

Queering the Potterverse: Close Reading Slash Fanfiction Pairings on Archive of Our Own

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A thesis submitted to
Auckland University of Technology
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Communication Studies (MCS)

12 July 2024

School of Communication Studies

Abstract

Originating in the 1970s underground fanzines that delighted in featuring Kirk and Spock in homosocial and homoerotic pairings (K/S), “slash” fanfiction has since become a fixture of fan culture. Fanzines in which fanfiction was published first arose in the 1930s and were long viewed as lowbrow and thus relegated to the status of an occluded genre. However, since the introduction of the internet, it has both vastly expanded in scope, cultural, and scholarly cache, following foundational studies by researchers such as Camille Bacon-Smith and Henry Jenkins. Massification of the internet coincided with the rise of J. K. Rowling’s novelistic heptalogy, and the development of online fanfiction platforms with the phenomenal success of the movie canon, propelling the Potterverse into particular prominence within this popular cultural nexus. This thesis investigates how fan-readers-turned-writers queer Harry Potter characters in slash fiction, reimagining their characteristics and reworking the official narratives to subvert the author’s controlling presence, especially in terms of her heteronormative portrayal of characters. This study both contextualises and presents a series of close readings of slash fiction from the popular fanfiction site Archive of Our Own to investigate how the characters that figure in such works adhere to and differ from their canonical characterisations, how queering their sexuality affects their culturally marked masculine and feminine traits, and how emotional intimacy can be built between “enemyslash” pairings, where canonical antagonisms are overcome via romantic and/or sexual couplings. Often, fans subvert conventionally masculine and feminine qualities to enhance the depiction of the characters’ emotional vulnerabilities, which can intensify their homosocial and, indeed, queer relationships. These reinterpreted characteristics make them more human and relatable to fans who bridle at Rowling’s authorial control over the Harry Potter franchise and associated universe, with often conservative and heteronormative underpinnings. These findings suggest the wider value of fanfiction as an unrestrictive medium for fans to challenge original narratives and authors, extend the life of a fandom, and underscore its significance in fan culture.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:



12 July 2024

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Paul Mountfort, for his invaluable guidance and unwavering patience in overseeing this thesis. Our numerous discussions on fan culture, literary theory, and the discourses of gender and sexuality have broadened my perspective and opened my eyes to a much larger and more intricate world. Your support has been instrumental.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation to my family. Dad, thank you for always lending a listening ear and offering sound advice. Mom, your delicious cooking has given me the strength and motivation to persevere each day. Wern Ee, thank you for your kindness and understanding, especially during my most stressful moments. Your support has been crucial as I poured my heart and soul into this thesis. Thank you for putting up with me and my fanfiction reading habits. I know I can be pretty expressive and disruptive at times.

A special thanks to an old friend, Julie Tan, who encouraged me to pick up my first Harry Potter book and introduced me to the world of fanfiction. Even though we were young and I did not fully grasp what I was getting into, reading fanfiction has brought me immense comfort and joy growing up. Without your introduction to this vibrant world, I would have missed out on countless enriching stories.

I am also grateful to Dr. Agnes Terraschke for proofreading this thesis. Many thanks to the Organization for Transformative Works for creating Archive of Our Own. This platform has provided me with a much-needed escape whenever reality gets too complex and challenging. It allowed me to immerse myself in the multiverse and find solace in its expansive narratives.

1. Introduction

A cornerstone of fan culture, fanfiction represents a vibrant and dynamic form of creative textual practice that has surged in popularity and influence. With the advent of Web 2.0, fan communities have been able to expand and flourish, but they have also faced considerable criticism. Despite being labelled by some as “lowbrow culture” (Varga, 2022, para. 28), fanfiction underscores the timeless nature of storytelling and everyday creativity as a fundamental human activity (Coppa, 2017). The 1930s marked the beginnings of amateur storytelling in fanzines, where fans used these public forums to form communities, trade comments on the science fiction they had read or watched, and develop their writing and editing skills in a “nurturing space” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 46). However, it was not until the 1970s that fanfiction took on a homoerotic orientation, leading to the emergence of the slash genre. This genre gained prominence with the publication of Kirk/Spock – hence “slash” – fiction in Star Trek fanzines, primarily written by women who desired to see a deeper emotional and/or erotic connection between these male characters.

Now a globally accessible online fannish activity with the rise of the internet, fanfiction has emerged as a “mainstream art form” (Coppa, 2017, p. 1) where fans read, write, expand, and reimagine their beloved characters, expressing their passion for the original material. This view accords with wider transformations in the relative status of popular versus “high” culture and between readers and writers in both literary and wider critical theory in the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The mass production of fanfiction also reveals the importance fans place on the “transformations of social identity” (Coppa, 2017, p. 13). They use this medium to challenge heteronormative perspectives and elevate marginalised groups, offering a space where diverse experiences and identities are explored and celebrated (Varga, 2022). Fanfiction reflects how fans consume and interpret culture and confront gender and sexuality discourse often overlooked in a patriarchal society (Enriquez & Lippert, 2020; Varga, 2022). It speaks of how meaning can be produced and reproduced (Varga, 2022). This practice deserves recognition and encouragement for its subversive nature as it broadens people’s exposure to various experiences and fosters inclusivity (Varga, 2022).

Fan culture is inherently complex. Intertwined with various forms of “cultural production and social identities” that challenge traditional distinctions (Jenkins, 2012, p. 3), it presents a series of movements that aim to include a wider variety of media and fan activities that operate in a more global context (Jenkins, 2007). Fan culture’s fluid nature responds to historical and social conditions (Jenkins, 2012), leading to the development of modern fandom. Fandom embodies multiple aspects simultaneously: It is “beautiful” (Coppa, 2014, p. 80); it is a representation of the future, a “testing ground for the way media and culture industries [will] operate” (Jenkins, 2007, p. 361), made more accessible by technology that fosters participatory culture and connection-building (Coppa, 2014). As

a “truly global phenomenon” (Gray et al., 2007, p. 9), its fannish activities are now visible to the public, functioning as a “collective entity” (Busse & Hellekson, 2006, p. 6) where a community of individuals creates meaning through online friendships and shared “soul-activatingly amazing” reading experiences (Romano, 2016a, para. 10). However, fandom is not without its flaws. Busse and Hellekson (2006, p. 8) described it as a “continual work in progress”, a dynamical fan culture that evolves through its members’ collective imagination and cultural experiences. Coppa (2014) also acknowledged that fandom is not a utopian space as it is “made of people with all their imperfections as well as their strengths” (Coppa, 2014, p. 77). To me, fandom remains a beautiful space that transcends mere exchange value. This is because, according to Romano (2016a), fandom can be:

[...] the collective experience of fans, mainly women and genderqueer individuals, who build things together, support each other, and learn from each other. Fandom is making every one of us sharper, smarter, more talented, more deeply creative, more subversive, and more politically and culturally aware with every moment we’re in it. (para. 16)

In a study of fanfiction, understanding fandom is crucial because “it matters to those who are fans” (Gray et al., 2007, p. 1). Their activities and “communal spirit” (Busse & Hellekson, 2006, p. 8) keep the heart of fandom beating, making fan culture, specifically fanfiction, a vital area of exploration.

The online Harry Potter fandom, described as an “invaluable repository of the creative and critical responses of the series’ most dedicated and engaged readers” (Tosenberger, 2008b, p. 200), has flourished since the mass adoption of the Internet. Fans and consumers eagerly leverage the Internet’s social networking capabilities to express their love for the Harry Potter universe (Gunelius, 2008). This “unquenchable” phenomenon (Blake, 2002, p. 1), aptly named “Pottermania” (Gunelius, 2008, p. 120), combined with the vast production of Harry Potter fanfiction on various fan-text publishing online platforms, underscores the enduring popularity of J. K. Rowling’s fantasy series (Bell, 2015). While many fans express their affection for the characters and the enchanting elements of the books, Romano (2016b, para. 10) noted the presence of a “transformative, critical, markedly progressive branch of the fandom” that continually challenges Rowling’s portrayal of a stagnant, heteronormative Wizarding World. This tension became particularly pronounced after *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (2016), a theatrical instalment of the franchise, failed to acknowledge a potential queer relationship between Albus Potter and Scorpius Malfoy (Romano, 2016b). Through fannish activities, especially the reading and writing of fanfiction, the online Potter fandom subverts the “abundant straightness” of the Potterverse (Romano, 2016b, para. 8), using their creativity to envision a more gender and sexually inclusive and diverse magical world.

The primary objective of this thesis is to explore how fan readers-turned-writers contest Rowling’s heteronormative framework by reinterpreting and queering characters from the Harry Potter novels through the comparatively economically and socially unrestricted practice of publishing fanfiction.

This thesis delves into character analysis, comparing the characteristics as depicted in the original novels with those in selected slash fanfiction, as well as associated plot lines. It examines the characters' heterosexual dynamics as portrayed in the source text and the representation of queer relationships in fanfiction, highlighting the popularity of these same-sex ("slash") pairings. It also considers how emotional intimacy can be established between characters canonically portrayed as adversaries.

Given the abundance of scholarship on fanfiction, I will explore the works most relevant to this thesis in the literature review (Chapter 3). One fundamental fan study is Henry Jenkins' (2012) *Textual Poachers*, renowned for its comprehensive theorisation of fan culture and practices (Busse & Hellekson, 2006). Another significant work is Camille Bacon-Smith's (1992) *Enterprising Women*. While Bacon-Smith's research primarily provides historical insight into fanfiction, it lacks diversity in its coverage of fandoms (Busse & Hellekson, 2006). By contrast, Jenkins offers a broader perspective, drawing from his dual experience as both a fan writer and an academic. Additionally, the scholarship co-edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse is invaluable for this thesis. As co-editors of *Transformative Works and Cultures*, an online journal archiving academic articles on fan culture, they have compiled extensive information on fannish practices. Their book *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (2006) includes numerous insightful essays from various scholars, such as Elizabeth Woledge (2006), who discusses the intimate genre, comparing slash fiction to published romance literature, and Ika Willis (2006), who focuses on interpretive practices within the Harry Potter fandom. Contributions from Abigail Derecho (2006), Catherine Driscoll (2006), Mafalda Stasi (2006) and Louisa Ellen Stein (2006) also offer substantial approaches pertinent to this study.

Since this thesis also touches upon the Harry Potter fandom, literature that investigates the series and its cultural impact is also essential. Andrew Blake (2002) and Lana A. Whited (2002) provide insights into the series' popularity, although their work is limited to the first four books. Given that I will examine fanfiction that extends beyond *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), contemporary discussions from scholars like Christopher E. Bell (2013; 2015), Bronwyn E. Beatty (2015), Chin-ting Lee (2015), and Nancy Reagin (2011) will be considered for their relevance to the entire series and the online fandom. In addition, a brief summary of each *Harry Potter* novel will be included in Chapter 3 to provide a foundational overview of the events pertinent to the fan-reimagined narratives. This thesis also focuses on the textual practices of fans and, thus, requires a review of – predominantly poststructuralist – literary and critical theory around narrative, meaning and interpretation, drawing from scholars such as Roland Barthes (1974; 1996), Michel Foucault (1997), Jacques Derrida (1997) and Julia Kristeva (2024).

Furthermore, to understand the broader implications of queering characters within the Potterverse, I will introduce foundational concepts related to gender and sexuality discourse within fanfiction in Chapter 3. Scholars like Judith Butler (2006), Teresa de Lauretis (1989), and Raewyn Connell (2005) provide essential frameworks for exploring the transformation of Harry Potter characters' sexuality. As a dedicated Potterhead who has extensively engaged with Harry Potter fan texts on various online fanfiction platforms, my personal experiences have inspired this exploration to understand how heterosexual female fan-readers-turned-writers, like myself, become captivated by the practice of reinterpreting the original works and queering characters from the series.

This thesis does not employ a positivist methodological approach that analyses numerical or qualitative data; instead, I will outline the design of the study tailored for textual analysis. This chapter (Chapter 4) introduces the criteria for selecting suitable Harry Potter slash texts and my approach to provide a series of close readings of them. "Close reading" has more than one definition and varied practitioners. My approach seeks to uncover meanings embedded in each fanfiction writer's work, their individual writing styles, tones, and language choices, and how their personal touch shapes their narratives, reinterpretations and responses to the original text, as well as their dissatisfaction and creativity. The works of H. Porter Abbott (2002), David Herman (2007) and Mieke Bal (2017) provide valuable discussions on narrative elements that will support my close reading approach in this thesis. In Chapter 5, I will present my interpretations of the selected slash fiction by using narratological strategies, such as identifying repetitive motifs and themes, highlighting the focalization of the stories, and examining the portrayals of each primary character, as outlined in the design of the study in Chapter 4. I aim to uncover how fans infuse their own interpretations and storytelling styles into these narratives.

Within the chapter that describes my design of the study, I also consider the relationship between J. K. Rowling as the author and fan-readers-turned-writers. Although studying fans is not central to this thesis, a brief discussion of fans and authorial presence is included to identify their motivations and desires for producing fanfiction. The recent controversies surrounding Rowling and her insensitivity to the LGBTQ+ community (Romano, 2024) make her an interesting subject of debate. Barthes's (1997) and Iser's (1997) essays on writerly readers can contribute to our understanding of fanfiction as subverting conventional hierarchies of writers and readers, but in this particular case fans' treatment of Rowling's canon can be seen as a direct rebuttal of her tendency to bunker down on the matter of her character portrayals in the Potterverse, frequently on social media. Catherine Tosenberger's (2008a; 2008b) essays on Harry Potter slash fiction and Rowling's responses to the surge of Potter fanfiction online contribute to understanding fans' intentions, desires and motivations to produce fanfiction. In Chapter 4, I will also outline my intention to analyse the mannerisms of characters to be examined in this thesis, which is supported by a discussion of Deborah Kaplan's

(2006) essay, compare their depictions in the original series with their reinterpreted portrayals in the slash text, examine their heteronormative dynamics in the heptalogy in comparison to the representations of homosexual relationships in the selected slash fictions, and present a compilation of my analysis in Chapter 6.

2. Lexicon

Hayot (2014) suggested that each field of study has “its own language” (p. 178). The numerous terms fans use may be unfamiliar to those new to the academic study of reading and writing fanfiction. Busse and Hellekson (2006) highlight that the language of fandom can evolve over time and vary between different fan communities. Therefore, it is beneficial to provide definitions for “specific terminology used in media fandom” (Busse & Hellekson, 2006, p. 9). This thesis includes a chapter formatted as a lexicon, which can be perceived as “the dictionary itself” (Cuddon & Habib, 2014, p. 384), to offer concise definitions and explanations of terms and concepts essential for understanding fandom, fanfiction and the *Harry Potter* series. I also clarify how I plan to reference the series throughout this thesis, specifying the naming conventions for the book titles and addressing other media adaptations, franchises, and texts. This framework will ensure a consistent and precise approach to referencing the *Potter* series in the subsequent chapters. This chapter covers three main areas: terminology frequently used in fanfiction studies and writing, key elements from the Harry Potter universe relevant to this thesis, and citation styles for the novels, franchise and fanfiction.

2.1 The Archive

Even though it is effectively impossible for fans to reach a shared agreement on the total penumbra of the primary and secondary source materials due to so many differing individual interpretations (Busse & Hellekson, 2006; Driscoll, 2006; Stasi, 2006), **canon** serves as the fan community’s “agreed framework” (Driscoll, 2006, p. 88), presenting their knowledge and interpretation of the source texts’ “universe, setting, and characters” (Busse & Hellekson, 2006, p. 9) while **fanon** refers to fantastical events created by members of a fandom that has been “repeated pervasively” throughout fan texts (Busse & Hellekson, 2006, p. 9). Fanon is often not supportive of the canon and may occasionally contradict it (Busse & Hellekson, 2006) because the fan-created event may be “so perfect, so convincing or fun that [other fans] simply adopt it wholesale” (Coppa, 2017, p. ix).

Archive of Our Own (AO3), established by The Organization for Transformative Works (OTW), is a fanfiction-focused online platform that is “run by fans for fans” (Kelley, 2021, p. 58). It became “the website of choice for fanfiction writers throughout much of the world” (Kelley, 2021, p. 58), offering a wide range of Harry Potter slash fiction featuring numerous pairings. With over 500,000 Harry Potter fanfiction and more being written and published daily, AO3 showcases the inclusivity and diversity of the fanfiction community.

One shots (one-shot), also known as “standalone fanfiction” (Fanlore, 2017, para. 5), are self-contained fan texts that typically consist of a single chapter. These fanfictions can vary in length, with the word count for a one-shot fanfiction sometimes dipping as low as 100 words or rising as high as over 10,000 words. In AO3, a one-shot can be identified by the number of chapters displayed in the blurb.

Fandoms can be organised based on **pairings** (Driscoll, 2006), which refer to the romantic or sexual relationship between two characters. Since each fan’s desires and preferences are distinct from one another, they may pair a character with various other characters (e.g., Hermione/Ron, Hermione/Draco, and Hermione/Snape) or favour multiple pairings (e.g., Harry/Draco, Sirius/Remus, and James/Lily). Fanfiction readers may search for works on AO3 based on their preferred pairings or category tags of a particular fandom. These category tags include heterosexual pairing, F/M (Female/Male), homosexual pairings, such as M/M (Male/Male) and F/F (Female/Female), non-romantic or sexual relationships (Gen) or relationships involving multiple characters (Multi).

Fanfiction can also be grouped based on a “storytelling device or convention” (TVTropes, n.d., para. 1) known as a **trope**. According to Coppa (2017, p. 9), tropes are “labels indicating a set of narrative and thematic expectations”. **Alternative Universe** (AU) is a trope relevant to this thesis. Its stories “transgress boundaries of space and time” (Thomas, 2011, p. 8), placing familiar characters in new settings that may or may not be canonical (Busse & Hellekson, 2006). This is often connected to the **canon divergence** tag on AO3. Fans, too, like to blend two fictional universes, and those fanfiction works that combine “two different sets of characters from two media sources” are known as **crossovers** (Busse & Hellekson, 2006, p. 11). The filter system on AO3 allows readers to include or exclude crossovers in their search.

2.2 The Wizarding World

In *Philosopher’s Stone*, Hagrid described **Hogwarts** as the “finest school of witchcraft and wizardry in the world” (Rowling, 1997/2013a, p. 47). Located in the Scottish Highlands, this is a “vast castle with many turrets and towers” (Rowling, 1997/2013a, p. 83), and it is where children with magical abilities learn to hone their skills between the ages of eleven and seventeen. Upon Harry’s arrival at Hogwarts, Professor Minerva McGonagall, the Deputy Headmistress, welcomes the first years, introducing the four Houses of Hogwarts: **Gryffindor**, **Hufflepuff**, **Ravenclaw**, and **Slytherin**. They have their “own noble history and each has produced outstanding witches and wizards” (Rowling, 1997/2013a, p. 85). The **Sorting Hat**, a magical artifact that determines which House each first-year student belongs to, shares the trait of each House in the form of a song:

You might belong in Gryffindor,
Where dwell the brave at heart,
Their daring, nerve and chivalry
Set Gryffindors apart;
You might belong in Hufflepuff,
Where they are just and loyal,
Those patient Hufflepuffs are true
And unafraid of toil;
Or yet in wise old Ravenclaw,
If you're a ready mind,
Where those of wit and learning,
Will always find their kind;
Or perhaps in Slytherin
You'll make your real friends,
Those cunning folk use any means
To achieve their ends. (Rowling, 1997/2013a, p. 88)

Close to Hogwarts is **Hogsmeade**, a magical village where students third-year and above are allowed to visit its magical shops like Honeydukes, which sells all kinds of “succulent-looking sweets imaginable” (Rowling, 1997/2013c, p. 147), and pubs like the Three Broomsticks where students and teachers go for drinks and food.

There is also a Quidditch pitch at Hogwarts. **Quidditch** is a popular wizarding sport played on flying broomsticks, and it is also beloved at Hogwarts. Each of the four Houses has a team of seven players: three Chasers, who are responsible for earning points by throwing a Quaffle through the goal (hoops), a Keeper who is positioned around the hoops to prevent the opposing team from scoring, a Seeker, who catches the Golden Snitch, a small, golden ball with wings that is worth 150 points, and two Beaters that direct magical hard, iron balls known as Bludgers at opposing Chasers and Seeker to disrupt them from scoring and finding the Snitch. In the novels, Harry Potter plays the role of the Seeker in the Gryffindor Quidditch team, while Draco Malfoy holds the same position in the Slytherin Quidditch team.

The **Marauders** refer to James Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin and Peter Pettigrew, who became close friends at Hogwarts. These four Gryffindor boys are known for their invention of the Marauders' Map, causing mischief in school, and their ability to “turn into a particular animal at will” as **Animagi** (Animagus) (Wizarding World, 2016, para. 1).

Goblet of Fire deviates from the formulaic structure set by the first three Potter novels with the introduction of the **Triwizard Tournament**. It is a “friendly competition” (Rowling, 2000/2013d, p. 165) between three magical schools: Hogwarts, Durmstrang Institute, which is rumoured to have “the

darkest reputation of all eleven wizarding schools” (Rowling, 2015c, para. 1), and Beuxbatons Academy of Magic, a prestigious magical school that “has a preponderance of French students, though Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Luxemborgians and Belgians also attend in large numbers” (Rowling, 2015a, para. 1). In this event, the **Goblet of Fire**, which is a magical artifact and an “impartial judge” (Rowling, 2000/2013d, p. 166), chooses three “most worthy” champions (Rowling, 2000/2013d, p. 166) to represent each of their schools. They are required to complete three tasks. Only one champion can win the Triwizard Cup, gain glory in the name of their school, and receive the prize money. As part of the tournament’s traditions, a **Yule Ball** takes place on Christmas Day to offer Hogwarts students a chance to socialise with their foreign guests (Rowling, 2000/2013d). In the novels, Cedric Diggory of Hufflepuff represents Hogwarts as its champion; Viktor Krum, a famous Bulgarian Quidditch Seeker is Durmstrang’s champion, and Fleur Delacour, a French witch with a unique creature heritage (a Veela) is selected as the Beauxbatons’s champion. Forced to compete due to Voldemort’s devious schemes, Harry Potter becomes the fourth champion of the tournament.

Lord Voldemort’s return in *Goblet of Fire* marks the beginning of the **Second Wizarding War** (Shaw, 2023, para. 1), resulting in a series of murders, destruction of properties in the non-magical community, and mayhem in the British wizarding community (Rowling, 2005/2013f). His defeat at the hands of the heroic protagonist, Harry Potter, in the final battle, known as The Battle of Hogwarts, signals the end of the war.

Also known as Dark Magic, the **Dark Arts** refers to magic that can be “used to control, harm or kill its target” (Wizarding World, 2023a, para. 1). The practice of Dark Arts is illegal in the British wizarding community due to its corruptive nature, which brings terrible consequences to both the user and victims (Wizarding World, 2023a). Voldemort and Gellert Grindelwald are infamous Dark Wizards who practice Dark Magic. A **Horcrux** is a Dark artifact that stores a part of a person’s soul (Rowling, 2005/2013f, p. 464). The act of splitting one’s soul is a result of committing murder, “the supreme act of evil” (Rowling, 2005/2013f, p. 465). Hence, it is considered Dark. Voldemort’s most devoted followers, the **Death Eaters**, also practice Dark Arts. Lucius Malfoy, the Lestranges, Bellatrix, Rodolphus and Rabastan are well-known Death Eaters in the novels.

Class politics, conflicts and divisions are prominent themes in the Potter series (Loiacono & Loiacono, 2011). This is because some magical families strongly care about “the purity of [one’s] magical heritage” (Loiacono & Loiacono, 2011, p. 184). The class system of the Wizarding community is divided into three tiers: **Pure-blood**, which refers to a “family or individual without Muggle (non-magical) blood” (Rowling, 2015e, para. 1); **Half-blood**, one who has a mixture of magical blood and non-magical blood; and, **Muggle-born**, a witch or wizard with no magical heritage but possesses magical abilities.

The Noble and Most Ancient House of Black is one of the pure-blood families that believe in “pureblood ideology” (Loiacono & Loiacono, 2011, p. 173), perceiving the purity of their blood to be superior to that of a half-blood or Muggle-born. This family is introduced in the fifth novel as their ancestral home, Number Twelve Grimmauld Place in London, is used to house the **Order of the Phoenix**, a group of witches and wizards under the leadership of Dumbledore that fights against the oppression of Voldemort and his followers. The members of the Black family relevant to this thesis are Regulus; his older brother, Sirius; his cousins, Bellatrix, who married Rodolphus Lestranger; and her sister, Narcissa, wife of Lucius Malfoy and mother of Draco.

A **house-elf** is a creature “magically bound” to a master or mistress of a wizarding family (Wizarding World, 2023b, para. 1). They care for the family’s household and carry out tasks on their master’s orders. Kreacher is a house-elf of the House of Black, primarily loyal to his mistress, Walburga, and her son, Regulus. Rowling (1998/2013b; 2003/2013e) described them as small in stature with large bat-like ears.

Another magical artifact, which appears quite often in the novels and is relevant to this thesis, is the **Pensieve**. Rowling (2015d, para. 1) described this object as a “wide and shallow dish made of metal or stone, often elaborately decorated or inlaid with precious stones, and carrying powerful and complex enchantments”. The purpose of a Pensieve is so memories can be taken from a magical person’s mind and be relieved through the enchantments of this artifact, allowing the owner of the Pensieve or another person to view the events first-hand.

The **Nineteen Years Later Epilogue** refers to the last chapter of *Deathly Hallows*, which depicts Harry, Ron and Hermione’s return to Platform Nine and Three-Quarters, grown and married, escorting their children, the next generation of witches and wizards, to board the Hogwarts Express to begin their new school year at Hogwarts.

2.3 A Guide to Citing Titles

Distinguishing between the referencing of Rowling’s original book series, film adaptations, and associated media, and fanfiction text raise issues beyond mere citational style, with different scholars opting for a range of solutions. While Whited (2002) italicises the *Harry Potter* books in her citations, Doughty (2002) and Borah (2002) cite the books in plain text (Harry Potter books), and Blake (2002) cites the franchise in plain text (Harry Potter). Bell (2015) also notes the brand of the amusement park, “The Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Studios” (Bell, 2015, p. 3), in regular,

unembellished text. More recently, however, Bell (2015) and other authors, including Groves (2017), McCauley (2022), Rose (2022) and Sutton-Ramspeck (2023), make a distinction in separating the published texts and the franchise by italicising the book titles (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*) and when citing the books and series in general (*Harry Potter* books or series). Both Bell (2015) and Sutton-Ramspeck (2023) also use italicisation when citing the film adaptations (*Harry Potter* films). Notably, Bell (2015) refers to Harry Potter-related websites in an italicised format (*Pottermore*).

It is essential to ensure an accurate and consistent citation style in this thesis. Thus, any brand or franchise cited here will be presented in plain, regular text without any italicisation, bolding or special formatting. Any other Harry Potter-associated media titles, including websites or YouTube video titles, will also be displayed in plain text but are marked by inverted commas ("Title"). This thesis focuses more on the printed and published works of the novels rather than the film series. All book and series titles, whether abbreviated or written out in full, will be italicised in this thesis.

For ease of citing and identifying the seven *Harry Potter* books, the titles are abbreviated as listed: *Philosopher's Stone* (1997), *Chamber of Secrets* (1998), *Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), *Goblet of Fire* (2000), *Order of the Phoenix* (2003), *Half-Blood Prince* (2005), and *Deathly Hallows* (2007).

Researchers in the field also approach the citation of fanfiction works in varying ways. In Coppa's (2017) *The Fanfiction Reader*, the author cites the titles with open and close-inverted commas ("Title"), while in Busse and Lothian's (2009) article "Bending Gender", the titles of fanfiction works are italicised (*Titles*). In this thesis, the titles of the chosen fanfiction texts will be cited with open and close-inverted commas so that they can be differentiated from the italicised format of the *Harry Potter* book titles.

3. Literature Review

This literature review aims to provide a summary of academic research carried out by scholars to date on specific topics relevant to this thesis. This includes an overview of slash fiction, detailing its origins and cultural significance within the fan community. Since the primary focus of this thesis is on the examination of Harry Potter slash fiction, it is essential to explore its fandoms concurrently. Presenting an overview of the current scholarship on the popularity of the *Harry Potter* series, insights into the novels and the characteristics of the online Potter fandom is beneficial for understanding the cultural impact of the series. I offer a comprehensive summary of the *Harry Potter* series, outlining key events that propel both the characters and the overarching narrative. This overview will include pivotal moments and turning points crucial to understanding the story and the context of relevant fanfiction texts. Furthermore, this thesis aims to conduct character and comparative analyses between the *Harry Potter* novels and a selection of fanfiction works. Therefore, it is essential to explicate certain principles of poststructuralism, especially the theoretical framework concerning the interpretation of texts and the fluidity of meaning.

This exploration serves as a foundation for Chapter 4. The discourse on gender and sexuality, particularly discussions on queer theory and masculinity, significantly shapes the narrative and illustration of characters in slash fiction, thus making it a vital aspect for examination. Although framing gender and sexuality in critical terms is an extensive topic, engagement with the fundamentals can aid in developing this thesis. To support the argument that fans utilise the practice of writing slash fiction to subvert Rowling's heteronormative framework, this chapter addresses five main topics: the background and cultural role of slash fanfiction, an overview of the *Harry Potter* series, scholarly perspectives on the *Harry Potter* series and the characteristics of the online fandom, poststructuralist text interpretation, and a foundational examination of gender and sexuality discourse.

