified December 2, 2017, <https://fanlore.org/wiki/Fluff>.

Next is the phenomenon called *Mary Sue*. Mary Sue is not precisely a story type, but a style of portrayal of a character, who is an idealised and perfect version of self. Mary Sue may as well manifest as an author's self-insert in a story, an idealized alter-ego able to interact with the characters. Popularity of this subgenre is debatable, as parodies prevail over honest attempts. Similarly, *omegaverse*, too, is not precisely a story type. It is rather a whole imagined universe, a type of setting, the most important aspect of it being that people are born either as *alpha*, *beta* or *omega*. The whole system is based on power balance and reproductive abilities. Omegaverse is not as popular as other genres, even viewed as obscure in certain circles. To an inexperienced reader without knowledge of inner structures, character behaviour is unpredictable and incomprehensible.

And finally, *romance* stories constitute a majority of fan writing and they, naturally, explore romantic relationships among characters. Explicitness ranges from soft romance with candlelit dinners to scenes with explicit sexual content. Without further euphemisms, it is writing fan erotica that fandoms are infamous for. In fanspeak terms, explicit erotic scenes are called *smut*, or alternatively *PWP*, which is either translated as *Porn Without Plot* or *Plot? What plot?*. The archaic terms for explicit sexual scenes are *lemon* and *lime* (for those who wondered what it meant before). Although not fandom specific, *NSFW* (not safe for work) is a general label seen as well. It is a tag used to label sensitive or explicit content, the kind you would not want to be seen scrolling by in a work environment, let alone in public.

Speaking of explicit content, especially online web archives are known for their systems of ratings and tagging. The ratings evaluate content in terms of occurrence of foul language, violence and sexual explicitness. Those ratings, or labels, enable readers to avoid or specifically look for a certain type of text. It works in a similar way as any age-restricted film - it prevents or at least warns underage audiences about explicit content. One of the biggest archives Fanfiction.net uses a system based on age; it sorts stories according to their appropriateness for certain age groups. The rating categories listed on their website are kids, kids+, teen, and mature audience. It is needless to add that FF.net does not officially allow any sexually explicit content at all. Another archive, Archiveofourown.org, rates their stories in the same fashion. Their categories include general audiences, teen and up audiences, mature, and explicit (for adults only). Furthermore, they employ a system of additional tags warning about specific topics dealt with in the texts (like graphic

description of violence, abuse, drug abuse, and so on). Independent authors not publishing on web archives would usually include ratings and warnings in a story description.

Although not in a widespread use, trigger warning tags are applied as well. Generally, they forewarn about elements that may induce anxiety or panic attacks in more sensitive readers. Again, graphic description of violence or blood presence serves as an example of trigger warning. The tag format is firmly set as “#tw: element”, for instance “#tw: blood”.

As can be seen, ratings and warnings are of high importance in fandom environment. The effort to properly categorize content and at the same time to address target audience meets in one.

Allow me to stay with tagging options a little longer. A tag bar is a convenient space to inform a potential reader about tropes or established recurring themes the story in question contains. Very often, when there is a need to express a protagonist’s characteristic or other feature, the punctuation mark “!” is inserted in between the key words. An example of a fan favourite trope is Slytherin!Harry (in such a universe Harry is sorted into Slytherin, not Gryffindor) or dark!Harry (evil Harry).

So far, we have been able to sort majority of these labels into groups. Aside from these, there are other universally understood tags describing stories, this time with individual meanings. A reader is most likely to encounter the abbreviation *OOC* at one point or another. It translates as *out of character*, meaning that the character will act differently in comparison to their behaviour in canon. Not to be confused with another abbreviation, *OC*, meaning *original character*. It is a term describing a fanfiction author’s own original character not existing in canonical source. Another quite important label is *AU*, *alternate universe*. These stories deviate from original setting, timeline or plot-wise. The new universe may be thematic, like a fantasy world for fandoms originally grounded in non-fantasy setting, or it can simply alter certain elements, like what if Harry’s parents never died. And finally, one more abbreviation that calls to be explained: *RPF*, which means *real people fiction*. This type of fiction uses as its characters real-life people, most often celebrities. It is a popular type of fiction especially in *bandoms* (music band fandoms), but really, anything is possible. There is a fair share of Barack Obama fanfiction on the Internet. The last reason for tagging we will cover here is purely expressive and not

functional at all. Tags in this case serve as a form of author's self-expression, as notes and comments. A real life example would be #whynot, or #thiswasfuntowrite.

As shown above, tagging systems used in fandoms are extensive and serve a variety of purposes, but they are for the most part functional. Their main functions would be summarised as categorizing into story types, then warnings and ratings, and lastly denoting specific tropes and other properties of fanfiction. A purely expressive function of tags is only marginal and is not commonly used.

The last classification angle regarding fanfiction is their status of completedness. Majority of fanfiction is divided into individual chapters, periodically written and posted one by one. Such a work is either *completed* or a *work in progress (WIP)* (or unfinished and abandoned, in a bad case scenario). One-chapter-length stories are usually called *oneshots*. There is also a special category of fanfiction called *drabble*, which is supposed to be exactly 100 or less words long. Generally, chapter length and publishing period may vary from author to author.

Given the periodicity of publishing and interactive nature of fandom, readers' reviews and comments on previous chapters may influence an author during writing. Hellekson and Busse even talk about a notion of a work in progress as a central feature to fan studies and fan communities.²⁴ Fandom environment is highly interactive and reactions are immediate, and that means that the author-reader relationship is very much alive and constantly evolving, influence and inspiration flowing back and forth. Texts are constantly revised and renegotiated and changes are made to react in real time. While original text sources are (commonly) marked with a single authorship, fanfiction texts shift towards a collective authorship. Beta readers hold a special position within fan communities, as their primary task is to proofread stories, edit them and comment on their coherence and quality. It is a common custom to list beta reader's name (if there is one) on nearly the same level as author's. The notion of a work in progress encompasses a wide range of qualities fanfiction possesses. Constant evolvment, development, interactiveness, and last but not least, the very nature of fandom in itself. Transforming original works is in no way passive consuming of media - on the opposite, works are being reread, revisited and actively

²⁴ Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson, "Introduction: Work in Progress," in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet. New Essays*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse (Jefferson: MacFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2006), 3.

engaged with. They are becoming a work in progress, open to new interpretations and projections. In this sense the canon is never “completed”, as long as there are fans that give it new meanings and dimensions.

Fanspeak and the whole system of inner structures and rules seems overwhelming at first glance, but in reality it is a complex, well-designed system meeting fandom-specific requirements. Fans aimed to create something of their own and a language is undoubtedly one way of achieving their goals. The language, however, did not arise out of creativity and entertainment alone, but out of need. Transfer from offline to online era and exponential rise in amount of fanfiction connected with it brought an urgent demand for functional tools enabling means of control. While many of these terms have been there since the fanfiction origins, the growing need accelerated standardisation and unified usage. Online web archives played an important role in said standardisation by predefining categories and establishing unified formats. Fans themselves rely on and require such language to not only seek desired texts, but also to avoid dispreferred materials. Terms are quick and reliable way to effectively navigate fannish writing and without its knowledge, orientation for any mundane observer becomes troublesome. In short, newly invented genres and categories served as an impetus to create such language, and functional needs unified it and shaped it into the form as we know it today.

5 Slash as a Controversial Fandom Flagship

As we have established in the previous chapter, slash is a type of stories that revolve around homosexual relationships among its characters. We have also made the distinction between the broader understanding of slash (as same-sex relationships) and the narrow understanding of slash (as male to male relationships, as opposed to femslash, denoting female to female relationships). Even though the broader understanding of the term is applied here, the disproportion in amount of male slash in contrast with the amount of female slash will inevitably favour male slash in both statistics and presented case studies. Allow us to very briefly speculate about the reasons behind said disproportion; especially fans would argue that the small number of femslash stories merely reflects the small number of well-written, well-rounded female protagonists with satisfyingly developed background. The other reasons presented, this time mostly by scholars, is that females constitute the majority of fandoms and therefore its authors. It is understandable then that male protagonists more often become the object of their focus and interest. We will return to this argument in more detail later.

The term “slash” does not indicate any form of violence as the word might suggest; the origin is actually pretty harmless. In fandom beginnings, relationships between characters were written down with a slash mark “/” in between names, for example *Star Trek* characters Spock/Kirk. Nowadays it is often replaced by portmanteaus, in this particular case Spirk, but many pairings remain unnamed and the slash format remains in popular usage for its simplicity and clarity, if not tradition. With time the meaning of slash narrowed and came to signify same-sex relationship stories only.

The Spock/Kirk example is not at all accidental, because it is *Star Trek* where we trace the slash origins. In 1970s *Star Trek: TOS* (The Original Series) debuted on TV and fans began to suggest that there is perhaps something more between the show’s two main protagonists, Kirk and Spock. Fans began writing their own stories about them and thus gave birth to a new genre that came to be known as slash. Early stories were distributed via fanzines and by acquaintance with another member of a community. The modern way of distributing relies heavily on online mediated communication and a direct access to web archives. This shift removed the third person from the equation - fans were no longer dependant on their friends or anthologies compiled by someone else. This is how slash found its way from

hand-to-hand distribution and a limited number of readers to a widely discussed phenomenon, often brought into spotlight due to its controversial nature.

5.1 Slash Meets Academia

The next part aims to overview academic fascination with slash and some of the discussions connected with it. Many major scholars of fan studies, like Henry Jenkins, Camille Bacon-Smith, Joanna Russ, Constance Penley, Patricia Lamb and Diana Veith view slash as female pornography, or “pornography written by and for women”. All of these academic writers unanimously report that slash (and fanfiction as a whole) is almost exclusively a feminine genre. In her article for *The New York Times* Camille Bacon-Smith states that “women have accounted for over 90 percent of the writing”.²⁵ There are few male writers and even fewer male readers. The genre is, indeed, overwhelmingly feminine. Yet some scholars, like Joanna Russ, call for a more neutral term other than pornography. The term pornography is certainly eye-catching (as Russ admits) but there is one flaw with viewing slash as pornography or erotica alone.

