



THE FAMOUS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS

FANFICTION AS AN ALTERNATIVE FORM OF LITERARY CRITICISM

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Introduction

Fan studies and fanfiction studies are gaining appeal, both in the academic field and in popular media. In fact, 2012 may be marked as the year in which fanfiction made its way into mainstream culture: E.L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey* was published, which was originally a fanfiction, called *Master of the Universe*, of the popular *Twilight Saga* written by Stephanie Meyer (Boog). This in itself, and the media attention surrounding it, asked for critical and comprehensive theory and analysis within the field of fanfiction studies.

Fanfiction studies limits itself to the study of textual artefacts, generally referred to as fanfiction, generated in a certain fandom (Hellekson 2)¹. As an academic field, fanfiction studies are still relatively young (Hellekson 1). The first approaches, based in cultural and media studies, originate mostly in the 1980s and 90s, in part because of the rise of the Internet, which caused an explosion in the fan communities (Busse 1-2). Henry Jenkins' "Textual Poachers" (1992) is one of the best examples in the field, alongside Camille Bacon-Smith's *Enterprising Women* (1992). Although both texts were written in 1992, these texts are the first to capture the fans and their fandom comprehensively, and they still apply today (Hellekson 22). Fan activity, including fanfiction, in cultural and media studies is first and foremost regarded as the blending of active production and passive consumption of media (Hellekson 20). Transformative fans, those who actively engage with their source text, change their source text to fit their needs. Affirmative fans, on the other hand, consume rather than create fan artefacts. In reading certain fanfictions, fans are acting both transformative and affirmative toward their source text

Studying fanfiction "for its own sake is still mostly unexplored territory; literary theorists have left the field clear for the social and cultural theorists" (Kaplan 134). Although fanfiction has been studied more and more as text in attempts to legitimize its standing as

¹ Hellekson and Busse refer to fandom as a collective entity that creates meaning in a text based on fannish goods: fanfiction, fan art, and fan vids. Fandom is most often referred to as a shared space, a community, in which construction of meaning takes place "with the ultimate erasure of a single author" (*Internet* 6).

literature (Kaplan; Willis; Stasi; Pugh), and although it has been thoroughly discussed in regard to its dubious legality (Lewis; Tushnet; Schwabach; Stendell), fanfiction has rarely been discussed as literary criticism. Fanfiction has been used as supportive evidence toward critical approaches of the source text, in literary or fanfiction studies, or to the fan communities, in cultural or fan studies. These use fanfiction to interpret the source text or the fan community, rather than to the fan text (Hellekson 8-11). This paper will argue that fanfiction can be seen as a form of critical engagement with and literary criticism on the source text, much like traditional criticism in literary studies. For the purposes of this paper literary criticism is defined as the expert study, evaluation, description and interpretation of literary works, often influenced by literary theory and with the possibility of intertextuality with theories in other fields, such as psychology, sociology, and philosophy (Baldick). Through an analysis of two novel-length fanfictions based on the immensely popular *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling,² this paper will demonstrate how fanfiction can be seen as a form of literary criticism. This paper will focus on one central theme in the original *Harry Potter* series that has been thoroughly analysed, criticised and interpreted: family and family ideology. The analysis of the representation of family and family ideology in the series has been thorough in traditional literary criticism. This paper will argue that fanfiction makes similar efforts as literary criticism through different means, and possibly with different aims.

The first chapter will further define and outline what fanfiction is. It will also give a review of theory in the field of reception analysis. The second chapter will discuss family ideology in *Harry Potter*. The relation between *Harry Potter* and family ideology in traditional criticism will be the main focus. The third chapter will provide close textual analyses of two fanfictions: *What is Right: Year One* (2008), by Emma Lipardi, and *In Blood Only* (2006), by E.M. Snape, which are both immensely popular *Harry Potter* fanfictions³.

² My choice for the *Harry Potter* series is based on its reputation as a major phenomenon and the enormous amounts of fanfiction produced based on it. In addition, I am familiar with the source texts and the fanfictions.

³ Both fanfictions can be found on fanfiction.net, one of the most popular fanfiction archives on the Internet.

Chapter 1 Defining Fanfiction

“All worthy work is open to interpretations the author did not intend. Art isn’t your pet – it’s your kid. It grows up and talks back to you” (Whedon).

Fanfiction⁴ has several different definitions, and depending on the definition certain works will be included or excluded as fanfiction. *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Jean Rhys, 1966), for example, can be regarded as a prequel fanfiction for *Jane Eyre* (Charlotte Brontë, 1847) or even the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (Homer) can be described as fanfiction if that includes collective storytelling: these epics have been changed time and time again by oral storytellers. Origin, then, plays no small part when defining fanfiction. Inclusion and exclusion of certain stories depends on the definition and origin of fanfiction. Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse state in their Introduction to *The Fanfiction Studies Reader* that: “most academics working on fanfiction studies [. . .] use [a] definition [which] places the beginnings of media fanfiction in the late 1960s. The 1960s saw the rise of the television program *Star Trek*, fans of which followed existing science fiction fandom infrastructure, with its vibrant convention and fanzine culture” (6). Works of fanfiction were distributed via magazines rather than via the Internet. The origin, however, could also be placed much earlier in the century, when in the 1920s and 30s, communities of Austen and *Sherlock Holmes* fans were formed (Derecho).