3.1 Slash Fanfiction

As defined by Coppa (2017), fanfiction is a “networked creative work produced within and for a community of fans”(p. 8). It is essentially a creative reinterpretation of a published media text narrative by its fans. This includes various media such as books, films, television series, animations, comics, music, and video games. It is a common practice among fans to express their love “for a particular fictional universe” (Thomas, 2011, p.1). Each fanfiction story is a unique interpretation of the original text by a fan writer. Free from commercial restrictions, fans “explore characters and worlds already familiar and beloved” to them (Busse & Lothian, 2009, p.2), and they voluntarily

share their creativity with other fans through fanfiction-specific platforms such as Fanfiction.net and AO3.

Slash fiction stands as a distinct genre within the realms of fan-generated content. Beyond its anthropological and sociological significance, slash fiction is layered with multiple references to other texts, creating a complex and intricate web of connections (Stasi, 2006). One of the significant elements of slash genre fiction is the portrayal of “two fictional male characters in non-canonical sexual or romantic relationships” (Enriquez & Lippert, 2020, p. 183). While Enriquez and Lippert’s (2020) definition is unusually gender-specific, Busse and Hellekson (2006) adopted a more gender-neutral approach, perceiving slash as an assembly of fictional romance stories centred around the sexual relationship of two characters of the same gender. This suggests that the paired characters in slash fiction can either be a pair of males or females. Jenkins (2012) also offered a more gender-neutral definition, describing slash fiction as fan-written stories of “homoerotic affairs” between two similarly gendered characters (p. 186). Hence, it can be inferred that three key components define slash fiction: it is fan-created, it portrays a non-canonical romantic or sexual bond between two characters, and that those characters are of the same gender, whether male or female.

The origins of slash fiction date back to the 1970s (Jenkins, 2012). This emergence coincided with Star Trek enthusiasts noting the more profound, potentially romantic connection between Kirk and Spock on screen, which surpassed mere camaraderie. Such, often eroticised, fiction was abbreviated to K/S, hence the term “slash”. Thomas (2011) observed that fanfiction was an “underground and marginalised” practice (p. 2) in this period. Before the internet, fanfiction was anonymously published in fanzines (Hellekson & Busse, 2014). This has become a topic of interest to many scholars (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 2012; Hellekson & Busse, 2014). However, with the advent of modern technology, fan writing has moved online, and fans can publish their works online, sharing and communicating with a large audience of fans with similar interests (Busse & Hellekson, 2006; Thomas, 2011). Online published fanfiction has gained the ability to “challenge boundaries between authors and readers, creation and interpretation” (Thomas, 2011, p. 2) because fans were able to use the internet as a tool to come together, break cultural restrictions and “throw off the shackles of power dynamics” (Kelley, 2021, p. 54). While most fan writers remain anonymous today, fanfiction and associated social media platforms have offered ways for fans to communicate, allowing the tradition of the communal fan spirit to endure in the twenty-first century.

While this thesis does not intend to include an analysis of fan communities and their behaviours, consideration of the authors behind the creation and consumption of slash fiction helps to provide a deeper understanding of the motivations and influences shaping this genre. The primary audience for slash fiction is women (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Busse & Hellekson, 2006; Coppa, 2017; Jenkins, 2012;

Pugh, 2005; Thomas, 2011). This in fact dates to the days of the early Kirk/Spock fanzines, when “anthologies of fan-written stories about [their] relationship” (Russ, 2014, p. 83) were maintained by a “[specialised] sub-group of writers, editors, and readers”, all of whom were women. Bacon-Smith (1992) strongly argued that women dabble in slash writing and reading because it is an activity that is sexually stimulating. The portrayal of a desirable male body and “masculine sexuality” in slash stories can be enticing to a female audience (Lamb & Veith, 2014, p. 113). Thus, slash fiction becomes an outlet for women’s sexual fantasies, an expression of their desire to be independent, capable, appealing (Russ, 2014) and their want to be on equal standing with their male counterparts in a predominantly masculine society (Lamb & Veith, 2014). It does not, according to Cicioni (1998), constitute “discourses about homosexuality” (p. 154). On the contrary, what women seek from partaking in this fannish activity is “the freedom to choose, a love that is entirely free of the culture’s whole discourse of gender and sex roles, and a situation in which it is safe to let go and allow oneself to become emotionally and sexually vulnerable” (Russ, 2014, p. 89). However, Bacon-Smith (1992) provided a contrasting view regarding women’s creation and engagement with slash fiction. They first argued that women did not see these practices as political, but later suggested that some female fan writers intended to “tear down the very institution of hierarchical power that constructs men as individuals” (Bacon-Smith, 1992, p. 247). These conflicting opinions signify that slash can be written with varying motivations, as well as understood or interpreted in various ways as a social practice.

Slash fiction is often likened to romance novels (Hellekson & Busse, 2014). Fan writers would frequently integrate other genre conventions or familiar popular tropes, such as historical drama, crime, and thriller, or blend two fictional worlds to allow romantic and sexual elements to become part of a broader storyline (Jenkins, 2012). Jenkins (2012) also proposed that some slash fiction, particularly “first-time” stories that depict the slash pair’s first sexual or intimate engagement, conform to a narrative structure that incorporates a series of four movements: the portrayal of the pair’s “initial relationship” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 206), the increment of homosocial desire between the two characters, the verbal expression of their desires, and the characters’ final acceptance of their emotional and sexual desires. The term “homosocial desire” was loaned from scholar Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2016), who used it to describe a close connection between two characters of similar genders with pre-existing friendships. Fan readers and writers perceive underlying homosocial desire between characters portrayed in the source text, bringing about new interpretations in slash fiction. While Bacon-Smith (1992) did not identify any formulaic structures within a “first-time” slash narrative, she concurred with Jenkins (2012) in underlining how, in a “typical [first-time] scenario” (p. 229), the two characters of interest share a romantic desire for each other and, through an “accident or great personal risk”, come to confess their feelings and give in to their inner desires. Depictions of graphic sexual scenes often happen once the characters reach such acceptance, hence Bacon-Smith (1992) identifying slash fiction as “homoerotic romance”. However, not all stories

contain such scenes. Some do not have any sexual content at all. As such, I cannot entirely agree with Jones's (2014) perspective that eroticism between two characters of the same gender is the "only convention" of slash fiction (Jones, 2014, p. 116).

It is important to note that when Jenkins (2012) and Bacon-Smith (1992) called attention to the narrative structure of slash fiction, they allude to the centrality of masculinity in slash fiction, pointing out fan writers' intention to criticise patriarchy and encourage equality between partners. Derecho (2006) viewed fanfiction as a form of "archontic" literature (p. 76), which is a piece of writing that allows writers to challenge conventional boundaries and realise their imagined society. Slash, while having the capability to offer a non-restrictive space of "narrative creativity" (Derecho, 2006, p. 76), also provides writers with the opportunity to express their "criticisms of social and political inequities" (Derecho, 2006, p. 76) beyond the confines of heteronormativity (Enriquez & Lippert, 2020). Willis (2006) perceived this fannish practice of producing slash fanfiction as "a way of taking pleasure in the truth" (p. 168), one that is free of cultural restrictions and filled with the freedom for fans to act as if anything is possible. However, Jenkins (2012) warned readers that despite slash fiction's confronting nature, it cannot solve the social concerns fans raise in their narratives. Its significance lies in its openness to questions and opening up space for exploring issues regarding gender, sexuality, popular culture and individual desires (Jenkins, 2012).

In summary, it is evident that slash fiction transcends mere fan creation, for it underscores the significance of fan communities, their influence on cultural discussions, gender representations and narrative reinterpretations.

3.2 Canon: The Harry Potter Series

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (1997) follows the journey of Harry Potter, an eleven-year-old orphan, as he discovers his identity as the Boy Who Lived and navigates the Wizarding World. The novel begins with the fall of the dark wizard Voldemort and baby Harry being left on the doorstep of his mundane relatives, the Dursleys. Ten years later, Harry learns he is a wizard and is invited to attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, where he will study magic, play Quidditch, and explore the wonders of this new world. At Hogwarts, Harry befriends Ron Weasley, the second youngest of seven siblings, and Hermione Granger, a Muggle-born witch. He also forms a rivalry with Draco Malfoy, the proud son of a pure-blood family. Harry uncovers a mystery involving a trapdoor on the forbidden third-floor corridor. Along with Ron and Hermione, he discovers that the trapdoor guards the Philosopher's Stone, a powerful object that grants its user long life and endless wealth. They learn that Voldemort seeks to obtain the Stone to regain his strength. Through a series of

dangerous trials, Harry and his friends prevent the dark wizard from achieving his goal. Harry bids his friends farewell as the school year ends and returns to London to spend his summer with the Dursleys.

In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), the second book of the series, Harry endures a dreadful summer with the Dursleys, which is further complicated by Dobby the house-elf's unexpected visit and dire warnings, only to be rescued by Ron and his brothers, allowing him to spend the remainder of his break at the Weasley's family home. When it is time to return to Hogwarts, Harry and Ron face a series of challenges, being blocked from the magical barrier at King's Cross Station and resorting to flying the enchanted Weasley car to school. Weeks into the school year, Harry becomes embroiled in a new mystery. He hears a mysterious voice and discovers an ominous message declaring that the Chamber of Secrets has been opened. The petrified body of Mrs. Norris, the caretaker's cat, sets off a chain of events where several students are found petrified. Harry is suspected of being the Heir of Slytherin due to his ability to speak to snakes. As the situation grows dire, with Hermione becoming petrified, Harry and Ron uncover that the monster responsible is a basilisk, controlled by a manifestation of Voldemort's younger self, Tom Riddle, preserved in a magical diary. With the help of Fawkes, Headmaster Dumbledore's phoenix, Harry kills the basilisk, destroys the diary, saves Ginny Weasley and defeats Voldemort. The book concludes with Harry freeing Dobby from the Malfoy family's servitude and his return to the Dursleys for the summer.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (1999) begins with Harry fleeing to Diagon Alley via the Knight Bus after an infuriating incident at the Dursleys, leading him to inflate Aunt Marge accidentally. Before returning to Hogwarts, Harry discovers that Sirius Black, an escaped convict rumoured to be a devoted follower of Voldemort, may be hunting him. The school year at Hogwarts is marked by the ominous presence of Dementors, the terrifying Azkaban guards stationed around the school for protection. Despite this, Black manages to infiltrate Hogwarts. Several shocking truths come to light. Sirius Black is revealed to be Harry's godfather and his parents' closest friend, who was wrongly accused of betraying them. Scabbers, Ron's pet rat, is Peter Pettigrew, who faked his death and framed Sirius. Remus Lupin, the new Defense Against the Dark Arts (DADA) teacher, is unveiled as a werewolf and another old friend of Harry's parents. The chaotic aftermath of the climatic confrontation forces Sirius to flee, Lupin resigns due to his werewolf condition, and Harry returns to the Dursleys for another summer but is now armed with the knowledge of his godfather's innocence and support.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (2000) introduces new characters, a thrilling competition and the resurgence of a formidable enemy. The story begins with Harry attending the Quidditch World Cup with the Weasleys, ending in chaos as Death Eaters attack the campsite. Back at Hogwarts, Dumbledore announces that the school will host the Triwizard Tournament, inviting students from

Durmstrang and Beauxbatons to compete. Though the competition is only open to students aged seventeen and older, Harry is mysteriously entered as a fourth champion by the Goblet of Fire, forcing him to participate alongside the official Hogwarts champion, Cedric Diggory. Harry battles a dragon, navigates the depths of the Black Lake, and faces a deadly maze in the Triwizard Tournament. In the final task, Harry and Cedric are unexpectedly transported to a graveyard, and Cedric is killed swiftly. Harry is forced to witness Voldemort's rebirth. Due to a magical connection between Harry and Voldemort's wands, Harry narrowly escapes with Cedric's body and returns to Hogwarts with the knowledge of Voldemort's return. The aftermath reveals that Mad-Eye Moody, their DADA teacher, is actually Barty Crouch Jr., a Death Eater who manipulated the Goblet to ensure Harry's participation. The revelation of Voldemort's return casts a dark shadow over the Wizarding World, and the book concludes with a sombre tone. Harry returns to the Dursleys for another summer, burdened by the events he has witnessed and the challenges that lie ahead.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2003) explores the challenges Harry faces due to the interference of the Ministry of Magic at Hogwarts and Voldemort's subtle infiltration attempts. The story begins with Harry using magic to fend off a Dementor attack near his relatives' home, leading to a disciplinary hearing that threatens his return to Hogwarts. Rescued by the Order of the Phoenix, he spends the rest of the summer at Sirius Black's home, Grimmauld Place. Returning to Hogwarts, Harry's fifth year is marked by difficulties: his classmates' scepticism and accusations, the oppressive rule of the new DADA teacher, Dolores Umbridge, Dumbledore's aloofness, and fears of Voldemort's mental influence. Harry forms Dumbledore's Army with Ron and Hermione to teach defensive spells despite these challenges. However, Umbridge's crackdown eventually disbands the group. After receiving a vision of Sirius in danger, Harry and his friends rush to the Ministry, only to fall into a trap set by Voldemort. A battle ensues, resulting in Sirius's death. The book ends with Dumbledore revealing the prophecy that links Harry and Voldemort, and Harry returns to the Dursleys, understanding the necessity to do so for his protection.

In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005), love is a central theme: Bill Weasley and Fleur Delacour's engagement, Remus and Nymphadora Tonks' romantic struggle, and Harry developing feelings for Ginny. This theme also appears in the form of love potions, the root of Voldemort's origins, and its dangers extend to a mishap that negatively affects Ron. The story begins with the recruitment of Horace Slughorn as the new Potions teacher. It is revealed later that he holds a crucial memory that uncovers the secret to Voldemort's immortality. During the school year, Harry keeps a close eye on Draco, suspecting him of being a Death Eater and under Dumbledore's guidance, he learns about Voldemort's past and his method of splitting his soul into Horcruxes. Harry and Dumbledore go to retrieve a Horcrux, but the Headmaster is severely weakened as a result. They return to Hogwarts to find that Death Eaters have infiltrated the castle. While Draco cannot kill

Dumbledore, Severus Snape steps in and completes the task. It is then that Harry discovers Snape is the Half-Blood Prince. The book concludes with Dumbledore's funeral, leaving Harry with the heavy responsibility of finding and destroying the remaining Horcrux to defeat Voldemort.

Harry decides not to return to Hogwarts for his final year in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007). Instead, he, Ron and Hermione embark on a mission to fulfil Dumbledore's final request: to find and destroy Voldemort's Horcruxes. In their journey, they identify the Horcruxes as the diary Harry destroyed in his second year, the ring Dumbledore destroyed, the Slytherin locket kept by Kreacher, the Hufflepuff Cup hidden in Gringotts Bank, Ravenclaw's lost diadem hidden in Hogwarts and Nagini, Voldemort's pet snake. It is later revealed that Harry himself is the final accidental Horcrux. Amid many dangers, isolated from their allies, the trio destroys the locket, cup and diadem. The Battle of Hogwarts begins when Voldemort and his Death Eaters attack the castle. Teachers, students and members of the Order of the Phoenix unite to defend it. Harry willingly sacrifices himself to Voldemort when he learns he is the final Horcrux. However, he survives, and when Neville Longbottom kills Nagini, making Voldemort mortal, he engages Voldemort in a duel and defeats him. Nineteen years later, a happily married Harry and Ginny meet Ron and Hermione at King's Cross Station to send their children off to Hogwarts.

3.3 The Harry Potter Fandom

Since *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* made its debut in 1997, the novel series has been known as a "cultural touchstone" (Bell, 2015, p. 1), consumed and read by millions of children, including their friends and family members, around the world (Groves, 2017). This cultural phenomenon, which Beatty (2015) described as "Pottermania" (p. 99), arose in part due to a combination of strategic media marketing and compelling storytelling. Beatty (2015) suggested that the popularity of Harry Potter as a brand was the result of a "coherent and aggressive global marketing and merchandising strategy" (p. 102). Developed by Warner Media, it utilised both offline and online channels to circulate the brand (Beatty, 2015). Further, they introduced various Harry Potter-related merchandise, such as toys, games, clothing and other accessories, to entice Potter fans to continue engaging with the novel and the film series (Beatty, 2015). Blake (2002) believed that the heptalogy was a success simply because "they [were] good stories, well told" (p. 4). J. K. Rowling, the author of the *Harry Potter* novel series, created a fantastical world that subtly addressed some of society's social, political and cultural "anxieties" (Blake, 2002, p. 4), causing many readers to find pleasure and comfort in the text (Beatty, 2015).

According to McCauley's (2022) interpretation, the Harry Potter series can be considered a bildungsroman, a type of fictional series suitable for both young children and adults who are in “the process of developing their own principles and character” (McCauley, 2022, p. 127). The seven-book series follows the magical journey of the heroic protagonist, Harry Potter, as he navigates life as an orphaned young student in Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and as the Boy Who Lived; that is, as the sole survivor of the Killing Curse. With the help of his closest friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, and the guidance of his mentor, the Headmaster Albus Dumbledore, Harry faces many challenges and confronts his nemesis, the dark wizard Lord Voldemort, time and again. The *Harry Potter* novels appeal to many readers because Harry is relatable. Young children can identify with him despite their lack of magical abilities. Just as Harry “gets detentions, frets over homework and endures bullying teachers” (Groves, 2017, p. 2), they also face similar concerns with their school life. Another factor contributing to the widespread appeal of the novels is the author. Fans are fascinated with how Rowling created Harry and how she stimulated readers’ imaginations, allowing them to envision the story more immersively (Borah, 2002). They appreciate how she includes “presentations of betrayal, grief and culpability” (McCauley, 2022, p. 131) in her stories without sanitising the emotional heaviness of such experiences. Adults are attracted to the depiction of how people “think about childhood, adulthood and the family; about the relationship between education and work; and about questions of good and evil, personal and collective responsibility” (Blake, 2002, p. 19). So, even though the *Harry Potter* series is entirely fictional, filled with outstanding fantastical elements, the novels highlight “complex real-world issues, real-world ethical and political dilemma” (Sutton-Ramspeck, 2023, p. 2) that are compelling enough to draw in a diverse range of fans.

It is debatable whether the *Harry Potter* series is a boy-centered book. Doughty (2002) maintained that they were “quintessentially boys’ books” (p. 243) because they included the ingredients of a basic schoolboy (and boys’ school) narrative: competitive team sports, dormitory escapades, adventures of solving mysteries, magical duels and epic battles (Doughty, 2002; Blake, 2002). Additionally, the promotion strategy for the novels was targeted towards a younger male audience, which is evident in Rowling’s decision to publish the novels under her initials out of concern that young boys might not be interested in reading a book about a male protagonist written by a woman (Blake, 2002; Borah, 2002). Thus, the world of Harry Potter is perceived to be primarily masculine; its stories are aimed at boys (Doughty, 2002). However, girls also find the heptalogy entertaining. With strong female characters like Hermione and Professor McGonagall, who drive some of the novel's plots, the *Harry Potter* series is “coded” towards female readers too (Blake, 2002, p. 39). Borah (2002) further suggested that the novels inspired Rowling’s readers regardless of gender, age, race, or culture. Older generations, including grandparents, parents and teachers, share the same excitement when reading about Harry’s magical adventures (Borah, 2002; Beatty, 2015). Therefore, Harry Potter fans are not solely for boys or girls. Collectively, they form a fictional corpus of interest to a “diverse group of

individuals who have come to read Rowling's books and participate in fan activities in numerous and creative ways" (Borah, 2002, p. 363).

Since the inception of the internet, Harry Potter fans, also known as "Potterheads" (Lee, 2015, p. 56), quickly became a "web-connected population" (Borah, 2002, p. 359). It is now an online fandom that communicates through different social platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, X (Twitter), Pinterest and Tumblr. The fans engage in various Potter-related activities that give them a sense of "social identity" (Lee, 2015, p. 65). Magic by Mikaila (n.d.), a YouTuber whose passion for popular culture like Harry Potter, Star Wars, The Hunger Games and recently, the *Percy Jackson* series prompts her to make engaging YouTube shorts depicting her unique interpretation of the *Harry Potter* books and characters; Bex in Blue (n.d.), another YouTuber, produces YouTube shorts solely dedicated to the Potter fandom, portraying modern, comedic analogies of the four Hogwarts houses (Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw and Slytherin), which shows their clear understanding of the distinctive characteristics of the houses. Magic by Mikaila and Bex in Blue are examples of contemporary fans utilising social media to share their Potter experience. YouTuber ColeyDoesThings (2018) portrays a near-accurate picture of the behaviour of Potterheads within the fandom. Her video identifies fans immersed in the Potter universe (Potterverse) since childhood and engaged with the fandom for a "long, long time" (ColeyDoesThings, 2018), highlighting their love for the Potter characters and side characters like Luna Lovegood. It also emphasises the content inside and outside the franchise, including the Very Potter Musical, comedic videos of the Potter Puppet Pals, fan-made music, outdoor Quidditch activities, podcasts and fan-created crossovers. Lee (2015) and Beatty (2015) suggested that the prolonged existence of the Harry Potter franchise, in comparison to many popular cultural examples, can be attributed to the online fandom and their activities – like the videos produced by Magic by Mikaila, Bex in Blue and ColeyDoes Things. Writing Harry Potter slash fanfiction is one of the various activities Potterheads engage in to keep the magic of the Wizarding World alive years after the release of the books.

Pugh and Wallace (2006) firmly believed that "[h]eteronormativity is alive and well at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry" (p. 263). Despite the odd and fantastical elements occupying the space of the Potter universe, the novels do not feature characters with non-heteronormative gender and sexual identities (Pugh & Wallace, 2006). With blatant heteronormative romances like Harry/Ginny and Ron/Hermione and traditional family structures like the Weasleys (Duggan, 2022), it is implied that the novel keeps to a conformist heterosexual, "straight boy" (Pugh & Wallace, 2006, p. 261), narrative. Thus, in the absence of queerness in the novels, fan writers find gaps, seek underlying tension between certain characters in the source text, and create non-heteronormative stories (Willis, 2006). Tosenberger (2008a), referencing a fan, suggested that the settings in the Potterverse often translate to a "queerspace" (p. 199), which often resembles a children's sandbox where straight or

queer female writers and readers go to enjoy non-normative activities (Tosenberger, 2008a).

Therefore, the practice of writing Harry Potter fanfiction helps to maintain the presence of the Potter universe, fosters a sense of community among fans who share a love for this magical world, and allows fans a safe space to explore their gender and sexuality (Tosenberger, 2008a).

3.4 Critical Theory: Meaning and Interpretation

The action of interpreting is to encourage encounters with the plurality of meaning within a text (Barthes, 1970/1974). Here, Barthes's (1970/1974) description of a text as a "galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds" (Barthes, 1970/1974, p. 5) highlights the correlation between the production of meaning and the distinction between the signifier and signified. The signifier, which refers to the letters, sounds or images that make up a sign, is, in Derrida's (1997) perspective, without "constitutive meaning" (Derrida, 1997, p. 11). It emphasises that language can be unstable and subject to multiple interpretations because signifiers are contingent upon the context in which they are used (Derrida, 1997). In his discussion of the "signifier of the signifier", Derrida (1997, p. 7) problematised the signified, which describes the meanings expressed by a signifier, positing a notion similar to Barthes (1970/1974) that the creation of meaning can be deferred through a chain of signifiers. Foucault's (1969/1997) discussion of discursive formations shares a connection with Derrida's (1997) deconstruction of signifiers, in the sense that Foucault (1969/1997) believed that discursive formations are a "schema of correspondence between several temporal series" (Foucault, 1969/1997, p. 74). This proposal suggests an interconnectedness between historical and social contexts and the development of discourses over time, thus shaping an individual's interactions with the world. Foucault (1969/1997) thus suggested that language can be understood as a space where meaning is constantly negotiated due to the reshaping of existing discourses.

While Foucault's (1969/1997) argument focuses on the broader frameworks that shape the production and circulation of discourses, Kristeva's (2024) notion of a text's "semiotic distribution" (Kristeva, 2024, p. 98), which identifies a pattern of clear ideas within a text that creates meaning, addressed the internal organisation and processes of the production of meaning in a text. Her concept includes a language's underlying structures and patterns contributing to a text's significance. In literature, signification suggests the "possibility of denotation" (Kristeva, 2024, p. 56), implying that words and symbols can point to or represent something real or tangible. However, Barthes (1970/1974) argued that while denotation often seems like the most straightforward act of interpretation, it is "not the first meaning, but pretends to be so" (Barthes, 1970/1974, p. 9), indicating that any meaning produced is merely a surface-level interpretation. Thus, denotation can be one aspect of finding meaning, one of the many connotations within a text (Barthes, 1970/1974).

In slash fiction, where characters and relationships may be reimagined and reinterpreted, writers often use narrative techniques, character interactions and symbolic elements to convey nuanced meanings and themes. These elements may carry connotations that surpass the surface level of the story and include aspects related to gender, sexuality, and emotional connection. Barthes (1970/1974) proposed early in his oeuvre that connotation leads to the “polysemy” of a text (Barthes, 1970/1974, p. 8). He described connotation as meanings beyond the definitions found in a dictionary or “in the grammar of language” (Barthes, 1970/1974, p. 8). Instead, they are shaped by a “sequential” space (Barthes, 1970/1974, p. 8), where meanings build over time in an “agglomerative” space (Barthes, 1970/1974, p. 8), where words connect to meanings outside the text, forming a “nebulae of signifieds” (Barthes, 1970/1947, p. 8). Additionally, connotation allows for various interpretations of a text, each starting a new pattern of meaning, introducing a “countercommunication” (Barthes, 1970/1974, p. 8) that disrupts the interaction between the author and the reader. Barthes’s (1970/1974) discussion of connotation is relevant to the act of close reading slash fanfiction because the examination of connotation associated with character dynamics, dialogue and narrative choices may uncover multiple layers of interpretation, subtextual meaning, and cultural references imbued within a text.

3.5 Gender and Sexuality

One singular perception of gender shared among theorists, such as Goffman (1956), Butler (2006) and De Lauretis (1989), is that it is a cultural construct. Goffman consequentially argued in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956) that gender is less a matter of being than a form of doing that we learn. Butler (2006) claimed that there is a distinction between gender and sex, rejecting the notion that gender is a by-product of one’s biological nature. Instead, it is “a politically neutral surface in which culture acts” (Butler, 2006, p. 10). Jagger (2008) expanded on that and suggested that Butler’s objective for making that distinction was to emphasise the idea that gender is a reflection of the existing “regimes of power/knowledge” (p. 17), which is in line with De Lauretis’s (1989) argument that gender may be “subsumed in sexual differences as an effect of language [...] or pure imaginary” (p. 2). De Lauretis (1989) proposed four premises on gender discourse: it is a “representation” (p. 3); it consists of many layers of historical culture that built that ‘representation’; “the construction of gender” (p. 3) continues to be present in contemporary public and private spheres; and external discourses can negatively impact it. In summary, beyond the simple notion that it serves as a social construct that distinguishes between men and women, gender is seen as “situationally variable” (Rahman & Jackson, 2010, p. 159), and malleable to cultural changes.

Regarding the subject of sexuality, Butler often made references to Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1978) in her works (Brady & Schirato, 2011). Neither Butler nor Foucault supported the idea that sexuality is linked to the biological nature of one's sex (Brady & Schirato, 2011). This is because they believed that sexuality is a system created to control and "regulate sexual experience" through the establishment of distinctive "binary categorisation" of gender (Butler, 2006, p. 32). De Lauretis (1989) also found Foucault's first volume of *The History of Sexuality* to be "highly influential" (p. 12) to her discussion on sexuality. A conclusion that she came to was that sexuality and power are closely connected as "sexuality is produced discursively (institutionally) by power, and power is produced institutionally (discursively) by the deployment of sexuality" (De Lauretis, 1989, p. 36). In De Lauretis's (1989) opinion, sexuality is "a property of the male" (De Lauretis, 1989, p. 14), structured by patriarchal ideology. Thus, sexuality may often be viewed as an "institutionalisation of heterosexuality" (Rahman & Jackson, 2010, p. 52), which Jagose (1996) positioned as a "neutral or unmarked form of sexuality" (p. 17). Rahman and Jackson (2010) proposed that the cultural prevalence of heterosexuality exposed a hierarchy of "normative and non-normative sexualities" (p. 52). Within that hierarchy, homosexuality, perceived as "morally and psychologically deviant" in the eyes of the social and patriarchal order (Rahman & Jackson, 2010, p. 5), is situated at the bottom.