Even though erotica is an aspect of slash writing, it would be a mistake to reduce the whole genre only to a fragment of it. The genre spans a large range of stories. From soft romances and gentle narratives to “first time” stories, stories of nurturing long lasting relationships, all the way to sexually explicit vignettes. Sexually explicit scenes often constitute only a fragment of a larger, elaborate narrative, as a climax of an emotionally taxing situation or simply as a part of a healthy sexual relationship. There are, of course, the PWP stories, purely sexual scenes with no context, no past, nor future. But these do not represent the genre on its whole. The slash aspect of a story is often inserted into a more traditional genre, like drama, or a larger narrative arc. The term pornography is inadequate for another reason, and that is for its association with “traditional” commercial pornography. Commercial pornography is predominantly male-oriented and concentrates on different aspects of sex and its representation. For these reasons the term “fan erotica” is more appropriate. And because this is erotica written almost exclusively by women for female readership, we are able to draw an insight from a feminist perspective.

25 Camille Bacon-Smith, “Spock Among the Women,” *The New York Times*, published November 16, 1986, <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/11/16/books/spock-among-the-women.html>.

Slash stories largely depict female sexual fantasies and those are fundamentally different from the male ones. Both Jenkins and Russ notice that the main focus is on sensuality and emotional states. "While the stories may provide detailed descriptions of specific acts, the emphasis is much more on the emotional quality of the sex than on physical sensations."²⁶ Rather than detailed description of physical acts and objectification of sex partners, which would be typical for commercial pornography, slash writers emphasise personal experience, internal feelings and emotions and use them to further characterize protagonists' personalities. It also offers an insight on relationship dynamics and their level of intimacy with each other. "The focus is often on sensuality (especially on stroking and sucking of breasts, the fondling of flesh, the massaging of backs and feet) rather than penetration and ejaculation."²⁷ High levels of affection and intimacy are the key concepts. The connection between characters is on both physical and spiritual level, the characters retain their independence, freedom and humanity while sharing trust, affection and feelings of safety. Unlike commercial porn, slash is about emotions and communication as well as about sexual experience.

There is another major difference between slash and commercial porn that has been repeatedly studied and that are roles in a relationship. Male-oriented pornography deals in binary opposites - it has clearly defined dominant and submissive roles, and strictly masculine and feminine features. Slash usually depicts a relationship between two equal partners who are defying traditional heteronormative roles. In this sense we can interpret slash "as a subversive act, wherein women can articulate a fantasy of equality between romantic partners that is difficult to achieve in heterosexual relationship"²⁸. A traditional patriarchal model does not allow this type of equality between a man and a woman. This break from heteronormative structures in order to exercise said equality requires a different literary approach. Authors intentionally mix masculine and feminine traits to present their characters as androgynous. That does not mean that the characters are genderless. Instead, slash does not impose any traditional gender roles to confine the characters in stereotypes. Jenkins explains that "slash explores the possibility of existing outside of those categories, of combining elements of masculinity and femininity into a satisfactory whole yet

26 Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 192.

27 Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 192.

28 Catherine Tosenberger, "Homosexuality at the Online Hogwarts: Harry Potter Slash Fanfiction," *Children's Literature* 36, (January 2008): 3, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/195576756?accountid=17239>.

constantly fluid entity”²⁹. For instance, character A can be strong, fast and decisive in one scene - and fragile, emotional and scared in the next. Character qualities are not linked to any gender, they are fluid and dynamic and relevant to a situation at hand.

Lamb and Veith have studied at length these androgynous features in Spock/Kirk fanfiction and they arrived at the conclusion that “Spock’s and Kirk’s relationship is not analogous to the relationship between a man and a woman”³⁰. Both characters exhibit seemingly masculine and feminine traits. Spock is both calm, highly logical and rational, but at the same time he is governed by Vulcan mating cycles and is faithful in relationships. Kirk is portrayed having multiple love affairs, he is dominant and strong, while he is also emotional and sensual. Russ agrees with Lamb and Veith and confirms the androgyny of the relationship. She then refuses to even attempt to assign gender roles.³¹ Once again, this androgyny does not aim to erase gender completely. Instead, it refuses pre-made limiting structures in order to create an even field, where characters are equal both in life and love.

The *Star Trek* case study is one of the many, but it is highly important because it was the first one, a founding stone for a genre that grew exponentially over the past few decades. The described features are present in any given piece of homoerotic fanfiction. The stereotypical heteronormative male romantic hero is in stark contrast to that. Imagine a stereotypical romantic hero: conventionally beautiful, hunky, brave, heroic, dominant, often rescuing a defenceless damsel in distress (I feel that James Bond would easily tick all the boxes). The plot is more often that not action-oriented. Now compare with a stereotypical slash hero: androgynous presenting character, usually having a major character flaw or having to face obstacles in their past (Sherlock Holmes’s drug addiction would be a good example, or else even Spock’s mixed origin of being only half-Vulcan would qualify). The plotline generally revolves around emotional states and relationships. There is, of course, plot development, however, it serves relatively a complementary role.

There is another quite typical feature of slash fiction, which emerged out of necessity. Unless a character is canonically presented as queer (of which there are few), the writer

29 Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 193.

30 Patricia Frazer Lamb and Diana L. Veith, “Romantic Myth, Transcendence, and Star Trek Zines,” in *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 100-101.

31 Joanna Russ, “Pornography by Women for Women, With Love,” in *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 88.

needs to address the character's sexuality. Some writers choose to implement acceptance of queerness as a characteristic of their universe. Their characters have always been aware of their sexuality and it causes no further issues, as society is supportive of it. In comparison, a majority of slash stories are characterised as "first-time" stories. The underlying theme of these stories is exploration and acceptance of one's own sexuality. In the course of a story, a character goes through stages of suppressed emotions, denial and eventual acceptance and embracing of their queerness. And lastly, in said type of stories wherein their sexuality is already established and dealt with, can be encountered relationship-centric plots, or the relationship as a whole is backgrounded in order to focus on a different aspect of a story (to illustrate, when the slash functions only as a part of a larger narrative arc). This exploration of one's sexuality is connected to something far beyond the scope of fanfiction - as we know, fandoms and fanfiction are associated with an overwhelmingly teenage-centered community. Plenty of adolescents have fought the same confusion and uncertainty regarding their sexuality at that age. Slash fiction is one of the ways of exploring it. It also reflects a growing need of queer community for representation in media; something, as they claim, traditional mainstream media fail to provide sufficiently. Nevertheless, this a topic for a discussion for sociologists, not us. This is to remind us that the queerness is not arbitrary but it serves a higher-than-literary purpose as well.

The fact remains that whenever we talk about slash and homoerotic fiction, we instinctively think about male queer couples. Now we have already suggested why that may be so (lack of autonomous female characters, feminine genre). Carolyn Heilbrun suggests another reason, this time stemming from internalized patriarchy. She expresses her disillusion that after all fighting for equality, women are still not able to free themselves from internalized heteronormative structures. She argues in three ways: "The failure of women to bond; the failure of women to imagine women as autonomous; and the failure of even achieving women to resist, sooner or later, the protection to be obtained by entering the male mainstream."³² In short, we cannot fully blame the lack of femslash on non-existent female characters. The female writers unconsciously prefer male characters and project their desires onto them, because the society has taught them that men are of

32 Brigitte Weeks, "Why Women Can't Wait," *The Washington Post*, published April 22, 1979, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/entertainment/books/1979/04/22/why-women-cant-wait/b8f00946-bd7d-4b2e-b601-0d49a1e9797f/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.5341c0350f5e.

higher value. Carolyn Heilbrun also criticises a tendency of presenting strong female characters as almost man-like. Once again, this is a topic for a discussion not for us, but this time for feminist circles.

5.2 Controversy and Reading the Subtext

It probably comes as no surprise anymore that most of these slash couples are not based on canonical relationships. From the vantage point of an ordinary reader, even if a character is not explicitly written as heterosexual, the general assumption is that they are. Many people from general public therefore react negatively at them being presented as queer in fanfiction texts. This discrepancy between public assumption and fannish interpretations gave rise to controversial reputation of slash. Whenever mainstream media mention fandoms and fanfiction, explicit slash sequences and art are presented for their shock value. It would not be the first nor the last time when an actor portraying the character in question is confronted with such explicit content (during talk shows or cons, for example). The public is shocked and possibly disgusted, the actor embarrassed. Slash has thus become a controversial flagship of fandom.

Alternatively, authors of the original content are asked whether they agree or disagree with fannish interpretation but these questions are mostly tied to the existence of fanfiction in general. Slash as a genre is accused of fetishization of same-sex relationships - which fans reject with their queer representation counterargument. It is fair to admit that slash community provides safe space for exploring various sexual quirks and preferences (in fact, there is copious amount of them) but it is important to reflect back on a part-whole relationship. Just like slash does not represent fanfiction as a whole, this section of slash writing does not represent the genre as a whole.

This controversy and narrow perception of slash is one of the reasons researching and explaining the genre is so critical. The status of slash is not a closed category - it is constantly evolving in reaction to fandom environment and society in general. Perhaps when the time comes and being gay is no longer different from being heterosexual, the genre will be deprived of its controversial nature. But until then, slash ought to be recognized not just for its explicit content, but for its contribution it brings in fan studies as well. Slash writing is, in many ways, progressive. It defies traditional gender roles and attempts to function beyond those categories. It offers an alternative approach to enjoying

erotica and it is open to see sexuality as freeing rather than constricting. At the same time, the genre is still written within boundaries that affect its authors, albeit unconsciously. Unlike new, original narratives, slash stories are bound to its origin narratives and adopt its elements, and therefore cannot be completely free of traditional persisting structures. It is a question for the future whether it retains its progressive approach and continues to challenge societal norms and perceptions or whether it falls as a victim of its own internal rules and becomes a predictable stereotypical (albeit differently) genre of literature.

6 Harry Potter & Relationships

6.1 The *Harry Potter* Series

Harry Potter is a popular series of seven books written by British author Joanne K. Rowling, published between years 1997 and 2007 by Bloomsbury Publishing. The books have been adapted into eight movies and translated into eighty languages³³. Following the series' commercial success, four official companion books were written by Rowling, set in the *Harry Potter* universe (*The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, a sequel *The Cursed Child*, *Quidditch Through the Ages*, and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*), and many more unofficial companion books written by other authors.

The main narrative arc of the series follows the life of a wizard named Harry Potter, studying at the time at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry (each book corresponding to one of the seven school years). The stories follow Harry's fight against Lord Voldemort, a dark wizard who killed Harry's parents during the first wizarding war. The immortality-seeking dark wizard believes in subjugating to his rule all non-magical folk and cleansing the magical community of all muggle-born witches and wizards, his pureblood policy not unlike Nazi ideology. The second wizarding war results in Lord Voldemort's defeat at Harry's hands.