The simplest definition of fanfiction is a story written by fans, for fans, based on characters and plotlines found in a particular source text or another medium, such as film or television series (Thomas 1). Definitions, however, range from descriptive to overtly political or psychoanalytic. British writer Sheenagh Pugh, for example, writes that fanfiction comes from a psychological desire of wanting more: “We had a canon of stories invented by others, but we wanted more, sometimes because the existing stories did not satisfy us in some way, sometimes because there are simply never enough stories and we did not want them to come

⁴ Fanfiction is alternatively referred to as *fan fiction*, *fanfic* or *fic*. The spelling fanfiction will be used here, rather than fan fiction. Both spellings are correct, however, and used interchangeably.

to an end” (*Democratic Genre* 9). Henry Jenkins, in *Textual Poachers*, argues that fans are both fascinated and frustrated by their source text of choice, and this is the reason why they revisit and rewrite it.

Fanfiction today occurs in a variety of different genres, forms and lengths, and it is not written for profit⁵. The length of stories can range from drabbles, usually no more than 100 words, without plot or any sense of direction, to novel-length or even multiple part stories (“Fanfiction Terminology”). They can be written in an Alternate Universe (AU), for example, in which the author “transgresses boundaries of space and time” (Thomas 8), or as a cross-over, in which the author pairs characters from different fandoms with one another (Thomas 8). AU often takes place in the same fictional world as the source text, but details from the canon are disregarded or changed (“Fanfiction Terminology”). AU has several subgenres such as Alternate Reality (AR) and Alternate Timeline (AT). AR stories change the canonical storyline, premise or character relationships, by means of, for example, killing of a character, changing motives or alliances or disregarding major events. E.M. Snape’s *In Blood Only* is an AR fanfiction. AT changes the timeline itself or sets the source text in a different time (“Fanfiction Terminology”). Do-overs, like Emma Lipardi’s *What is Right: Year One*, usually take characters back in time so they can change their own history, thus change everything that happens in the source text.

Fanfiction and the Tradition of Literary Theory and Criticism

In social and media studies, fan activity, such as creating fan art and indeed fanfiction, has been studied extensively as a social phenomenon. Regarding fans as media audiences rather than literary readers has led to much less attention for fanfiction in literary studies. Most of those studies try to defend the status of fanfiction as literature rather than fanfiction as a form

⁵ Fanfiction that has been published as a proper novel, such as E.L. James’ *Fifty Shades of Grey*, is often altered in such a way that it is not immediately recognisable as fanfiction, in which source characters names are always used. Publication of fanfiction that is meant for profit often results in issues with legality and copyright.

of literary criticism. To explore fanfiction as literary criticism, literary theory offers more appropriate methodologies than media studies.

Most literary scholars who do explore fanfiction as criticism look at it from a Barthesian standpoint. Roland Barthes, in *S/Z*, distinguishes between readerly and writerly texts, and this distinction has been used to understand the act of writing fanfiction. Readerly texts leave no room for the reader, and Barthes denotes them as the “classic text” (4); a readerly text is a thing that can be physically touched. In this distinction between readerly and writerly texts, Barthes argues that a text must make its readers “no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text” (4), which is what happens in the writerly text. Writerly texts cannot be found in a bookshop or a library like the readerly text; the writerly text is “*ourselves writing*, before the infinite play of the world [. . .] is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system [. . .] which reduces the plurality of entrances” (5). These entrances are used by fans to interpret and expand the source text. Fans as Barthesian readers, then, are the ultimate producers of writerly texts (Busse 6).

Authors, who take part in the process of production, are more commonly perceived to criticise and analyse the source text rather than readers, who take part in the process of consumption. The fan is primarily a consumer of the source text, who might actively engage with a text by writing fanfiction. As fans are readers first, who might revisit their favourite texts again and again through reading or writing fanfictions, literary theories of reading and interpretation are advantageous in analyses. Reader response theory offers a concept of active reading that is applicable here: it tends to emphasise reading as an activity which changes over time (Bertens 96). Hans Bertens summarizes the phenomenological position reader response criticism takes: “Since we cannot with absolute certainty know that we know the outside world, we must focus on how that world appears to our senses and is constituted by our consciousness” (96). In fanfiction analyses, scholars study the textual world of the source text rather than the real world and analyse how readers experience and respond to it.

Wolfgang Iser is a reception theorist in reader response criticism. According to Iser, meaning resides in the communication between the text and its reader, not just in text itself (*The Act of Reading* 1978). This communication “depends upon our continually filling in a central gap in our experience” (165). This gap is what drives the communication between reader and text. The text and its features collide with the reader’s background, including his or her prior knowledge, experiences, and expectations of the text. The reader constantly has to adapt his or her views between what is known and what is unknown: “what is concealed spurs the reader into action, but this action is also controlled by what is revealed; the explicit in its turn is transformed when the implicit has been brought to light” (169). The gaps constitute the notion that “segments of the text *are* to be connected, even though the text itself does not say so” (182-3). The gaps and blanks in a literary text force the reader to decide how to link different segments. This is what constitutes the communication between text and reader, and successful communication “ultimately depend[s] on the reader’s creative activity” (112). Fanfiction as a response to the source text can be seen as a manifestation of the fan’s communication with the text: “We react to an image by building another more comprehensive image” (186). Iser does not refer to fanfiction in particular, but through analysing fanfiction, which can be considered to be the filling of the gaps, it is possible to analyse the fan’s experience, knowledge and expectation of the source text.