Queer theory considers the "cultural and theoretical" influences of gay and lesbian identity within academic settings and broader society (Jagose, 1996, p. 76). According to Jagose (1996), the term "gay", which commonly refers to homosexuality as the sexual desire between two people of similar sex, was deployed as a political movement to challenge the "binarised and hierarchised sexual categorisation" (Jagose, 1996, p. 72). Most scholarship that discusses subjects such as "gayness", lesbianism, and other topics, including "cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity", and transsexuality (Jagose, 1996, p. 3), are a part of queer theory. Rahman and Jackson (2010) identified queer theorists as a group of academics that "seek to trouble the privileged and normative status of heterosexuality" (Rahman & Jackson, 2010, p. 127). Homosexuality, without conforming to the heteronormativity of deterministic constructions of sex and gender, becomes a reflection of an identity that has been socially and culturally "repressed by heterosexist power structures with privilege gender-asymmetry, sexual reproduction and patriarchal nuclear family" (Jagose, 1996, p. 36). The repression that homosexuals faced may be a reason why male homosexuals take on masculinity to keep their "ostensible femininity" hidden (Butler, 2006, p. 70) and invisible from the gazes of the heteronormal public.

Masculinity and femininity are "social attributes" (Rahman & Jackson, 2010, p. 18) that code the maleness and femaleness of an individual (Parker, 2009). Connell (2005), who is also in agreement with Butler (2006) that homosexual masculinity faces oppression from heterosexual men in a patriarchal-centred society, discussed the subject of masculinity extensively. Her earlier writings

challenge and dispute the false perceptions of masculinity, which include the mistaken belief that masculinity stems from the image of a male body (Connell, 2005). Using sports as an example, Connell (2005) suggested that another flawed conception of masculinity could be created through the performance of “competition and hierarchy of men, [and the] exclusion or domination of women” (p. 52). One significant argument Connell (2005) presented that may be beneficial to the understanding of masculinity is that homosexuality “disrupts hegemonic masculinity” (Connell, 2005, p. 57). Her idea of masculinity implies that it is an attribute that is “liable to internal contradiction and historical disruption” (Connell, 2005, p. 73). Moreover, hegemonic masculinity, which she described as the patriarchal practice of ensuring men occupy a dominant position and women a subordinate one, reflects its ability to accept and assert a new dominating form of masculinity when facing change. Thus, similarly to De Lauretis’s (1989) view of sexuality, masculinity is connected to power (Reeser, 2010). Hegemonic masculinity can force homosexual masculinity to the “bottom of a gender hierarchy among men” (Connell, 2005, p. 78) and become the subordination of heterosexual men because gay practices, behaviours and desires are often rejected by hegemonic masculinity.

Slash fiction often provides characterisations and narrative arcs that subverts the traditional, or as Connell (2005) described it, hegemonic views of masculinity. It is a genre that challenges the heteronormal and features the “limitations of traditional masculinity and [the reconfiguration of] male identity” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 119). While fan writers do not assert their knowledge of masculinity and femininity onto their readers, they attempt to break the “rigid” perceptions of masculinity and femininity by narrating their reinterpretations of characters (Jenkins, 2012, p. 218). They ensure that their paired protagonists are “equally strong and equally vulnerable, equally dominant and equally submissive” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 194). This sense of equality can be achieved when fan writers allow their characters to embrace their homosocial desires (Jenkins, 2012). Sedgwick (2016) described “homosocial” as a form of “social bond” (p. 1) that existed between two people of similar sex, primarily to illustrate the practices of “male bonding” (Sedgwick, 2016, p. 1). Homosocial desire, thus, draws a “continuum between [the] homosocial and homosexual” (Sedgwick, 2016, p. 1). However, male bonding, in the perspective of a heteronormative society, can instigate a homophobic response, indicating a “fear and hatred of homosexuality” (Sedgwick, 2016, p. 1). According to Reeser (2010), men are aware and cautious about expressing “physical and emotional closeness with other men” (Reeser, 2010, p. 99) out of the anxiety that they might accidentally display their inner desire for homoeroticism. Slash fiction breaks this conventional fear and promotes a form of masculinity and male bonding that supports “emotional openness and male intimacy” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 219).

4. Design of the Study

The purpose of this chapter is to explicate my approach to analysing and interpreting how fans transform Harry Potter characters to circumvent Rowling's heteronormative practices through fanfiction. It specifies my approach to reading and interpreting the selected fanfiction texts, recognising that they can produce multiple meanings. It also describes the type of fanfiction, including word count, publication dates, and prevalent tropes. These data points present my criteria and rationale behind the selection of fanfiction for this thesis. Given Rowling's significant authorial presence within and beyond the *Harry Potter* series, it is crucial to highlight fan readers' participation in creating fanfiction from the gaps found in the novels. Although, again, not the primary focus of this thesis, understanding this participatory culture is essential for appreciating the broader context in which these fanfiction stories are produced as it emphasises how fanfiction serves as a site of resistance and creativity. Since this thesis focuses on slash fiction, it is imperative to examine the depictions of heteronormativity in the original *Harry Potter* texts and identify the specific slash pairings selected for analysis. This chapter consists of three subsections. The first outlines how I intend to interpret the selected fanfiction texts with a close reading approach. This is followed by a discussion of the extent fans acknowledge Rowling's authorial authority within the domain of fanfiction. The last subsection explains my intention to investigate three slash male-pairings, focusing on how their homosexual relationship and masculinity affect the development of emotional intimacy.

4.1 A Close Reading Approach

This thesis aims to examine written text-based Harry Potter slash fiction, carrying out a detailed and careful evaluation of multiple one-shot stories that do not exceed 15,000 words. I select shorter fanfiction texts to enable the inclusion of a broader range of narrative styles, which in turn allows comparative analysis, offering insights into the distinctive features of each transformed character from the Potterverse. My close reading approach focuses on fan writers' writing style, tone, language choice and use of literary devices to reveal how they may convey themes and meaning concerning fan culture, the Potter fandom, and representations of gender and sexuality discourse in the realm of fanfiction. According to Abbott (2002), "identifying themes and motifs" (p. 88) does not generate a definitive interpretation because it can lead to multiple interpretations. However, recognising them can be crucial in a close reading. In understanding the fan-written text, I can dismiss less plausible interpretations, resulting in a more accurate and insightful analysis of fans' interpretations of the source text and the characters' intricate transformations, expansions and deviations from the Potter fictional universe. Thus, in this thesis, I seek to examine the narrative structure of the selected texts,

identify their voice and focalization, and investigate the characterisation of Harry Potter characters portrayed in the selected slash fiction, making comparisons with those described in the heptalogy.

The composition of a one-shot may be fundamentally distinctive from that of a multi-chaptered fanfiction. Because of its brief format, a one-shot condenses its plot, character development and thematic exploration into a single, self-contained story, approaching the structural elements of time, pacing and resolution in a different manner. Thus, I intend to conduct a close analysis of the selected fanfiction narrative's structure, focusing on its temporality, rhythm and closure in my approach to understand how they influence the development of themes while exposing fan readers' interpretations of the original Potter series. In terms of temporality, Bridgeman (2007) emphasised the significance of time in the construction of a narrative and the effects temporal "information" (p. 64) has on readers' interpretation of a narrative, suggesting that "they are part of its fabric, affecting our basic understanding of a narrative text and of the protocols of different narrative genres. They profoundly influence the way in which we build mental images of what we read" (pp. 52–53). In one-shot slash fiction, where the story is often compressed, fan writers may choose a prominent event from the source text, a single point of time or multiple small moments to form their reimagined story. Hence, it becomes crucial to identify the "time of telling" of the story (Bal, 2017, p. 67) because narratives like AU stories may or may not align with the timeline of the source text and highlighting the point of divergence can reveal fans' interpretation of the canonverse.

I also aim to determine the rhythmic patterns of a fanfiction text, by considering narrative tools, such as ellipsis, which indicates an "omission in the story" (Bal, 2017, p. 90); pauses "in which no movement of the fabula-time is implied" (Bal, 2017, p. 95); or summarisation of "insignificant events" (Bal, 2017, p. 92). These specific features were selected because they illustrate gaps in the source texts, which fan writers tend to focus on the gaps in the source text (Willis, 2006) and the details that are "peripheral to the primary plots" (Jenkins, 2012, p. 155). Another focus in my analysis is the endings of the selected fanfiction text as Abbott (2002) suggested that closure in a narrative concerns "the resolution of a story's central conflict" (Abbott, 2002, p. 53), and it may result in achieving either satisfaction or frustration in readers. Highlighting the resolution of a fanfiction story can draw a contrast between the format of a one-shot fanfiction and a multi-chaptered one in terms of whether a closure is achieved or if it is left open-ended. Closely analysing these three structural components (temporality, rhythm and closure) is the first step to interpreting the strategies for meaning-making occurring within the selected fan texts.

A text may have different "voices" (Barthes, 1970/1974, p. 41) that contribute to the plurality of understandings of a text as they express various viewpoints and abruptly change the direction of a conversation. Abbott (2002) suggested that knowing the "voice in narration" (p. 64) paints an image

of the character and “by the quality of their language, convey the kind of personality” (p. 65) the character possesses. Hence, in my approach to close reading the selected fanfiction texts, it becomes necessary to discuss focalization and its influence on a story. Focalization alludes to the “lens” (Abbott, 2002, p. 66) through which readers perceive characters and events in a narrative, with the focalizer being either a character within a story or an external third-person narrator (Abbott, 2002). Jahn (2007) referenced Genette and classified focalization into three distinct “categories” (p. 97): non-focalization, internal focalization and external focalization. In this thesis, internal focalization may be more relevant for grasping the complexities of a fanfiction text than non-focalization or external focalization because internal focalization provides narrative information confined to the “perception, cognition”, thoughts and emotions of one or more characters (Jahn, 2007, p. 98) and it can be crucial for providing insights into intricate character dynamics and emotional nuances central to fanfiction narratives.

It is also likely that the selected fanfiction texts fall within two of internal focalization’s sub-patterns: fixed focalization, where events are narrated exclusively from the viewpoint of a single character, and variable focalization, where the narrative shifts among multiple characters’ perspectives (Jahn, 2007). I can identify the focalization of a story by distinguishing the components of free indirect style that may be present in the text. Free indirect style or discourse is a “fluid adaptation of the narrator’s voice in a kind of ventriloquism of different voices, all done completely without the usual signposts of punctuation and attribution” (Abbott, 2002, p. 70). Bal (2017) suggested that the presence of “personal language” (p. 47) and the details narrated beyond what is necessary for the story’s development can be indicators of free indirect discourse. In relation to the nature of this style, Toolan (2007) observes that free indirect thought can be narration that dramatises a character’s perspective by utilising deictic words and phrases, such as personal pronouns (I, you, he, she, it, and they), demonstrative determiners (this, that, these and those), and demonstrative adverbs (here, there, now and then) (Cuddon & Habib, 2014). They communicate a character’s thoughts on what they believe to be important, which reveals their characteristics in a story. To summarise, I seek to determine the voice and focalization of the selected fan-written texts as part of my close reading approach, aiming to analyse the portrayal and development of the primary characters’ key characteristics.

I examine five characters from the *Harry Potter* series that are central figures in the selected fanfiction texts: Harry Potter, Draco Malfoy, Tom Riddle and his alter ego, Lord Voldemort, James Potter and Regulus Black. Within each AU story, these characters are participants within their “narrative domain” (Margolin, 2007, p. 66). Abbott (2002) suggested that when characters drive the action in the events of a narrative, they “reveal who they are in terms of their motives, their strength, weakness, trustworthiness, capacity to love, hate, cherish, adore [and] deplore” (p. 124). It is through their actions that readers can know the characters (Abbott, 2002). I aim to investigate these five

characters and how they are portrayed in fan-written narratives. Margolin (2007) suggested that finding out “what is explicitly stated in [the originating text] and what can be inferred from it” (p. 68) may uncover the personalities and qualities of these characters. I also compare their depicted actions in the source text. The practice of fanfiction writing reflects a fan writer’s interpretation of the original work, and the characters portrayed in slash fiction become “one possible understanding of characterisation” (Kaplan, 2006, p. 136). So, even though fans are familiar with many of these characters from the Potterverse (Pugh, 2005), it is necessary to analyse how fans reimagine the characters and their dynamics with other characters, which “help build the image of a character” (Bal, 2017, p. 114), and the transformations they undergo.

As such, this investigation also examines the archetypes of these five characters. An archetype is “the most typical and essential characteristics” (Cuddon & Habib, 2014, p. 51) deeply rooted in human nature and shared by a group. Fathallah (2017) observed that fan writers are known to pick and choose parts of the source text, transforming them to “create alternative explanations and expansions” (Fathallah, 2017, p. 31). A character’s archetype need not be fixed and often transitions between personality types, such as the evolution from a villainous portrayal within the canon universe to that of a heroic figure in slash fiction. This transition highlights character transformations through fanfiction adaptation rather than character development within a narrative arc since this thesis focuses on how fans reimagine and reinterpret characters beyond their original stories. Thus, unveiling the archetypal traits of these five primary characters as depicted in the original work and juxtaposing them with the altered personality types in slash fiction serves to elucidate fan writers’ reinterpretations of the characters and shed light on the nuances of character development in fanfiction.

This thesis further explores antithesis in a text to reveal fan writers’ comprehension of characters and their complex relationships to see if meaning can be found in its occluded layers. According to Barthes (1970/1974), the antithesis is a reference to a “nature of opposites” (p. 26). It indicates the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas or elements, not dissimilar to Lévi-Strauss’s (1964/1970) observation of binary oppositions. This anthropologist’s idea of “binary distinctions” (Lévi-Strauss, 1964/1970, p. 84) stemmed from his literary analysis of mythologies, where he found “the existence of an isomorphism between two oppositions” (Lévi-Strauss, 1964/1970, p. 28), such as nature/culture, life/death, young/old and light/dark. Potts (2022) suggested that Lévi-Strauss’s objective in establishing duality in mythologies was to emphasise the presence of meaning. For this thesis, I select five characters (Harry, Draco, Voldemort, James and Regulus) and specific one-shot fanfiction to identify the existing semantic axes, which Bal (2017) proposed as a method of “mapping out the similarities and oppositions between the characters” (p. 114). In highlighting their likenesses and differences, I can uncover the gaps the author left in the source texts and search for the hidden threads

that draw a connection between some of these characters. This exploration allows me to delve into the uncharted territories of their relationships, thus enriching my investigation into these five characters.

4.2 The Death of J. K. Rowling

While this thesis primarily centres on the close examination of fanfiction texts, it can and must also encompass an analysis of fan community due to the close interrelation between these subjects. Understanding fan writing and reading behaviours may broaden the discussion regarding fanfiction. This research compares the selected slash texts with related content in the original *Harry Potter* novels to highlight fan reader-turned-writers' interpretive abilities and prove the absence of its influential author, J. K. Rowling.

According to Borah (2002), “[f]ans are people who read, reread, and interpret text” (p. 355). Iser (1974/1996) perceived reading to be a “kaleidoscope of perspectives, preintentions, [and] recollections” (p. 77). He believed that each text contained some unexpected developments that may frustrate the reader because the story would have presented its incompleteness to them. In the face of that interruption, readers can identify and fill in the gaps based on their individualistic imagination and produce multiple possible storylines (Iser, 1974/1996, p. 78). Fans who already possess their “knowledge, experiences, and expectations” (Sandvoss, 2014, p. 70) can communicate with the original text using their reading process. They are essentially “an active interpretive community” (Kaplan, 2006, p. 135), and the creative interpretive acts they participate in produce extensive fanfiction archives. Potts (2022) considered fanfiction to be a result of readers transforming themselves into writers who choose to dispute the original authors' narrative decisions (Leavenworth, 2015), becoming a form of critic who combs through the text with a microscopic lens for unsatisfying gaps in the plot (Jenkins, 2012). As part of their interpretive practice, fanfiction writers take apart the genre and the plot, reshape its characters and offer other fan readers different points of view to the original story (Hellekson & Busse, 2014), “repositioning the events into a greatly expanded narrative and a more fully elaborated world” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 177), regardless of the authorial presence of the original author.

In the fanfiction domain, authorial authority may often be a complicated area of discussion (Potts, 2022). According to Hellekson and Busse (2014), this complexity is tied to the nature of fanfiction. As a text written based on a fan's reading and interpretation of the original work, it represents the shift of “interpretive power” (Hellekson & Busse, 2014, p. 19) from the author of the source text to the reader. Barthes (1968/1996) famously argued that “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (p. 122). He suggested that if the Author exists on a timeline that is

categorised into “before” and “after” the conception of their book, they would undoubtedly be placed in the “before” category (Barthes, 1968/1996, p. 120). This is because readers, in their attempts to understand the words in the text and interpret its multiple layers, take charge of it, and it is Barthes’s (1968/1996) contention that the “total existence of writing” (p. 122) lies on the responsibility of the reader (Barthes, 1968/1996). Many authors may be threatened by the presence of “derivative works” (Potts, 2022, p. 165) like fanfiction. However, Rowling, who is very much aware of the Potter fandom and the sizeable amount of fan text, is “actively supportive” (Tosenberger, 2008b, p. 201) of the fans that produce such creative interpretations of her work, unlike other authors. In this thesis, the original content cannot be dismissed; instead, comparisons between the novels and fanfiction will be made so that character and event deviations can be identified and if the author has any influence on the fan reader-turned-writer.

Rowling’s authorial presence can be both a blessing and a curse to the Potter fandom (Tosenberger, 2008b). Her continuous attempts to provide “unwelcome extratextual commentary” (Duggan, 2022, p. 159) and insert her control onto her readers’ interpretations are a reflection of her status as an “undead” author (p. 159). In relation to Barthes’ (1970/1974) notion of the readerly text, Wolfreys (2000) pointed out that readers may respond to a text in two ways: “acceptance or rejection” (p. 14), and it is clear that, with regards to the canon, Potter readers are divided into these categories. Taking Rowling’s announcement of Dumbledore and Grindelwald’s homosexual relationship as an example, some fans showed excitement for her support and interest in offering more content regarding the Wizarding World beyond the scope of the published novels. However, some fans do not appreciate her interference as she endeavoured to influence their interpretations (Tosenberger, 2008b). While they do not object to this pairing, dissatisfied fans, in a display of their distrust towards the author, have published their rejection of her vision and wider politics as creative fan texts (Duggan, 2022). Tosenberger (2008a) suggested that fans were “perfectly content” (p. 196) to ignore her commentaries and disregard some aspects of the source text, allowing their imagination to run wild with the stories they wish were told in the original books. These views align with Jenkins’s (2012) inference that fans produce copious fanfiction to make their frustrations and desires known. The “Nineteen Years Later” epilogue exemplifies fans’ rejection of and need to subvert Rowling’s authorial position. Rowling’s epilogue was such a disappointment for the Potter fandom that fan writers decided to ignore it or “work within (or around) the constraints of the epilogue” (Coppa, 2017, p. 137). Their endless creative “correction” (Tosenberger, 2008a, p. 203) sets a time of death on her authorial authority.

To comprehensively understand the extent to which fans reject the author and transform the source text, this study concentrates on how fans reconfigure the characters in the Potter universe. Pugh (2005) suggested that a fan writer, depending on whether the author of the original work has provided an extensive description of their characters, may have a firm grasp of a “book-based character” (Pugh,

2005, p. 70) in which they are clear on how the character moves, speaks, reacts, and interacts with other side characters, and understand their personal background stories (Kaplan, 2006). While some fan writers are determined to be loyal to the “canon portrayal” (Leavenworth, 2015, p. 43) by sticking close to the traits displayed in the source text, other fans, showing their capabilities as writerly readers, rewrite characters (Kaplan, 2006). It is a core component of their interpretive practices to reshape characters to “better suit their desires” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 156). Drawing parallels and highlighting differences when exploring the antithesis in fanfiction can indicate the fan writers’ interpretations of these characters. Thus, the selection of fanfiction texts is narrowed down to those published between 2010 and 2022 because it is assumed that fan-written works published several years after the first publication of *Deathly Hallows* (2007) could feature expanded character developments and their life events that may or may not be covered in the heptalogy. It can shed light on fans’ interpretation and reinterpretation of the books and how they may address the gaps and unsolved mysteries in the Potterverse.

In addition to the comparative analysis of canon and fanon characteristics, this thesis explores the features of specific genres. For this purpose, only slash texts of specific genres are included in the analysis while fanfiction elements irrelevant to the research are excluded. Jenkins (2012) identified ten different approaches to fan writing: reinterpreting the gaps in the source text by placing it in a new context; continuing narratives that have not been “fully explored” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 163); moving the central focus of the narrative to a side character; reshaping the characteristics of the antagonist; emphasising one genre over the plot of the source text; merging the universes of two different texts; removing a character from their original setting; carving a space for the writer’s original character; creating traumatising situations to invoke emotional pain; and experimenting with regards to the sexual relations of characters beyond the limitations of publication and societal censorship. Most of the chosen fanfiction significant to this research is either an expansion of the original story or a “recontextualization” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 162) of characters, in which characters from two different timelines merge into one. So, some form of canon divergence may be expected, but slash fiction containing genre-shifting features like time-travelling and time-looping or universe-altering tropes, such as Muggle or Non-Magical AU, are excluded. Fan texts with original characters or placement of characters in different periods are also not included. As this is an exploration of Harry Potter slash fiction, the romance between male pairings can be a dominant feature, but there may be minimal explicit scenes and limited “eroticisation” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 175).

4.3 Homosexuality, Masculinity and Intimacy

The *Harry Potter* novels are perceived as adhering to a heteronormative framework. All major and minor characters in the books align with traditional societal norms, portraying relationships and identities that reinforce conventional expectations of heterosexuality and binary gender roles as any sexual or “gender deviance is indeed invisible” within the Potterverse (Pugh & Wallace, 2006, p. 263). Although some of her characters possess non-human characteristics, which represents a message of inclusivity, Rowling maintained their heterosexuality and omits any presence of queer characters, trampling on “the marvelous range of diversity that otherwise defines” the Wizarding World that she had created (Pugh & Wallace, 2006, p. 264). In this thesis, I aim to outline the heteronormativity Rowling depicted in the source texts and compare it with recurrent representations of homosexuality found in slash fiction. This comparison may shed light on the ways slash fiction challenges and subverts traditional gender roles and sexual relationships. According to Willis (2006), the fan practice of writing fanfiction allows for a “queer space” (Tosenberger, 2008a, p. 199) that resonates with younger readers and writers. Fanfiction “happens in the gaps between canon, the unexplored or insufficiently explored territory” (Pugh, 2005, p. 92), and it is up to the fan reader-turned-writer to negotiate the “gaps and silences” (Duggan, 2022, p. 152), offering alternative perspectives and helping to enrich the discussion on gender and sexuality. Based on the considerations presented here, beyond examining the characteristics of Harry, Draco, Voldemort, James, and Regulus, I explore their heterosexual dynamics in the novels, highlight the significant popularity of the M/M pairings in the Potter fandom, and analyse their homosexual relationships in the selected fanfiction texts.

I investigate three specific M/M pairings: Harry Potter/Draco Malfoy (“Drarry”), Tom Riddle/Harry Potter (“Tomarry”) or Harry Potter/Lord Voldemort (“Harrymort”), and James Potter/Regulus Black (“Jegulus”). Each pairing has the common feature of an enemyslash, a term many in the fan community use to describe a pairing of characters at odds with each other in the canon. The desirability of an enemyslash fanfiction lies in the sexual tension between the male characters and how they negotiate their animosity and develop an emotional and romantic connection with one another (Tosenberger, 2008a). This idea of two male characters going through an intimate and emotionally romantic journey can be associated with Woledge’s (2006) concept of “intimatopia” (Woledge, 2006, p. 99), which describes a “homosocial world in which the social closeness of the male characters engender intimacy” (Woledge, 2006, p. 100). Sedgwick’s (2016) discussion of the homosocial-homosexual continuum and male bonding is prominent in Woledge’s (2006) study of intimatopic texts. Woledge (2006) suggested that slash fanfiction utilises depictions of “homosocial bonding” (p. 100) between the protagonists to establish their homosexual relationship but argued that intimatopic elements are seldom found between adversarial pairings. This thesis aims to investigate the validity of this claim and determine the degree of intimacy present in the selected slash texts.

In this thesis, I exclude slash fiction incorporating the genderswap trope. Genderswapping is a common subset of slash that utilises science fiction or fantastical elements to “reimagine characters’ sexed and gendered bodies” (Busse & Lothian, 2009, p. 1). According to Butler (1996), “gender is a contemporary way of organising past and future cultural norms” (p. 148); the act of choosing one’s gender then becomes an interpretation of the “received gender norms” (Butler, 1996, p. 148) that can be reorganised, implying that individuals can restructure and reinterpret these norms in the construction of their gender identity. When writing slash fiction, fans have the creative freedom to subvert the restrictive heteronormative practices of gender and sexual roles (Jenkins, 2012; Tosenberger, 2008a) and the imaginative ability to “manipulate the bodies of their protagonists for a variety of purposes” (Busse & Lothian, 2009, p. 1), reconstructing the characters’ gender identity to accommodate the narrative. Alternatively, fans also have decision-making powers to forego the genderswap trope, enabling a more profound investigation of existing gender norms and dynamics. Thus, deliberately excluding this trope can allow for a more central analysis of the original portrayal of characters and their relationships without introducing the element of gender transformation. This suits the objective of this thesis, which is to analyse the characters’ interactions and narratives within their canonical gender identities, facilitating the examination of fans’ reinterpretation of the heterosexually compliant *Harry Potter* novels and exploration of homosexuality in the realm of slash fiction.

It is possible for slash fiction to challenge the heteronormative perception of masculinity while keeping the characters in their canonically male bodies. This is because slash, as a fanfiction genre, “makes masculinity the central problem within its narrative development and tries to envision a world where conventional identities are redefined in a more fluid, less hierarchical fashion” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 219). Patriarchal society often assumes that men in homosexual relationships are absent of masculinity (Connell, 2005). However, masculinity is a cultural concept, an effect of gender practices “in bodily experience, personality and culture” (Connell, 2005, p. 71). It implies that in a space that is free from commercial and heteronormal restrictions like slash writing, writers are permitted to disregard the “conventional notions of masculinity” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 205) and break the “rigid boundary between masculinity and femininity” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 218). Pugh (2005) also suggested that writing slash fiction was an effective method to acknowledge “male vulnerability” (p. 94). Fan slash writers tend to portray their male protagonists in a state of a “painful yet liberatory process of self-discovery” (Penley, 2014, p. 180), compelling them to be more open about their feelings. While Bacon-Smith (1992) proposes that romance between male slash pairings “strip [the] characters of their power in masculine culture” (Bacon-Smith, 1992, p. 249), slash texts allow for a more fluid depiction of male characters, encouraging them to embrace both masculine and feminine traits (Jenkins, 2012; Penley, 2014).

I seek to demonstrate how fan writers circumvent the author's portrayal of orthodox masculinity in her male characters by "retooling" (Penley, 2014, p. 178) their masculine traits. Navigating around Rowling's authorial authority may reveal the intimate connections between the male pairings, highlighting how these relationships encompass both masculine and feminine qualities. Thus, this analysis, which may uncover fans' nuanced reinterpretations and expanded perceptions of the original characterisation, can allow for a more in-depth discussion on the portrayal of the five characters' masculinity and assess the level of emotional intimacy between these characters who, in the source material, are depicted as adversaries.

5. Close Reading of Selected Slash Fiction

This chapter presents a series of interpretations based on my close reading of seven slash fiction works, organised into three subsections according to specific slash pairings. The first subsection examines slash fiction featuring Harry and Draco as the central male pairing. Drarry stories are abundant, even among one-shot fanfictions. In this subsection, I analyse the distinct narratives that diverge from the canon plot, where fan writers have identified gaps and opportunities to reimagine these characters, reinterpret their relationship, and queer their sexuality within the Hogwarts setting. The second subsection focuses on the pairing of Harry and Tom Riddle. Although Tom Riddle and Voldemort are essentially the same character, fans often distinguish between them, treating them as separate entities with similar qualities. I analyse two slash fiction stories featuring Harry/Tom and one featuring Harry/Voldemort. This distinction allows for a comprehensive analysis of Voldemort's character in a later chapter and an exploration of the connections between Harry and Voldemort or even a younger Tom Riddle. The third and final subsection centres on the pairing of James Potter and Regulus Black. Even though these characters are relatively minor, their slash pairing has gained popularity in recent years, revitalising the Harry Potter fandom (Rosenberg, 2023). In this section, I conduct a close reading of two Jegulus slash narratives that fan readers highly appreciate on AO3. This chapter aims to lay the fundamental foundation for a thorough examination of the characters' traits and relationships, allowing for a detailed comparison between their portrayals in the original novels and the fanfiction.

5.1 The Harry/Draco Phenomena

5.1.1 Good Company (Greenflares, 2012)

“Good Company” is a continuation of *Deathly Hallows*, but written without the Nineteen Years Later Epilogue in mind. In this one-shot slash fiction, Harry, Ron and Hermione return to complete their final year of education at Hogwarts after the battle against Voldemort. While Ron and Hermione take the opportunity to enjoy their budding relationship in a safer environment (and now constantly on the run from Voldemort and his Death Eaters), Harry, left behind, surprisingly finds himself in the company of one Draco Malfoy. As the story unfolds, readers witness a bond growing between the pair of once-rivals as they overcome trauma and loneliness. Harry soon realises that his feelings for Draco go beyond the boundaries of friendship, and the story concludes with Harry and Draco embracing their newfound romantic connection.