The series is most often described as fantasy, but it falls into several genres of literature: not only fantasy, but children's literature and young adult literature as well. The world of Harry Potter contains typical elements of fantasy setting, the most obvious being usage of magic and presence of magical creatures. But unlike typical self-contained fantasy world (like Tolkien's Middle Earth), Rowling's world is embedded into our own reality. How many young readers secretly hoped their Hogwarts letter would arrive? But aside from fantasy setting, *Harry Potter* is first and foremost about Harry's journey through life. In that sense it could be viewed even as a bildungsroman. The book started as a child story, containing magic and enchantments and flying brooms. But as the main protagonist matured, so did the themes. The books make the step towards a young adult genre and deals with adolescence, coming of age and themes of responsibility. The main narrative arc

³³ "500 Million Harry Potter Books Have Now Been Sold Worldwide," Pottermore, published February 1st, 2018, <https://www.pottermore.com/news/500-million-harry-potter-books-have-now-been-sold-worldwide>.

of Harry's life is further saturated with additional subplots of mystery, adventure, and even romance.

Harry Potter is no longer just a series of novels; it has long become an international phenomenon with great impact on literature and most importantly of all, on an entire generation of readers, nowadays in their 20s and 30s. One of the most frequently proposed reasons for its popularity is the series element. To explain that in more detail, the entire generation attached to a story that grew up with them. As the readers grew older, also the book became more mature and dealt with far heavier subjects than before. So this is the magic formula that made the series so well-loved. And who does not want a bit of magic in their daily life?

6.2 The Boy Who Lived & The Half Blood Prince

In order to carry out an in depth analysis of metamorphosis of relationships, a specific pair of characters needs to be selected and examined in a great detail. For this purpose, the author decided to focus on the main character of the series, Harry Potter, and find a complementary character with developing relationship and/or interesting dynamics in relation to Harry Potter, allowing for personal reinterpretation and reinvention possibilities from the viewpoint of fanfiction authors. Severus Snape was selected as the second character.

The relationship between Harry Potter and Severus Snape is the most progressive one in the series. First and last mention of Snape in the series changed from being described as having “greasy black hair, a hooked nose, and sallow skin”³⁴ and eliciting a sharp hot pain across Harry's scar to the title of “probably the bravest man I ever knew”³⁵. Progressive as it was, the change was not always for the better; their relationship dynamically evolved for seven books, ranging from scowls to pure hatred to understanding and forgiveness, not necessarily in such order.

As the entire series is told from Harry's point of view, it only makes sense to have Harry's insight as a vantage point for the analysis and which character offers the most complex relationship of all? Only few fictional characters have managed to elicit so much love and

34 Joanne K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1997), 94.

35 Joanne K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and Deathly Hallows* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 607.

hate at the same time and provoke such heated discussions as Severus Snape. Celebrated as a hero by some, despised as the ultimate villain by others. Pottermore website sums up perfectly the seven-books-long struggle to make sense of Hogwarts' Potion Master: "It took a long time to understand Severus Snape"³⁶.

To contextualize Harry Potter/Severus Snape fanfiction, the work provides an overview of the source narrative. This introductory part to their characterisation and key concepts provides a frame upon which the fanfiction analysis is built. The following lines outline how their relationship developed throughout the books.

In the first book, *The Philosopher's Stone*, Snape's character is built as of a main villain (Lord Voldemort occupying the role of defeated evil, therefore not an imminent threat). Snape constantly verbally attacks Harry during potion classes and Harry receives nothing but unfair treatment. At one point Harry is even convinced that Snape is trying to kill him. In the end we learn that Snape was actually trying to save Harry's life and that Snape's hate is actually a remnant of his hate on James, Harry's father, from his own school years. In the end, Harry metaphorically faces Snape during the last obstacle to obtain philosopher's stone, a riddle on a table along with seven flasks of potions.

The Chamber of Secrets follows in the "trend" of Snape humiliating Harry. In the same book, Harry formally duels Snape for the first time in the Duelling Club, at the time led by professors Snape and Lockhart.

The third instalment, *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, brings back all four Marauders - Remus Lupin, as new defence against the dark arts teacher, Sirius Black, a prisoner escapee, Peter Pettigrew, a first wizarding war traitor, and James Potter, Harry's father and a leader of Marauders who tormented Snape during school years. Snape's hostility towards Harry and all his friends escalates and affects also Lupin and Black, whom he tries to either compromise or have killed.

The fourth book, *The Goblet of Fire*, reveals that Snape used to be lord Voldemort's spy and follower, but was not punished after his fall, and now works for Dumbledore who firmly trusts his allegiance for unknown reasons.

36 "The Chapter That Made Us Fall in Love With Severus Snape," Pottermore, accessed February 10th, 2019, <https://www.pottermore.com/features/chapter-that-made-us-fall-in-love-with-severus-snape>.

The fifth book, *The Order of the Phoenix*, intensifies their relationship with Occlumency lessons. Harry accidentally sees Snape's worst memory and sees him vulnerable for the first time. That unleashes Snape's anger and while Harry begins to understand Snape's resentment for his father, it does not improve their relationship, only making it more tense.

The Half-blood Prince is Snape's tale in disguise. The book ends with Snape killing Dumbledore and fleeing Hogwarts afterwards. Harry only feels pure rage and betrayal, even murderous intentions to avenge the deaths of Sirius and Dumbledore.

And finally, *The Deathly Hallows* unravels in the very end the entire Snape's backstory of loss of love and his shifted allegiance. Harry does his best to honour Snape's memory and even names his youngest son after him.

As can be seen, for the most part Harry and Snape stood in opposition to each other, at the same time formally being on the same side of the war. They constantly clash and their personal relationship prevents them from achieving their common goals and oftentimes causes more harm than good (as in fifth book where Snape unwillingness to talk to Harry eventually leads to Sirius's death).

This gradual uncovering of Snape's personal backstory reflected in his fluctuating popularity amongst Potter fans. Fannish reception of Snape noticeably differed with each newly published book - initially he was presented as an openly hostile character, unattractive, intimidating students, even bordering on evil. The public opinion changed when his true loyalty and motives were revealed in the seventh book. This shift in opinion was reflected in fanfiction as well - early fictional stories often present Snape as a villain, later stories are far more forgiving, sometimes portraying Snape as a tragic hero, even. But it is important to keep in mind that the entire septology is written in Harry's point of view - should it be told from Snape's point of view, the roles would be likely reversed or at the very least, the characters would be described very differently.

On top of that, movie adaptations and especially Alan Rickman (who played the role of Severus Snape) made an enormous favour to Snape's character and very strongly influenced public image of Snape. In movies he is presented as fairly attractive, charismatic and much older than he is in the books. Rickman's Snape is smooth, suave, dignified, and full of pride - book-Snape is snide, greasy, and drowning in ill-made past

decisions. It is therefore movie adaptations that Snape's popularity owes a great deal to and gradually replaces a book version of his character in the minds of fans who like him.

If we assume that Lord Voldemort was presented as Harry's archetypal enemy, then Snape (along with Umbridge) was presented in the series as Harry's personal enemy. Snape's hostility towards Harry was not grounded in Harry's role of a hero; rather, Snape's grudge was held against Harry's parentage, which connected the loss of Snape's greatest love (Lily, Harry's late mother) and a memory of his bully (James, Harry's late father). As a result, Harry was a constant living reminder of Snape's two greatest weaknesses.

Lily is an element that ties the two characters together and symbolises in the series pure love. She represents two very distinct kinds of love with connection to Harry and Snape. With Harry, it is unconditional maternal love, so strong it averted the Killing Curse. With Snape it is a different kind altogether. This time it is dedicated, if not obsessive love.

In many aspects, Harry and Snape are polar opposites. Harry is young, well-loved, surrounded by close friends, emotional and attractive, but sometimes also brash and overly heroic. On the other side, Snape is older, generally despised and therefore solitary, unattractive, emotionally cold (he has the emotional range of a wooden spoon) and strict, especially towards Hogwarts students. Furthermore, the two characters have a different stance on rules and authority. While Harry goes frequently against the rules and is rewarded for it (like receiving House Points when disobeying the rules and leaving to fight the mountain troll in *The Philosopher's Stone*), Snape abides by rules, yet he is perceived strict and unwilling (like in the *Order of the Phoenix* scene when underage Harry wants to join the Order). Snape was always a follower, but never a master (as a Death Eater to Lord Voldemort and as a spy and soldier for Dumbledore). On the contrary, Harry assumes the role of a leader (he leads the practising group called Dumbledore's Army in fifth book, for example) and Dumbledore was more of a grandfather figure than a teacher to him.

This pattern of leader-follower, however, does not translate into their personal relationship. What sounds better, Harry and Snape or Potter and Severus? Does one of the name pairs sound a bit more natural? That is because their social status is expressed through naming and Snape is always presented in a position of authority (whether Harry recognizes him as a person of authority is an entirely different story). Whether as a teacher, mentor, more experienced and skilled soldier, or simply as an older person. Snape uses his dominant

position to verbally attack Harry and puts him into detention as often as he can. Only once the roles are reversed during Occlumency lessons, when Harry manages to access Snape's worst memories; at that point Snape is put on an equal level with Harry and he is humiliated, and reacts violently (he breaks potion vials when throwing Harry out of his office). As a result of this canon depiction, fanfiction rarely depicts Harry in a position of authority over Snape as well. The exceptions to the rule are mostly AUs (alternate universe stories) or stories within which Harry attains some kind of a title enabling his position of authority (like the Master of Death, or when Harry becomes a head of a powerful wizarding family).

Despite all these dissimilarities, there is a number of parallels that can be drawn between these two men as well. Firstly, they are both of mixed-blood origin and one of the parents belonged to an ancient wizarding bloodline. Despite that fact both grew up in a muggle neighbourhood. Moreover, their childhood was not exactly happy, they were both raised in an abusive household. It is up to speculation how differently their lives would have unravelled should they have been raised in a supportive family that develops their specific talents. Later in life, both Harry and Snape made some brash questionable decisions that came to haunt them in the long run; in Snape's case it is the decision to join Lord Voldemort's ranks and thus revealing the prophecy to him, which ultimately led to Lily's death. In Harry's case it is the already mentioned rescue mission to the Ministry of Magic to save Sirius, which led to Sirius's untimely death.