In fanfiction, the textual world of the source text is the source of its textual and ideological gaps, rather than the real world as manifested in social interaction. This is in conjunction with the notion of faultline stories by Alan Sinfield. Faultline stories, according to Sinfield, “address the awkward, unresolved issues; they acquire the most assiduous and continuous reworking; they hinge upon a fundamental, unresolved ideological complication that finds its way, nilly-willy into texts. [. . .] Authors and readers want writing to be interesting, and these unresolved issues are the most promising for that” (*Cultural Politics* 4). For Sinfield, these issues are found in real life, but for fanfiction authors these issues are

found in the textual world. Sinfield refers to Shakespeare's *Othello*, which addresses the "awkward issue" of race in Elizabethan England ("Othello"). For *Harry Potter* fanfiction, such an awkward issue might be the position of the family. Sinfield works with a distinction between dissident and conservative texts, which also applies to the fanfictions that do address some issues. It is worth looking into the fanfiction that is dissident, which Sinfield "take[s] to imply refusal of an aspect of the dominant," (*Cultural Materialism* 49) when analysing fanfiction as a form of literary criticism. The dominant would be the *Harry Potter* source material and fanfiction then functions as the subculture⁶. Scholar and author Ika Willis shows that fanfiction is a negotiation between the fan and the gaps, and that fanfiction functions to "fill in the blanks" (Iser) for fans: "fanfictions becomes a way [. . .] of negotiating the 'painful gaps' left in the encounter between a reader's 'felt desires' and the read text. [. . .] Fanfiction is a way of alerting other fans to other potentially choosable structures of desire in the text" (166-7).

Fanfiction as Literary Criticism

The idea that fanfiction can be considered as a form of literary criticism is not new, but in the past it has mostly been implied rather than explicitly mentioned in the academic literary field. Fans are less inclined to leave this idea implied. In 2010, tycho garen⁷ argued in "Fanfiction is Criticism" that fanfiction should be regarded as literary criticism. His first, and most important, claim is that "sure [fanfiction]'s causal, sure it's written in the forum [*sic*] of a story, but the fanfictioner and the critic both write from the same core interest in interpreting texts and using varying readings of texts to create larger understandings of our world."

More recently, there has been a move towards this explicit theorisation of fanfiction as literary and textual criticism in academic circles as well. This thesis will contribute to that discussion. Through analysis of fanfictions and the relationship between the source text and

⁶ Conservative fanfiction texts, on the other hand, do not necessarily change the source text by "refusal of an aspect," but rather add to it.

⁷ tycho garen is presumed to be a pen name used on the blog tycoish.

the fan's desires, disappointments and expectations of it, it is possible to expose how fans respond to the source text by critically assessing its meaning and reworking it to create new meaning in fanfiction. The changes made by the author illustrate where the faultlines are created. Fanfiction becomes the only form of literary criticism that can add, subtract, alter and in this way, in the eyes of the fan, *correct* a particular text (McBride), which is different from what traditional criticism attempts. Reading fanfiction that alters the source text puts its fan in a position in which he or she is able to think critically about the source text and the fan-text. In addition, fanfiction is becoming a more accessible form of criticism than traditional academic criticism, the latter often requiring a background and schooling in the field. By reading and writing fanfiction, fans are actively constructing meaning rather than passively consuming it.

Chapter 2 A Quest for Family:

Family Ideology in *Harry Potter*

“Families are intensely significant for understanding characters in themselves and in relation to each other” (Wolosky 105).

This next section will explore one of the central themes in *Harry Potter*: family. Fans often acknowledge this theme and use it as well. The most reviewed, favorited, and shared stories in the *Harry Potter* fandom on fanfiction.net, one of the most popular archives for fanfiction in general which hosts nearly 716,000 *Harry Potter* fanfictions,⁸ are concerned with either one of two subjects: changing Harry’s parental figures, or changing his Hogwarts house (fanfiction.net). This chapter will first define the (normative) family and its ideology, after which it will outline the relation between family ideology and academic literary criticism on this subject in *Harry Potter*. This section will also explore where the ideological faultlines might appear in the source text. The analysis of the family in *Harry Potter* and the possible faultlines will provide a base to which the fanfictions will be compared.

Defining the Family

Any definition of the family is highly contested. It is therefore necessary to give a definition of the family for the purpose of finding the ideological faultlines that appear in the source text. Defining the family is a process of inclusion and exclusion: who is and who is not a member of one’s family? Whether or not extended family, neighbours, or friends, for example, are included into the family differs per definition. By defining the family through exclusion based on ideology one forms a normative definition: those who conform to the norm are included, but those who do not are often not recognised as a family, sometimes by government institutions, or even the better part of society.

⁸ As of June 22 2015. Results can be found via a search in Google: Harry Potter Fanfiction Fanfiction.net.

The normative family changes over time, and differs from place to place. In the Western tradition, the heterosexual nuclear family⁹ is the ideal family, the norm. Moreover, the ideal is not simply “an innocent idealistic fantasy but an ideological system in which issues of power and control are embedded” (Alston 9). Family ideology is promoted and controlled through powerful ideological institutions, such as government, education, religion, and literature. Families that do not adhere to the ideal of the loving nuclear family are looked down upon, or, according to Alston, sometimes forced to comply with the ideal or they are “demonised; essentially, they become the other” (9).

Within literature, children’s literature is one of the most prolific to propagate family ideology. The ideal of a nuclear family has hardly been affected by the realities of a post-war society in which death of a parent and divorce are more common and apparent than ever (Alston 23-25): “the depiction of the family in children’s literature is, at heart, deeply conservative” (Alston 1). Family ideology in children’s literature contains a paradox, as Ann Alston points out: “on the one hand we adhere to the myth of the ideal nuclear family and on the other there is recognition that this nuclear family is no longer entirely workable” (11). These norms, however, still influence characters and the developments of plotlines in most children’s literature (Alston 2-4). With the complexities that are present in the reality of the 20th and 21st centuries and their counterpart representations in children’s literature, “the ideal of the family [is] strengthened rather than weakened” (Alston 59). In the foregrounding of possible issues, for example a single parent household that goes awry or child abuse, these stories set negative examples, ultimately emphasizing the ideal nuclear family as being better.

Although the normative family refers to an ideal set by equally ideological social institutions, the word family can have broader connotations, which is also the case in this paper. Family, rather than the ideal family or the normative family, in this paper refers to the

⁹ Often defined as a married couple and their biological children (Alston 9).

concept of family that is linked to love, home and a sense of belonging, including, amongst other, extended family, friends and romantic interests.