The narrative is structured into a series of interactions between Harry and Draco and the often disagreeable conversations between Harry, Ron and Hermione. The fan writer Greenflares (2012) used line-breakers to indicate scene changes. Utilising line-breakers may be an easy method to help readers consume the narrative. More importantly, the separation of each interaction highlights Harry's ongoing friendship with Ron and Hermione and his newfound relationship with Draco after the Second Wizarding War. It also emphasises how both groups are rarely depicted in the same scene together. Written from a limited third-person point of view, Harry becomes the central focus of this fanfiction. Almost all the scenes present Harry interacting with either Draco or his friends.

The readers are first introduced to a depiction of Harry's "fragile facsimile of a friendship" with Draco (Greenflares, 2012, section 1):

[...] one that had been forged through years of torment and hatred, one that had come into fruition upon their final year at Hogwarts during which they were both isolated from their friends and incredibly displeased with how things had eventuated. They were alone, and so they'd come together. Somehow, it worked. (Greenflares, 2012, section 1)

Establishing a friendship between Harry and Draco at the start of the fanfiction, and reminding fan readers of their previously complicated rivalry throughout their growing up in Hogwarts, helps emphasise Harry's forgiving nature and ability to make friends. Despite their past and Draco's role as a Death Eater, a follower of Lord Voldemort, the villain who ceaselessly attempts to take Harry's life, Harry's optimistic characteristics shine through. His friendship with Draco represents his capacity to put the past behind him. However, it seems that Harry is the only one who can be forgiving. An argument between Harry and Ron follows the easy-going narrative between Harry and Draco (see Appendix A, Excerpt 1). Being the first to confront Harry and his decision to spend most of his time with Draco, Ron portrays a character who is unwilling to look beyond his past conflicts with Draco and continues to see him as the person he used to be. The repetitive usage of Draco's family name, "Malfoy", suggests that Ron does not see Draco as someone he can grow close to. Moreover, "Malfoy" becomes a form of adjective for Ron to describe an unpleasant characteristic, particularly Draco's unsavoury reputation, which he uses as a reason for why Harry should not befriend Draco. Harry's disagreeable conversation with Ron and Hermione after a midnight drinking session with Draco implies that Ron is not alone in trying to stop Harry from spending his time in Draco's company:

"You're being difficult," Hermione snapped.

"And you're being ridiculous," Harry countered. He looked at Ron and Hermione, levelled them with his gaze, and said quietly, "Just because I got drunk with someone who isn't either of you doesn't mean it's time to sit me down for an intervention, okay? It was the weekend, we were celebrating, neither of us died, so why don't you both *please* calm down about it. You should be happy I'm happy, shouldn't you?" (Greenflares, 2012, section 4)

Hermione's attempts at dissuasion are portrayed as her concern for Harry. However, underneath that caringness, readers may be able to detect a hint of disapproval. Harry's heated response also proved that, on the one hand, Hermione may be outwardly frowning upon his drinking habits, and on the other, she disagrees with his association with Draco. Based on these two interactions between Harry, Ron and Hermione, it is evident that neither of Harry's friends approve of him spending time with Draco.

Loneliness is a theme throughout "Good Company", represented through the characters of Harry and Draco. Their motivation for their friendship is to abandon the sense of isolation forced upon them by the absence of friends around them. Ron and Hermione, unaware that in Harry's desire to dispel that lonely feeling, he finds Draco and builds a sense of companionship together, continue to criticise him and his choice of companion. The portrayal of their obliviousness encourages further heated interactions between the three friends, and it also signifies the loneliness and abandonment that overwhelms Harry, causing more conflicts to spark between him, Ron and Hermione (see Appendix A, Excerpt 2). Even though Ron and Hermione are labelled Harry's friends, they constantly question his actions and friendship with Draco. While this might identify Ron and Hermione as characters who serve as obstacles, creating conflict to impede the protagonist from moving forward in the narrative, their actions produce a contrasting outcome. Their arguments with Harry push him towards Draco for comfort (see Appendix A, Excerpt 3). The irony is that Draco becomes a better friend to Harry than Ron and Hermione in this fanfiction. The depiction of Draco in "Good Company" is one of a reformed character. Despite the bad habits that he picked up, like smoking and drinking, he's painted as someone who provides good companionship. In the scene presented in Appendix A, Excerpt 3, he continues to give Harry good advice, encouraging him to talk to his friends and "spend more time with them" (Greenflares, 2012, section 8). He is considerate towards Harry, relieving his loneliness when his friends leave him behind again and offering him quiet company. However, he is also a character who lacks friends at Hogwarts as a result of the war and feels overwhelmed by the solitude (see Appendix A, Excerpt 4). The loneliness these two characters feel sets the stage for their friendship and motivates them to connect and bond.

The progression of the narrative in "Good Company" reflects how Harry and Draco's friendship transforms into a romantic relationship. The physical contacts that they share indicate the growth of their friendship and the level of comfort of being in each other's presence (see Appendix A, Excerpt 5). Initiating physical contact and exchanging first names, which highlights the affection they are starting to feel for one another, foreshadows the romance between the male protagonists. The intimacy between Harry and Draco signifies that they trust each other and are comfortable sharing personal feelings. However, there are three obstacles they need to overcome before a romantic

relationship is built. The obstacles highlighted in the three scenes presented in Appendix A, Excerpt 6 are Greenflare's (2012) characterisation of Draco as a considerate person for not wanting to interfere with Harry's friendship with Ron and Hermione, Harry's obliviousness as he was unaware of his growing feelings for Draco, and the extent to which Draco was negatively affected by the war. While the fanfiction does not explicitly detail Harry and Draco's roles in the war, Harry's narrated thoughts of the aftermath and his conversation with Draco indicate that the lingering effects of the war still impact them. Yet, Harry and Draco overcame these obstacles, and the resolution presented a positive closure for readers as Harry and Draco successfully transformed their friendship bond into a romantic relationship.

5.1.2 Kiss (xErised, 2016)

"Kiss" alters the canon timeline so that when the Triwizard Tournament takes place in Hogwarts, Harry, Draco, and their year mates are in their sixth year. The story begins with Harry as he navigates the hardships of being the unwilling fourth Triwizard champion. At the same time, he has to keep his relationship with Draco a secret. However, their roles as the Boy Who Lived and the son of a loyal Death Eater challenge the strength of their bond. It will be difficult for them to maintain and share further physical intimacies with the war looming. This one-shot slash fiction ends without providing the readers with a concrete conclusion to Harry and Draco's somewhat forbidden romance, but it concludes on a positive note that their love will survive despite the bleakness of their future.

Similarly to "Good Company", xErised (2016) uses line breakers to separate the scenes in "Kiss". The story mentions dates in the format of "Day Month, Year" at the beginning and after certain line breaks to indicate the time of year and events of the Triwizard Tournament. If dates are missing after a line break, readers can assume that the next scene is happening in the same period as the previous section. The time stamps may be significant because witnessing the shift in time increases the foreboding feeling that Harry and Draco's relationship is ending. This fanfiction's narrative structure also shifts between the two protagonists' points of view: the "24 November, 1994" scene begins with Harry's perspective, changes to Draco's point of view for scenes "25 December, Christmas" and "24 February, 1995", returns to Harry's point of view in the "25 June, 1995" scene, and the last scene "Late June, 1995" ends with Draco's perspective. The fan writer used free indirect speech to voice the main characters' internal thoughts and feelings within the narrative. The changes in the character's point of view, which indicate variable focalization, allow readers to gain insights into that character's consciousness without directly quoting their thoughts, which encourages a more immersive and subjective narrative experience. Writing in Draco's limited third-person point of view, thus, enables

fan readers to understand Draco's internal struggles, including his love for Harry and his loyalty to his family.

There is a recurring "us against the world" theme in Harry and Draco's interactions throughout the narrative. It emphasises their vulnerability and youth in a time of war and conflict. The first indication of this theme is when Harry rationalises the physical intimacies he shares with Draco:

He stared at his own love bites blooming on Malfoy's pale skin like crushed roses on snow, wondering what Ron Weasley – stupid, jealous Ron who used to be his best mate – would think if he had seen Harry's tongue down Draco Malfoy's throat.

What they did... it's just a way to let off steam, what with the anger, loneliness and sadness that Harry feels about his fraying friendship with Ron and Hermione, the stress and anxiety about the Tournament and the deluge of schoolwork. (xErised, 2016, section 1)

In this scene, Harry is isolated from his friends, mainly from Ron, who is incapable of being supportive when Harry needs him. Unexpectedly, he finds comfort from Draco, from their intimacies that they hide from the school and their friends. The isolation carves a boundary around these protagonists and separates them from the rest of the school. The pronoun "they" repeatedly shows the "us vs. them" separation (see Appendix A, Excerpt 7). "They" (as seen in Appendix A, Excerpt 7A), which portrays Harry's internal thoughts, refers to Ron and Hermione, Harry's closest friends. By referring to them as "they", Harry separates himself from his friends, reigniting the theme of isolation. It also highlights Ron and Hermione's shortcomings as the side characters of this narrative and their failure to take on the supportive role of Harry's friends. While the first "they" point to Harry's unsympathetic friends, in the following passages "they" is used to refer to Harry and Draco – "they fight now not to hurt", "They're each other's dirty little secret", "They're just two boys slow-dancing together", "They're now flying together shoulder-to-shoulder", and "All they know is that they have each other" (xErised, 2016; Appendix A, Excerpt 7). It unifies these two characters into one unit, affirming the "us against the world" theme. Additionally, using the noun "boys" and indicating their age ("a pair of sixteen-year-old boys") emphasises their youth and innocence, outstanding the protagonists' fear of the upcoming war. Depicting Harry and Draco's vulnerabilities may evoke sympathy from the readers and increase the impact of the "us against the world" theme.

The intensity of Harry and Draco's relationship, as portrayed in "Kiss", represents their characters' function as past rivals, and the physical intensity of their intimate moments reflects their homosocial desires. Throughout the narrative, there is a repetition of Harry and Draco craving for one another's attention. The passages (see Appendix A, Excerpt 8) present a mixture of Harry and Draco's internal thoughts and verbal confessions of how they desire each other's attention. For example, Draco uses the female students from the French wizarding school, Beauxbatons, to attract Harry's attention (see

Appendix A, Excerpt 8A). The dialogue hints to the readers that Draco is very much aware when Harry watches him from afar despite the secrecy and the distance between them, and he enjoys Harry's display of jealousy. The line – "They've been so hyper-aware of each other since they were eleven" (xErised, 2016, section 2) – intensifies the dynamism of their relationship even as their roles shift from rivals to lovers. The passages presented in Appendix A, Excerpts 8B–8C highlight Draco's internal desire to have Harry's constant attention and Harry's full awareness of Draco's desires, amplifying the idea that the intensity of their relationship is also based on the level of their sexual attraction for each other. Additionally, the fan writer utilises the symbolism of a "magnetic force" to describe the protagonists' attraction towards one another (see Appendix, Excerpt 8D). Magnets are inevitably attracted to each other, and the writer's additional use of the word "unstoppable" increases the intensity of the force of attraction between Harry and Draco, suggesting that their romantic relationship is predestined and unavoidable. The fifth passage (see Appendix A, Excerpt 8E) further supports this implication.

Shifting between Harry's and Draco's points of view allows readers to assess their traits from different perspectives. The writer uses Draco as a character to describe Harry's personality, strengths and weaknesses, and physical characteristics. At the Yule Ball, a Triwizard Tournament Christmas event, Draco, who had been watching Harry dancing with his date, noted that Harry was a horrible dancer, describing his form of dancing as "awkward *shuffling*" (xErised, 2016, section 3). It suggests that Harry behaves less confidently in social events and with a female student. This is because outside of these events, Harry, through Draco's eyes, is depicted as a character with the qualities of a hero (see Appendix A, Excerpt 9). Harry's heroism might be one of the outstanding qualities that Draco is portrayed to simultaneously despise and admire. His thoughts when he calls Harry "silly" and "foolish", seem to possess a taunting, sneering tone, which indicates that he regards Harry's heroic traits with derision and belittles his goodness. There may, additionally, be a tone of fear reflected in Draco's internal thoughts when he thinks about the lengths Harry would go to save the "hostages" and "fight the Dark Lord". In the fanfiction, after Draco falls off his broom on a one-on-one flying game with Harry, Draco attempts to break their relationship because "Potter's the very personification of the churning waves that are pulling him under – wild, messy, out of control and *dangerous*" (xErised, 2016, section 4). The symbolism of "churning waves" highlights Draco's fears of and for Harry. However, the writer also implies that Draco is in awe of Harry's virtuous personality because he repeatedly uses adjectives like "brave" and "noble" to illustrate him, and he constantly thinks lowly of himself when he concludes that he is "nothing like Harry Potter". Furthermore, Draco is fixated on Harry's eyes throughout the fanfiction, as evident in this passage:

Draco tries to forget all about Potter, but how can he, when some days, Potter's kisses are the only things worth remembering?

How can he, when everywhere he turns in the Slytherin dorms he sees green, not green for Slytherin...

...but green for Potter. (xErised, 2016, section 11)

In contrast, Harry's description of Draco demonstrates the boy's beauty and emphasises his internal struggles. The portrayal of Draco's "acres and acres of unblemished pale skin", his "full, rosebud-pink lips", and "unfathomable grey eyes [that are] mercurial in the moonlight" offers the readers Harry's vision of Draco and the extent of his allure in his perspective. Draco's physical features were also used to convey Harry's trauma from encountering Lord Voldemort in the graveyard and depict Draco's inner turmoil as he struggled to remain loyal to his father while being in love with Harry (see Appendix A, Excerpt 10). The comparison Harry makes of Draco's face to his father's suggests that Draco looks very much like his father, Lucius Malfoy, so much so that after the traumatic incident at the graveyard, Harry finds it difficult to separate the two characters. It also calls attention to the struggles that Draco face. The writer accentuates his conflict between his love for Harry, which can no longer be denied when Draco admits that it was useless to run from Harry because "Potter will find him anywhere" (xErised, 2016, section 4), and his loyalty to his father, his family, who is committed to the dark wizard that craves for Harry's demise. Thus, after analysing the text closely, it can be inferred that xErised (2016) leveraged changes in the protagonists' perspectives to describe the physical appearance of Harry and Draco, which can be advantageous in helping readers better visualise these characters and comprehend their personalities.

5.2 The Potter/Riddle Fantasy

5.2.1 Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship (whitedandelions, 2016)

In the alternate universe of "Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship", Harry Potter, destined to defeat the Dark Lord, Grindelwald, is unexpectedly sorted into Hufflepuff. Despite Tom Riddle's insistence that Slytherins and Hufflepuffs "do not get along", he befriends the prickly first year and surrounds him with the other Hufflepuffs in his year. As the story unfolds, readers witness the growth of these protagonists and the development of their friendship over the years as it overcomes obstacles and transforms into a romantic relationship. It concludes with Grindelwald's defeat and an epilogue that illustrates Tom and Harry's happy ending. This one-shot fanfiction, written from Tom's limited third-person point of view, offers the readers a different perspective of his struggles as an orphaned student in the Slytherin house at Hogwarts. The fan writer of this story, whitedandelions (2016), structures the narrative with line breakers to separate each event. Except for the "Epilogue", which is placed at the

end of the fanfiction and marked as a subheading, readers are expected to navigate the text without explicit dates, relying instead on dialogue and narration to discern the progression of time.

A distinguishing feature of this one-shot is its concentrated portrayal of Hufflepuff and Slytherin houses. The text reflects how the fan writer has interpreted the characteristics of two Hogwarts houses in their narration. Based on the Hufflepuff traits highlighted (see Appendix B, Excerpt 1), it can be inferred that students belonging to the Hufflepuff House are known for their amiability and loyalty, but when threatened they can defend themselves and their fellow housemates. The last passage (Appendix B, Excerpt 1D) also suggests that Hufflepuffs do not discriminate against a student based on their parents' magical ancestry, while Slytherins, conversely, judge a witch or wizard by their blood status and lineage. The writer's impression of the Slytherin House, as captured in the scenes presented in Appendix B, Excerpt 2, indicates Slytherin's ill reputation because they are known for their affiliation with Dark magic and biases towards witches and wizards with no magical heritage. Abraxus Malfoy's use of the term "Mudblood" is a slur that derogates Muggleborns, magical persons without magical ancestry. This implies that Slytherin House discriminates against students with questionable heritage, and as evident in the passage presented in Appendix B, Excerpt 2A, they do not treat them kindly. The portrayal of their ambition, cruelty towards those not belonging to the Pureblood faction, and preference for the Dark Arts demonstrate the writer's image of Slytherins and how the students from the other Hogwarts houses find them intolerable.

Tom is a central figure in this fanfiction. Described as possessing a pair of "red eyes" (whitedandelions, 2016, section 1), he is quite a solitary character. Despite his desire to escape his loneliness after becoming a student at Hogwarts, he was "sorted into the one house that's supposedly not very nice" (whitedandelions, 2016, section 1) and shunned by most students in Slytherin. This house is most prejudiced about one's blood status, and Tom, being an orphan who lives in a non-magical orphanage, does not receive a warm welcome from them. Tom is also portrayed as a self-conscious, prideful character who is concerned about his image. At the beginning of "Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship", Harry tries to befriend him, but knowing Hufflepuff's reputation as the house that is "most looked down on in Hogwarts" (whitedandelions, 2016, section 1), Tom rejects his friendship (see Appendix B, Excerpt 3). In contrast, Harry is a character who radiates warmth and friendliness. From Tom's perspective:

Potter doesn't have *any* trouble getting along with his classmates. He's always surrounded by people whenever Tom sees him, and Tom can't help sneering at Potter whenever they meet eyes. Potter just sends him this confused smile whenever he does and Tom always turns away in a huff. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 2)

Despite Tom's initial unfriendliness, he is embraced by friendly Hufflepuff students who later "adopt Tom as one of their own" (whitedandelions, 2016, section 4), partially because of Harry's inclination

to make friends. However, Tom's solitary characteristic does not fade away even though being friends with Harry and their Hufflepuff year mates means he is not often alone. Upon learning of Harry's destiny to defeat Grindelwald, Tom turns to Dark Arts to help him, but Harry disapproves. This incites a series of arguments between them, and their friendship crumbles. Tom's experimentation with Dark Magic intensifies his loneliness. Two passages in the narrative (see Appendix B, Excerpt 4) prove that Tom's solitary trait can be destructive and harmful to him. Fortunately, his friendship with Harry and Harry's tendency to save Tom (he rescues Tom in the second task of the Triwizard Tournament in their fifth year, stops him from dabbling in Dark Magic, and saves him from Grindelwald in their seventh year) make him a better person and thus prevent him from becoming a Dark Lord.

The character dynamics of Harry and Tom in "Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship" drive the progression of their relationship from friendship to romance. Throughout their years at Hogwarts, Harry and Tom's interactions, central to this narrative, showcase their attitudes towards each other, the conflicts they face and overcome together, and the development of their emotional bond. Tom's fondness for Harry is one example that demonstrates their character dynamics as exemplified by the passages presented in Appendix B, Excerpt 5. In the story, Tom repeatedly admits that he cannot refuse Harry's requests, signifying his fondness for Harry and foreshadowing Harry's effortless manipulation to get Tom to run for Minister of the Wizarding community of Britain. The excerpts also amplify the evolution of their friendship. Despite rejecting Harry's attempt to befriend him in their first year, Tom inevitably finds himself enjoying his company and has, at one point in their third year, confessed that Harry is the "only one he would consider an actual friend" (whitedandelions, 2016, section 4). Harry's show of concern and protectiveness of Tom also proves that he regards Tom as his friend, as evident in the passages included in Appendix B, Excerpt 6.

The transformation from friendship to a romantic relationship happens in three stages: Tom's realisation that he has a crush on Harry, Harry's bold confession to Tom, and Tom's renouncement of the Dark Arts. Each of these moments (see Appendix B, Excerpt 7) indicates the emotional connection between them and their growth from friends to lovers. Their fifth year signifies the end of their friendship and the beginning of their romantic relationship. The conflict that erupts between the two protagonists when Harry finds out Tom has been experimenting with Dark magic causes a rift between them, but Tom's willingness to give up the Dark Arts for Harry establishes his reluctance to surrender the bond he has with Harry, allowing him to finally connect with him romantically. The author also uses Harry and Tom's joint effort to defeat Grindelwald to showcase their compatibility as a romantic pair:

The battlefield is full of a myriad of spells, and the long hours they spent together training has allowed them to learn each others' fighting style intimately. Harry prefers protective magic,

while Tom likes weaving between his opponent's spells and sending his own offensive spells back. They work extremely well together, and between the shield charms and Tom's quick footwork, Harry fades into the background and Grindelwald starts to focus his attention solely on Tom. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 6)

This passage portrays the emotional connection between these protagonists, and the depiction of their distinctive fighting styles reflects their personalities – Harry is protective of Tom, especially against prejudiced Slytherins, and Tom is the epitome of a Slytherin, cunning and ambitious – and it affirms how well-matched they are for each other. Therefore, the relationship between Harry and Tom in “Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship”, as seen in the narrative, shows that their character dynamics, which establish the emotional bond between these two central characters, play a part in the friends-to-lover narrative progression.

5.2.2 Snake Eyes (wynnebat, 2018)

“Snake Eyes” is a one-shot fanfiction that significantly focuses on the family theme. It is set in an alternate universe where Tom and Harry are friends and attend Hogwarts together. A unique element of this story is that it takes place beyond the walls of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry during the summer holidays at the end of their second year. When Harry does not respond to his letters, Tom leaves the house where he lives with his maternal uncle, Morfin Gaunt, in Hogsmeade and travels to Privet Drive to uncover the reason for Harry's lack of communication. Upon arrival, Tom discovers Harry's mistreatment at the hands of the Dursleys, and it is a testimony of their friendship that Tom promptly intervenes, offering him shelter at his uncle's house.

Fan writer wynnebat (2018) described Morfin Gaunt as a character with a “gruff voice” and sarcastic attitude. He has odd habits like drinking “coffee straight from the pot” and a not-so-secret sexual relationship with Severus Snape, Harry and Tom's potions professor at Hogwarts. He is also unlike his ancestors, who practice traditional Slytherin views. The dialogue in the third passage (see Appendix B, Excerpt 8C) suggests that Morfin underwent an off-screen character transformation, evolving from a person who cared about a witch or wizard's blood status to the more open-minded person he is now, uncaring about his nephew's half-Muggle heritage and the possibility that Tom might settle down with a non-magical person. Furthermore, the sarcastic tone in his response presented in Appendix B, Excerpt 8A emphasises that he does not look kindly upon the “fine traditions” of the Gaunt family. Yet, the use of the slur ‘mudblood’ (in Appendix B, Excerpt 8B) indicates that some discriminatory practices continue to linger in his daily life. This habit does not interfere with his relationship with Tom, as the younger character shows minimal reaction to the

derogatory word. Additionally, the introduction of Morfin as a side character reveals Tom's family situation in "Snake Eyes":

Morfin hadn't known what to do with him, but on that first day he'd said, "There isn't much left of us Gaunts anymore. Never thought that was a bad thing. My dad wasn't a good man back when he was alive, but it's not like his dad was any better, and it's better to not even speak of my mum. I left as soon as I turned seventeen and so did Merope. We were never close, but I looked for her when a few years passed and I hadn't seen her. I hoped maybe she went abroad, that she was happy out there somewhere."

"She died," Tom had said, unable to even look at the man. "They both did and you didn't even try to find me." (wynnebat, 2018, paras. 28–29)

It is evident from the passage above that the Gaunts are a dysfunctional family that was once reputable in the Wizarding community. While the story does not explain why the Gaunts are not as well-to-do as they were, it suggests that some of the Gaunt ancestors were "sentenced to life in Azkaban" (wynnebat, 2018, para. 4), thus implying the possibility that the Gaunts had gotten involved with the wrong crowd and were shunned by the public. After the family's name fell into a disreputable state, Morfin and Tom's mother, Merope, who died in a car crash in this fanfiction, felt disconnected from each other, and both had led separate lives. Despite the disconnection, Morfin attempts to be a good parent figure to Tom. The interactions between Tom and Morfin (see Appendix B, Excerpt 9) offer readers valuable insight into their uncle-nephew dynamics. Calling Tom a "brat", asking if he needed money, and casually talking about his sexual life indicate that they have a somewhat harmonious, familial relationship. The writer's portrayal of Morfin also highlights his capabilities as a caring parent to his orphaned nephew. In the second passage (see Appendix B, Excerpt 9B), Morfin is shown to try to provide for Tom, gifting him an owl even when he has no experience in this area, and he is depicted to care for Tom when he makes an effort to wait for his return. Thus, the story illustrates Morfin as a considerate character. He is also careful when initiating physical contact with Tom, comprehending that Tom may not respond well to touches, as evident in the passage seen in Appendix B, Excerpt 9D. Their dynamic strengthens the family theme, underscoring Morfin's views of the significance of familial bonds despite missing out on paternal affection himself.

The portrayal of Tom in "Snake Eyes" is similar in some respects to that of the canonverse. For example, he shows a dislike for Muggles or Muggle-related matters. One passage (see Appendix B, Excerpt 10B) indicates that Tom is intolerant of Muggles due to his past experience of living with foster families. The character's distrust towards "adults who had power over him" (wynnebat, 2018, para. 21) implies that he might have suffered abuse from his foster parents before Morfin took him in. His aversion to Muggles also suggests he may have had negative experiences with them. His interaction with Harry's relatives, the Dursleys, further cements his dislike for Muggles, with Muggle

pastries being the only exception, stating that “Wizards pastries just weren’t the same” (wynnebat, 2018, para. 10). Another similarity between Tom from the books and this fanfiction story is his anger and murderous intentions towards Muggles (see Appendix B, Excerpt 11). The writer uses adjectives like “loud” and “cold” to describe the intensity of Tom’s fury, which is evident in Appendix B, Excerpt 11A. “Loud”, typically associated with sound and volume, and “cold”, commonly indicative of temperature, evoke imagery of Tom’s anger. By using adjectives that connote auditory and sensory aspects, the writer enables readers to visualise the extent of Tom’s rage, and it also signifies that this fanfiction is narrated with a fixed focalization. Furthermore, these descriptors complement Tom’s vengefulness, emphasising his capacity for retaliation. Other passages (see Appendix B, Excerpts 11B–11D) provide evidence of Tom’s propensity for vindictiveness, particularly towards Muggles, who had wronged him or Harry. However, even though Tom’s internal musings and verbal expressions suggest a potentially dangerous persona capable of inflicting harm, Harry’s trust in him implies a deep and enduring friendship. It highlights Tom’s penchant for retribution, balanced by Harry’s loyalty and forgiveness.

This fanfiction prominently features the deep friendship between Tom and Harry, which serves as a driving force in the narrative’s development. Written from Tom’s perspective in the third person, the story provides readers with insight into the profound significance of their bond and its impact on Tom. The depiction of their friendship is established in the narrative. The writer, employing Tom’s voice, uses the metaphor of a “leech” to illustrate how Harry has firmly attached himself to Tom and is unwilling to release their hold (see Appendix B, Excerpts 12B–12C). This metaphorical comparison suggests that Harry is tenacious in forming a friendly bond with Tom, similar to a leech clinging tightly to its host. The symbolism of the “leech” represents Harry’s persistent attempts at befriending Tom. The metaphorical depiction of Harry as a “protective little burr” (see Appendix B, Excerpt 12D) further reinforces the notion of his unwavering attachment and reluctance to relinquish his hold, indicating Harry’s fierce devotion to safeguarding his friendship with Tom. Comparing Harry to that of a “burr”, he is painted as a character who is steadfast and loyal. These metaphorical imageries underscore the depth of Harry’s determination and the intensity of his desire to establish a connection with Tom. Despite Tom likening Harry to unattractive and bothersome objects such as a leech and a burr and regardless of his verbal insistence for Harry to “go away” (wynnebat, 2018, para. 22), Tom appears to derive reassurance from their friendship as evident in the first passage and does not make any attempts to distance himself from Harry. The absence of any inclination to shake off Harry’s friendship after the Gryffindor “dug under his skin and never left” (wynnebat, 2018, para. 23) highlights Tom’s contentment and security in their companionship despite his initial reservations.

5.2.3 You Can't Please Everyone (DobbyRocksSocks, 2021)

Diverging from the canon story, “You Can't Please Everyone” offers a glimpse into Harry's life after he is forced to marry the Dark Lord, Voldemort. This story unfolds from Harry's third-person point of view, delineating five scenes interspersed with ellipses. It reinterprets Harry's heroic characteristics, revealing the darker, more twisted personality that he kept hidden from Dumbledore and his allies. To Voldemort and the Death Eaters' surprise, Harry acclimatises quickly to their lifestyle, which is filled with violence, Death Eater raids and Muggle tortures. The story concludes with an open-ended resolution that leaves Harry in a state of contentment with his life alongside a Dark Lord and his followers. While the fate of their marriage and the Wizarding World remains uncertain, Harry's sense of satisfaction provides a fitting conclusion to the narrative.