Between Harry Potter and Severus Snape, there are several key scenes in the series that had a major impact on their relationship or on how it is interpreted. In no particular order, perhaps the most revealing and powerful scene is the Pensieve memory in which Snape weeps in Dumbledore's office after Lily's death. This scene shows Severus Snape as vulnerable as never before or afterwards. The scene is one of the few where Snape can be seen emotional. The emotional weight of the scene lies in scarcity of seeing such sorrow in Snape; the death of his greatest love becomes his greatest tragedy. The scene also finally reveals his true loyalty and the reason why Dumbledore trusted him when no one else would. Speaking of Dumbledore, the second scene belonging on this list is actually a scene of his own death. The scene unites all three characters (Harry, Snape, and Dumbledore) on the top of the Astronomy Tower. For unbeknown reasons to Harry, Snape kills weakened Dumbledore. Snape is seen by Harry as a cold-blooded murderer and a traitor, while the

death was in fact planned long ago and agreed upon by Snape and Dumbledore. Harry is at the moment quite literally frozen by Snape and has no power to defy him. The scene contains all elements typical for their relationship - mutual animosity, distrust, later hate and anger, secrets, and hidden motivations. Upon second reading, understanding and forgiveness is added. The third and final scene has been already mentioned - it is Snape's worst memory featuring James Potter. This memory or rather what followed after helped to shape Snape's personality and showed the roots of hostility towards Harry Potter.

To summarise, the relationship between Harry Potter and Severus Snape is very dynamic and takes on many forms. Their dynamic could be likened to one of good and evil. In the beginning, Harry is presented as an inherently good character, while Snape as an inherently bad one. This dynamic evolves throughout the books, as we learn about Snape's motivation and loyalties, and the representation of the characters shifts from black and white to shades of grey. Snape's character develops from hated potion master and an ex-Death eater to Dumbledore's loyal spy with tragic personal backstory. Harry, on the other hand, is no longer a wizarding poster boy; he becomes a soldier in a war he did not want and discovers the darkness within him.

6.3 The Relationship in Fanfiction

There are several commonly recurring issues in Harry Potter and Severus Snape fanfiction. Firstly, the stories deal with the complicated history they have in common: coming to terms with Snape's love for Lily and Snape's changed allegiance, Snape's past as a Death eater and present membership of the Order of the Phoenix. Their mutual animosity in and outside Hogwarts. Slash stories portraying a romantic relationship between Harry and Snape negotiate a number of different problems; the largest obstacle is their age, Snape being about twice Harry's age and being in a position of authority over Harry, in a role of a teacher. Such relationship would be of course not only morally wrong, but also illegal. To avoid that, these slash stories are opted to be written as a sequel, set years after the canonical era, making the relationship legal, although with age gap. The other option is to incorporate alternate universe elements making the relationship equal, such as time travel. Such romantic stories almost always present a moral dilemma and feelings of inappropriateness and wrongness over their romantic feelings.

7 Comparative Analysis of Fanfiction Corpus

7.1 Compiling the Fanfiction Corpus

The comparative analytical part of this thesis focuses on a selected corpus of fanfiction texts and the therein depicted relationship between Harry Potter and Severus Snape. This part details the methods and criteria applied for compiling the aforementioned literary corpus of fanfiction texts for relationships analysis. Selected fanfiction texts are then compared with the canonical source they are based off, namely the *Harry Potter* series.

In the pre-digital fanfiction era, the majority of fanfiction texts was published either via fan-produced fanzines, or directly exchanged between fans in a printed form. However, the main interest of this thesis lies in the digital fanfiction era and specifically the presence of fanfiction across the world wide web. Therefore, as its main source, the thesis uses fanfiction texts published on the Internet. Due to the large number of fanfiction available on the Internet, it was thus necessary to establish selection criteria allowing for unbiased corpus compilation. Online fanfiction web archives were chosen as the most feasible option as a source medium. These websites draw together a large number of authors and fanfiction readers alike, and allow targeted searching for specific story types. Although not all authors choose to publish their works on these websites, it is still the preferable option as opposed to seeking individual texts at random.

As the source of the texts in the corpus was chosen the online fanfiction web archive called Archiveofourown.org. The site was chosen for being a web archive with wide readership, for its inclusive policy of all ratings and genres, and for its effective system of search filters. The site was accessed as of December 30th, 2018, and the corpus was compiled from the results valid to this date.

The following search filters were applied:

Firstly, a fandom was selected, *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling, a book series. All crossovers were excluded from the results. This produced 175,495 hits matching the criteria. Secondly, the language of fanfiction was narrowed down to English only. This produced 159,384 hits. As can be seen, English is the prevailing language of fanfiction. This includes writing by both native and non-native speakers of English, which is reflected in literary and language level of fanfiction. Many non-native speakers choose to write their stories in

English in order to reach a wider audience. Thirdly, only completed works were taken into consideration. Only completed works can provide the full metamorphosis of relationship and finished narrative arc. It also allows to critique a story as a whole. This criteria further limited the number of results to 135,897 hits. Additionally, all ratings and all genres were accepted, in order to achieve diversity of texts and discovering different instances of portrayal of sought relationship. And finally, two essential condition were set; the story must either contain the relationship between Harry Potter and Severus Snape, or it must contain these two characters as protagonists of the story. These restrictions further narrowed down the number of hits to the final count 5,628 stories matching all the criteria listed above.

Lastly, the results were sorted by kudos, descending. The system of kudos is most closely likened to the system of “likes” on the social website Facebook. In other words, the results are sorted from most favourite to least favourite, as rated by readers. Of the 5,628 hits matching the criteria, only the top 3 results were selected for comparative analysis and henceforth comprise the fanfiction corpus for this thesis.

7.2 “Escaping the Paradox” by Meri

“Escaping the Paradox” is a oneshot alternate universe story written by Meri which proposes an alternate timeline in which Harry’s and Severus’s relationship has a chance to develop under a different set of circumstances. That is achieved by using time-travel as the means of progressing the story in a different direction as opposed to the canonical narrative.

A disclaimer is placed at the beginning of the work, in which the writer under the pen name Meri states that “I completely acknowledge that JKR created this world and everything in it”³⁷. A disclaimer is a typical feature of fanfiction which credits the rightful owner of copyright and renounces any claims of ownership of original characters. Alongside the disclaimer, in the introductory section to the story, Meri shares their belief that “I think Harry and Severus are much happier with my version of things than they were with hers [Rowling’s]. Just saying”³⁸. There is an apparent desire to reconcile old enemies and to extract whatever good is hiding inside Snape’s character. The author attempts to look for a

37 Meri, “Escaping the Paradox,” Archiveofourown.org, published 19 April 2008, accessed 30 December, 2018, https://archiveofourown.org/works/2060?view_adult=true.

38 Meri, “Escaping the Paradox.”

brighter future but at the same time acknowledges that Snape's character is not easily turned around for the light side, as there will always be some darkness within.

The prologue is set in the Post-epilogue Era³⁹ and opens with a scene of Harry Potter accidentally being thrown back in time during working on a dark magic case with a stolen time device. This jump in time throws Harry Potter back to Hogwarts (in the Marauders Era) and suddenly makes him senior to now first-grade Severus Snape by whopping 12 years. While Harry Potter retains all memories of his past (technically now the future) and recognizes Severus Snape for who he is and is meant to be, to Severus Snape, Harry is just a stranger, and suspiciously behaving one at that.

Because the story is told from Harry's point of view, "Escaping the Paradox" is chiefly about the metamorphosis of relationship which is experienced by Harry. There are two levels to this story: on a character level, the story follows Harry's conscious effort to readjust his old beliefs and to repay Severus Snape what he could not during his own timeline. Additionally, it outlines his desire to foster this time a healthy, mutually supportive relationship. On a second, higher level, the story proposes that there might a different possible future for Snape, which is not marked with emotional abuse and a lack of financial stability.

Let us start with the second level. The idea of changing the future and consequently changing one's fate is very prominent in the story. In a way, it is Snape's redemption arc, allowing his character to act unburdened by his past mistakes and relived tragedies. It provides Snape's character with a clean slate and a freedom of choice. The story discusses the importance of such choice; in his original timeline, Snape comes from a poor, emotionally abusive family, where he has virtually no freedom of choice and his social status causes him being the popular victim of bullying. This inevitability, or inability to escape his social status is depicted well in the robe-shopping scene. As his mother is unable to obtain any second hand school robes, she decides to shrink to size some of her old ones.

"I'll have to charm my school robes to fit him."

³⁹ Note: the Harry Potter fanfiction universe generally recognizes several eras: the Founders Era (the time when Hogwarts school was founded), the Marauders Era (the time when Lily Evans, James Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin and Peter Pettigrew were at school), the Hogwarts Era (the temporal setting of Harry Potter books), the Post-epilogue or Post-Hogwarts Era (the post-war adult lives of the main characters), and finally the Next-gen Era (the era of Harry's and everyone else's children, "next generation").

“What if he isn't sorted --”

“Oh, he'll be in Slytherin, Eileen said as if it were a foregone conclusion.”⁴⁰

The family tradition destines him to be sorted into Slytherin and this is further reinforced by this scene, presenting the fact as a seemingly inescapable fate. As we know from the canon series, he is indeed later sorted into Slytherin, thus fulfilling his destiny. The Slytherin environment, said to produce dark wizards, leads him to befriend future Death eaters and later on join Lord Voldemort's ranks. This inclination to dark magic causes his falling out with Lily, his love and his only good friend.

During the new, alternate timeline, however, he is given the choice and the possibility to control his own life for the first time. Harry provides him with new sets of robes, all necessary books and other equipment and promises to do the same every year, provided he studies well. While Harry believes this will put him on equal footing with other students, Dumbledore expresses his concerns regarding helpfulness of such generosity:

“That may not help him as much as you might hope it would. He comes from abject poverty. That is likely to leave its mark on him as much as starting school in patched robes.”⁴¹

Dumbledore suggests that his fate may not be reversed as easily as by buying new clothes every year, that the imprint of his “abject poverty” cannot be erased completely. Still, freed from crippling financial instability and given the freedom to delve into his studies, Snape is eventually sorted into Ravenclaw and becomes, along with Lily, the best student of the year. Their friendship remains unaffected, with Harry's help. Despite being in Ravenclaw, Snape eventually finds his way among Slytherins and Death eaters and considers joining them. His final decision returns him back to Dumbledore's side. In the end, the redemption arc is seemingly completed and Snape becomes a positive character. The story suggests that given the right choices at the right time, even Snape can be a hero.