The Family and Family Ideology in *Harry Potter*

J.K. Rowling uses several common tropes of children's literature, among others racial, social and educational issues that are at hand in the confined space of a school (Eccleshare 95), but she begins and ends with the mention of the heteronormative family. On the first page of *Philosopher's Stone*, Rowling introduces Mr and Mrs Dursley, and their son Dudley, who "were proud to say that they were perfectly normal" (1). In the epilogue of *Deathly Hallows*, Harry, who is now married to Ginny Weasley and father of three children, is waving goodbye to two of them as they go to Hogwarts. He is surrounded by several other heteronormative families, for example, Ron and Hermione and their two children (603-7).

"The Boy Who Lived," the first chapter of *Philosopher's Stone*, also introduces the reader to Harry, a now orphaned one-year-old wizard boy, who is left on the doorstep of his mother's sister, Mrs Dursley, the "only family he has left now" (15). Albus Dumbledore, Hogwarts' headmaster, has erected protective spells over the Dursley's home; these spells are based on two concepts that are widely associated with family: love and blood. Harry's mother sacrificed herself to save her son, and he has been brought to the only blood-relatives he has left. In *The Order of the Phoenix*, Rowling explains that as long as Harry lives in Mr and Mrs Dursley's house some part of the year and still thinks of it as home, the spells will stay intact. Rowling introduces us, then, to the definition of what family is supposed to mean in the series: love, blood-relatives, protection, a home to go back to and a sense of belonging or, in other words, the normative family (Alston 74; Kornfeld and Prothro 121). It is also indicated that a blood-relation is not a guarantee for love and affection, as is shown in Harry's relationship with the Dursleys, but the Dursleys do love their own son.

Home, personal belonging, and belonging within in a community are all situated within the social context of the family (Alston 69-70). In *Harry Potter*, belonging in the wizarding community is based on the ability to do magic. Harry, who is different from his relatives because of his magical abilities, is able to escape to a world where he feels he belongs (Eccleshare 95). Belonging within the magical community, however, is not based solely on magical ability, but also on family heritage. This link between belonging and family is explicated by the concept of blood-status. A witch or wizard's blood-status is based on his or her parents' magical ability: whether or not a person is born to Muggle¹⁰ parents, wizarding parents or a combination of both. Part of the wizarding community believes in the ideological notion of blood-purity: wizards and witches born from Muggle parents are held in contempt because of their non-magical family background and Rowling shows that this division of people is unfair. Blood-status, however, still defines most relationships, especially between pure-blood wizards and non-pure-blood wizards.

Harry, Ron and Hermione form a friendship which is found odd in the wizarding community. Each of them represents a blood-status: Harry is the son of James Potter, a well-known wizard of a pureblood wizarding family, and Lily Evans, a Muggle-born witch; Hermione Granger, as mentioned before, is a Muggle-born witch; and Ron Weasley is a member of a pureblood wizarding family. It is, however, true that each of them has a quirk that makes the friendship logical: Harry was raised as a Muggle, like Hermione; Hermione is the smartest and best-performing witch of her age; and Ron's family, though pureblood, is discredited because of the family's occupations: Arthur Weasley works with Muggles, Bill Weasley works with goblins and Charlie Weasley works with dragons, all creatures that are considered lower than witches and wizards (Wolosky 9). The Weasley family is neither completely caught in the prejudice of blood-purity, nor in the prejudice of the normative family. Their nuclear family is constantly reinterpreted and extended (Wolosky 9), with

¹⁰ This is a word created by J.K. Rowling to indicate the non-magical population (*Philosopher's Stone* 43).

witches and wizards that all have a defect, by societal standards: “The Weasleys welcome into their family life Hermione, who is Muggle-born; Fleur [Delacour], who is part-Veela; [Remus] Lupin who is a werewolf; and Hagrid, who is half-giant” (Wolosky 9).

For all of them, and for all members of the wizarding community, their family heritage reveals a lot of information that is not always positive. Molly Weasley frets about Harry as if he were her own son, and “at the end of *Goblet*, when Harry has won the Triwizard Tournament and survived the attack by Voldemort, Mrs. Weasley is at Hogwarts in lieu of his own family” (Whited 107). She is what Petunia Dursley never was for Harry: the Weasleys and the Dursleys are placed on opposite ends of the spectrum of a heteronormative family.

Family, however, is also influenced by a sense of belonging in the home. In children’s literature when a hero goes on a quest, he or she leaves his or her home to find a home that is more loving and secure, or to recreate the family that was lost (Kornfeld and Prothro 121;131-2). Young Harry “yearns to escape [his] real world, because only in the world of magic does the vision of home and family take on any meaning or permanence” (Kornfeld and Prothro 124). Throughout the series, there are a handful of places that Harry calls his home: 4 Privet Drive, The Burrow, 12 Grimmauld Place, and, most importantly, Hogwarts. In *Deathly Hallows*, it becomes clear how much of a home Hogwarts was for Harry. As he is preparing to surrender to Voldemort willingly to save his friends, Harry overhears a conversation between Ginny Weasley and another girl:

“‘It’s all right,’ Ginny was saying. ‘It’s OK. We’re going to get you inside.’

‘But I want to go *home*,’ whispered the girl. ‘I don’t want to fight any more!’

‘I know,’ said Ginny, and her voice broke. ‘It’s going to be all right.’

Ripples of cold undulated over Harry’s skin. He wanted to shout out to the night, he wanted Ginny to know that he was there, he wanted her to know where he was going. He wanted to be stopped, to be dragged back, to be sent back home. . .