A notable aspect of this fanfiction is reimagining the central character's traits. This departure from the canon universe allows readers to explore an alternate portrayal of Harry. This “what-if” scenario highlights his darker inclinations, presenting an intriguing perspective on this character. It invites fans to contemplate the complexities of his personality beyond the confines of the canonical storyline. The writer's portrayal of Harry in a different light depicts him exhibiting traits of indifference, cruelty and impatience. The description of Harry's nonchalant body language, such as “[twisting] his wedding ring around his fingers absently” and “[sprawling] in his seat beside Voldemort” (in Appendix B, Excerpt 13A) indicates his disregard for Voldemort, the Death Eaters and the “meeting he'd been asked to attend” (DobbyRocksSocks, 2021, Section 2). Despite the purpose of his marriage to Voldemort, which was to “temper” the Dark Lord (DobbyRocksSocks, 2021, section 1), he shows no reaction to their plans and does not respond as they had expected him to. However, his impatience shows its hand when a side character, Pius Thicknesse, begins speaking in a voice that “sounded like nails on a chalkboard” (DobbyRocksSocks, 2021, section 2). Harry's dialogue (see Appendix B, Excerpt 13B), characterised by his sharp, snarky tone and straightforwardness, reflects his disregard for individuals he does not hold in high esteem. Harry's impoliteness, childish demeanour – Harry rolls his eyes at Pius Thicknesse (DobbyRocksSocks, 2021) – and interaction with Goyle (see Appendix B, Excerpt 13C) also indicate his lack of concern for those he views unfavourably, resorting to the threat of violence to appease his irritation. This story suggests that Harry's darker personality is a reflection of the abuse and mistreatment he suffered at the hands of his relatives, the Dursleys:

Harry's opportunity at a functional life had been over with his parents' death. Given his raising, he hadn't exactly had the chance to nourish his ‘caring and compassionate’ side.

Irritating people just made him stabby, which, according to most people, probably wasn't the most appropriate reaction to have. (DobbyRocksSocks, 2021, section 1)

This passage implies that the loss of Harry's parents extinguished any prospects for a normal future. It also underscores the inadequacy of his relatives as caretakers, who failed to provide the nurturing love expected within a family. The Dursleys' unsuitability as parental figures might have contributed to Harry's preference to stab "irritating people", another indication of his darker attributes and his discontentment with life.

Harry is depicted as having a marital bond with Voldemort in this fanfiction. Despite their adversarial relationship in canon, their interactions in the story reveal an unexpectedly amicable rapport. Voldemort displays amiability and appears to tolerate Harry's company. Two passages (see Appendix B, Excerpt 14) depict Voldemort in a contrasting light from the books, showcasing a significantly calm and affectionate demeanour. They challenge the conventional portrayal of him as the cold-hearted villain and fearsome Dark Lord. In particular, his voluntary display of physical affection towards Harry, offering him solace when recognising the latter's difficult day (see Appendix B, Excerpt 14B), emphasises this unconventional depiction of Voldemort and humanises him. Their interactions are characterised by a relaxed atmosphere, infused with playful banter and flirtation reminiscent of married couples, as evident in the first excerpt. Moreover, they exchange terms of endearment like "beloved", further highlighting the intimacy of their bond. As a result, this fanfiction offers a refreshing perspective on the relationship between these two characters, who were once adversaries, presenting readers with a heartwarming portrayal that may defy their expectations.

5.3 The James/Regulus Romance

5.3.1 Loving is easy (rxgulus, 2021)

In an alternate universe where Harry's father, James Potter, does not develop romantic feelings for Lily Evans, "loving is easy" is a one-shot fanfiction that takes place during the Marauders Era, featuring the generation of Harry's parents. As the protagonist of this story, James finds himself falling in love with his best friend, Sirius Black's younger brother, Regulus, a Slytherin. This fanfiction focuses on James' budding love for Regulus, and the readers witness how their relationship grows during their school days at Hogwarts and after when they settle into their marital life. Soon, the war with Voldemort, a prophecy and Pettigrew's betrayal threaten to disrupt their idyllic life and their son, Harry. They must fight alongside their friends, Sirius and Remus, to protect the family they have built together. The narrative is structured in four main sections separated by three significant gaps. These gaps serve three primary purposes: showing a transition between scenes, which indicates a shift in time; creating an emotional impact, allowing readers to mull over the events that have recently

unfolded; and offering a reflective pause, which offers the readers a moment of reprieve before they dive into the next section of the narrative.

Written in the fixed focalization of James's third-person limited point of view, this fanfiction has a well-rounded narrative that balances non-verbal narration with descriptive writing. It presents James's thoughts and feelings on the development of his relationship with Regulus at Hogwarts. In the early stage of their romance, James contemplates his crush and love for Regulus, which is laced with much uncertainty. The uncertainty is portrayed in the repetitive use of the words "maybe" and "perhaps" (see Appendix C, Excerpt 1A). These words convey a tone of indecision, but their use also implies that James did not fall in love with Regulus overnight. It was the things he did, such as showing kindness to a creature that the Wizarding community commonly mistreated or belittled and sharing a similar passion for Quidditch. James found himself paying more and more attention to the Regulus, and he "wasn't sure how to feel about that" (rxgulus, 2021, section 1, para. 3). The depiction of James's uncertainty also stems from their differences. The writer compares the two characters (see Appendix C, Excerpt 1B). Both James and Regulus may come from pureblooded wizarding families, but they have contrasting traits that situate them in opposite Hogwarts houses and make them associate with different friends. Furthermore, italicising "never" and "shouldn't", as the passage in Appendix C, Excerpt B indicates, denotes extremes. They convey a sense of absolute prohibition or rejection that indicates the improbability of James and Regulus's love for each other. However, in the last sentence of the passage, the word "did" is italicised, establishing a positive connotation and a triumphant tone to portraying their unlikely relationship. Thus, the second passage suggests that James's uncertainty moves on a positive-negative spectrum, in which he cannot fathom how their love came to be, and yet, he is in awe of their affection for each other.

In this fanfiction, readers discover James's poetic and romantic side as his relationship with Regulus evolves. Comparing James's love for Regulus to "a warm hug after a long day" (Appendix C, Excerpt 2A) heightens the portrayal of James's affectionate personality. This passage mirrors the protagonist's internal monologue as if it were his confession, which he articulates to convey his reasons for loving Regulus. Additionally, the writer uses anaphora to amplify James's poetic and romantic disposition (see Appendix C, Excerpt 2B). The paragraph opens with "James hadn't meant for it to happen" and closes with "He hadn't meant for any of it to happen". This repetition indicates a sense of unexpectedness, suggesting that it is a serendipitous occurrence when James develops a romantic connection with Regulus. It also highlights the intensity of the love James harbours for him. The anaphoric quality can also be identified from the repetitive phrase "They didn't" at the beginning of every sentence (see Appendix C, Excerpt 2C). The repetitive use of this phrase creates a poetic and rhythmic effect, signifying James's depth of emotion and sentiment towards Regulus. Using the verb

“didn’t” may initially convey a negative tone, but it can reflect James’s unique perception of Regulus’s positive attributes, which are often overlooked by others due to their biases.

The portrayal of Regulus’s attributes, illuminated through the lens of James’s limited third-person perspective, also underlines the emotional connection of their relationship. In the initial passages, Regulus emerges as “shy but wickedly smart” (rxgulus, 2021, section 1, para. 6), showing compassion toward mistreated creatures and bullied students and displaying reckless passion when playing Quidditch. Despite these qualities, he often finds himself misunderstood by others. Regulus conceals his inner turmoil and challenges, which are gradually unveiled to readers through James’s eyes. The narrative delves into his past, reveals his struggles, acknowledges his flaws and illustrates the potential bleakness of his future. The passages (in Appendix C, Excerpt 3) highlight the Blacks’ off-screen presence and how, despite their physical absence, they continue to assert pressure on Regulus, suggesting that their influence extends beyond direct interactions with the character. The Blacks exert their influence through letters, which are “filled with expectations” and reminders to live up to the standards of House Black (see Appendix C, Excerpt 3A). Regulus’s mother, Walburga, even goes so far as to send him a Howler. In the Potterverse, Howlers are a form of magical objects witches and wizards use to verbally admonish their recipients to humiliate or reprimand them for their actions publicly. The letters reflect the absence of familial warmth in Regulus’s life as the Black family prioritises their traditions and values over genuine affection for their child. The depictions of Regulus’s withdrawal from his friends and avoidance of James are a consequence of the obligations they have imposed on him. The lack of familial affection also has a detrimental effect on Regulus as this character is often described as shy and withdrawn (see Appendix C, Excerpts 3C–3E). Thus, his relationship with James can be seen as a saving grace. James appears to be attuned to Regulus’s needs and emotions, helping him overcome his inner struggles and his affectionless childhood. This dynamic between these two characters emphasises the depth of their relationship, underscoring their emotional connection and intimacy.

5.3.2 Hope is the thing with antlers (stardiver, 2022)

The fanfiction “hope is the thing with antlers” disregards several plot points from the canonverse, such as the war with Voldemort and James’s love for Lily Evans, focusing on an alternate universe where James and Regulus are happily married. In this story, James finds it difficult to cope after his father, Fleamont’s death. Overwhelmed with grief, he often transforms into his animagus form to seek solace. This one-shot focuses on one such moment. Readers witness the depth of James and Regulus’s relationship as the latter attempts to comfort his partner with his quiet presence. It explores the themes

of love, grief, and family, concluding on a positive note featuring toddler Harry and his infectious happiness, which lifts James and Regulus's spirits.

A distinctive feature of this fanfiction is the writer's reference to Emily Dickinson's poem "*Hope*" is *the thing with feathers* (1891). This allusion is apparent in the opening of the narrative and the title. The story opens with the poem's first stanza, and the writer credits the original material and the poet, signifying that the writer may have drawn some inspiration from the poem to enhance their storytelling. The title of this one-shot replaces "feathers" with "antlers", which alludes to James's animagus animal, a stag that possesses majestic antlers. In the Potterverse, an animagus is a witch or wizard who has learned the magical ability to transform into an animal. This implies that James is a crucial character in the narrative. However, this story is written in Regulus's third-person limited point of view. This character provides background information essential to the story to the readers, offering them insight into his relationship with James, their dynamics and individual characteristics. The reference to Dickinson's poem is also present in the alternatingly mellow and sombre tones of the story, which the writer enhances descriptively through detailed language and the use of adjectives to vividly portray the scenes, settings, emotions and events in the narrative, creating a more sensory experience for the reader and allowing them to immerse themselves in James's silence, Regulus's contemplations, and their grief.

In this fanfiction, the writer employs repetition of words and phrases as a stylistic device to enhance the attractiveness of their story. While the repetitions are not as systematic as traditional anaphora, they exhibit similar qualities, adding rhythm and emphasis to the narrative. For example, the repetitive use of the adjective "quiet" indicates a contrast in James's personality before and after his father's passing (see Appendix C, Excerpt 4C). Before, James's characteristics are associated with liveliness, as evident in the following descriptions of his actions: "spend every waking minute talking or laughing", "yell", "let out a happy scream of joy or of feigned shock in an exaggerated, theatrical manner", "singing" and "lively discussing" (see Appendix C, Excerpts 4A–4B). However, his lack of vitality (depicted in Appendix C, Excerpt 4C) shows a significant contrast between his old personality and the current, quiescent one he has adopted. This suggests that Fleamont's death had a profound impact on James, and the change in his demeanour reflects his struggles in grappling with the emotional weight. The transformation from a loud, talkative, and lively character into one that hardly speaks, preferring silence over noise, indicates that he is emotionally affected by the loss of his father. It also highlights the depth of his grief, and the repeated use of the adjective "quiet" amplifies a sense of sadness and mourning. Another example is the repetitive phrase "It's me and you" (see Appendix C, Excerpt 5). These repetitions, present at the end of these three passages, illustrate the depth of affection James and Regulus have for one another. They create a sense of togetherness and reassurance, which signifies solidarity and support between these protagonists as they attempt to

process their grief. This difficult time following from the loss of James's father in this fanfiction allows Regulus and James to convey empathy and compassion, thus offering the readers insight into their emotionally connected bond, suggesting that they have a tight partnership and a mutual reliance on each other.

The motif of silence continues throughout the narrative, extending even to the setting, as illustrated in this passage:

Upon reaching the treeline he stops for a breath and lets the silence of the forest surround him. Gone is the swish of the wind flowing above the wild field and for a breath or two his ears ring from the difference in sensation. Soon he picks up the woods' own melody, the hum of the canopies swaying above, a slow conversation of birds over his head. (stardiver, 2022, para. 42)

Additionally, the writer employs James's animagus transformation to underscore this motif of silence. When the protagonist assumes his animalistic form, relying on body gestures that Regulus is familiar with, their dialogue diminishes significantly, amplifying the comfortable silence between the pair of characters and the ease they feel within the tranquil atmosphere of the forest. The narrative suggests that James's primary characteristics persist despite the transformation through comparisons between the character and the animal. The first passage (see Appendix C, Excerpt 6A) focuses on the physical similarities between James and Prongs, the nickname of his stag, in that they have similar skin and fur colour. The second passage (see Appendix C, Excerpt 6B) identifies the similarities in James and Prongs's actions and emotions, while the third (see Appendix C, Excerpt 6C) highlights the contrast between the human and his animalistic alter ego. The portrayal of this difference between the human and the animal establishes the possibility that James uses his magical abilities to transform into a stag as a means of seeking refuge from the hardships of life, such as his father's passing, allowing him a method to evade the trauma associated with Fleamont's death.

Thus, in this fanfiction diverging from canon, James is a character who finds silence preferable to inconsequential chatter. When transforming into an animal who lacks the ability of human speech, he can comfortably remain silent. Regulus is another character who reflects the motif of silence. The narrative depicts Regulus as a character who embodies qualities associated with silence as illustrated in the passages presented in Appendix C, Excerpt 7. The writer describes Regulus as a character whose behaviour aligns with a comfortable type of silence, preferring "quiet moments" despite being in the company of others (Appendix C, Excerpt 7A). His actions also display a sense of quietude (see Appendix C, Excerpt 7B). James's affirmation that Regulus's company is the quietness he seeks further demonstrates how the writer uses the motif of silence in this narrative to illustrate the emotional intimacy between these two characters. Regulus's concern and James's reassurance (see Appendix C, Excerpt 7C) amplify the theme of togetherness. The short dialogues between them imply

that they can be comfortable with the silence because they are satisfied just by being in each other's presence.

6. Findings

In this chapter, I analyse shifts in portrayal and narrative contexts from the original novels of the canonverse to the selected slash fiction I closely examined in the previous chapter fanfiction of five characters central to this thesis: Harry Potter, Draco Malfoy, Tom Riddle and his alter ego Voldemort, James Potter and Regulus Black. In addition, I present the findings from a comparative analysis of heteronormativity in the canonical series versus the depiction of homosexual relationships in the seven slash fiction texts. This subsection considers each character's heteronormative dynamics as shown in the novels and suggests how fans queer the characters' sexuality based on their canonical connections and relationships, whether adversarial or otherwise. The final section of this chapter highlights the masculine and feminine qualities these five characters exhibit in the selected slash fiction. By examining their shifting masculinities, I draw connections to Woledge's (2006) ideology of intimacy between male characters. I identify three aspects that solidify intimacy between the three main pairings: isolation, equality, and emotional vulnerability. This chapter aims to provide evidence supporting the argument that fans use fanfiction as a medium to subvert Rowling's portrayal of a stagnant Wizarding society, showcasing how fan-created narratives offer a dynamic reimagining of character relationships and societal norms.

6.1 A Character Analysis

6.1.1 Harry Potter

Harry Potter, the central figure in the Potterverse, is not just a hero but an "archetypal hero" (Grimes, 2002, p. 109). Bound by a prophecy that designates him as "the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord" (Rowling, 2003/2013e, p. 741), Harry is thrust into the role of a "child of destiny" (Campbell, 1993, p. 326). He is burdened with the responsibility of saving the Wizarding World from the clutches of the Dark Lord Voldemort. Grimes (2002) described him as a "heavenly prince" (p. 109), a hero whose defining traits are bravery, loyalty, and compassion. These heroic qualities are vividly portrayed in *Goblet of Fire* when he confronts the resurrected Voldemort despite his lack of experience:

Harry crouched behind the headstone, and knew the end had come. There was no hope...no help to be had. And as he heard Voldemort draw nearer still, he knew one thing only, and it was beyond fear or reason – he was not going to die crouching here like a child playing hide-and-seek; he was not going to die kneeling at Voldemort's feet...he was going to die upright like his father, and he was going to die trying to defend himself, even if no defence was possible... (Rowling, 2000/2013d, p. 575)

Harry's heroism remains in fans' reinterpretation of the character in fanfiction stories. For example, in "Kiss", Draco views him as a character that is "brave, noble, and entirely worthy of the Gryffindor-gold thrumming in his blood" (xErised, 2016, section 7) because despite their rivalry and the risk of exposing their romantic relationship, Harry saves Draco from the lake in the second task of the Triwizard Tournament and declares his determination to fight Voldemort regardless of his fears. This is not the only time he saves a canon adversary in the slash fanfiction explored in this thesis. In "Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship", Harry rescues Tom from the second task of a similar tournament, successfully stops Tom's experimentation with Dark Magic and protects him from Grindelwald's deadly spell. Harry's consistent heroic moment in saving another character in the Triwizard Tournament is mirrored in the source text, where he was awarded and applauded for his "moral fibre" (Rowling, 2000/2013d, p. 440) in his attempts to rescue all hostages in the Black Lake. In *Order of the Phoenix*, Hermione calls Harry's instincts to save people a "saving-people thing" (Rowling, 2003/2013e, p. 646). Despite that Hermione was trying to dissuade Harry from being a reckless hero, this scene reminds readers of the times Harry rescued Ginny, Ron's sister, from the Basilisk and a fragment of Voldemort's soul in *Chamber of Secrets*, Hermione from the hundreds of Dementors in *Prisoner of Azkaban*, and Ron from the Black Lake in *Goblet of Fire*.

Nevertheless, Harry's heroism is not the sole characteristic that defines him. Fanfiction writers like Greenflares (2012) and whitedandelions (2016) amplify Harry's forgiving nature in "Good Company" and "Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship". The portrayal of this character's ability to put the past behind him is seen in the depiction of his "fragile facsimile of friendship" (Greenflares, 2012, section 1) with Draco in "Good Company" and the romantic connection he builds with Tom in "Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship". The reinterpretation of this characteristic in these two fan texts stems from Harry's capacity to forgive Ron's pettiness and jealousy in *Goblet of Fire*:

Hermione stood nervously between them, looking from one to the other. Ron opened his mouth uncertainly. Harry knew Ron was about to apologise and suddenly, he found he didn't need to hear it.

'It's OK,' he said, before Ron could get the words out. 'Forget it.'

'No,' said Ron, 'I shouldn't've—'

'Forget it,' Harry said.

Ron grinned nervously at him, and Harry grinned back. (Rowling, 2000/2013d, p. 313)

Harry's stubborn loyalty and fierce devotion to Tom in "Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship" and "Snake Eyes" mirrors Harry's rejection of Draco's handshake in defence of his newfound friendship with Ron and his act of challenging Draco, who bullies Neville and steals his Remembrall in *Philosopher's*

Stone. However, “You Can’t Please Everyone” diverges from the canon universe, and Harry is portrayed as abandoning his heroic qualities and embracing his darker characteristics. His thoughts and perception of the Light Side (Dumbledore and his friends) and the Wizarding World reflect his disdain for them. Readers may not find this interpretation of Harry odd because they can connect his darker personality to his frustrations displayed in *Chamber of Secrets*, where students show fear at his ability to speak to snakes, and in *Order of the Phoenix*, where Seamus spoke of his mother’s blind trust in the Daily Prophet, which promoted falsehood about this encounter with Voldemort at the final task of the Triwizard Tournament:

1. ‘Hannah,’ said the stout boy solemnly, ‘he’s a Parselmouth. Everyone knows that’s the mark of a dark wizard. Have you ever heard of a decent one who could talk to snakes? They called Slytherin himself serpent-tongue.’ (Rowling, 1998/2013b, p. 148)
2. Harry said nothing. He threw his wand down on to his bedside table, pulled off his robes, stuffed them angrily into his trunk and pulled on his pyjamas. He was sick of it; sick of being the person who is stared at and talked about all the time. If any of them knew, if any of them had the faintest idea what it felt like to be the one all these things had happened to...Mrs Finnigan had no idea, the stupid woman, he thought savagely. (Rowling, 2003/2013e, p. 196)

Thus, in “You Can’t Please Everyone”, DobbyRocksSocks (2021) reimagines a possible scenario that expands Harry’s depth as a wronged protagonist and provides readers with another interpretation of this character, highlighting different aspects of his motivation, personality, and relationship.

6.1.2 Draco Malfoy

In the Potter universe, Draco Malfoy is known for his rivalry with Harry. Most of their schoolyard conflicts are caused by Draco’s “pureblood privilege” (Sutton-Ramspeck, 2023, p. 55), as he was raised to believe that his bloodline indicates a heritage that deems him above those who are born to non-magical parents. He is “given the best of everything and wants for nothing” (Loiacono & Loiacono, 2011, p. 174). In *Chamber of Secrets*, the significance of a wizard or witch’s blood status comes to light:

‘It’s about the most insulting thing he could think of,’ gasped Ron, coming back up.

‘Mudblood’s a really foul name for someone who was Muggle-born – you know, non-magic parents. There are some wizards – like Malfoy’s family – who think they’re better than everyone else because they’re what people call pure-blood.’ (Rowling, 1998/2013b, p. 89)

Draco is also from a pureblooded family with considerable wealth. He is often seen belittling the financial state of the Weasleys and Harry’s best friend, Ron’s, family (Sutton-Ramspeck, 2023). Loiacono and Loiacono (2011) further suggested that despite the Weasleys’ blood purity, their

poverty forces them to the bottom of the social pyramid in the Wizarding community. Thus, the Malfoys do not hesitate to undermine their worth.

When Draco first introduces himself to Harry on the Hogwarts Express in *Philosopher's Stone*, Ron snorts and gains Draco's ire: "Think my name's funny, do you? No need to ask who you are. My father told me all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles and more children than they can afford." (Rowling, 1997/2013a, p. 81). On another occasion in *Order of the Phoenix*, Draco "conflates poverty and dirt" (Sutton-Ramspeck, 2023, p. 60) to humiliate the Weasleys:

1. 'Saved Weasley's neck, haven't you?' he said to Harry. 'I've never seen a worse Keeper...but then he was *born in a bin*...did you like my lyrics, Potter?' (Rowling, 2003/2013e, p. 365)
2. '- but you like the Weasleys, don't you, Potter?' said Malfoy, sneering. 'Spend holidays there and everything, don't you? Can't see how you stand the stink, but I suppose when you've been dragged up by Muggles, even the Weasleys' hovel smells OK-' (Rowling, 2003/2013e, p. 365)

Fan writers extend this conflict between Draco and Ron to their stories to highlight Draco's unappealing qualities. In "Good Company", Ron emphasises Draco's unpleasant characteristics even though Draco has "kind of renounced his evil ways" (Greenflares, 2012, section 2). The absence of a conflict between Ron and Draco in this narrative demonstrates the writer's assumption that readers are aware of Draco's horrible personality in the canonverse before reading this fanfiction. This bad blood between Draco and Ron often extends to their fathers, Lucius Malfoy and Arthur Weasley, in the novels. It draws a similarity between Draco and his father, which Rowling (2000/2013d) states in *Goblet of Fire*: "Harry and Draco Malfoy had been enemies ever since their very first journey to Hogwarts. A pale boy with a pointed face and white-blond hair, Draco greatly resembled his father." (Rowling, 2000/2013d, p. 91).

In "Kiss", after Harry's traumatising encounter with Voldemort in the final task of the Triwizard Tournament, Harry is portrayed to find it difficult to differentiate the Malfoy son from his father:

"You're his son," Harry whispers, so lost in the thistles of his thought that he starts when he feels Draco's quivering hand rest on his forearm in a show of comfort. He turns to face the blond head beside him, and when Draco's features begin to blur into Lucius Malfoy's face and back again, as the shifting sands of memory and reality start to mix, Harry swallows a sob and shoves Draco away so hard that he stumbles back and falls on the floor. (xERised, 2016, section 6)

Moreover, in this fanfiction, Draco struggles with the conflict between his loyalty to his father and his love for Harry. According to Loiacono and Loiacono (2011), in exchange for "his life of wealth and privilege" (p. 174), Draco is required to meet his father's expectations and follow in his footsteps

regardless of his individual desires. It suggests that Draco may possess good qualities beyond the constant demonstration of his privileges. In *Half-Blood Prince*, Draco presents a more vulnerable side that signifies his capability to be a cold-hearted killer:

‘My dear boy, let us have no more pretence about that. If you were going to kill me, you would have done it when you first Disarmed me, you would not have stopped for this pleasant chat about ways and means.’

‘I haven’t got any options!’ said Malfoy, and he was suddenly as white as Dumbledore. ‘I’ve got to do it! He’ll kill me! He’ll kill my whole family!’ (Rowling, 2005/2013f, p. 552).

This passage shows that family is essential to Draco, an aspect of his character, which is also reflected in “Good Company”, where he admits to Harry that his reason for returning to Hogwarts was to improve the Malfoy name on the behest of his parents:

“They think that by showing humility and nobility in the face of disgrace we’ll be able to build a respectable reputation again,” Malfoy recited, sounding as though he didn’t share his parents’ beliefs in the slightest. “So they put me on the train and sent me back here. I’m the future of the Malfoy name, after all, so it’ll be me who this all benefits eventually.” He allowed himself a small shrug. (Greenflares, 2012, section 6)

Draco’s inner conflicts in “Kiss”, as he struggles between his loyalty to his family and his love for Harry, also indicate the significance of family to Draco. In summary, while “Kiss” unveils a depth of Draco’s characteristics barely seen in the novels, “Good Company” reimagines him as a character reformed and changed by the war. So, even though Greenflares (2012) ignores the “Nineteen Years Later” epilogue, the writer considers Draco’s character transformation as portrayed in *Deathly Hallows*, where he merely stands afar from the Golden Trio (Harry, Ron and Hermione) “nodded curtly and turned away” (Rowling, 2007/2013g, p. 605).

6.1.3 Lord Voldemort/Tom Riddle

The Dark Lord Voldemort appears to be a distinctive villain in the canonverse, for this character represents two sides to a coin: the young, orphaned child from Wool’s Orphanage named Tom Riddle, who was later introduced to the Wizarding World through Dumbledore and the young adult who upon learning his heritage as a descendant of Salazar Slytherin, a founder of Hogwarts and the Slytherin house, discarded his father’s name (Riddle) in favour of a name (Voldemort) feared by most witches and wizards. In *Chamber of Secrets*, the sixteen-year-old soul fragment from the diary proclaims his identity as Voldemort, who was his “past, present and future” (Rowling, 1998/2013b, p. 231), his hatred for his Muggle father, and his villainous ambitions:

‘You see?’ he whispered. ‘It was a name I was already using at Hogwarts, to my most intimate friends only, of course. You think I was going to use my filthy Muggle father’s name

forever? I, in whose veins runs the blood of Salazar Slytherin himself, through my mother's side? I, keep the name of a foul, common Muggle, who abandoned me even before I was born, just because he found out his wife was a witch? No, Harry, I fashioned myself a new name, a name I knew wizards everywhere would one day fear to speak, when I had become the greatest sorcerer in the world!' (Rowling, 1998/2013b, p. 231)

Fan writers also make this distinction known in their stories. In fanfictions like "Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship" and "Snake Eyes", which portray a younger Tom Riddle, who, despite his unpleasant upbringing in orphanages or foster families, by befriending a similar-aged Harry Potter, Tom's future diverges from that of the canon-Voldemort future. However, some original characteristics are maintained but reinterpreted in fanfiction. Thus, "Snake Eyes" reimagines Tom's childhood, in which the narration in Tom's limited third-person perspective provides readers with an alternate backstory. In this story, he was orphaned due to a car accident that took the lives of his parents. His unpleasant experience with Muggle foster families adversely affected Tom, building his hatred for them.

"Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship" maintains the canon story of his abandoned mother, his childhood at Wool's Orphanage, and his characteristics as a self-conscious and prideful character. His solitary nature and magical abilities match the characteristics ascribed to him in the novels. In *Half-Blood Prince*, Tom's childhood and personality are revealed through the Pensieve, where Dumbledore shares his collected memories of the youthful character before he became the feared Dark Lord:

1. 'I trust that you also noticed that Tom Riddle was already highly self-sufficient, secretive and, apparently, friendless? He did not want help or companionship on his trip to Diagon Alley. He preferred to operate alone. The adult Voldemort is the same. You will hear many of his Death Eaters claiming that they are in his confidence, that they alone are close to him, even understand him. They are deluded. Lord Voldemort has never had a friend, nor do I believe that he has ever wanted one.' (Rowling, 2005/2013f, p. 259)
2. 'However, if he was frightening or impressing fellow Slytherins with displays of Parseltongue in their common room, no hint of it reached the staff. He showed no sign of outward arrogance or aggression at all. As an unusually talented and very good looking orphan, he naturally drew attention and sympathy from the staff almost from the moment of his arrival. He seemed polite, quiet and thirsty for knowledge. Nearly all were most favourably impressed by him.' (Rowling, 2005/2013f, p. 337)

In the canonverse, his loneliness, powers and newfound heritage forged the pathway to his becoming Voldemort, and in "Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship", the fan writer expands on how his solitary characteristics can be destructive and harmful to him. Sutton-Ramspeck (2023) suggested that Tom's "emotional detachment" (p. 14), which can be seen in his rejection of all forms of human connection, his need to dominate others deemed below him and his determination to achieve immortality paved the way for his bleak, criminal future as Voldemort. Fortunately, the Tom in these fanfiction stories has been saved by his friendship with Harry.