To clarify, the story is not intended to subvert the original narrative, but rather to expand it in the sense of developing Snape's character. Many a times, the motivation behind Snape's actions is unclear - does it stem from his innate nature, or is it to do with the past he experienced? The story attempts to answer this question.

40 Meri, “Escaping the Paradox.”

41 Meri, “Escaping the Paradox.”

And finally secondly, on a character level, Harry's role in Snape's redemption arc. "Escaping the Paradox" is a typical what-if story, in this particular case fuelled by Harry's desire to perhaps repay what he could not, and to repair what he can. Harry himself admits the reason for his actions:

"And while he didn't care that much for the man this little boy would become, he owed him more than he could ever repay. One of the things he'd regretted when all was said and done was that he'd never got a chance to make peace with Snape."⁴²

Harry admits there is no likeability to Snape, let alone friendship, but he feels there is a chance for repayment, for reconciliation, even if the other person will never be aware of it. Harry understands very well that tampering with time has possibly grave consequences but he is accepting the risk of a time paradox in order to improve Snape's prospects.

Another transformative element of this fanfic is the switching of dominant and submissive roles. In the canon, Snape occupies the role of a teacher and mentor and stands in a position of authority. This story proposes the complete opposite. In the alternate timeline, Harry becomes the older, mentoring figure, also acting as a guardian of sorts. The power dynamics in their relationship is completely different to the one in books; at this point in the story, Harry is the one seasoned soldier who lost his family and friends to the war and Snape is the impressionable pupil looking for a role model. The relationship is also, as opposed to the books, positive and nurturing, and mutually supportive. This is the kind of story where the characters would be referred to as Potter and Severus, not the other way round. This switch in dominance is marked by one simple line, at the moment when Harry (or should we say Potter) addresses Snape (Severus) for the first time.

"Can I pay for Sna...Severus' robes?"⁴³

The transition is more natural in Harry's internal monologues. At the beginning of the story, Harry keeps referring to Snape by his surname. But as the story progresses, he begins to think of him as Severus. They develop a very intimate relationship, unlike in the Rowling's series.

The reconciliation of old enemies is complete and even more so. The story successfully imagines what it would be like had Snape been given chance to decide his fate. Even

42 Meri, "Escaping the Paradox."

43 Meri, "Escaping the Paradox."

though this version of Snape's character is overwhelmingly positive, it still manages to retain and capture some of his stinginess. The character, although newly supported on multiple levels, does not lose its plausibility. Especially the robe-shopping scene, where his character is established. Meri uses the same starting point for Snape's character as Rowling does: the first mention is of a greasy, skinny boy, with distrustful look and confrontational approach. This provides the character with familiar credibility. Once youthful version of Snape is accepted by the readers as authentic, the story offers alternate plotline, while simultaneously staying true to the character. It is further easily accepted that Harry feels something akin to guilt, some incentive to help alleviate Snape's pain that is surely to come. Thus begins their unforeseen relationship, far closer than the books suggest, as they end up in a romantic relationship.

This relationship is just as much about what could have been as about what Harry's past experiences and knowledge made it to be. Without any doubt, Harry would not have acted this way had he not known the consequences the future brought in his original timeline. On the other hand, the central motif of the story is the one of a choice. And a choice is what Severus had been given and Harry provided. What can be discussed is how well he chose and whether it is at all believable.

According to the writer's Archiveofourown profile, Meri has written and published 93 works over the span of nearly 11 years, 38 of them in the Harry Potter fandom. The language Meri uses and fluency of the narrative suggests a seasoned writer. Aside from Snape's character who has undergone a change, all of the other characters stay true to the books, which is sometimes difficult to achieve with alternate universe stories. The fanfiction is internally divided into the same chronological sequence of seven school years as Rowling's series is; this allows direct comparison of timelines and character development. (Which is, of course, the aim of the story.) The story uses to its advantage all perks of fanfiction (no need for narrative exposition, can freely skip complementary plot in order to focus on key scenes), flows naturally, and the language is accurate and reader-friendly. No inconsistencies, grammar or syntax errors have been observed while reading the story. That refers to an almost professional level of beta readers proof-reading the story, the introductory paragraph specifically mentions three beta readers by their nicknames. Overall, "Escaping the Paradox" is a very well-written fanfiction with rounded characters, cohesive storyline and a high language level.

7.3 “With Eyes Wide Open” by suitesamba

“With Eyes Wide Open” is a oneshot Snarry fanfiction playing on an arranged/forced marriage theme. *Snarry* is a slash ship name denoting romantic relationship between Harry Potter and Severus Snape. Although the most favourite *Harry Potter* slash pairing by far is Drarry (Draco & Harry), Snarry as a pairing has a large fanbase as well.

Fanfiction with a forced marriage theme is not uncommon and usually follows a certain stereotypical format. Firstly, it is typically set in Post-Hogwarts Era/Post-war Era. The storyline is usually altered in favour of the dark forces, which either win the war or remain in a position of strong political and social influence. The story is typically told from the point of view of the “victim”, the involuntary spouse, even though the other way round can be seen as well. The marriage is then usually proposed as a part of war reparations paid by the vanquished side of the war. Harry Potter, a symbol of resistance and the light side, is traded as a spouse to the winning side. Some stories explain the trade as political one, some describe it in terms of slavery. Whichever the way, the married couple is initially put into opposition. As a story progresses, the couple starts getting to know each other and eventually fall in love, despite all expectations or circumstances. That is the stereotypical development.

This story ticks nearly all the boxes. It is told from Harry’s point of view, in the Post-Hogwarts Era. The marriage comes into equation when Narcissa Malfoy asks Harry to repay his life debt to her, doing so by marrying Snape. The marriage is said to be required by Snape’s grandfather’s will and requires him to be married at least for a year and a day in order to secure his inheritance. What is more, the marriage serves Narcissa’s other plans, and neither of the men is particularly happy about it.

The story follows a traditional development of relationship from strangers to lovers. In the beginning, the idea of Harry marrying his former potion master is treated as absurd and completely unacceptable. Harry argues that he cannot marry his former teacher, twice his age, let alone someone who fell in love with his mother.

“But...Snape? He hates me! I can’t marry Snape. Ask something else. Anything else!”⁴⁴
Given their history of mutual distrust and arguments, it is understandably hard to picture

⁴⁴ suitesamba, “With Eyes Wide Open,” Archiveofourown.org, published December 27, 2012, accessed December 30, 2018, <https://archiveofourown.org/works/610909>.

one another as a potential life partner. At one point, the idea of marriage is even compared to a death sign:

“He stared into his teacup. He thought he could see the Grim if he squinted.”⁴⁵

Although briefly, the story clearly identifies inequality in their relationship. The marriage is perceived as a chance to balance such inequality, to establish them on the same level as peers.

“There was a sea of history between them, and more than anything else it had felt, until this very moment, unequal. Unbalanced. Harry—younger than Severus. Less educated, less accomplished, less experienced.”⁴⁶

Meanwhile, Harry clearly states that he intends to uphold his part of the contract only because his vows bind him to:

“And that was why Harry was here. Honor. Obligation. He’d made a promise and he would keep it, even—even if it did mean marrying the man he had despised until...well, until he had finally understood, back in Dumbledore’s office, when he thought Snape was dead.”⁴⁷

The story progresses when the marriage contract is negotiated and sealed, and the two newly-weds begin to live together. From initial indifference, they slowly develop a deep loving relationship that reaches far beyond the boundaries of obligation.

“And that is something wholly new to me. Loving—and being loved in return.”⁴⁸

This line refers to the transformation that Snape’s character undergoes in the course of the story. Initially in a role of a cold, indifferent teacher-turned-forced-husband, Snape becomes a caring loving partner to Harry. His character becomes more emotional, sensual and supportive. The metamorphosis of relationship in this story manages to span the entire spectrum. From strangers to lovers, from enemies to closest friends. The story suggests that there is a deep understanding to be found between the two of them and a potential for a long, nurturing relationship. The nurturing aspect demonstrates as a play on the hurt/comfort genre. Harry falls ill in the course of the story and it is Severus who comes to his side, comforts him and nurses him back to health. The caregiver-cared for relationship

45 suitesamba, “With Eyes Wide Open.”

46 suitesamba, “With Eyes Wide Open.”

47 suitesamba, “With Eyes Wide Open.”

48 suitesamba, “With Eyes Wide Open.”

exposes vulnerability in one of the partners and subsequently promotes mutual trust and intimacy in their relationship. They find comfort in each other's arms. The hurt/comfort aspect is not the primary appeal of the fanfiction, but it serves well to complete the arc of strangers-turned-lovers.

To a reader unaccustomed to reading slash fiction, one question must repeatedly come to mind. How come everyone is so blatantly gay? Just this story alone identifies Harry Potter, Severus Snape, Lucius Malfoy, Draco Malfoy, and Daphne Greengrass as positively queer. This is a typical approach when writing slash fiction, the narrative is set in an imagined universe where queerness is widely socially accepted and seen as common practice. Wizarding marriage law clearly does not differentiate between same-sex marriages and traditional marriages (as opposed to majority of real life countries). But how does that compare with the original books, where none of these characters are presented as queer? "With Eyes Wide Open" in particular seems to bridge the canon narrative to fanon interpretation through bisexuality. For example, Harry's sexual preference for men as well as women is introduced as follows:

"No! he hissed, flustered. Not totally. I mean, not all the time. I like girls. Women. Too."⁴⁹

Similarly, Snape's character is said to have female love interests in the past, but preferring males as of late:

"Oh, he has made his preferences for the male gender perfectly clear of late, Narcissa answered, her voice frigid."⁵⁰

The story uses the canon narrative as a starting point to develop a new narrative, one which alters sexualities of characters to suit specific needs of slash fiction.

Moreover, another typical feature of slash relationship can be traced in the narrative. It is the attention to sensuality and emotional states of characters. Even though the story contains a number of sexually explicit scenes, the focus is on mental well-being as well. Sensuality, not necessarily of sexual nature, depicts intimacy between the partners and illustrates the comfort they find in each other's arms.

49 suitesamba, "With Eyes Wide Open."

50 suitesamba, "With Eyes Wide Open."