But he *was* home. Hogwarts was the first and best home he had known. He and Voldemort and Snape, the abandoned boys, had all found home here. . .” (558; original ellipses)

At Hogwarts, for the first time in his life, Harry knows what it means and feels like to belong (see also Kornfeld and Prothro 125; Wolosky 116). Hogwarts is his “first real home, the place that meant he was special; it meant everything to him” (*Deathly Hallows* 238), just as it was for Voldemort and Snape.

Even in an environment where the family and parents are absent, family ideology is still “informing the attitudes of the characters and the development of the plot” (Alston 2). The quest for family starts at home (Kornfeld and Prothro 121; Alston 69). Harry is actively constructing a makeshift family at the only home he knows to replace the one that he lost, expanding his family circles throughout the series. This starts immediately upon arrival at Hogwarts, where he is told, that while he is at Hogwarts, his “house will be something like [his] family within Hogwarts” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 85). At Hogwarts, family is not necessarily determined only by blood, birth or affection, but by actions, loyalties and relationships forged between members of the same house (Kornfeld and Prothro 124). Each house represents certain character qualities that all members display, and the four houses are rivals. They compete for the House Cup and in the school’s Quidditch tournament, essentially creating “family feuds” between houses (Kornfeld and Prothro 126).

Hogwarts is also the place where Harry is most closely connected to his parents. He looks onto his family for the first time in his life in the Mirror of Erised,¹¹ right after he receives a family heirloom (*Philosopher’s Stone* 148; 153-4). His heritage is also pointed out constantly by people who knew his parents: he has his mother’s eyes, and his father’s athletic skills in Quidditch. James’ old friends in the Order of the Phoenix¹² compare him to his father

¹¹ The Mirror of Erised is a mirror that shows the onlooker his or her’s deepest desire (Rowling, *Philosopher’s Stone* 156-7).

¹² The Order of the Phoenix is a secret group of wizards and witches which fought against Voldemort when he first came to power (Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix* 65).

again and again. Sirius Black, Harry's godfather, says to him after being saved by Harry: "You are – truly you're father's son" (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 303). In *Deathly Hallows*, Harry stands up to Lupin, arguing from James' perspective. Lupin at this point wants to leave his pregnant wife behind to join Harry, Ron and Hermione in the hunt for Horcruxes¹³. Lupin argues that "James would have wanted me to stick with [Harry]", to which Harry replies: "I'm pretty sure my father would have wanted to know why you aren't sticking with your own kid, actually" (175). Harry exemplifies the importance of family, as he says: "Parents shouldn't leave their kids unless – unless they have to" (177).

Throughout the series, Harry's makeshift family, which has extended beyond his Hogwarts House and the Weasleys, changes his relationship with his real family, essentially fusing them in the end when he marries into the Weasley family (Randal 45; Wolosky 107). Harry is obsessed with his parents, but realizes that it is the emotional connections that last, even if the people themselves have passed away (Kornfeld and Prothro 135).

Like other children's literature, *Harry Potter* explores the significance of the family and alternative families, but in the end returns to the importance of the heteronormative family (Alston 2), as Harry is surrounded by his own wife and children, and other heteronormative families. At Platform 9 ¾, a host of normative families has gathered to send off their children. Teddy, Lupin's now orphaned son, is also there and Lily, Harry's daughter, says when he is caught snogging Victoire, one of her cousins that it would be "lovely if [Teddy and Victoire] got married [. . .] Teddy would *really* be part of the [Weasley] family then" (606). This reinforces the family that is bound by blood or marriage, and its heterosexual focus. In addition, the normative family is placed in the absolute centre of all the affairs: everyone is part of the Weasley family, and if they are not, they should be.

¹³ A Horcrux is "the word used for an object in which a person has concealed part of their soul [. . .] Even if one's body is attacked or destroyed, one cannot die, for part of the soul remains earthbound and undamaged" (Rowling, *Half Blood Prince*, 464-5). Voldemort has created seven Horcruxes for his soul, including Harry. Horcruxes are almost always inanimate objects, and before Harry, a person being a Horcrux was unheard of (Rowling 466).

Chapter 3 A Quest for Family:

Changing Harry's History

“Readers do not have to respect closures. [. . .] We can insist on our sense that the middle of the text arouses expectations that exceed the closure” (Sinfield, “Othello” 79).

The epilogue to *Deathly Hallows*, “19 Years Later,” is a definitive end to the *Harry Potter* series: it does not leave room for alternative endings. Dissident fanfiction, in the reading of Sinfield, refers to the fanfiction that does not accept these boundaries. The finite story, in this case the story of family ideology in *Harry Potter*, is reopened in fanfiction to become infinite in its possibilities. The potential other readings of the text and of the family, which are foreclosed upon in the epilogue, can now be expanded (Sinfield, “Othello” 79). This chapter will explore two fanfictions and the way in which they reimagine the Harry Potter universe through recreating, adding to or changing Harry's heritage and family: *What is Right: Year One* (2008), by Emma Lipardi, and *In Blood Only* (2006) by E.M. Snape¹⁴.

What is Right: Construction of Family and Family Ideology in Another Hogwarts House

What is Right: Year One is a do-over fanfiction, in which a character gets the chance to re-do his or her life at Hogwarts from the start. Having Harry start over gives Lipardi, and other do-over fanfiction authors, the possibility to comment on the situation in which they found Harry. Through changing Harry's situation, fanfiction highlights the original's family ideology. Fanfiction authors comment implicitly on unsatisfying concepts in the original series. In other words, their stories attempt to repair the faultlines that occurred, which results in a critique of the series.

¹⁴ Both Emma Lipardi and E.M. Snape are presumed to be pen names.