Another feature that wynnebat (2018) and whitedandelions (2016) also stay true to from Tom's canon characteristics is his intellectuality and studious behaviour. In "Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship", Tom is often depicted as the tutor for his Hufflepuff yearmates, and in "Snake Eyes", the writer demonstrates his urge to impress his teachers to be the most competent student in school:

Tom spent the next hour trying to read the book he'd brought with him and practicing some of the spells he'd learned from his third year reading material. He was already the best in their year – to Hermione Granger's everlasting frustration and Tom's smugness – but he wanted to really wow Professor McGonagall next year. (wynnebat, 2018, para. 35)

Yet, some fan writers explore stories focusing on Voldemort as a central character. As a leader of the terrorist group, the Death Eaters, Voldemort is depicted to be dominating and inhuman. Reagin (2011) explored the idea that Voldemort had found his leadership through his use of many pureblooded families' "preexisting prejudices" (p. 132), which presents a possible reason fan writers include Death Eater raids in their reimagined narratives. The portrayal of Voldemort in fanfiction and his execution of Death Eater raids to oppress the Muggle population maintains his tyrannical behaviour in the novels. Even though "You Can't Please Everyone" focuses on Harry's cruel and violent behaviours, it maintains Voldemort's role as the Dark Lord. The aspect that challenges his conventional portrayal is his calm and affectionate demeanour. It shows a reinterpretation of a leader with a friendlier relationship with his followers and a romantic connection with his partner, which humanises him. Humanising Voldemort in fanfiction stories indicates readers' sympathy for the character, which Bell (2013) suggests is a reflection of Harry's sympathy for Voldemort in *Half-Blood Prince* after learning about Voldemort's birth and circumstances. The "systematic exclusion, Othering and marginalisation" (Bell, 2013, p. 63) in the Muggle and Wizarding World led him to be a victim. Presenting a humanised Voldemort provides a different perspective on a villainous character who has found emotional connection and love.

6.1.4 Regulus Black

As a side character, there is limited information on Regulus Black in the *Harry Potter* novels, but he is popularly known for his minor role in the defeat of Lord Voldemort. Readers first learn of Regulus in *Order of the Phoenix*:

'Because I hated the whole lot of them: my parents, with their pure-blood mania, convinced that to be a Black made you practically royal...my idiot brother, soft enough to believe them...that's him.'

Sirius jabbed a finger at the very bottom of the tree, at the name 'Regulus Black'. A date of death (some fifteen years previously) followed the date of birth.

‘He was younger than me,’ said Sirius, ‘and a much better son, as I was constantly reminded.’

‘But he died,’ said Harry.

‘Yeah,’ said Sirius. ‘Stupid idiot...he joined the Death Eaters.’ (Rowling, 2003/2013e, p. 104)

Highlighting Regulus’s identity as a Death Eater does not paint this character positively. However, it is later, in *Half-Blood Prince* and *Deathly Hallows*, that readers understand that there is more to this character than meets the eye. It is possible that Sutton-Ramspeck’s (2023) description of Regulus as a “rare and influential character” (Sutton-Ramspeck, 2023, p. 8) who silently defies Voldemort and the fandom’s acknowledgement of his status as an “unsung hero” (Wizards World, 2017) that this character becomes attractive to fanfiction writers. In *Half-Blood Prince*, Regulus’s act of defiance appears in the form of a message he leaves for Voldemort in the fake Slytherin locket:

To the Dark Lord

I know I will be dead long before you read this but I want you to know that it was I who discovered your secret. I have stolen the real Horcrux and intend to destroy it as soon as I can.

I face death in the hope that when you meet your match, you will be mortal once more.

R. A. B. (Rowling, 2005/2013f, p. 569)

This disobedience supports Hobbs’s (2022) opinion that having a “dark wizard reputation is not an absolute” (Hobbs, 2022, p. 68) as Regulus’s Dark heritage does not limit his understanding of right and wrong. It also emphasises Regulus’s intelligence.

In “loving is easy”, the writer, in James Potter’s voice, describes Regulus as “shy but wickedly smart” (rxgulus, 2021, section 1, para. 6). This reinterpretation of Regulus may not be far away from the portrayal of the novel Regulus for, except for Dumbledore and Slughorn, he was the only character that figured out Voldemort’s secret, which was the creation of Horcruxes, and he executed a suicidal mission to steal one of Voldemort’s Horcrux so that he may be defeated. His intentions to sacrifice himself indicate his “refusal to submit to another’s will” (Sutton-Ramspeck, 2023, p. 115) and his need to protect his family and house-elf, earning Kreacher’s loyalty even after his death. Kreacher’s loyalty to Regulus also amplifies his compassion towards mistreated creatures – Kreacher tells Harry, Ron and Hermione how “Master Regulus always liked Kreacher” (Rowling, 2007/2013g, p. 159) – another characteristic that is reflected in “loving is easy”. Kreacher’s tale reveals Regulus’s characteristics as a son of the House of Black. In *Deathly Hallows*:

‘Master Sirius ran away, good riddance, for he was a bad boy and broke my mistress’s heart with his lawless ways. But Master Regulus had proper pride; he knew what was due to the name of Black and the dignity of his pure blood. For years he talked of the Dark Lord, who was going to bring the wizards out of hiding to rule the Muggles and the Muggle-borns...and when he was sixteen years old, Master Regulus joined the Dark Lord. So proud, so proud, so happy to serve...’ (Rowling, 2007/2013g, p. 159)

While Kreacher's tale does not highlight the Black family's treatment of Regulus, Sirius, his older brother, often makes known his complaints about his family in *Order of the Phoenix*. There, fan writers like rxgulus (2021) and stardiver (2022) reinterpret Regulus's life with his family to be unpleasant and lack familial affection.

In "loving is easy", the Blacks continue to assert pressure on Regulus at Hogwarts, sending him letters to remind him of their expectations for him, his "duties to his family and what would happen should he dare to disappoint them" (rxgulus, 2021, section 1, para. 7). The Blacks' idea of familial love has a detrimental impact on Regulus, causing him to become withdrawn. In "hope is the thing with antlers", the lack of familial love from the Blacks is reflected in Regulus's appreciation towards the Potter family and in the comparison he makes between the settings of the "dark London townhouse of Grimmauld Place" (stardiver, 2022, para. 39), the Potter garden and Hogwarts ground where the two latter places give him "a similar feeling of freedom and a sense of warm homely magic" (stardiver, 2022, para. 39). Thus, his defiance of Lord Voldemort as portrayed in the novel, despite his willingness to join the ranks of the Death Eaters, shows that he "may yet shine free of his Black origins" (Groves, 2017, p. 132). Defying his family to marry and settle with James, a Gryffindor, as portrayed in "hope is the thing with antlers" and "loving is easy" indicates that, within the Potter fandom, fans perceive Regulus's overall characteristics to reflect a quiet rebel.

6.1.5 James Potter

Rowling offers minimal information about James Potter in the books. However, readers gain insights into this character through his son, Harry, his group of friends from Hogwarts, Sirius Black and Remus Lupin, and Severus Snape's animosity towards him. When Remus's identity as a werewolf is revealed in *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry (and the reader) learns of James's ability to transform into an animal. Remus spends part of his time at Hogwarts involuntarily transforming into a werewolf in secret, and the transformations were, in his words, "terrible" (Rowling, 1999/2013c, p. 259) without the Wolfsbane Potion, which was yet to be invented at the time, to alleviate the pain and suppress the beast in him. James, portrayed to be a loyal friend, decided to take on the challenging task of learning the magical skill to transform into an animal to keep his friend company during his painful transformations: "And they didn't desert me at all. Instead they did something for me that would make my transformations not only bearable but the best times of my life. They became Animagi." (Rowling, 1999/2013c, p. 259). This aspect of James, his ability to transform into a stag, is present in the fanfiction "hope is the thing with antlers". However, the objective of the transformation distinctively differs from his innocent intentions to accompany his friend.

In this one-shot, stardiver (2022) reimagines James's animagus ability as a form of his grieving process, in which by becoming a stag, James can escape the trauma of his father's death, if only for a short moment a day. It also presents an alternate side to this character that is often depicted as carefree in the company of his group of friends in the canonverse. Before Fleamont died in "hope is the thing with antlers", Regulus described James as a lively character, full of vitality. However, in the books, not all characters view James in a positive light. In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Severus exposes James's unpleasant traits to Harry:

'How extraordinarily like your father you are, Potter,' Snape said suddenly, his eyes glinting. 'He, too, was exceedingly arrogant. A small amount of talent on the Quidditch pitch made him think he was a cut above the rest of us, too. Strutting around the place with his friends and admirers....the resemblance between you is uncanny.' (Rowling, 1999/2013c, p. 209)

In *Order of the Phoenix*, Rowling (2003/2013e) utilises Harry's curiosity and the magical artifact of a Pensieve to uncover one of Severus Snape's memories of James, where in a show of arrogance and pureblooded pride, he bullied young Severus during their school days. His conflict with Lily Evans, Harry's mother, displays the worst aspects of James:

1. 'You think you're funny,' she said coldly. 'But you're just an arrogant, bullying toerag, Potter. Leave him *alone*.' (Rowling, 2003/2013e, p. 570)
2. 'Messing up your hair because you think it looks cool to look like you've just got off your broomstick, showing off with that stupid Snitch, walking down corridors and hexing anyone who annoys you just because you can – I'm surprised your broomstick can get off the ground with that fat head on it. You make me SICK.' (Rowling, 2003/2013e, p. 571)

Groves (2017) observed how James is cast in "the worst possible light" (p. 92) in this scene. Sutton-Ramspeck (2023) suggested that James's portrayal here reflects his wealth and pureblooded privileges.

In the fanfiction "loving is easy", rxgulus (2021) does not discard this side of James, having hinted that his arrogance might have resulted from his parents' coddling. So, the writer utilises it to depict Regulus's influence on him:

The two of them together never failed to tell their little Harry how much they loved him and sometimes James worried he'd end up spoiling Harry to the point that the kid would become an arrogant tosser like James had been in his early years. However, it was a good thing he was paired with Regulus who would never allow such a thing. It had been Regulus' unimpressed scowls at his poor behaviour that had caused him to have a long, hard look at himself to finally see his flaws. (rxgulus, 2021, section 2, para. 60)

However, this writer also reinterprets James's characteristics as possessing an affectionate, poetic and romantic disposition after he falls in love with Regulus. It reflects James's canon relationship with

Lily Evans, which is revealed in *Order of the Phoenix* as Harry questions his mother's ability to love such an arrogant man:

'And,' said Harry doggedly, determined to say everything that was on his mind now he was here, 'he kept looking over at the girls by the lake, hoping they were watching him!'

'Oh, well, he always made a fool of himself whenever Lily was around,' said Sirius, shrugging, 'he couldn't stop himself showing off whenever he got near her.' (Rowling, 2003/2013e, p. 591)

The similarity between novel-James and the one in "loving is easy" is their willingness to become a better person for the one they love. However, the reimagination of James in this fan text proves that the writer finds James, as a character, to be more romantic and charming than what was shown of James in the novels, capable of being kind and compassionate, which earned him Regulus's affection. Thus, the portrayal of James Potter in the books and fanfiction stories indicates an expansion of character depth based on fans' interpretations of the character from the source text.

6.2 Homosexuality in Fanon

Within the Potterverse, heteronormativity, which implies that heterosexual relationships are the default and normative sexual orientations, manifests in the societal norms of the Wizarding World and its character portrayals and dynamics. This is because *Harry Potter* is a "straight boy's story" (Pugh & Wallace, 2006, p. 261), in which Rowling keeps her characters away from non-normative gender and sexuality practices, subtly steering "readers into culturally normative sex roles" (Pugh & Wallace, 2006, p. 263). Despite the human-creature hybridity displayed by some of her characters, which suggests her tolerance and acceptance of the "abnormal over the normal" (Duggan, 2022, p. 150), the author maintains heteronormative practices in the novels (Pugh & Wallace, 2006). For instance, Remus Lupin, a known werewolf, engages in a romantic relationship with Nymphadora Tonks, a Metamorphagus with the ability to change her "appearance at will" (Rowling, 2003/2013e, p. 52). Moreover, Bill Weasley, who comes to possess some "wolfish characteristics" (Rowling, 2005/2013f, p. 572) after a werewolf attack, marries Fleur Delacour, a French woman who is "part Veela", a magical creature with Siren-like abilities (Rowling, 2000/2013d, p. 270). Rowling's heteronormative tendencies are also reflected in the portrayal of some of the primary characters analysed in this thesis: Harry Potter, Draco Malfoy and James Potter.

Playing the hero of the Wizarding World, Harry "must be free of any taint of sexual queerness" (Pugh & Wallace, 2006, p. 272), and thus, in the novels, engages in a heterosexual relationship, first with Cho Chang and then Ginny Weasley, the younger sister of his best friend, Ron. In *Prisoner of*

Azkaban, Harry starts to form romantic feelings for Cho when he first sees her in a Gryffindor versus Ravenclaw Quidditch match:

The Ravenclaw team, dressed in blue, were already standing in the middle of the pitch. Their Seeker, Cho Chong, was the only girl in their team. She was shorter than Harry by about a head, and Harry couldn't help noticing, nervous as he was, that she was extremely pretty. She smiled at Harry as the teams faced each other behind their captains, and he felt a slight jolt in the region of his stomach that he didn't think had anything to do with nerves. (Rowling, 1999/2013c, pp. 191–192)

They share a kiss in *Order of the Phoenix* and spend Valentine's Day at Hogsmeade Village, but their feelings for each other quickly fade since Cho is constantly haunted by her past relationship with Cedric. Harry's relationship with Ginny is more successful as they marry and settle down with three children in the epilogue.

The depiction of Draco's relationship with Pansy Parkinson during his Hogwarts days may be unclear, but she is often seen in Draco's company. In *Goblet of Fire*, she attended the Yule Ball "clutching Malfoy's arm, in very frilly robes of pale pink" (Rowling, 2000/2013d, p. 359), and in *Half-Blood Prince*, they share an intimate moment on the Hogwarts Express:

[...] and Malfoy, sniggering, lay back down across two seats with his head in Pansy Parkinson's lap. Harry lay curled uncomfortably under the Cloak to ensure that every inch of him remained hidden, and watched Pansy stroke the sleek blond hair off Malfoy's forehead, smirking as she did so, as though anyone would have loved to have been in her place. (Rowling, 2005/2013f, pp. 142–143)

Even though Rowling did not offer a clear explanation of what became of Pansy after the second wizarding war, she established Draco's marriage with Astoria Greengrass, "the younger sister of a fellow Slytherin" (Rowling, 2015b, para. 21) in the epilogue, securing heteronormativity in the series. While there is minimal information offered relating to James Potter and Lily Evan's relationship, theirs, too, represent heteronormativity in canon. These excerpts from the novels show parts of their relationship:

1. He stopped on a picture of his parents' wedding day. There was his father waving up at him, beaming, the untidy black hair Harry had inherited standing up in all directions. There was his mother, alight with happiness, arm in arm with his Dad. (Rowling, 1999/2013c, p. 157)

2. 'How come she married him?' Harry asked miserably. 'She hated him!'

'Nah, she didn't,' said Sirius.

'She started going out with him in seventh year,' said Lupin.

'Once James had deflated his head a bit,' said Sirius.

‘And stopped hexing people just for the fun of it,’ said Lupin. (Rowling, 2003/2013e, p. 591)

Harry’s birth is also evidence of their heterosexual connection. However, Regulus and Voldemort are exceptions to Rowling’s implementation of heteronormativity.

Firstly, with regards to Regulus, as a side character whose purpose was to highlight his defiance against Voldemort and the existence of his Horcrux, the author offers no information on his past romantic relationships or sexual identity. In addition, this character had died young, “some fifteen years previously” (Rowling, 2003/2013e, p. 104), as Harry deduced from the date of death indicated on the Black family tree, and thus, he may not have lived long enough to have a wife and settle down as James and Lily had. Secondly, Voldemort is a villainous figure who lacks the capability to love and form human connections with one another. As established in his character analysis based on the source text (see Chapter 6.1.3), he is a character that favours solitude. Rowling (2005/2013f), in Dumbledore’s voice, illustrated how Tom Riddle had been “highly self-sufficient” (Rowling, 2005/2013f, p. 259), preferring to distance himself from others and “operate alone” (p. 259). In *Deathly Hallows*, Dumbledore suggests how Voldemort’s downfall was related to his inability to understand the power of love (Groves, 2017):

‘And his knowledge remained woefully incomplete, Harry! That which Voldemort does not value, he takes no trouble to comprehend. Of house elves and children’s tales, of love, loyalty and innocence, Voldemort knows and understands nothing...*Nothing*. That they all have a power beyond his own, a power beyond the reach of my magic, is a truth he has never grasped.’ (Rowling, 2007/2013g, p. 568)

Even though Regulus and Voldemort do not actively embody heteronormativity as such in the novels, their absence of relationships and romantic connections does not undermine the existing heterosexual practices in the canon.

Publically announcing Dumbledore’s homosexuality suggests that Rowling has a prominent authorial presence in the Potterverse and intends to extend her influence to the fandom. It also highlights the fact that the novels are “ominously silent and unable to truly embrace diversity when it comes to non(hetero)normative desires and relationships” (Rose, 2022, p. 154). This is because Dumbledore’s queerness is not “explicitly described” (Duggan, 2022, p. 151) in the series. It is one of the gaps present in the Harry Potter series that Duggan (2022) observed. This noteworthy gap “created by the almost exclusive focalization through Harry” (Duggan, 2022, p. 149) encourages readers to put on their queer-reading spectacles and write Harry Potter slash fictions. Willis (2006) suggested that this fan practice serves as a form of “intervention into canon” (Willis, 2006, p. 161) to emphasise the presence of homosexuality. Thus, it is reasonable to propose that the slash stories and pairings found

on AO3 have been initiated from fans' subtextual reading of the canon text (Tosenberger, 2008a) and that the "construction of the Potterverse" (Tosenberger, 2008a, p. 199), its portrayal of primary and secondary characters, and their dynamics have been instrumental to fans' slash reading and writing behaviours.

Since the realm of fanfiction allows for endless possibilities and because the novels hold an "enormous cast of intriguing characters" (Tosenberger, 2008a, p. 191), the variety of homosexual pairings may be assessed based on fans' preferences and desires. Over the years, the Drarry pairing has reigned as one of the most popular M/M pairings in the Potter fandom on AO3. Based on the AO3 ship statistics posted by fan centreoftheselights (2016;2023), since 2016, the Draco Malfoy/Harry Potter slash pair has maintained its position in the top ten of the "Overall/All Time Top 100" category, which identifies the top 100 relationship tags across all fandoms with the most published fanfictions on AO3. They were ranked fourth in 2023, featuring in approximately 59,048 works. While some fans remain loyal to heterosexual relationships such as Ron Weasley/Hermione Granger ("Romione"), Draco Malfoy/Hermione Granger ("Dramione"), and James Potter/Lily Evans ("Jily"), the introduction of same-sex pairings like Tomarry, Harrymort and Jegulus, which entered the "All Time Top 100" and yearly "Top 100" rankings respectively in recent years, indicate the Potter fandom's expansion of pairing primary characters to secondary ones. According to Rosenberg (2023), the sudden popularity of the Jegulus pairing is connected to the rise of fanfiction that focuses on the Marauders Era, which portrays the generation that centralises Harry's parents and their friends. The publication of multi-chapter fanfiction "All the Young Dudes" (2017) on AO3 led the charge in this shift, attracting fans' attention to the exploration of a homosexual relationship between James Potter and Regulus Black. Thus, the popularity of Drarry, Tomarry or Harrymort, and Jegulus pairings aligns with Tosenberger's (2008a) argument that the fantasy genre of the Potterverse allows fans more "freedom to imagine the discourse of homosexuality" (Tosenberger, 2008a, p. 198) in a socially and commercially non-restrictive space like the Wizarding World on AO3.

Enemyslash pairings offer readers a unique lens through which they can explore the intersection of heteronormativity in canon and representations of homosexuality in fanon. Tosenberger (2008a) suggested that the desirability of enemyslash pairings is the reinterpretation of conflict between two adversarial characters into sexual tension. With characters of the same sex, "the pleasure is seeing their negotiation of expectations of male aggression" (Tosenberger, 2008a, p. 193) develop into a desire for each other. The Drarry, Tomarry, Harrymort, and Jegulus pairings share this characteristic. Harry and Draco's rivalry in the Potter series makes them an ideal enemyslash pairing. Their schoolyard fights and arguments, and the animosity between their houses, Gryffindor and Slytherin, amplify the tension between the characters (Tosenberger, 2008a). Their hatred for each other can be reinterpreted as love and passion (Torn, 2019). A form of obsession exists between them, which Torn

(2019) believed that some readers may view as “some underlying feelings that neither of them is willing to express” (Torn, 2019, para. 6). Harry’s odd obsession with Draco is highlighted in *Half-Blood Prince*:

‘Don’t be stupid,’ said Ron sharply. ‘You couldn’t have missed a Quidditch match just to follow Malfoy, you’re the Captain!’

‘I want to know what he’s up to,’ said Harry. ‘And don’t tell me it’s all in my head, not after what I overheard between him and Snape –’

‘I never said it was all in your head,’ said Ron, hoisting himself up on an elbow in turn and frowning at Harry, ‘but there’s no rule saying only one person at a time can be plotting anything in this place! You’re getting a bit obsessed with Malfoy, Harry. I mean, thinking about missing a match just to follow him...’ (Rowling, 2005/2013f, p. 391).

While Rowling’s (2005/2013f) objective had been to call readers’ attention to Draco’s task for the Dark Lord, the portrayal of Harry’s constant suspicions and his stalking tendencies encourage fans to perceive a different interpretation of their antagonistic relationship.

It is likely that the “Sectumsempra” scene in *Half-Blood Prince* (Rowling, 2005/2013f, p. 489), which depicts Draco in a vulnerable state and features a duel between Harry and Draco, enhances the attractiveness of the Drarry pairing even further. The portrayal of Harry and Voldemort, as the protagonist and antagonist of the *Potter* series, has positioned them to become a compelling enemyslash pairing. According to Groves (2017), beyond the connection that Harry has with Voldemort as his seventh Horcrux, their age difference, and how their paths have taken different turns, these two characters “share an essential kinship” (Groves, 2017, p. 17). Rowling constantly reminds readers of their shared connection in the novels. In *Chamber of Secrets*, Riddle points out the likeness between them:

Riddle’s face contorted. Then he forced it into an awful smile.

‘So. Your mother died to save you. Yes, that’s a powerful counter-charm. I can see now – there is nothing special about you, after all. I wondered, you see. Because there are strange likenesses between us, Harry Potter. Even you must have noticed. Both half-bloods, orphans, raised by Muggles. Probably the only two Parselmouths to come to Hogwarts since the great Slytherin himself. We even *look* something alike... But after all, it was merely a lucky chance that saved you from me. That’s all I wanted to know.’ (Rowling, 1998/2013b, p. 233)

In *Goblet of Fire*, according to Dumbledore, both their wands had connected during the Graveyard scene, creating the “reverse spell effect” (Rowling, 2000/2013d, p. 605), because they contained similar wand cores: feathers plucked from Fawkes’s tail. Additionally, in *Order of the Phoenix*, Dumbledore implied that their shared connection was a result of a prophecy and Voldemort’s choice

to “mark [Harry] as his equal” (Rowling, 2003/2013e, p. 742). Thus, their roles in the canon texts and the portrayal of their connection identify them as an ideal enemyslash pairing.

The homosexual relationship between James and Regulus is distinctively different to the Drarry and Tomarry pairings because Rowling provides little to no information in the novels that connects these two characters other than Regulus was the brother of James’s best friend, Sirius. However, looking at the slash fiction of “loving is easy” and “hope is the thing with antlers”, fans have interpreted three connections between them in the canonverse that set them as a potential enemyslash pairing: one, they are both sons from pureblooded families; two, the sorting into Gryffindor and Slytherin places them in rivalling houses in Hogwarts; three, they are passionate Quidditch players. Finding the connection between James and Regulus in fanfiction texts, highlighting their similarities and differences in the source text implies evidence of fans’ level of investment and interest in secondary characters in the Potter novels. This seems to support Pugh’s (2005) observation that fans also use “minor characters, whose personalities and opinions are not so well established in the canon” (Pugh, 2005, p. 69) to write alternate stories based on their preferences and desires. Therefore, the appeal of Jegulus pairing stories may be that fan readers-turn-writers can explore their reimagined space of the Wizarding World and its characters while filling in the gaps Rowling left behind by creating a relationship between two characters with layers of complexity.

6.3 Intimacy between Masculine Characters

As Lamb and Veith (2014, p. 113) propose, the allure of “masculine sexuality” captivates female fan readers and writers. In slash fiction, male characters often embody a spectrum of masculine qualities that define their identities and shape their relationships and interactions within the narrative. For example, in “Kiss” and “Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship”, Harry’s acts of heroism exhibit his masculine traits. He is a character that initiates action, saving Draco and Tom in the second task of the Triwizard Tournament, and actively opposing Dark Lords like Voldemort and Grindelwald. In “Good Company”, he is the first to confront Draco and be upfront about his feelings. Draco also presented some forms of masculinity. Connell (2005) suggested that being rational is a conventionally masculine quality, which is reflected in Draco when he becomes Harry’s voice of reason in “Good Company”, offering him sound advice that helps him mend his friendship with Ron and Hermione.

Other examples of Draco’s masculinity appear when he feeds Harry breakfast or takes the food he dislikes and the distance he puts between himself and the other Eighth-year students at Hogwarts. Harry remains the only company he keeps from the beginning to the end of the story. The portrayal of Tom’s protectiveness after learning about Harry’s living situation with his abusive relatives, as seen

in “Snake Eyes”, indicates his masculinity. Tom’s show of care and need to protect Harry, saving him from a lifestyle of abuse and offering him shelter, reminds readers of a “masculine style” (Reeser, 2010, p. 137) in the Middle Ages when knights would rescue damsels in distress. The depiction of Voldemort’s masculinity differs from Tom’s even though they are essentially the same character. His masculine traits lie in this control over his emotions and in the power he exudes as a powerful Dark Lord in the Wizarding World and the leader of the Death Eaters. Between James and Regulus, James presents more stereotypical masculine qualities. He is often portrayed offering Regulus comfort in “loving is easy”, and, despite his silence and overwhelming grief in “hope is the thing with antlers”, keeping his emotions to himself and withdrawing away from his family can be seen as masculine characteristics. Regulus’s most notable trait of masculinity is reflected in his passion for the wizarding sport, Quidditch, playing as a Seeker for Slytherin. He is also considered a skilled duellist, prominently portrayed in his fight against Voldemort and his Death Eaters in “loving is easy”, which further emphasises his masculinity.

However, these characters also exhibit nuanced feminine traits amidst their portrayal of masculinity. Slash fan writers often challenge the conventions of masculinity represented in heteronormative society, “combining elements of masculinity and femininity into a satisfactorily whole yet constantly fluid identity” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 193). Masculine and feminine characteristics, which Connell (2005) suggested are commonly perceived as a distinction between men and women “beyond categorical sex difference” (Connell, 2005, p. 69), are not entirely opposites and men “can be both very masculine and very feminine at the same time” (Reeser, 2010, p. 193). These slash writers, in their practice of protesting traditional societal views of masculinity, incorporate feminine qualities in their masculine, sexually appealing male characters. Regulus is one character who, while possessing the masculine passion for Quidditch, often displays maternal characteristics. In “loving is easy”, he shows kindness to mistreated creatures and protects younger students from older bullies. His love for baby Harry, too, rivals that of a mother’s. Another example of feminine features attributed to Regulus is his need to care for James in “hope is the thing with antlers” indicates his femininity. The depiction of James’s romantic and poetic disposition and his occasional dependence on Regulus in “loving is easy” is another example that illustrates feminine qualities in masculine males. Despite Voldemort not displaying feminine characteristics, Tom portrays a few feminine qualities, such as his tendency to be emotionally driven. In “Snake Eyes”, Tom internally confesses to feeling “like he had suddenly become Pansy Parkinson” (wynnebat, 2018, para. 3) when he grows angry and impatient, ordering Harry to respond to his letters after his three weeks of silence. There are moments in “Kiss” when Draco presents his femininity. He exhibits sensuous characteristics, as he is often shown to conduct himself in such a manner to attract Harry’s attention, showing his yearning for him. Harry’s feminine qualities can be found in his inaction against his abusive relatives, portraying himself as a “damsel” and allowing himself to be rescued by Tom in “Snake Eyes”. It indicates that he has a dependency on

the more masculine figure. Penley (2014) suggested that slash writers' objective for combining masculine and feminine features in male characters is to promote the notion of "sexual equality" (Penley, 2014, p. 178). It may be attractive for some female slash fans, who "can never have a truly equal love relationship with a man" (Hellekson & Busse, 2014, p. 78), to fantasise about two male characters that are equal in power and sexuality.