“Merlin that hand felt good. Cool, dry, soothing. He wanted to lean into it, to close his eyes and admit to Severus that he’d probably ruptured his magical core or something worse and let him carry him up to bed and tuck him in, lie next to him and cradle him in his arms. With effort, he pulled back from Severus’ hand.”⁵¹

This internal monologue in particular communicates sensuality through tactile vocabulary, starting with verbs like soothe, lean into (something), carry (someone) up, tuck (someone) up, lie next to (someone), cradle (someone in one’s) arms, and body parts important for senses like hands, eyes, and arms. Such level of sensuality is not arbitrary; firstly, the level of intimacy reflects their growing relationship and is quite typical for hurt/comfort genre. And secondly, slash is a predominantly female genre. Chapter n. 5 talks at length about its specifics and the reasons behind it. To briefly remind, female pornography prefers sensuality, intimacy, and description of emotional states as opposed to detached sexual acts.

On a formal note, the story is not written in a chapter format, it is written as a single piece. Considering the length of the story (70,621 words, or 127 pages in PDF format), reading difficulties may occur. That being said, the length of the story is also one of its strengths. The story aims for a natural, slow development of their relationship, and the explicit scenes complement the story, rather than being written at the expense of it. The length provides enough space to carefully examine everyone’s motivations, starting with Harry, Snape, and last but not least, Narcissa Malfoy. Every character has a chance to explain themselves and expand their characters beyond the span of canon, especially Andromeda Tonks’, whose character is canonically only complementary, but is now given the space to become one of the main characters. The length of the story also allows second chances and giving benefit of the doubt – many shorter stories are forced to cut straight to the action, so to speak.

The characterisation is consistent throughout the story, the plot progresses meaningfully and naturally, and does not suffer from overly information dense or redundant scenes. The story contains comedy elements which somehow even out the emotional strain put on characters and potentially heavy theme of forced marriage.

At one point the author mentions that the story was heavily beta’d by another popular Snarry writer. To what degree we may have to thank them for the resulting quality of the

⁵¹ suitesamba, “With Eyes Wide Open.”

story remains a mystery. As a result of the beta review, once again, there are no occurrences of grammatical errors or storyline inconsistencies. The language is appropriate to the story and flows well. And the last note to the story, perhaps a measure of popularity of sorts amongst fans, there are two translations of “With Eyes Wide Open” being carried out, Korean and Portuguese one.

7.4 “A Year Like None Other” by aspeninthesunlight

“A Year Like None Other” is a firm fan favourite written by aspeninthesunlight. It is a part one of a trilogy called “Like None Other” (“A Year Like None Other”, “A Summer Like None Other”, and “A Family Like None Other”, in this order). The story is just short of 790,000 words, the number referring to the first part of the trilogy only. The “Year” is a fandom classic and it was translated into seven languages, including Czech. It has also won fourteen fandom awards, including the award for Best Genfic, Best Angst Fiction, Best Alternate Universe, and Best Characterisation. The story itself has been turned into both an e-book and audiobook format, and inspired numerous artworks that accompany it. Despite the huge wave of fan response to the story, the fanfiction remains strictly non-commercial. All related artwork, translations and audiobook recordings are fan contributions, and everything is published free of charge.

Equally important, Aspeninthesunlight credits her beta reader, Mercredi, for her substantial contribution to the story. Fanfiction authors continually remind readers of importance of beta readers, who keep an eye on consistent characterisation, narrative flow, and proper language. According to Aspen, the story was inspired by two other pieces of fanfiction⁵². This is a commonplace phenomenon to be found in fandom environment, commonly named “fanfiction of fanfiction”. (To my knowledge, there is no academic term describing these occurrences.) Oftentimes, when the fanfiction piece in question is especially popular amongst readers, fan stories based on more popular fan stories may appear. The derivative approach of fanfiction can be applied on itself and produce another, even more metatextual pieces of fiction. Because intertextual nature of fanfiction requires prior knowledge of its canon, only the most popular fanfiction stories are awarded with its own fanfiction.

⁵² aspeninthesunlight, "A Year Like None Other," Archiveofourown.org, first published 30 March, 2013, and completed 9 June, 2013, accessed 30 December, 2018, https://archiveofourown.org/works/742072?view_full_work=true.

As the long list of awards suggests, the “Year” falls into several subgenres. The story can be characterised as a genfic (a general story, no romantic relationships), an alternate universe story (the story was written before *The Half-Blood Prince* was published, therefore it is canon divergent after the fifth book), family drama, and angst fic. Most importantly, it is an adoption fic. The story falls into a fandom subgenre called *Severitus*, which features a very uncommon kind of relationship to be found between Harry Potter and Severus Snape - one of a son and a father. The subgenre increased in popularity after the publication of the fifth book, which more than ever before gave space to one-on-one interactions between Harry and Snape, especially during Occlumency lessons.

Given the fact that the novel-length story only covers one school year, the relationship transforms quite slowly and the changes are very subtle; but eventually, the canonically unpleasant, sneering Snape transforms into new Snape in father-figure role. As a side note, Harry is not the only new addition to the newly formed family - Draco has been adopted by Snape during the course of the story as well. Draco and Harry are thus too introduced into a new type of relationship, this time as brothers (as opposed to school rivals). The story is, again, told from Harry’s point of view and plotline is chronologically sequenced, with the exception of memory flashbacks and clairvoyant dreams referring to future events.

The early chapters are behaviour-wise canon compliant. Snape is presented as unattractive, sneaky, and despised character. Harry is presented in his usual role of a defiant student and the animosity between the two of them is palpable:

“That slimy excuse for a teacher’ll take a thousand points off Gryffindor if I let my potion boil over again like last week.”⁵³

Snape’s behaviour in classes mirrors the canonical potion class scenes, complete with sarcastic remarks and comparing Harry to his late father:

““Then get to work!” Snape shouted. “Now, Mr Potter! Or do you think yourself above the rest of your classmates, whom I might point out are ignoring the spectacle you present and working, something you’ve never had the slightest inclination to do? I will say you come by it honestly, though. Your father was the same way, not to mention your sainted godfather--””⁵⁴

53 aspeninthesunlight, "A Year Like None Other."

54 aspeninthesunlight, "A Year Like None Other."

As can be seen, the early chapters provide characterisation consistent with the books and depict their relationship in the same way. However, it is imperative to keep in mind that in this alternate universe, alternative six year story, Snape's love for Lily is never introduced, nor is his true motivation and loyalty. Their mutual relationship is of a student and a teacher only, as yet unaffected by existence of horcruxes, which are canonically introduced in the sixth book, *The Half-Blood Prince*. If anything, their antagonistic relationship is only deepened due to the Occlumency lessons and resulting repeated mind invasions. Therefore, their relationship is reduced to their mutual distrust and animosity, and lacks the complexity that came with the sixth and seventh book. As a result, the progress in their relationship is temporarily hindered (in contrast to canon), before being steered in a wholly different direction than canon commands. Instead of impending second wizarding war, the narrative chooses a path of creating a loving family, the one thing neither of the men got to have. Gradually, they grow to care about each other and trust each other.

It could be even argued that Harry and Snape are virtually thrust into a situation that *forces* them to create a strong bond. In early chapters, Snape is sent to protect Harry on his family hospital visit, which makes him involuntarily involved in a highly personal matter. Snape initially keeps at a distance but as the situation worsens, he steps in to help, albeit hesitantly.

“Up until then, Snape hadn't done much but watch, but for that last draw he went to stand by him. Not touching, not speaking, not even casting a wordless spell to calm him. He just stood there, reminding Harry that he wasn't alone.”⁵⁵

At this point, Harry despises him yet earns for a little sympathy nonetheless. In the next days, Snape's behaviour towards him changes, if only in private, towards a more supportive approach. Harry experiences a paradigm shift and realizes that Snape might not be all that bad of a person after all:

“Conveniently ignoring the plain fact that in only two days, his entire concept of Severus Snape had undergone a radical rethinking,[...]”⁵⁶

and

55 aspeninthesunlight, "A Year Like None Other."

56 aspeninthesunlight, "A Year Like None Other."

“However much Snape might have meant his hurtful comments in the past, he didn't mean them now.”⁵⁷

Interestingly, the relationship Harry begins to form with Snape is not equivalent to any other relationship with teachers or Order members. Instead of becoming amiable with Snape, he begins to perceive him as parental figure, the same way canonical Harry looks up to Remus Lupin or Sirius Black. Snape assumes a protective role over Harry. This is where the story begins to divert from the books and brings their relationship to the forefront of the story.

When Harry donates bone marrow to his Aunt Petunia, his magical core is seriously impaired by needles and he temporarily loses his magical abilities. In a magical world fully relying on such ability, he is immediately vulnerable. Taking advantage of the situation, Lord Voldemort manages to abduct Harry and torture him, causing blindness and severe PTSD. Snape, as a Potions Master, is assigned to take care of him and find him a remedy. He accommodates him in his personal quarters, becomes his primary caregiver and their relationship is shifted in a drastically different direction, from a mentor-student to a caregiver-patient. They go on to gradually create a very strong bond. The hurt/comfort aspect is strongly present in the story:

“Harry screamed, his back a raw mess, only to find that somebody was holding him, stroking salve across his injuries. An herbal scent rose from the steaming wounds, the smell of healing potions, and Harry relaxed into the arms around him. It was all right to be touched, just now. But at the same time those hands were so caring, so loving, yes, *loving*, voices were echoing all around him. Or rather, one man's voice.”⁵⁸

Eventually, Snape becomes a strong father figure in Harry's life and adopts Draco and Harry as his own, forming an unexpected family.

“Looking his friend in the eye, Harry admitted, "I love Severus, Hermione. I love him a lot. He understands me and he's good for me and I don't want anybody else for a father.”⁵⁹

Nonetheless, Hermione voices her concerns that the relationship is not very healthy indeed:

57 aspeninthesunlight, "A Year Like None Other."

58 aspeninthesunlight, "A Year Like None Other."

59 aspeninthesunlight, "A Year Like None Other."

“You don't love him; you have an unhealthy attachment because he took care of you when you were horribly mangled on Samhain!”⁶⁰

Hermione's comment opens the question of genuineness of such relationship. While Harry and Snape have obviously formed a very strong bond, the circumstances during which it developed were extreme. Harry's utter dependence on Snape's care and potions holds his feelings a hostage. And while there is a possibility of them becoming close friends otherwise, there is a justifiable concern that the war trauma and subsequent isolation played a major role in forming a strong attachment to Snape. Whichever the way, the family seems to be happy and provides supportive environment for all family members.