In Lipardi's AU for *What is Right*, Harry's story ends rather differently. Voldemort has managed to capture and kill most of Harry's closest friends. In the first chapter, Lipardi confirms the strong friendship between Ron, Hermione and Harry: Harry dies with "his arms still wrapped around [Ron and Hermione]" (Lipardi "1. A Choice")¹⁵. Once he dies at the hand of Voldemort, Lipardi gives Harry a choice: he can enter the afterlife with his "predecessors," he can be born again as Muggle to have a "peaceful life", or he can "[go] back to where everything started" (Lipardi "1. A Choice"). Harry chooses the latter and, while he retains his memories, returns to his ten year-old self. Over the summer, when he prepares to go to Hogwarts, his character changes: he is acting more shyly, and silently, doing chores without complaining and working for a little pocket money. While buying his school supplies in Diagon Alley,¹⁶ he meets Draco Malfoy and his father. They offer to continue shopping with him and Lipardi remarks: "It was wrong like [the idea of] the Dursley's [*sic*] being nice to him was wrong" ("3. Malfoy?"). Harry has grown so used to his relatives not being nice to him, his definition of what a family is supposed to do has altered, but later Lipardi still adds: "He wanted to go back to Privet Drive where he knew he was safe" ("3. Malfoy?"). She does not refer to Privet Drive as home, even though she could, but instead chooses the impersonal reference to a street name, effectively commenting on the differences between a family home and the house he shares with the Dursleys. She does, however, repeatedly reference to his aunt and uncle's house as a safe place, and she references Dumbledore's protective spells: she recognises the importance love and blood, which are widely associated with family.

At the station and on the train to Hogwarts, Harry does not meet the Weasley family. He already has the knowledge he needs to get to platform 9 ¾, so he does not need their help. This immediately changes the dynamic in the story: there is no heteronormative family at the

¹⁵ Chapters of the fanfictions are referred to by author, number of the chapter and chapter title. The stories are written and read in separate chapters that cannot be viewed in one document, so for better reference chapter numbers are mentioned. Fanfiction authors often use chapter titles to convey the main event in a chapter, having it at hand might be useful.

¹⁶ Diagon Alley is the wizarding shopping street in London, accessible through a pub, The Leaky Cauldron, which is only visible to wizarding people (Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone* 53-56)

base throughout the story. Instead, Lipardi has to make a new family for Harry and her choices of friends, mentors and protectors explain where the faultlines occur for her. Instead of Ron, Harry meets Hermione on the Hogwarts Express: not a pure-blooded member of the Weasley-family, but a Muggle-born, raised like himself. Once Draco joins them, Harry points this out to the prejudiced young wizard: “I’m Muggle-raised. Hermione and I will be going through the same experience” (“4. Home Sweet Home”). It is interesting to note that Lipardi has chosen to title the chapter in which Harry returns to Hogwarts “Home Sweet Home”. Lipardi captures in three words what Kornfeld and Prothro said: Harry “yearns to escape [his] real world, because only in the world of magic does the vision of home and family take on any meaning or permanence” (124). She shows us that Hogwarts is Harry’s home, and “homes should be welcoming places that can be returned to and desired at every turn” (Alston 75). Even after hardships, torture, and the death of various friends, Lipardi’s Harry still longs for Hogwarts, and as Alston argues “the family that achieves such a home is considered to have reached the epitome of good, moral domesticity” (75).

Once at Hogwarts, the Sorting Hat refuses to Sort Harry into any of the four Houses, since it knows he is not eleven years old. As a result, Harry is granted a choice of his own, giving him the opportunity to choose his own Hogwarts family. Changing Harry’s Hogwarts House directly affects the process in which he creates his makeshift family. Lipardi sorts Harry into Ravenclaw, rather than Gryffindor or Slytherin: apart from Gryffindor, Slytherin House is the best explored House in the series, and their natural rivalry is a big trope in the series. Ravenclaw has no part in the “family feud” (Kornfeld and Prothro 126) between Gryffindor and Slytherin, the two most important Houses in the war with Voldemort. Being a Ravenclaw rather than a Slytherin or Gryffindor affects Harry’s relationship with his former makeshift family and with the people that are closest to Voldemort as well: belonging to neither side of the struggle, Harry suddenly finds the freedom to become friends with both.

This has already become clear in his friendship with Hermione, a Muggle-born Gryffindor as well as with Draco, a pure-blooded Slytherin, and.

Lipardi explores alternative possibilities for family through Harry's new found freedom in Ravenclaw. His changing relationship with Slytherin House, for example, also becomes clear in his relationship with the Malfoy family, Draco in particular, and his relationship with his Potions Professor Severus Snape. Instead of the Weasley family, who are part of the Order, the Malfoys, who are loyal to Voldemort, take over Weasley's role in Harry's life. Lucius Malfoy congratulates Harry on being sorted into Ravenclaw House. As he opens Lucius' letter, Harry thinks of the phrase "in loco parentis", which translates to "in place of the parents," and asks himself: "Did Lucius Malfoy actually feel that he had some kind of parental duty towards Harry?" ("5. Pop Quiz"). Lipardi is actively creating a new family for Harry in the Malfoys. They do not see one another as member of the rivalling House or as enemies any more. Harry and the Malfoys form a family of their own. Although still heteronormative, it changes the social hierarchy and the sense of belonging through the characters' Howargts House that is dominant in the original series with the Weasley family, who were all Gryffindors like Harry. Lipardi presents a family that is loving and caring towards and protective over Harry, but still from a different House and a different blood-status. The Malfoys offer Harry protection, a home to go to for the holidays and a sense of belonging; they are the replacement normative family as portrayed by the Weasleys in the original series (Alston 74; Kornfeld and Prothro 121). Moreover, Harry believes that "it was pointless to live up to imagined parental standards. [. . .] His teachers had reinforced it. He was Harry and he could not be anything else" ("5. Pop Quiz"). Unlike Alston, Lipardi seems to argue that Harry's attitude is not positively informed by his absent parents (Alston 2): rather than focussing on what he has lost, this Harry focusses on what he has now. This is not the case in the original series, where Harry is always looking for his own family, and Lipardi,

by changing Harry's views on this, is commenting on the ideological faultline that occurs within the strict dichotomy between family and friends.