Masculinity, which according to Reeser (2010) may be situated on a fluid "continuum of desire for other men" (Reeser, 2010, p. 100), is closely associated with Sedgwick's (2016) discussion of homosocial desire (Reeser, 2010) and Woledge's (2006, p. 99) observation of the "intimatopia" in slash fiction. The practice of "male bonding" (Sedgwick, 2016, p. 1) indicates a hypothetical connection between the homosocial and homosexual (Sedgwick, 2016; Woledge, 2006). It is seen as a friendly act that excludes "violent or high-stakes rivalry" (Reeser, 2010, p. 97), which is more commonly involved with the idea of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 2005, p. 77), its marginalisation of women and assimilation of homosexuality with feminine qualities. The "representation of men discovering their own capacity for openness and tenderness" (Cicioni, 1998, p. 161) possibly revealed through the acts of male bonding becomes more significant than the examination of homosexuality in slash fiction. This is because, for fans of slash, the portrayal of intimacy in intimatopic texts, which emphasises "interpersonal relationships with men" (Woledge, 2006, p. 100) excites them. Intimatopia separates itself from the contemporary realities of homosexual politics, allowing readers and writers to freely explore the intimate bond between two men (Woledge, 2006) who may have homosocial desires for one another but are unburdened by homophobic barriers present in a patriarchal society (Sedgwick, 2016).

"Good Company", "Snake Eyes", and "hope is the thing with antlers" are examples of slash texts that prioritise human interaction and the male bond. While "Kiss", "Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship", "You Can't Please Everyone", and "loving is easy" contain some homosexual activity, the intimate moments between male characters are limited. These stories prioritise the existing tension and illicit desires between them. They maintain their central focus of depicting the gradual evolution of emotional bonds between the male protagonists, emphasising the intricacies of their developing relationships. A point that Woledge (2006) makes, which this thesis rejects, is the unlikeliness of intimacy forming between character pairings that are known to be adversaries in the canonverse. In these selected slash fiction texts, intimacy is palpable within the enemyslash pairings of Drarry, Tomarry, Harrymort and Jegulus. The narratives analysed in this thesis intricately weave moments of isolation, shared experiences and emotional vulnerability between canonical adversaries, challenging Woledge's (2006) opinion and the conventional boundaries of intimatopia.

To foster a close emotional bond between the male pair, slash writers strengthen “homosociality” (Woledge, 2006, p. 101) by placing their characters in isolated settings or different time periods in their stories. In doing so, they can delve into the potential for homosexual relationships. Despite Harry and Draco’s well-established rivalry and mutual animosity in the novels, their pairing remains a beloved choice within the Potter fandom. Fanfiction such as “Good Company” and “Kiss” exemplify how they can develop intimacy despite their adversarial relationship. Desire between two male characters can exist even when their relationship appears as “hostility or hatred or something less emotively charged” (Sedgwick, 2016, p. 2). Regardless of whether it manifests as antagonism or indifference, desire can be perceived as a form of emotionally positive and social energy that bonds individuals together (Sedgwick, 2016). In “Good Company”, Greenflares (2012) establishes that both Harry and Draco were “isolated from their friends” (Greenflares, 2012, section 1). Harry’s isolation is the unintentional result of Ron and Hermione’s budding romance as they often celebrate their newfound relationship and forget about Harry, leaving him “alone to wallow in misery” (Greenflares, 2012, section 1). In contrast, Draco’s isolation is a consequence of his unpleasant demeanour during his youth, his family’s allegiance with Voldemort in the second wizarding war, and the absence of his Slytherin friends who were hesitant to return to Hogwarts due to the negative reputation they have acquired. Their isolation becomes an invisible force, pushing the two lonely characters together, forming a friendship despite their “years of torment and hatred” (Greenflares, 2012, section 1).

Similarly, in “Kiss”, the distinct lack of amicable interaction between Harry and his friends highlights his solitary state. Throughout the narrative, Ron’s portrayal primarily revolves around a form of conflict with Harry: his jealousy when Harry was chosen as the fourth Triwizard champion and his anger at Draco as the person Harry “will sorely miss” (xERised, 2016, section 5). Even during a seemingly peaceful conversation, Harry’s inner thoughts reveal his doubts that Ron, Hermione and others at school would understand the bond he shares with Draco. Draco experiences a profound sense of isolation as he grapples with the realisation of his sexuality, finding that he is “more partial to boys than girls” (xERised, 2016, section 3) and the depth of his feelings for Harry. These internal struggles lead him to conceal his true emotions, keeping them hidden from others. Thus, the clandestine nature of their relationship, which mirrors the recurring theme of “us against the world”, underscores their isolation. These variations of isolation in “Good Company” and “Kiss” affirm Woledge’s (2006) suggestion that in their loneliness, paired characters can build an intimate bond with one another. While the form of isolation may not necessarily portray “alien planets” or “historical or futuristic eras” (Woledge, 2006, p. 101), the social and emotional isolation that Harry and Draco struggle with offer adequate cause for these two characters to come together and bond, especially between canonical rivals like them who are socially on opposite sides and are emotionally charged teenagers.

Female slash fans, who are often women seeking genuine equality with men and mutual reciprocity in their intimate relationships (Lamb & Veith, 2014), can be drawn to portrayals of equality depicted between two masculine characters in fanfiction (Woledge, 2006). The equality in a Tomarry pairing is primarily reflected in the portrayals of their age and gender. Harry and Tom maintain their male bodies, thereby avoiding the gender-swapping trope, because it may be easier to imagine equality “in a fictional male-male relationship” (Lamb & Veith, 2014, p. 101). In the fanfiction texts “Snake Eyes” and “Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship”, Tom’s age has been altered to match Harry’s, making him significantly younger than he was in the source material. Harry and Tom are between the ages fourteen and fifteen; having finished their second year at Hogwarts in “Snake Eyes”, and in “Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship”, the characters enter Hogwarts at the same time, beginning their first year together and carry on most of their school days as close friends. These slash texts suggest that regressing a character’s age to match the other, in order to create a feasibly matched male pair, can resonate with female fans’ yearnings for equality in an intimate relationship as such pairings often eliminate existing power imbalance.

Equality also figures in the narration of the paired characters’ backgrounds. Harry and Tom’s shared status as orphans in the novels is a significant point of similarity that resonates with readers, and slash writers like wynnebat (2018) leverage their orphaned backgrounds to build a commonality of loss, resilience and quest for belonging between the male pair. While Tom is orphaned due to a “car crash that had killed his parents” (wynnebat, 2018, para. 4), Harry’s parents had died in a Ministry explosion that killed sixty-two people. As orphans, they live with their relatives: Tom’s maternal uncle, Morfin, and Harry’s mother’s sister, Petunia. Even though they do not discuss their pasts before the events of the story – “[...] Harry had always been so tight-lipped about his family. Maybe he’d only been trying to not bring up the subject because of Tom’s own family issues...” (wynnebat, 2018, para. 45) – they find a sense of equality through their shared experience of being orphans.

Additionally, equality can be highlighted when depicting power, which is also conventionally been perceived as masculine (Hellekson & Busse, 2014). In “You Can’t Please Everyone”, Harry and Voldemort’s arranged marriage places them on equal standing. When the Death Eaters come to learn of Harry’s true characteristics, they show him the same kind of respect that they usually reserve for Voldemort, referring to Harry as “My Lord” (DobbyRocksSocks, 2021, section 4). Cicioni (1998, p. 169) suggested that “authentic love” may only exist between paired equal characters. Nevertheless, Woledge (2006) proposed that equality can also be depicted based on characters’ differences. For example, “Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship” contrasts Tom’s solitary nature in contrast with Harry’s friendlier disposition and highlights their different views on Dark Magic. This difference encourages Tom to abandon the path that would have led to him becoming Voldemort, the Dark Lord incapable

of love. The satisfactory and happy conclusion of this fanfiction supports Woledge's (2006) proposal that differences can "enhance intimacy" (Woledge, 2006, p. 109) between an equal pair.

Slash writers often use "extreme suffering" (Woledge, 2006, p. 110) to create intimacy between characters. Jenkins (2012) suggested that the hurt/comfort genre in fanfiction exemplifies this, placing a strong focus on the characters' "suffering rather than death" (Woledge, 2006, p. 110). For example, in "loving is easy", James and Regulus alternate being the vulnerable one seeking comfort and the one providing support and reassurance. When Regulus receives "a nasty letter from his parents, parchment filled with expectations and tales of Regulus' duties to his family and what would happen should he dare to disappoint them" (rxgulus, 2021, section 1, para. 7), he drowns in his emotional pains by shutting himself away from people. In his attempts to comfort him, James forces him out of his refuge, such as the library and the Slytherin dormitory, interacting with him and gently initiating physical contact, alleviating Regulus's suffering. James's moment of vulnerability happens after they survive "a planned siege on a suspected Death Eater's hideout" (rxgulus, 2021, para. 25). Regulus offers him some comfort, allowing James to cling to him as he recovers from his nightmares. As James's grief over his father's passing is the focus of "hope is the thing with antlers", this story centralises his vulnerabilities and Regulus's capabilities as a good partner and companion. James escapes into the forest at the peak of his emotional pain, transformed into a stag to grieve in silence. Regulus, patient and understanding, treks through the forest to offer him his quiet company, bringing him food and reading a book as a comforting gesture. The silence, a repeated motif of this fanfiction, highlights the hurt/comfort trope and the intimacy between them. The portrayal of James in "loving is easy" and Regulus in "hope is the thing with antlers" represent Cicioni's (1998) "eroticization of nurturance", in which the author proposes that intimacy can blossom when one of the male pair offers "physical and/or emotional comfort to the other" (Cicioni, 1998, p. 162). Therefore, a character's emotional suffering can be seen as a "catharsis" that strengthens the connection between a bonded pair (Jenkins, 2012, p. 174).

7. Conclusion

This thesis has sought to explore how fan readers-turned-writers queer characters from the *Harry Potter* novels through fanfiction, reinterpreting their characteristics and transforming the narrative to contest J. K. Rowling's authorial influence and heteronormative "treatment" of her characters (Romano, 2016b, para. 8). By undertaking a close reading of seven distinctive slash fiction stories, this thesis analyses five Harry Potter characters, investigating their backstories, personalities and interpersonal dynamics. It compares each character's portrayal in the novels, focusing on their heteronormative relationships, with their homosexual relationships depicted in the selected fanfiction texts. This investigation also examines the characters' culturally marked masculine and feminine qualities as presented in slash fiction, questioning whether their masculinity and roles as adversaries in the original work disrupt or enhance the emotional intimacy between them. By highlighting these reinterpretations, this thesis demonstrates how fanfiction can both subvert the canon and sustain an online fandom long after the publication of the final novel.

In terms of overall findings, this thesis reveals that it is possible fans produce copious slash fictions that queer the characters' sexualities and transform their characteristics to challenge Rowling's heteronormative narratives within the Potterverse. The character analysis subsection illustrates that fan writers often retain certain canonical traits, such as Harry's heroism, Draco's loyalty to his family, Tom Riddle and Voldemort's pride, power, loneliness and intelligence, Regulus's disobedience, and James's capacity to overcome his shortcomings for love. However, they also expand and humanise these characters, making them more relatable to Harry Potter fans. Harry is depicted in moments of emotional vulnerability with potential to "turn to the dark side". Draco can be reimagined as a reformed character who displays kindness and self-sacrifice. Tom and Voldemort are given opportunities to make friends and experience love. Regulus discovers true familial love while James is portrayed as a romantic poet with the chance to be a father to his son. These fan-created narratives blur the lines of conventional masculinity and femininity in male characters, adding depth and complexity that often surpasses their original portrayals.

The overall findings also suggest that enemyslash pairings are given the potential to form homosocial bonds, thereby intensifying their homosexual relationships. While Woledge (2006) argued that adversarial pairings are rarely emotionally intimate, the seven slash fictions selected for this thesis demonstrate that moments of isolation, shared experiences and emotional vulnerability can foster intimacy and desire between canonical adversaries. Desire is often expressed through tension between characters (Tosenberger, 2008a; Torn, 2019), with their conflicts in the source text being reinterpreted as sexual attraction. Harry and Draco's schoolyard fights, Harry and Voldemort's multi-layered connection, and James and Regulus's similarities and differences are primary aspects that make them

ideal enemyslash pairings. The findings reveal that emotional intimacy can blossom through Harry and Draco's loneliness, Harry and Tom's shared experiences, the equality depicted between Harry and Voldemort, and the hurt/comfort moments between James and Regulus. Thus, I disagree with Woledge's (2006) view that slash fiction pairing adversarial characters from the source text is "rarely intimatopic in nature" (Woledge, 2006, p. 106).

Fanfiction breathes new life into the Potterverse, allowing fans to engage with and expand upon the original material on an ongoing basis, and often subversively. The emergence of the Jegulus pairing indicates that, despite the series' conclusion, the Harry Potter fandom remains vibrant and active (Rosenberg, 2023). Although this thesis does not linger on this aspect, it acknowledges the potential for further research in this area. A new generation of fans is gravitating towards stories about the Marauders (Rosenberg, 2023), highlighting the possibility that some Jegulus pairing narratives are primarily fanon rather than canon. While some fan writers adhere strictly to the canon, transforming the *Potter* novels by filling in "canonical spaces without breaking any canonical characterization or plot" (Stein, 2006, p. 247), others expand upon existing fan texts. Rosenberg (2023) noted that the Jegulus pairing began to gain traction following the popularity of "All the Young Dudes", a slash fiction on AO3 that focuses on Sirius/Remus pairing. This has spurred fans to fill in the gaps of the Marauders Era, creating stories that extend beyond Rowling's original texts. Thus, further research can be conducted on the Jegulus pairing and the creation of fan texts based on fanon, exploring how this phenomenon exemplifies the ongoing evolution and creativity within the Harry Potter fandom.

Another limitation of this thesis is its exclusive focus on textual analysis, which overlooks the perspectives and responses of fan writers concerning Rowling's heteronormative practices. Referencing Driscoll (2006, p. 93), who acknowledged that fan communities "form structures and spaces that name and define fan fiction", Stasi (2006) emphasised the intertwined nature of fanfiction and its communities, arguing that "performing textual analysis in isolation is impossible" (Stasi, 2006, p. 118). Given this interconnectedness, further research could explore the sentiments of the online Harry Potter fandom regarding Rowling's influence and their motivations for writing Harry Potter fanfiction. A mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, could be employed to gather rather thick fanthropological data (Salkowitz, 2022). For example, questionnaires could be distributed online to solicit comments from a broad sample of fanfiction writers, with a subset selected for in-depth interviews to gain richer insights into their experiences and viewpoints. This approach could provide a more holistic understanding of the dynamic between fan writers and the original text, highlighting how fan communities actively engage with and transform the source material.

During the course of this thesis, I have continued to read a variety of Harry Potter fanfiction, including other one-shots, multi-chapters, and serials featuring different slash pairings. With the wide range of genres and tropes written and published online, such as time-travelling adventures, modern alternate universes, and fix-it stories, the choices for finding a well-crafted, reimagined narrative are virtually limitless. These stories, archived and accessible globally by fans with computer and Internet access, offer a vast array of imaginative and innovative takes on beloved fictional characters and universes. Based on my experience reading slash fiction and this thesis's findings, fanfiction readers highly appreciate stories that delve deeply into the characters that fans already know and love, focusing on reinterpretations of their characteristics. While passion and sexual desires depicted between same-sex characters can be thrilling for some fan readers, I cling to stories that create, build and connect emotional intimacy between two vulnerable male characters. It is not that I derive pleasure from seeing two men endure physical or emotional pain that necessitates comforting (Cicioni, 1998). Instead, I value the portrayal of genuine equality, intimate connections and resilient courage that resonates within these stories, enriching my reading experience. Studying these selected one-shots for this thesis was a unique experience that has enhanced my perspective as a heterosexual female fan-reader-turned-writer and deepened my engagement with fan culture.

The transformative power of fanfiction encourages fans to reimagine characters, settings and universes, enabling them to explore creatively beyond the social boundaries imposed by economics and patriarchy. This creative freedom allows fan writers to subvert authorial influences and invest deeply in characters, relationships and experiences they may not encounter in real life. Fan culture goes beyond mere passion for a media text; the practices that fans engage in as a community reflect their eagerness to continuously breathe new life into the fantastical worlds they adore. The online Harry Potter fandom has thrived for so long because its fans consistently immerse themselves in the text, the films and all other media within the franchise. They actively reinterpret and expand upon the original material to keep the narrative alive and relevant. Although this thesis primarily focuses on the textual analysis of Harry Potter slash fiction and includes minimal information about the broader engagement of the Harry Potter fandom, it underscores the significant role fanfiction plays in extending the life of a fandom.

8. References

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Appendix A

“Harry/Draco Slash Fiction”

Title: “Good Company”

Writer: Greenflares

Date: 21 October 2012

Excerpt 1

This passage depicts an argument between Harry and Ron concerning Ron’s suspicion of Draco:

“It’s just, well, he’s still Malfoy,” Ron continued, following after him like a scrappy dog, “even if he’s kind of renounced his evil ways.”

“*Kind of?*” Harry echoed, looking over his shoulder with raised eyebrows, looking sceptical. “How did he *kind of* manage that?”

Ron looked lost for words but managed to say, “He’s still Malfoy, that’s all. How sure can you be when it comes to a Malfoy?”

“I’m sure,” Harry told him, just a little too forcefully, and Ron must have heard the underlining warning because he immediately dropped the subject. (Greenflares, 2012, section 2)

Excerpt 2

This scene portrays a heated interaction between Harry and his two friends, Ron and Hermione, who are upset that Harry spends more time with Draco than them:

“What he’s trying to say,” Hermione interjected heatedly, “is that you’re never fully with us. Your head’s always somewhere else. We just want you to join in with us again, Harry.”

Harry’s fists bunched at his sides and he snapped, “Excuse me for not wanting to take part in your disgusting couple-y behaviour! If I knew you were so open to threesomes I’d have suggested it months ago!”

“I beg your pardon!” Hermione gasped, pressing a hand to her chest and dropping her mouth open in shock.

Ron screwed up his nose in faint disgust. “Thanks but no thanks, mate,” he said gruffly. “That’s a bit... a bit much.”

“When you’re with me you’re so busy being all lost in each other’s eyes and holding hands and being so ridiculously in love that I could be a teapot or a hippogriff for all you’d care,” Harry told them angrily, eyes flaring and chest heaving, “and that’s only when you’re here, because honestly that’s not very often. You’re always off with each other and if you think I’m just going to sit in the dormitory fucking *knitting* or something, you’re dead wrong. So

forgive me for trying to fill up the void in my life with someone who's actually *there*." He glared at them both, challenging them to shout back at him. (Greenflares, 2012, section 7)

Excerpt 3

Following the disagreement with his friends, Harry seeks Draco for comfort:

"Yeah, well, you're scaring me," Malfoy said, dropping the cheery act and fixing Harry with a determined expression. "You'd never ask me for a cigarette if something wasn't bothering you. So don't treat me like an idiot by telling me nothing's wrong."

"Fine," he said with a huff. "Today Hermione told me she thinks you're a bad influence – which you're not, by the way – and then she told me I'm not spending enough time with them." He rolled his eyes and snorted to express just how unimpressed he was.

"Firstly," Malfoy began, "I just refused to support your non-existent smoking habit, so I think that ought to say something about what kind of influence I am on you. Secondly, maybe she has a point."

Harry opened his mouth to agree before he realised what he'd just said.

"What?" he murmured with a frown. "I don't... wait, what?"

Looking defensive and embarrassed, Malfoy shrugged, looked out at the lake, and said, "It's just, well, we do spend a lot of time together. And they're your best friends. Maybe you should spend more time with them."

Harry blinked repeatedly. "I'm sorry, I'm just. I'm having trouble comprehending all of this. You – You want me to spend less time with you? Is that – am I understanding you correctly?"

"They're your best friends," Malfoy said simply.

"And what are you?" Harry demanded. "You're – you're not just some person – you're my friend too, you know. They don't have sole rights to my friendship." He took a breath and looked at Malfoy, who refused to return the gaze and instead continued to watch the lake. "If I want to spend all my time with you, they're in no position to tell me not to." (Greenflares, 2012, section 8)

Excerpt 4

This conversation between Harry and Draco portrays Draco's solitude in Hogwarts:

"Why didn't your friends come back to Hogwarts with you?" Harry asked before he could stop himself.

Malfoy's quill stuttered against the parchment before it came to a stop. He looked at Harry and his eyes were lost and tired.

"They didn't think they were welcome," Malfoy replied with a weary sigh. "I believe Pansy at one stage said that she was worried we'd be lynched." Malfoy smiled shakily at the

comment, but Harry kept a straight face. “I guess they were just scared. Or couldn’t be bothered. I know Blaise doesn’t need an education, since his inheritance will take care of him.” (Greenflares, 2012, section 6)

Excerpt 5

These passages show the physical contact Harry and Draco share as their friendship grows:

1. Harry took the bottle but didn’t drink, instead he held it in his hands and let the condensation wet his fingers and make him shiver. He leaned back against his bed and Malfoy, who was beside him on the floor of their dormitory, leaned back as well. Their sides fitted together, warm and solid. (Greenflares, 2012, section 3)

2. Malfoy’s fingers tightened around Harry’s arm, squeezing him gently. “Harry,” he urged.

That’s the first time you’ve called me Harry,” he said numbly. He was suddenly unable to look away from Malfoy’s hand on his arm, his pale fingers digging warmly into Harry’s olive skin.

“Yeah, well, you called me Draco just then,” Malfoy murmured. “Also I figure since we’ve known each other so long it’s about time we got around to being on a first name basis.” He cleared his throat and took his hand from Harry’s arm only to offer it to him for a handshake. “Hello. My name’s Draco Malfoy.”

Harry snorted and met Malfoy’s eyes, trying to read his expression. “This is stupid,” he said quietly, but he took Malfoy’s hand and shook it with his own. “I’m Harry Potter.” (Greenflares, 2012, section 8)

3. Malfoy was still hiding behind his hands, and Harry smiled and reached out. He took Malfoy’s wrists and tugged on them gently until Malfoy’s hands came away, revealing how flustered and unhappy he looked behind them. (Greenflares, 2012, section 12)

Excerpt 6

These are three obstacles Harry and Draco need to overcome before their romantic relationship can be built:

1. Malfoy took a stabilising breath and asked, “Why am I your friend?”

Harry scrunched up his nose. “Is this conversation just going to consist of you asking me ‘why’ and me having to explain everything? Because I’m pretty sure this is how people go insane.”

“Please,” Malfoy murmured, and Harry knew it was important to him to know, though Harry couldn’t understand why.

“You’re my friend because I like you,” Harry answered. “You give me good advice, and you’re funny, even though most of the time your jokes are at my expense, and you’re surprisingly good company.” He shrugged. “I don’t usually keep track of the reasons why

I like people. Sorry if that list is a little short. There are other things, I just can't think of them right now. Check back with me later."

Malfoy nodded as he accepted what Harry had said.

"Is there a reason why you're asking me these things?" Harry prompted gently, and Malfoy sighed.

"I thought once Granger and Weasley stopped treating you like a third-wheel we'd stop spending time together. You'd have them back, so I'd become useless," Malfoy admitted in a small voice. "It made sense, at the time." (Greenflares, 2012, section 11)

2. "W-we're friends," Harry stammered, eyes wide. "That's all! Who told you we weren't?" His chest felt tight.

"No one," Ron said. Cautiously he added, "It's just... the way you two behave around each other, that's all. It... it gives of the wrong impression, I guess – well, the wrong impression since you said I've got it wrong. Not that it's wrong in principle. It's great in principle. I'm all for equality, Harry." He pretended to wave a flag, and Harry was sure he was about to pass out.

"What Ron is *trying* to say," Hermione interjected in a clear and precise voice, "is that for several weeks we've been under the impression that you've been dating Malfoy. I want to make it clear that we haven't been upset about it, we've merely been concerned that you didn't feel comfortable in telling us."

"But we're not!" Harry rasped. "There's nothing to tell!"

Hermione and Ron looked at him for a very long time while Harry struggled to breathe. (Greenflares, 2012, section 12)

3. "It won't cause problems for me," Harry told him, going back to the question. "Why would it cause problems for me?" He struggled to concentrate. The only thing he could think of was Malfoy's hand, warm and solid in his own, and the proximity between them.

"Because of things," Malfoy answered very unhelpfully. At Harry's blank expression he added, "Family things." (Greenflares, 2012, section 16)

Title: "Kiss"

Writer: xErised

Date: 21 December 2016

Excerpt 7

The subsequent narration in the story provides evidence of the recurring "us against the world" theme:

1. They wouldn't understand.

No one would understand.

Ron and Hermione understood the enmity; they've got front-row tickets to the punches and insults and kicks that Harry and Malfoy hurl towards each other. But what they don't understand is that they fight now not to hurt.

They fight because they can't wait another second without touching each other. (xErised, 2016, section 2)

2. Is it a relationship?

No.

Does Harry care?

Hell no.

They're each other's dirty little secret... a secret that's begging to be divulged right now because Malfoy is whispering something into the ear of the Beauxbatons girl. Harry knows how his voice can be – the cadence of that sugared-up voice low, intimate and seductive. (xErised, 2016, section 2)

3. They're just two boys slow-dancing together in the snow and moonlight on Christmas night without the weight of their destiny and bloodline on their shoulders. Potter reaches up to brush snow off Draco's hair, his fingers threading tenderly through blond locks.

Only Potter is allowed to touch his hair. (xErised, 2016, section 3)

4. They're now flying together shoulder-to-shoulder in a sky full of stars, and Draco feels more alive than he's ever been. (xErised, 2016, section 4)

5. The both of them are part of something bigger than them, nothing but mere pawns playing on opposing sides of a chessboard. (xErised, 2016, section 6)

6. Eyes closed, Harry and Draco rest their foreheads together, clinging to each other for a comfort that only either can give to the other.

They're just boys – a pair of sixteen-year-old boys scared and uncertain about the respective roles they're supposed to play. (xErised, 2016, section 7)

7. They have no way of predicting the future, no way of knowing what horrors lay lurking in wait for them.

All they know is that they have each other. (xErised, 2016, section 7)

Excerpt 8

These passages show Harry and Draco wanting each other's attention:

1. "No need to be jealous, Potter, I can hardly remember their names. I just wanted your attention. I love it when you watch me with those eyes, love it when I'm so distracting that you can't even finish your homework." He licks up Harry's neck and Harry throws his head back, giving him full access to nibble, lick and suck. "I want your attention on me all the time until you can't think of anything else, anyone else. Only me."

I want you. I want you in every sense of the word. Does that count? Harry thinks dimly. They've been so hyper-aware of each other ever since they were eleven. (xErised, 2016, section 2)

2. He wasn't supposed to feel jealous when he saw Potter dancing with Patil – well it was barely dancing and more of a sort of awkward *shuffling*, Draco notes in mean-spirited glee. He hates it whenever Potter's attention isn't on him, and to see a blushing Potter holding Patil in his arms, his attention focused completely on Patil and their dance steps had made Draco frightfully possessive and jealous. (xErised, 2016, section 3)
3. "I saw your face while I was dancing with Parvati. You always want my attention," he whispers.

"I do not." Draco is being contrary for the sake of it, because they both know that Potter's right. Pleased that Potter was sneaking glances at him even when he was occupied with Patil, Draco relaxes into his touch. Potter takes the hint, pressing himself closer against Draco's back and squeezing his waist. (xErised, 2016, section 3)

4. They're drawn to each other like an unstoppable magnetic force. It must've been written somewhere all over the stars, if not how could this be, because, *because-* (xErised, 2016, section 3)
5. It's completely different – flying alone versus flying with Potter – to feel Potter's intense beam of focus on him and only on him, the way it has always been, the way it will always be, the way it *should* be- (xErised, 2016, section 4)

Excerpt 9

In Draco's eyes, Harry is depicted as a heroic character:

1. "You always have to be the hero, don't you, Potter?" Draco breaks the silence and looks up at Potter, who stops rubbing his head. Draco frowns, places Potter's hand back on his head and only continues speaking when Potter resumes his stroking. "I heard what happened in the lake. You got to me first, but you had to make sure all the hostages were free before you came up with me."

Potter shrugs easily. "Anyone would have done the same."

No, they wouldn't. It's just you. Brave, noble, silly Potter, Draco wants to say. *I'm*

nothing like you. What in Salazar's name are you doing with me then? (xErised, 2016, section 5)

2. Harry's eyes are shining with self-righteousness fervour; eyes that remind Draco so much of fresh green grass and of blooming summer warmth. Draco thinks that Harry is utterly foolish, declaring so firmly and so confidently that he wants to fight the Dark Lord.

Yet Harry is brave, noble, and entirely worthy of the Gryffindor-gold thrumming in his blood.

Draco is nothing like Harry Potter. (xErised, 2016, section 7)

Excerpt 10

After encountering Lord Voldemort in the graveyard, Harry finds difficulty in separating Draco and his father and feels conflicted by his love for him:

“You're his son,” Harry whispers, so lost in the thistles of his thoughts that he starts when he feels Draco's quivering hand rest on his forearm in a show of comfort. He turns his face the blond head beside him, and when Draco's features begin to blur into Lucius Malfoy's face and back again, as the shifting sands of memory and reality start to mix, Harry swallows a sob and shoves Draco away so hard that he stumbles back and falls on the floor.

“You're his son!” Harry shrieks so loud that his words reverberate around them in the cold night sky and all around the mountains surrounding them. He hangs his head. “How could I... how could we...”