The golden-thread of the story is the idea of forming a family, and how could two characters so seemingly opposite come to love each other as only family members can do. The story challenges the traditional idea of how family is defined and how it is formed. Moreover, the story deals with far heavier issues, like self-harm, PTSD, disability and death in a family. Because it is Harry who is suffering from all of the aforementioned issues, the hurt/comfort narrative arc manifests as well and exerts a strong influence on the relationship formed between Harry and Snape.

7.5 Findings

Altogether, three pieces of fanfiction have been presented and analysed. In concordance with the canonical narrative, all three stories were told from Harry's point of view, making him the central character. There is no omniscient objective narrator, so stories are told through the lens of Harry's perspective. That was not surprising, given the nature of fanfiction. Along with original characters, setting and storyline, fanfiction inevitably assumes also storytelling structures and patterns, including a point of view.

Fanfiction authors consistently stressed the importance of their beta readers, thanking them for their support and constructive criticism. From the language point of view, the stories were written cohesively, coherently and no grammar deficiencies were observed. Only one of three author's profiles provided information about their country of origin; aspeninthesunlight's profile reveals her country of origin is the United States of America, therefore making her an English native speaker. Overall, the writers used a wide range of expressions, but the use of idiomatic language was lower than expected. This could be

⁶⁰ aspeninthesunlight, "A Year Like None Other."

possibly ascribed to non-native speakers of language writing the stories. Another explanation for this phenomenon is that it is a courtesy towards less experienced readers; majority of readers do not have English as their mother tongue as well. Disclaimers were in popular use, along with a tagging and rating system. All in all, quality of the texts was high and corresponds with their popularity amongst fans/readers.

7.5.1 Character Development

Generally speaking, characterisation of the main protagonists was mostly consistent with the books. Early parts of the analysed narratives established the characters as true to the books, as judged by readers' comments and own evaluation. The beginnings of stories often employed scenes quite canonically typical to ground their characters, i.e. sitting in the Great Hall and chatting about classes, potion classes, or Harry's visits to Dumbledore's office. These scenes evoked the feelings of familiarity and introduced the characters in their natural habitat. But at the same time, their development was not hindered, and the characters were forced to react to the events and changes they were made to face. By doing so, character development was enabled.

Of the two, Severus Snape's character was developed significantly more. In the stories, Snape is presented as a much more emotional and loving character. Snape can be seen frequently laughing, crying (which canon mentions only *once*, in the final Pensieve scene in *The Deathly Hallows*), smiling, and publicly expressing a wide range of emotions. As a reminder, canonical Snape is cold and distant and his only emotional scenes are connected to memories of Lily, conveyed by Pensieve, no less. Pensieve is a medium removing the raw power of such emotional release, seeing that the scene is rather like watching a recording. His loving persona is manifested in several distinct ways: as a lover, husband, and father. Fatherly love is incomparable to a husband's love, but it is love nonetheless. Fanfiction Snape is in many aspects a humanised version of his character, his actions explained and emotions not suppressed. All in all, Snape's character is given the benefit of doubt. He is offered second chances, space to explain his actions and underlying motivation. His character arc is a redemption arc. Fans apparently want to see him do the right choices and to find love, whether it is in a form of a family or a loving partner. Again, it is up to a discussion to what degree Alan Rickman's portrayal of Snape is responsible for such

desires. To summarise, there is a tendency to make Snape's character more positive and more lovable than the books might suggest.

What about Harry? Fanfiction Harry tends to be a lot more darker and serious character than as we know him. No longer a teenager or a popular pupil, Harry is more often than not portrayed as a seasoned soldier, Order member and an Auror, who suffered great losses in the wizarding wars. He frequently deals with issues of death, trauma, loss, and betrayal. Referring to the analysed stories only, Harry is thrown back in time to deal with war trauma all by himself and unable to confide in anyone in fear of causing a time paradox, he is forced into a political marriage against his will, and lastly abducted and tortured by Lord Voldemort. Harry's character arc is one of a survivor, of persistence. Just like Snape, Harry is offered second chances as well. His second chances are mostly about finally understanding Snape and having a chance to repay him, talk to him. This desire is communicated through the two of them developing a close relationship, creating an opportunity to finally understand Snape.

There is one suggestion for further discussions: in alternate universe stories, how do we evaluate whether someone stays in character? Change of circumstances, change of events, that all has a long-reaching butterfly effect. Like, for example, Harry buying young Snape a new set of robes he could not afford on his own. What degree of a change is acceptable? Where is the line, if the starting point remains the same? AU stories do not attempt to answer these questions, but they do offer some alternatives, and it is up to the reader whether to accept them as their own or not.

7.5.2 Metamorphosis of Relationships

Although each work chose to depict the relationship in a different fashion, there are general tendencies to be found. All of the stories express a persistent desire to somehow reconcile the old enemies, to bring them together under various pretences. The proposal is that the two men are essentially the same, or at the very least have a lot in common, only the circumstances of the war prevented them from discovering as much. The stories give the characters the opportunity to talk freely and understand each other, especially regarding Snape's long hidden reasons and silent loyalties. Those are stories of regrets and second chances, chances to explain. It is about overcoming their history, spanning across two generations, and moving together towards a better future.

Equally important, the authors often work with the power dynamics in their relationship. Mostly there is a desire to put them on the same level and create a balanced relationship (like the marriage fic does), or they choose the other path of reversal the power dynamics altogether (like the time travel fic, when mentor-student roles have been flipped).

The stories explores the different roles Harry and Snape can have in relation to each other, not only as canonical mentor-student, but also as friends, lovers, life partners, or as a father and a son. It was surprising to find how strong role hurt/comfort genre played in building these relationships; as if only a physical/psychological harm could serve as an impetus for re-evaluating their relationship they had so far. Of course, there is no easy way to break through the history of animosity they have, but it is an interesting emerging pattern in building these stories. The influence of hurt/comfort genre on their relationship might be an interesting topic for further research.

Harry and Snape are two enticing characters to have interacting in a story, and even more enticing is the prospect of pushing their relationship beyond the boundaries of canon. If one can get over the social distance that divides them, which direction is most likely to be taken? Fanfiction stories attempt to answer this question and each fan has found their preference. Some enjoy seeing them together romantically, some wish to unite them in a family, and some wish, well, for them to finally sit together and have a long, heartfelt talk.

8 Conclusion

The goal that this thesis set out to reach was to provide a comprehensive handbook to understanding the cultural phenomenon of fanfiction. Even though academic interest in the field of fan studies reaches all the way back to 1980s, such studies primarily deal with the second half of the 20th century and its so called zine culture. Because of rapid technological advancement and the advent of the Internet in the 1990s, there has been a dramatic change in the way fanfiction is produced and consumed. As a result, there is a significantly smaller number of works pertaining to the new, online fanfiction era. This thesis attempted to answer the growing need for more research dealing with contemporary fanfiction residing in online spaces and to provide a comprehensive overview of the new era in the context of its historical development.

In order to understand the interpretative value contemporary fanfiction has to offer, the thesis chose to focus on one element frequently appearing in fanfiction and its depiction across various pieces of fiction. Specifically, the thesis chose to focus on the depiction of relationships and the transformation they are subjected to on the way from canonical material to a new piece of fanfiction. This metamorphosis of relationships and its recurring tropes is an indicator of strongly felt inadequacies of the source text and reflect fans diverging interpretation of characters and their mutual dynamics. Regardless of the kind of relationship in question, fanfiction exercises its power of “fixing” these relationships and probing what-if scenarios.

As the primary material for the analysis was chosen *Harry Potter*, a British literary saga written by Joanne K. Rowling, and its corresponding fanfiction universe. The *Harry Potter* series has acquired an immense fannish following that comprises one the biggest fanbases in existence. On top of that, the decade the first book was published corresponds with the decade the world wide web was put into every home; effectively making it one of the few huge fandoms that from the very beginning established their presence in online spaces and began forming their inner structures and organising fannish activities there as well (as opposed to, for example, *Star Trek* fans, who used zines as their primary medium.) To narrow down the research question, a specific pair of characters was selected for further analysis: Harry Potter and Severus Snape. The analysis compared selected corpus of fanfiction texts with the original source narrative and examined to what degree the

characterisation and relationship changed and if so, in which direction and what ways. Based on the comparison, the analysis then names the most important variables in their relationship and the way fanfiction works with them.

The thesis was structured in the following way:

The first chapter provided theoretical background on a fandom and fanfiction. The chapter defined the phenomena and put them into a larger context. The definition of fanfiction is narrowed down to its modern notion only, which is subsequently used throughout the whole thesis. And lastly, features typical for fanfiction as a genre are discussed - mainly the intertextual nature and the copyright issues that are connected with it.

The second chapter deals with two notions associated with fan communities: convergence culture and participatory culture. Firstly, convergence culture is a term describing content flow across various media types and audience migratory behaviour willing to follow said content. Media types experience change in prominence and their presence alone influences any other media type that precedes or follows; convergence is not only horizontal, but also vertical. Secondly, participatory culture studies fans and their means of communication and interactivity within the community. This notion stresses the importance of active media consumption and blurs the line between a fan and a creator.

The third chapter presented an overview of fandom history and academic interest in fan studies. Fandoms have been in existence for decades, starting with Holmesian fandom, through groundbreaking *Star Trek* fandom, to contemporary online based fandoms. As the introductory paragraph to conclusion suggested, the critical studies have not been able to fully keep the pace. Most of the listed influential works indeed focus on the second half of the 20th century, although exceptions are presented. To name just one for all, Henry Jenkins is the most influential scholar in the field of fan studies.

The fourth chapter focused exclusively on the online fandom and specifically on fandom terminology. The chapter is built as a fandom glossary: it is intended to explain all fandom-specific terms, genres and subgenres, abbreviations, tropes, and online tagging systems for rating and categorising content.

The fifth chapter is devoted to a perhaps controversial genre of fanfiction, slash. In this part, slash origin is explained, it is characterised and finally presented as an innovative genre subverting traditional heteronormative narrative values.

The sixth chapter finally introduced the *Harry Potter* series and focused on one relationship portrayed within. After the series introduction, the canonical relationship between Harry Potter and Severus Snape is analysed, including key scenes and recurring themes that might pose significant in the following analysis.

The seventh chapter is the comparative analysis itself. The beginning details the methods and criteria for compiling the fanfiction corpus and reasons behind resulting selection. Finally, three pieces of fanfiction are introduced and analysed in terms of genre, characterisation, depiction of relationships, and lastly comments of literary level of writing.

Conclusion constitutes the chapter eight and summarises the goals and findings of the thesis. Résumé and list of bibliography comprise the final part of the thesis.