Harry's relationship with Snape changes drastically as well. Now that Harry is in Ravenclaw House, which has paired classes with Hufflepuff House, Snape has no grounds to treat Harry with the same intense hatred when Harry was in Gryffindor: "That was the largest and most disturbing change in this new life. Snape had changed. He did not treat Harry the way he had the first time around. He mostly ignored Harry, though he did treat Harry the same as the other students in his Ravenclaw/Hufflepuff class" ("6. Troll!"). Later on, Snape agrees to private Potions lessons with Harry. Snape becomes a mentor to Harry, rather than the tormentor he used to be. Lipardi is thus exploring Harry's relationships when he is part of neither the Gryffindor family nor the Slytherin family and comes to the conclusion that the family feud that is created does not improve the inter-house relationships between Slytherin and Gryffindor, as Kornfeld and Prothro suggested (124).

As the story progresses, Snape becomes more and openly protective of Harry. Snape was also protective of Harry in the Rowling series, but it was always secretly, with resentment and he was protective of him because of his mother Lily, whom he loved. His protection for Harry, then, was not unlike Albus Dumbledore's protective behaviour: Dumbledore protected Harry for the greater good rather than protecting Harry for who he was (Wolosky 109-11; Rowling *Deathly Hallows* 551). Neither of these men loved and protected Harry for the person he is. Lipardi now explores what would happen if Snape was indeed protective of Harry because he grows fond of Harry himself, in essence providing a safety that parents usually do. Snape and Lucius Malfoy both show this protective factor in their relationship with Harry. Lipardi explains the difference between Malfoy's relationship and Snape's relationship with Harry, in terms of protection, when Harry is attacked by a Death Eater¹⁷ at Malfoy Manor when he stays there over Christmas break. Lucius Malfoy reprimands the

¹⁷ Death Eaters are Voldemort's followers.

Death Eater for laying a hand on Harry, and it seems that Harry is treated as part of the family not because he is genuinely loved, but rather because Harry is friends with Lucius' son. His relationship with Harry is for the sake of his son, much like the relationship Rowling's Snape and Dumbledore had with Harry. Lipardi's Snape on the other hand cares for Harry: "'Tsk. That doesn't look good, Mr. Potter.' Snape said as he rearranged Harry so that Harry's uninjured side rested against Snape's shoulder. 'Let's get you away from him' [. . .] Harry wrapped his arms around Snape and held on. He knew Snape would dismember anyone who dared touch Harry now" ("8. Suspicions and Dancing").

It is not just Snape who experiences the changing relationship. Harry starts to realize that Snape is the father figure he missed the first time around, and he starts to wonder what would have happened if he had been sorted into Slytherin to begin with:

"Harry stared at Snape. He idly wondered if this was the man who would have been like if he had chosen Slytherin all those years ago when the Sorting Hat had suggested it¹⁸. Would Snape still have been supportive? Would Snape have fought for Harry? Would Snape have listened to three frantic first years about the Philosopher's Stone?¹⁹ The possibilities of *what could have* been rattled through him and he shuddered" ("13. Flying"; original emphasis).

Their relationship was previously negative in Rowling, but they both choose to construct a new relationship in Lipardi, one that resembles that of a family in terms of affection, protection, taking care of another and a sense of belonging.

Harry's parental relationship with Snape is placed outside the norm of the source text, because Harry and Snape were, first and foremost, rivals in a family feud at Hogwarts, and rivals for Harry's mother's love. Lipardi is exploring the idea of family based on the

¹⁸ During Harry's first experience with the Sorting Hat in *Philosopher's Stone*, the Hat is not quite sure whether to sort Harry in Slytherin or Gryffindor and it is suggested that the Hat took Harry's wish into account (Rowling 90-91).

¹⁹ This is in contrast with Minerva McGonagall, Head of Gryffindor House, who did not listen to Harry, Ron and Hermione when they came to her about the Philosopher's Stone (Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone* 195).

possibility of what could or would have happened if Harry, Snape and the Malfoys were not rivals from the start, but rather impartial in the family feud at school and in the war.

In Blood Only: Construction of Family and Family Ideology with a Different Father

E.M. Snape's *In Blood Only* is a novel-length fanfiction that is classified as a Severitus fanfiction²⁰. Severitus fanfictions are fanfictions which address Harry's relationship with Snape. Severitus fanfiction writers play with the idea what could happen if Harry was actually Snape's biological son²¹. Each Severitus fanfiction addresses the issues surrounding the family: what it means to be family, how family is defined, and what a sense of belonging means within the wizarding world and the family.

In Blood Only is one of these stories: only Albus Dumbledore and Lily Potter are aware that Harry is not James' son, but the result of a one-night stand of Lily and Snape while she was already married to James. Years later, Snape accidentally finds a concealed memory, in which we see a poisoned Harry about to receive an antidote that is based on the blood of a close relative. The Dursleys have denied access to their blood, and Dumbledore, who knows Snape is actually Harry's father, tells Snape to use his own blood, and in E.M. Snape's own words: "It is then Snape knew he was Harry Potter's father" ("1. The Memory"). In the heteronormative, ideological family marriage comes before having children, and in making Lily break her vows to James, Severitus fanfiction authors undermine the status of the heteronormative family in the original series. In the case of *In Blood Only*, the now blood-related Harry and Snape apparently must actively work on being a family and this is where E.M. Snape starts the family plot: the acknowledgement that there exists a biological

²⁰ Severitus fanfictions are the result of a challenge set by Severitus, a fanfiction author on *fanfiction.net*. A challenge is an organized activity in which fanfiction authors are challenged to write fanfiction with a certain theme, plotline or idea ("A Guide to Fanspeak"). The challenge asked other fanfiction authors to write fanfictions around the idea that Severus Snape is in fact Harry Potter's father (Severitus).