He remembers Draco's sneering face during the riot at the Quidditch World Cup. He had watched with unconcealed glee as Death Eaters – Lucius Malfoy amongst them – tortured Muggles and Muggle-borns-

No, that's not it, Harry's heart pipes up. That was when Draco had been Malfoy and not *Draco* – soft, warm Draco that had melted under Harry's touch like snow throughout the school year, his glorious kisses an addictive slide of sticky glitter and sugar vanilla on Harry's lips. No, it was *Draco* who Harry had met during Hogsmeade weekends... (xErised, 2016, section 6)

Appendix B
“Potter/Riddle Slash Fiction”

Title: “Saved by Hufflepuff Friendship”

Writer: whitedandelions

Date: 19 August 2016

Excerpt 1

The passages below highlight Hufflepuff’s traits:

1. No one ever expects anything of Hufflepuffs. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 1)
2. He thinks the Slytherins would mind that he’s surrounding himself by Hufflepuffs, but they *don’t*. He thinks it’s because they’re not Gryffindors and they’re not know-it-all Ravenclaws, and the general consensus around school is to leave the Hufflepuffs alone. They’re already not causing trouble, so to pick a bone with them seems pointless. (And although people don’t like to admit it, Hufflepuffs are *scary*. They’re all kind and nice, but they’re *loyal* foremost, so the whole House sticks together when one of their own are getting picked on.) (whitedandelions, 2016, section 4)
3. Hufflepuffs are fierce when they’re angry and it descends into an all out brawl. Tom doesn’t know what to do even though he probably knows the most jinxes and curses out of all of them, and when one of the Slytherins aim at him, Potter’s there in all his fury, casting a strong shield charm and retaliating with one of the nastier jinxes they’ve been taught. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 4)
4. It had stopped mattering as much since the Hufflepuffs never talked about blood status and the younger Slytherins hardly dared to breathe a harsh word to him after the first brutal beating they had gotten from the Hufflepuffs. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 4)

Excerpt 2

The passages below reflect the writer’s impression of the Slytherin House:

1. He hasn’t been bullied in so long that he’s utterly baffled when a group of Slytherins start to taunt him about how his friends are all Hufflepuffs. He’s not really offended though, because out of all of them, Potter is the only one he would consider an actual friend, so the insults just roll right off of him. He’s fine as long as the bullying’s only words, and so he ignores it for the better part of the year.

He’s rather used to it by the time the Slytherins get cocky and call him Mudblood when he’s with the Hufflepuffs. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 4)

2. “You can’t be a Mudblood,” sneers Malfoy. “There’s no *way* a Mudblood can just get *it* without even trying!” Malfoy pauses, his nostrils flaring, and then he heaves a sigh. “You came from an orphanage, didn’t you? For a fee, Gringotts can outline your lineage for you. I’ll pay it; I just need a drop of your blood.” (whitedandelions, 2016, section 4)

3. “Just because I’m a Slytherin doesn’t mean I’m going to turn evil,” says Tom, even though Harry’s *right* with the amount of Dark magic Tom’s using. “Dark magic isn’t completely bad. You can’t just listen to Dumbledore...” he trails off, because Harry’s shaking his head already. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 5)

4. Harry pouts, “But I’m *just* a Hufflepuff, Tom. *You’re* the evil Slytherin.”

“I can see how you think so,” agrees Tom amicably. “What with Slytherins known for their ambition and Hufflepuff for their kindness. And yet, people don’t understand just how manipulative these little puffs are.” (whitedandelions, 2016, Epilogue section)

Excerpt 3

At the beginning of the story, Tom rejects Harry’s friendship:

“How are you liking Slytherin so far?” chatters on Potter, oblivious. “I thought I would only like Gryffindor, but Hufflepuff’s not so bad. I mean, honestly, I think I’m scared of heights, so I’m glad our common room is in the basement instead of the tower.”

“I see,” he gets out, his red eyes scanning the text instead of looking at Potter.

“We’re pretty close then,” continues Potter. “Slytherin’s in the dungeons, right? Slytherins and Hufflepuffs should get along, then, since we’re right next to each other.”

That’s what sets him off for some reason because he’s never heard of such flawed thinking because Slytherin *and* Hufflepuff getting along? Merlin, the boy is irritating. He closes his book, turning his glare to the bespectacled boy. “Are you not getting along with your friends? Why do you insist on bothering me? Also, Slytherins and Hufflepuffs do *not* get along, as I will show you if you continue talking to me.”

Harry blinks big, green eyes at him as if he’s utterly confused on why Tom is being so acerbic, and somehow that just makes him angrier. He picks up his book, sends one withering last glare at the Hufflepuff, before leaving the library in a huff. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 1)

Excerpt 4

Tom experiments with Dark magic:

1. He throws himself into the books found in the Chamber. They’re Dark, but they’re mostly parselmagic, and all of it just fascinates him. He and Harry don’t talk besides searching glances whenever Harry thinks Tom isn’t looking and all of it is *fine*, really. It’s not like Harry would have understood him anyway. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 5)

2. He doesn’t confront Harry though, because of how the last confrontation went, so he sits and stewes and even *Malfoy* can’t put up with him. So he holes himself up even more in the Chamber of Secrets, reading about spell after spell and trying them all out enough that it becomes all he remembers. Class is easy enough, and the Slytherins all respect him now ever since Malfoy’s outed him as the descendant of Slytherin that he feels...empty in

some way. Having the respect of his peers had been all he ever wanted, but now that he's got it, he realizes that their respect meant nothing compared to what he had felt for Harry. So he fills up that hole with more and more Dark spells and it slowly starts to become an obsession. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 5)

Excerpt 5

Tom's fondness for Harry demonstrates their character dynamics:

1. "This is *your* fault," he says quietly, and Potter just dissolves into laughter.

"She's *nice*," says Potter, when he gets his breath back. "It's good for you to be surrounded by nice people."

He glares at Potter, but he can't retort, because the girl's back and she's asking for help on the Potions homework and he can't actually say no with Potter staring at him with his big, green eyes. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 3)

2. "Tom," says Potter, "you've been proper weird this whole year. Don't think I haven't noticed what with you spending so much time with that Malfoy git and those bloody strange textbooks you try to hide from me."

He flushes, embarrassed at being caught out, and Potter's grin grows wider.

"Anyway, I don't care because it's probably good for you to find *some* friends in the Slytherin house, even if it is bloody Malfoy. Come home with me this summer?"

And he does. Because Potter's insistent and Tom's never been good at ever telling Potter no. And it doesn't help that saying yes means that he gets to spend time with Potter all summer *and* escape the Orphanage. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 4)

3. Harry begs Tom to sit with the Hufflepuffs during the Welcoming Feast and Tom just goes along with it because it's easier to listen than to say no to Harry. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 5)

Excerpt 6

Harry shows concern and protectiveness for Tom as his friend:

1. When he comes back from his third summer away from Hogwarts, he's pale and withdrawn and Potter is more righteously angry that he should be. He's even more angry when he finds out Tom asked to stay at Hogwarts and was promptly denied, and Tom catches Potter slashing angry bold words in a letter to his parents.

"Don't worry about this summer," says Potter, "I'll take care of it." (whitedandelions, 2016, section 4)

2. "Why?" he gets out after a long moment and Harry blinks at him, his anger seeming to drain away. "Why do you care so much about me?"

“Because,” says Harry, almost immediately, “You’re not some slimy Slytherin, Tom, You’re *not* like that git, Malfoy, you’re...snarky, but you’re not *evil*. Not like Grindelwald. You’re my friend, Tom. My *best* friend. It doesn’t matter to me if you’re just Tom,” continues Harry, his voice becoming soft. “Because you don’t have to prove anything to me.” (whitedandelions, 2016, section 5)

Excerpt 7

Each of these moments, as shown in the passages below, indicates the emotional connection between them and their growth from friends to lovers:

1. His crush on Harry doesn’t fade the whole while. He’s rather thrown by it all, because in all his years of living, he never even *suspected* that he could ever have romantic feelings for anyone. He’s always been bored of people, only ever seeing them for their worth and value rather than their effect on him, so to be anxious over anything Potter even says to him is draining.

And the most embarrassing thing is that Tom actually doesn’t *mind* crushing on the Hufflepuff. He likes craving Potter’s attention and he likes making Potter laugh. And he doesn’t even *mind* that him crushing on Potter means he likes guys because having magic was weird enough that being queer doesn’t even faze him. After all, he doesn’t like Potter just because he’s physically attractive, but because Potter’s kind, stupidly generous, and mind-boggling oblivious. And most of all, just bloody persistent. Because Potter’s never given up on Tom and he’s so idealistic, that Tom just isn’t sure how to respond to Potter sometimes. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 4)

2. “Okay,” says Harry, “I’ll make it *extremely* clear why I care.” And then he’s kissing Tom, his right hand gently tilting Tom’s head the right angle and Tom’s so startled that he doesn’t move for a long second. He gives in, enjoying the feel of Harry’s lips against his, that he doesn’t shake out of it until Harry’s pulling away. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 5)
3. He can’t help it, what with his heart currently bursting at the fact that Harry still considers him the most important in a school full of people who adore Harry so much. He won’t say I love you, not like this, in churning water, surrounded by everyone and Tom still has a reputation to maintain despite being obviously besotted with the Hufflepuff still holding him up against the waves. “I’m going to stop using that kind of magic,” he says, because that’s good enough of a confession anyway, and Harry stops avoiding his eyes and looks him straight on, his eyes wide. (whitedandelions, 2016, section 5)

Title: “Snake Eyes”

Writer: wynnebat

Date: 5 January 2018

Excerpt 8

Morfin is unlike his ancestors, who practice traditional Slytherin views:

1. His scowl must have passed Morfin's inspection, because the man only huffed, "I assume you're not going out to carry on the fine traditions of our ancestors, even if you're taking my father's wand." (wynnebat, 2018, para. 7)

2. "You'll understand when you're older," Morfin said with an easy wave of his hand. "But maybe you already do. This about the Potter kid?"

"Have you been snooping through my letters?" The things Tom would do if Morfin had even touched—

"No, just something Severus said a month back, that the two of you were close. Pillow talk, you know."

Tom made every attempt to ignore his uncle's words, but he still blurted out, "No, I *don't* know. I don't plan to ever know."

"At least he's not a mudblood," Morfin said with a put-upon sigh. "You could do worse." (wynnebat, 2018, paras. 13–17)

3. "Even though you're a halfblood," Morfin had confirmed, and his tone hadn't changed on the last word. "You're it, you know, the last of the Gaunt line. I can't have kids, so when I'm gone, it'll just be you. You can do whatever you want with the name. Drag it through the mud for all I care. Marry a muggle like Merope." His grimace was deep, but he sounded sincere. "I used to care a lot about that kind of shit, but I'd like to say I've grown some as a person. Only half of it was out of spite for my dad. Still, break it to me gently if you do decide to marry a muggle." (wynnebat, 2018, para. 32)

Excerpt 9

These passages portray Morfin as a good parent figure to Tom:

1. "Brat," Morfin replied. "You need money?"

"I have my own." He patted his pocket. He didn't anticipate needing any, but Tom wanted to be prepared for all possibilities. A part of him also hoped that one of the possibilities would be a bakery near Harry's home. Wizarding pastries just weren't the same. "I don't know when I'll be back, so if you plan to do horrible things on the couch again, do it during the next hour."

"Will you get over it already, it was one fucking time." Morfin waved his wand and the pot of coffee began slowly refilling. "You were supposed to be gone all day."

"I'm never going to get over it," Tom said, grimacing in remembered horror. "It was *Snape*." (wynnebat, 2018, paras. 9–12)

2. Hedda was a fierce bird with sharp yellow eyes, gifted to him by Morfin on the day Tom moved in with him. Neither of them had very much experience with either giving or receiving presents, and it had shown, but it meant something to Tom that Morfin had even tried.

He'd expected to hate him, to use him in order to get away from the muggle world and then leave at the first possibility, but Morfin hadn't been cruel, nor had he been cold. (wynnebat, 2018, paras. 26–27)

3. Morfin was on the porch, leaning against the railings with a bottle of butterbeer in his hand as he watched their descent. (wynnebat, 2018, para. 136)
4. Morfin reached toward him slowly, giving him the opportunity to duck away if Tom didn't want him to ruffle his hair. Tom allowed it just this once. (wynnebat, 2018, para. 143)
5. He found himself yawning as well. There were heavy footsteps behind them and strong arms that guided them off the hovering carpet and under the bedcovers. These weren't ratty, hold-ridden ones, and Tom supposed he could thank Morfin for it sometime. (wynnebat, 2018, para. 149)

Excerpt 10

Tom shows a dislike for Muggles or Muggle-related matters:

1. He refused to transfigure them into sneakers. It was bad enough that he was wearing jeans. Tom hadn't dressed in muggle clothes since he'd started Hogwarts, but there were still a couple pairs of jeans and a printed t-shirt at the very bottom of his trunk, along with a pouch of money he'd gathered from various foster parents. He hadn't wanted to keep any of it, but he'd been uncertain of how long his situation with Morfin would last when he'd come to live with him at the beginning of last summer. And now he was all set to venture out into the muggle world for the first time since he'd left it. Tom wasn't looking forward to it, but needs must. (wynnebat, 2018, para. 8)
2. Morfin had never cast a spell at him in anger, nor ever hurt him otherwise, but a part of Tom just wouldn't stop thinking that maybe one day he would. A life spent in foster care hadn't left him with much trust for adults who had power over him... (wynnebat, 2018, para. 21)
3. He was really starting to dislike Harry's relatives. Maybe not all muggles were horrid creatures (maybe), but neither Tom's foster families nor Harry's relatives were examples of sainthood. Or even general decency. (wynnebat, 2018, para. 61)

Excerpt 11

These passages also portrays Tom's anger and murderous intentions towards Muggles:

1. Tom tore his attention from Harry's glasses and ratty muggle clothes to the only window in the room. There were bars across the window that didn't seem far apart enough to stick a wrist through, though Harry must have managed because the window was open enough for a breeze to enter the room. The door that Tom hadn't seen from behind Petunia was clear to him now. The three locks that only opened from the outside were even worse now that Tom could see them.

Down the hall, Petunia knocked on another door and said with a voice sweet as honey, “Dudley, would you like a snack?”

“I don’t understand,” Tom said, but he did. A loud, cold fury began to build in him, the kind he’d once had only for his own circumstances. He hadn’t felt it for over a year, but it flooded through him like an old friend. (wynnebat, 2018, paras. 69–71)

2. Tom was going to murder someone for the fact that Harry hadn’t been able to deny Tom’s words. Fortunately, there were three people in this very house that he could release his anger on. He’d brought Marvolo’s wand to show Harry how easy it was to circumvent the trace, maybe to show off a little, but this was a much better use of his magic. (wynnebat, 2018, para. 80)

3. “But Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon will just lie like they did last time in grade school. They’re good at it, they know what to say—”

A few drops of veritaserum and that problem would work itself out, or, “If I murder them, you can’t be sent back to them.” (wynnebat, 2018, paras. 82–83)

4. “Morfin’s my family and I would turn him into a toad and step on him if he tried to hit me.” And he didn’t want to talk about it because the part of his life was over and done with, but, “My foster placements weren’t good, but I only got hit once, and I made him fall down the stairs with my magic for it. He spent a month in the hospital.” (wynnebat, 2018, para. 93)
5. Tom pointed his hand at them and pushed harder than he ever had in his life because he’d never been so livid. It didn’t matter that he didn’t have his wand in his hand or that it wasn’t his wand hand. What good was magic if it didn’t listen to him right now? A wave of pressure without sound swept through the home and caught Petunia and Vernon in it, lifting them up and smacking them against the wall directly behind them with a bag. When they tried to yell, it came out garbled, and Tom could almost make out phantom fingers against their throats. It was a pity they hadn’t been standing across from the large living room windows; Tom was so angry he would’ve relished seeing them break through the glass. (wynnebat, 2018, para. 109)

Excerpt 12

Tom and Harry’s friendship is established in these passages:

1. After all the effort Harry had gone through to become Tom’s friend, it would be madness for him to ditch him now. Utter madness, Tom thought to himself, scowling. Harry wouldn’t just abandon him. (wynnebat, 2018, para. 2)
2. The first time he’d been hexed outside the Slytherin dorms, he’d been forced to allow a Gryffindor yearmate to walk him to the hospital wing. Tom had told him to go away very firmly, but Harry hadn’t left his side. And then he’d been as bad as a leech, loudly protective of Tom against anything his yearmates said in public and not very casually staying in the library with him in the evenings to make sure he was alright. (wynnebat, 2018, para. 22)

3. And then, like any proper leech, Harry dug under his skin and just never left. Through thick and thin, he'd stayed, even when Tom discovered his ability to speak to snakes was more special than he'd realized and proved that he had more prominent wizarding roots than anyone who dared to insult him. (wynnebat, 2018, para. 23)
4. Tom had always found it easy to discard friendships and ignore people he didn't need anymore. But Harry had been a protective little burr on his side during their first year, and he'd sent letters every single week during the summer afterward as Tom navigated living with Morfin, and their friendship had grown stronger than ever during their second year at Hogwarts. (wynnebat, 2018, para. 47)

Title: "You Can't Please Everyone"

Writer: DobbyRocksSocks

Date: 3 July 2021

Excerpt 13

Harry exhibits traits of indifference, cruelty and impatience, as demonstrated in the following passages:

1. Harry twisted his wedding ring around his finger absently. He was sprawled in his seat beside Voldemort, one leg thrown over the arm of his chair as he paid little mind to the meeting he'd been asked to attend.

The Death Eaters were all sending curious looks his way as Voldemort outlined the raid he was planning for that very night.

Harry figured they were wondering why Harry wasn't pleading with him to *save the children* or some such nonsense.

Truth was, Harry didn't really give a toss. (DobbyRocksSocks, 2021, section 2)

2. Harry interrupted the prattling man with a raised hand. "Are you being so irritating on purpose, or is this some kind of passive suicide that I don't know about? Get to the point!"

Thickesse blinked at him and opened his mouth to speak.

"Choose your next words very carefully, Pius," Voldemort warned, visibly amused at Harry. "My husband has clearly outgrown his patience."

Pius swallowed hard, fear evident in his eyes, and he eventually said, "The Ministry has fallen apart, My Lord. It's yours for the taking."

"See, that wasn't hard, was it?" Harry said, rolling his eyes. He looked at Voldemort.

“Can something be done about his vocal chords? I’ll rip them out if I have to hear them often, and that just doesn’t seem very polite.” (DobbyRocksSocks, 2021, section 2)

3. “What do you want, Goyle?”

Goyle shifted his feet. “The Dark Lord asked me to tell you that dinner is being served.”

“Tell him I’m not hungry,” Harry said with a grimace.

“My Lord—”

“Go away, Goyle. My fingers are twitching, and if you don’t let them play the piano, they’re going to start playing with knives.” (DobbyRocksSocks, 2021, section 4)

Excerpt 14

Voldemort appears amiable and tolerates Harry’s company:

1. “My Lord?” Lucius asked, the hesitation clear in his voice. “Will your husband be joining us on the raid?”

Voldemort glanced at Harry and then tilted his head curiously. “Will you be joining us?”

Harry thought for a second and then nodded his head. “Sure. Be nice to set a few fires.”

Voldemort snorted. “The light has no idea what their ‘saviour’ is really like, do they?”

“Pretty sure I’d have been locked in a dungeon, shackled to the wall, if they knew—and not even in the kinky way.”

There was a pause, and then Voldemort’s lips tilted up. “Perhaps we’ll have to try that out, beloved. In the kinky way, of course.”

Harry grinned. “As my Lord wishes.” (DobbyRocksSocks, 2021, section 2)

2. A few minutes later, the door opened again, and strong, long fingers pressed into his shoulders, the palms of two hands pressing into his back.

“Are you quite alright, beloved?”

“Meh,” Harry muttered. “Today has been the worst and I don’t want to deal with people.”

“The minions seem to be quite concerned about you,” Voldemort murmured. “Some more than others. Bella offered to come and cheer you up, but we just redecorated in here so I thought better of it.”

Harry chuckled. “Bella’s idea of cheering me up makes some sense though.” He leant back against the taller man, his head resting on a flat stomach. “Come and spar with me for a while?”

Voldemort leaned down to press a kiss to his head. “Of course.” (DobbyRocksSocks, 2021, section 4)

Appendix C

“James/Regulus Slash Fiction”

Title: “loving is easy”

Writer: rxgulus

Date: 10 January 2021

Excerpt 1

At the beginning of the narrative, James contemplates his crush and love for Regulus:

1. Maybe it was when James had snuck down to the kitchens for a cup of hot chocolate after a rough Quidditch practice and saw Regulus kneeling in front of a twitchy looking elf, speaking to her as if she were an equal instead of a mindless creature. Perhaps it started when he first saw the young Slytherin zipping about on his broom with reckless abandon for his own safety, fuelled by his own passion for the sport. Or maybe, it began when he bumped into the slighter boy in the library and he looked up at him with startled silver eyes before hurrying away with pinkened cheeks. (rxgulus, 2021, section 1, para. 2)
2. The small, shy scion of House Black, sorted into Slytherin and expected by all to go dark and the boisterous but recklessly noble Heir to the Potters should *never* have fallen in love. They simply wouldn't work, why would they even bother to speak to each other? Surely, theirs was a love that would end in heartbreak for one or even both of them. It couldn't work, it *shouldn't* work. Yet, it *did*. (rxgulus, 2021, section 1, para. 10)

Excerpt 2

James possesses a poetic and romantic side, as is evident in the passages below:

1. Maybe it was because falling for Regulus had been inevitable. One look into those gentle silver eyes, narrowed slightly with suspicion and he had been hooked. It hadn't been a fierce rush of adrenaline or a fiery passion that had consumed him because it didn't *need* to be. Falling for Regulus had felt oddly safe. By nature, it should have been anything but. The feelings James had for Regulus should have scared him, should have terrified him with the reality that their love simply could *never* be. Instead, it had been a warm hug after a long day, snowflakes settling on long eyelashes and flushed cheeks that spoke of hidden delight and undeniable love. (rxgulus, 2021, section 1, para. 4)
2. James hadn't meant for it to happen. Truly, he hadn't. He had always hoped to find love in Hogwarts just like his parents had or at least, find something *close*, but he had never expected to find true love within the shy but wickedly smart Regulus Black. James hadn't expected to find himself tracing Regulus' initials or mumbling his name in his sleep and yet, he had. He hadn't meant for any of it to happen and yet he was nothing but grateful with the outcome. (rxgulus, 2021, section 1, para. 6)
3. They didn't see the fire in his eyes when he went flying or caught the snitch with a wicked gleam of satisfaction shining in his eyes. They didn't get to hear his adorable rambling about Rune sequences or his whiny complaints about Slughorn. They didn't see

the way his nose wrinkled when his tea didn't have the heaps of sugar he insisted upon and how he'd playfully argue with James when he called him out on his unhealthy habits. They didn't see the righteous fury when he found one Hufflepuff senior bullying a first year Ravenclaw for having a suspected criminal for a father. They didn't see how carefully Regulus handled the young girl and how Regulus had escorted her back to her common room with a lengthy speech. They didn't hear the passion and conviction in his tone as Regulus repeated that everyone's sins were their own and that she was not her father, not unless she wanted to be. They didn't see the pain in Regulus' eyes after she had gone to her common room or hear the tremble in his voice as he spoke of his own insecurities and how sometimes he wondered why he was fighting against becoming like his parents if all people would see was a snake that couldn't be trusted. (rxgulus, 2021, section 1, para. 13)

Excerpt 3

The passages below delve into Regulus's past, struggles and flaws:

1. Loving Regulus wasn't always easy. There were times when he'd shut down and withdraw from everyone around him, ignoring Barty's concerns, going out of his way to avoid James and straight up pretending he didn't exist. Sometimes, Regulus would get upset and throw himself into his studies. James had learned that these outbursts generally coincided with a nasty letter from his parents, parchment filled with expectations and tales of Regulus' duties to his family and what would happen should he dare to disappoint them. (rxgulus, 2021, section 1, para. 7)
2. Also to be expected, was the rage of the Black family at *both* of their sons leaving to be with the Potters. It had only worsened after Walburga sent a vicious Howler to the Potter residence at Yule, *demanding* that Regulus return home and fulfil his duties like a true scion of House Black. (rxgulus, 2021, section 2, para. 8)
3. Often, being direct with Regulus was the only way to handle him when he was close to shutting down. James had learned over the years that although Regulus appreciated subtlety in public, he craved the sort of loud affection that James was brilliant at providing. At times like this, James knew it was best to be open and honest, something that came easy to James but Regulus sometimes had trouble with due to his upbringing. (rxgulus, 2021, section 2, para. 33)
4. Regulus had been starved for any sort of affection as a child, only able to feel warmth when with his brother, leaving him with a plethora of issues that James had done his best to help him work through and cope with. (rxgulus, 2021, section 2, para. 60)
5. He knew that Regulus always came across as either shy and quiet or withdrawn and arrogant, depending on your perception of him. But they didn't know even a fraction of the snarky, fierce but unbelievably gently and caring man he had come to adore. (rxgulus, 2021, section 3, para. 10)

Title: "hope is the thing with antlers"

Writer: stardiver

Date: 20 December 2022

Excerpt 4

The passages below show a contrast in James's personality before and after his father's passing:

1. James used to spend every waking minute talking or laughing, trying to coax the same reaction out of others and usually succeeding, with his golden boy charm and genuine sweetness that didn't bear to be ignored. He used to yell sometimes, used to let out a happy scream of joy or of feigned shock in an exaggerated, theatrical manner. (stardiver, 2022, para. 2)
2. Regulus remembers that night, remembers James singing while washing Harry's black curls, trying to distract the child from the streams of foamy shampoo water. He remembers James lively discussing some Quidditch article with Sirius in the kitchen after Harry's been tucked into bed. (stardiver, 2022, para. 7)
3. "Quiet" didn't suit him, before. And yet that's how he is these days.

Quiet.

Most of the time. He hasn't completely sworn off words and never, even on days when he would not make a single sound otherwise, does he ignore their son, answering Harry's curious toddler questions with great effort and patience. But once the boy is out of the picture to conquer a castle, a drawing board or a snack, James often falls silent, not to pick up his voice again till nightfall. (stardiver, 2022, paras. 3–5)

Excerpt 5

Intimate moments between James and Regulus:

1. "Hi, James," Regulus whispers. He pulls back to look in the big, dark eyes. They're glossy and fixed on him, a deep black that reflects the greenery around them. James' ears flicker and the eyes blink slowly. *Hi*, they say. *It's me*, they say. *It's you*.

It's me and you. (stardiver, 2022, paras. 50–51)

2. They sit like this for a while, basking in each other's presence and the sensory abundance of the forest clearing. A faraway melody of a bird sounds every now and then, joining the hum of the draft over the grass and their synchronised breaths. *It's me*, they say. *It's you*.

It's me and you. (stardiver, 2022, paras. 76–77)

3. James hums, waiting with his reply. He slides his hands down to Regulus' hips, circling his thumbs into the bumps of his hip bones. Regulus holds his hand cupped at the edge of James' jaw. Despite their previous teasing these touches are not sexual. They're intimate, they're communication. *It's me*, they say. *It's you*.

It's me and you. (stardiver, 2022, paras. 111–112)

Excerpt 6

These passages indicate moments of comfortable silence between James and Regulus in the tranquillity of the forest:

1. From between the tangle of evergreen branches emerges the rest of the animal. The deer's coat is clean and shiny, the brown hair gaining a rich red hue in the sun that reminds Regulus of his husband's skin tone. (stardiver, 2022, para. 48)
2. It's rather the difference that's similar to the difference between James that hasn't forgotten to take his meds and the James that's frantic and distracted and easily overwhelmed by chores. The difference between James who has just returned from a flight and the one that's been locked up at home over a few days of bad weather. The James that is surrounded by the people he loves and the James worried for their wellbeing or plagued by their absence.

Both Jameses are equally able to feel the same emotions, but it's something in the transformation that calms James down, smoothes out life's hard edges. (stardiver, 2022, paras. 53–54)

3. He's told Regulus that as a deer his thought process happens differently, it functions in concepts and instincts, less precise than a human mind. That's what is easier about taking hard days on as an animal. A pain that's less concrete doesn't sting as sharply, fitting instead between the other layers of a transformed existence, transformed instincts. Some of them go, some of them stay. (stardiver, 2022, para. 64)

Excerpt 7

Regulus is also portrayed as a character who reflects the motif of silence:

1. Regulus is well versed in silence. He's not only not a very talkative person, but his general nature has never been a loud one either. He's always enjoyed calm, quiet moments, be it in solitude or in peaceful company. (stardiver, 2022, para. 9)
2. Regulus feeds him the rest of the carrots without saying anything, only smiling fondly. He enjoys the silence too, lets the moment flow between them without words. (stardiver, 2022, para. 73)
3. Regulus opens the book and takes a deep breath. He tried out reading aloud to James sometime after the first time he joined him transformed in the forest, having noticed the way James focused on his voice the few times he spoke to him.

"Did you like it?" He asked once James was back in his human form, not convinced that he wasn't being lied to. "You said you transform for the quiet."

"You *are* quiet," James answered in a whisper. (stardiver, 2022, paras. 86–88)