The textual analysis focused on the intertextual relationship to the canonical text and the interpretative value of fanfiction, as manifested on the metamorphosis of relationships. The analysis of the fanfiction corpus highlighted some recurring patterns and revealed general tendencies. As for the formal comments, all stories manifested typical features of fanfiction, including copyright disclaimers, employment of beta readers, intertextual nature, and fell into fanfiction-specific genres, such as hurt/comfort, slash, or alternate universe stories. Overall, the texts were of high quality and accurate characterisation.

Speaking of characterisation, there has been noted some changes on the way from canon to fannish writing. Fanfiction Severus Snape was portrayed as an emotional, loving persona, who was allowed to explain his motives and intentions. His presence was predominantly positive and he was allowed to enter into relationships based on emotions, rather than rational thinking. On the other hand, Harry Potter's fanfiction version has gotten increasingly mature and serious. His character often deals with heavy issues of death, trauma and inability to trust people. So while Snape made a step forward a happier life, with Harry, the tendency almost seems to be of the opposite direction. Nevertheless, both characters are introduced into loving relationships of various nature.

The relationships have manifested in a form of mentor-student roles, as family members, and as a married couple. Despite the clear differences between these types of relationships, there are common variables to be found in all of them. Firstly, the stories often worked with (in)equality of their relationship and power dynamics connected with it. Secondly, there was a strong presence of hurt/comfort aspect that allowed forming such relationships. And lastly, the stories seem to suggest that the characters are capable of forming a very strong bond, if given the opportunity. The stories often play with the idea of war and its consequences on their fates. The suggestion is that without the war, or maybe even just because of it, these two men can create a bond stronger than anyone else in the *Harry Potter* series.

Limited by a scope of a master thesis, only three fanfiction stories were examined in detail. Even though the readings are by no means exhaustive, they can still provide a valuable insight into the interpretative power of fandom and fanfiction, that can be extrapolated into more general findings. Based on these findings, there is a suggestion for a future, more specialised study, and that is to inspect the role of a hurt/comfort genre in Harry Potter/Severus Snape fanfiction relationship.

Besides these findings, there is a belief that this thesis helped to cover new ground in the form of online fanfiction spaces, thus supplementing existing research. Fanfiction is a deeply intertextual and interpretative genre that is constantly evolving. The goal was to bring fanfiction closer to a common reader, to share the passion and the heart it contains.

9 Résumé

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá fenoménem fanouškovské literární tvorby zvaným fanfiction, v češtině též známým pod přejatým názvem fanfikce, či jen jako fanouškovské povídky. Poslední označení se však již dnes jeví jako nepřesné, jelikož tyto fanouškovské příběhy svým rozsahem často atakují délky románu a zahrnují do svého příběhu množství postav. Fanfiction lze definovat jako fanouškovskou literární tvorbu vycházející z již existujícího materiálu, většinou ve formě knih, seriálů, filmů, či inspirovanou reálnými osobnostmi. Fanfiction je hluboce intertextuální, ze zdrojového materiálu většinou přejímá postavy, dějovou linku a zasazení (místní a časové), případně jiná specifika svého světa. S touto vlastností se pojí její přední nedostatek, a to je právní neukotvenost ve vztahu k autorským právům. Jelikož je však fanfiction svou podstatou nekomerční záležitostí, její existence je většinou autorů tolerována.

Konkrétně se pak práce věnuje fanfiction napsané o britské literární sáze Harry Potter od Joanne K. Rowlingové. Harry Potter byl zvolen pro svou širokou fanouškovskou základnu, nesmírnému množství fanfiction, které k němu bylo napsané, a proto, že byl jako jeden z mála fandomů těchto rozměrů již od svých prvopočátků přítomen na internetu, kde se fanouškovské jádro dodnes schází.

Studia fanfiction svým zaměřením spadají dílem do literární kritiky, dílem do studií nových médií a neposledně také do studií fanouškovství. Přestože studia fanouškovství nejsou běžně vyučována v akademických kruzích jako samostatná disciplína, i tak se dá jmenovat množství významných prací a uznávaných vzdělavců v této oblasti. Jako zástupce akademické sféry reprezentujícího tento obor lze jmenovat Henryho Jenkinse, profesora nových médií při Univerzitě v Jižní Kalifornii. Henry Jenkins také prvně vyslovuje dva koncepty úzce spjaté s fanouškovskou komunitou a její tvorbou, a to participatorní kultura a kultura konvergence.

Participatorní kultura ve svém významu zahrnuje střet roviny osobní s rovinou sociální a zajímá se o interakce jedince v rámci skupiny. Dále upozorňuje na důležitost aktivní role fanouška vůči zdrojovému materiálu, který nejenže konzumuje, ale také s ním aktivně pracuje. Výsledkem takovéto práce je třeba fanfiction, nebo jiné deriváty, ať už ve formě

psané, kreslené, či třeba ve formě fanouškovských setkání, tzv. conů. Oproti tomu se kultura konvergence zajímá spíše o mediální obsah jako takový, jeho pohyb napříč různými typy médií a pozoruje změny, které tento pohyb vyvolává.

Přestože je fenomén fanfiction znám již několik desetiletí, akademický zájem o něj začíná až v osmdesátých letech dvacátého století. Dosavadní výzkum se ale zaměřuje především na druhou polovinu dvacátého století, kdy se ve fanouškovské komunitě těšili oblibě zejména fanziny, tj. fanouškovské časopisy. Přelom tisíciletí ale přinesl významné změny co do způsobu komunikace mezi fanoušky a následnou tvorbou a formou sdílení jejich fanouškovské tvorby. Největším technologickým pokrokem je bezesporu vynález internetu a založení globální internetové sítě. Jako důsledek tohoto technologického pokroku se fanouškovské komunity hromadně začaly přesunovat na internet a zakládat zde své základny. Tento skok pochopitelně přinesl jisté změny, které jsou ale jen velice málo zachyceny v kritických studiích. Tato práce si klade za cíl doplnit stávající výzkum a zaměřuje se právě na přítomnost fanoušků a fanfiction v online sféře. Fanfiction se v digitálním prostředí velmi rychle zorientovala a začala být celosvětově široce dostupná. Tímto krokem se fanfiction rozšířila z malých oddělených skupinek nadšenců na obrovské globální fanouškovské komunity, pro něž je přístup na internet společným jmenovatelem.

Jelikož svou vlastní práci může na internet sdílet kdokoli s přístupem na síť a trochou času, dostala fanfiction pejorativní nádech jako nekvalitní, amatérská literatura bez vlastních originálních nápadů. To je vyvažováno interním systémem editace a kontroly textu ve fanouškovské komunitě bezplatně zprostředkované pomocí lidí nazývaných jako beta readers. Ti práci pročítají, upozorní na stylistické a gramatické nedostatky a poskytnou konstruktivní kritiku k hodnocenému textu. Samozřejmě, ne všechny texty touto kontrolou procházejí, ale jedná se o důmyslný interní systém poskytující spisovateli zpětnou vazbu a vzdělává ho v rámci komunity.

Fanouškovská komunita si v rámci efektivity komunikace vytvořila fanspeak – fanouškovský žargon – důmyslný systém termínů, zkratek, pojmů označujících vlastní žánry a jiné, často se vyskytující motivy. Jako zásadní se jeví rozdíl mezi kánonem (původní předlohou) a fanonem (fanouškovskou interpretací). Fanfiction rozeznává tři hlavní žánry: gen (všeobecné příběhy bez důrazu na romantickou zápletku), het (příběhy s výskytem heterosexuální romace) a slash (příběhy s výskytem homosexuální romace).

Fanfiction dále rozeznává množství podžánrů, které jsou specifické pouze pro fanfiction. Vybrané příklady jsou charakterizovány, například angst, fluff, nebo hurt/comfort. Žargon zahrnuje také množství zkratk a označení podružných motivů, které se v příbězích vyskytují. V neposlední řadě je osvětlen kategorizační systém a jeho důležitost při vyhledávání jednotlivých příběhů. Jeden z tří hlavních žánrů, slash, se stává předmětem širší diskuze. Je osvětlen jeho původ a nastíněna bližší charakteristika, včetně jeho několika typických rysů. Ty by se daly shrnout jako smyslovost, androgynie a především jeho kontroverze v očích široké veřejnosti.

Druhá, analytická část práce se již věnuje konkrétně knihám o Harry Potterovi a fanfiction k nim napsané. Cílem práce je analýza vztahů a jejich posun ve vyobrazení ve fanfiction vůči její předloze, tj. role fanouškovské interpretace vztažená na vyobrazení a proměnu vztahů. Práce si k analýze vybrala dvě postavy, jejichž proměnu vztahů napříč fanfiction sleduje. První je hlavní postava celé ságy, Harry Potter, a druhou je postava jeho učitele lektvarů, Severus Snape. Tyto postavy byly vybrány pro jejich dynamicky proměnlivý vztah napříč knihami a jejich diváckou popularitu.

Fanfiction vybrané k bližší analýze byly vybrány na základě objektivních kritérií z internetového fanfiction archivu Archiveofourown.org, jakožto zástupce nové digitální vlny fanfiction, umožňující porovnání velkého množství příběhů od mnoha různých autorů na jednom místě. Komparativní analýza zvolených příběhů odhalila společné rysy ve způsobu vyobrazení vztahu mezi Harry Potterem a Severusem Snapem.

Analýza ukázala, že zkoumané postavy prošly pozorovatelným povahovým vývojem. Severus Snape byl všeobecně zobrazován jako emocionálnější, láskyplnější postava a častěji dostával příležitost vysvětlit svou motivaci k činům, což předloha neobsahuje. Harry Potter byl naopak povahově vyzrálější, často stíhaný horory války, nikterak vnímaný jako dětská postava. Jejich vztah také prošel znatelnou proměnou. Jejich vztah byl vyobrazen v mnoha podobách, v rolích učitele a studenta, ale také v rolích milenců, manželů, a dokonce v rodinných rolích, jakožto otec a syn. Všechny tyto vztahy se však vyznačovaly společnými proměnnými; tou nejvýraznější byla rovnocennost nebo naopak nevyváženost ve vztahu, prohození dominantní a submisivní role. Fanfiction dále zdůrazňovala, že jejich vztah, je-li vytvořen, je velmi silný a dlouhotrvající. A do třetice se velmi výrazně prezentoval žánr hurt/comfort, který takovýto vztah často zprostředkoval.

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