²¹ The meaning of the term Severitus fanfiction has expanded since the original challenge to also include fanfictions that are not responses to the challenge, and stories in which Severus Snape is not Harry's biological father, but serves as a mentor, friend or other father-like figure. *What is Right: Year One* by Emma Lipardi can also be counted as a Severitus fanfiction.

relationship between the two wizards. E.M. Snape implicitly comments that an immediate blood-relation is the marker for natural feelings of love, which adheres to the normative family, where parental love is unconditional; however, since Harry was conceived out of wedlock, in an affair even, the very start of their relationship lies far from the normative family. Any biological connection is no guarantee for a happy family, where affection, security and a sense of belonging combine into home, like with Harry and the Dursleys in Rowling's series; the connection between parent and child, however, is an exception, even in fanfiction: E.M. Snape establishes a loving father-son relationship between Snape and Harry as her story progresses, not unlike Mr and Mrs Dursley's relationship with their biological son.

Snape at first refuses to form a family, saying that "No, [he] would not have wanted the impertinent brat for himself, but [Lily and Dumbledore] had no right to hide this from him! Especially not after the boy's mother *died*" ("2. Blindspots"; original emphasis). E.M. Snape's title suggest that the relationship that exists between Harry and Snape is in blood only, with no other attachments. Harry's reaction to the news emphasises this status of the relationship: "Is this some kind of joke?" ("3. An Unfortunate Genetic Relationship"). In chapter 3, "An Unfortunate Genetic Relationship", E.M. Snape explains just what Snape thinks of the situation: "As things were, he'd been betrayed by the Headmaster, thwarted by the woman he'd loved for the thirteen minutes it took to reach a climax, and trampled by a society that proclaimed Potter's son a hero when it was actually Snape's bastard who stopped the Dark Lord." Although Snape has no intention of loving Harry or caring for him, he is irrationally angry with Dumbledore for taking away his choice. Harry, on the other hand, keeps insisting that it is all a lie, that it cannot possibly be true. He is as reluctant to admit his blood-relation as Snape.

Even in the original series, it is shown that families that have a blood relation, must have love or affection for one another. In Rowling's series, the families that had blood-

relations but who had no affection met an unfortunate fate²². E.M. Snape's Snape admits to himself, freely, that he "has no love for the boy, no emotional investment in him other than six years of deep-rooted dislike. No tender feelings had arisen in his chest, and he truly had no desire for them to" ("13. The Christmas Present"). Harry had been under a spell for his entire life. This spell, the glamour, concealed any likeness with his biological father Snape. After Snape has removed the glamour that kept Harry looking like James Potter, Harry also points out that affection comes along with the blood-relation to form a family: "Before, when he was an orphan, he at least knew there was no chance of having [a look of pride or affection from his father] for himself. But now. . . Snape was his goddamn *father*. He should feel that way, if only a little bit. . . Did Snape simply hate Harry so much that he loathed him even when he was his own flesh and blood?" ("15. Unexpected Appreciation"; original ellipses). Their unloving, though existing, relationship is placed outside the normative family described in the original series due to the lack of affection and love, which Harry craves from his biological father. His emotional neglect at the Dursleys is continued in his relationship with his biological father, implicitly commenting on the meaning of family. Although Harry and Snape are biologically related, their relationship is strained and the knowledge of their biological relationship does not change their previous relationship overnight: love and affection do not come easy to either one of them. E.M. Snape is commenting on the process of family, and undermining the ease with which is loved and cared for in Rowling's series.

In chapter 30 "The Visitor", E.M. Snape finally lets Snape think about the possibility of him being a parent: "He wasn't sure how to be a father. [. . .] But what if he could have that thing, that asset that the Weasleys and the Malfoys and their ilk seem to prize so highly?" E.M. Snape compares the relationship between Harry and Snape with the family relationships that are displayed by the Weasleys and the Malfoys in Rowling's series, the heteronormative

²² Voldemort was born to a family that was based on a love potion. Once his magical mother stopped dosing her husband, he left. It was a loveless marriage on his side, and he did not care for his unborn son. Having a baby was a decision meant to keep her husband bound to her. After he left, his mother stopped decided to give leave him behind in an orphanage (Rowling, *The Half-Blood Prince* 242-260).

families where love, affection and blood-relation coincide naturally. She does not mention the heteronormative family of the Dursleys, who were never a real family or a real home for Harry. E.M. Snape explains that Harry and Snape need a sense of belonging together to be a family. It is in this same chapter, over half way into the story, that Snape, for the first time, admits that having a son might be something that he “couldn’t bear to see destroyed”. Snape’s ultimate admission of what it means to be a family, even a single-parent family, foregrounds the ideological faultline that appears when considering love and affection in combination with blood relations. As Kornfeld and Prothro, and Alston suggested, family is more than just shared DNA.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to demonstrate that fanfiction can be seen as an alternative form of literary criticism. This paper focussed on family and family ideology in *Harry Potter*, and through close textual analysis of *What is Right: Year One* by Emma Lipardi and *In Blood Only* by E.M. Snape highlights critical insights into Rowling's series within their fanfictions on this particular topic. The comparison was made between the source text and the alterations that were made to the source text by the fanfiction authors. Each alteration relates back to the original and its family ideology, voicing what fans are curious about or what they find unsatisfying. For *What is Right: Year One* and *In Blood Only*, the alterations to Harry and his family serve to challenge the dominant ideology found in *Harry Potter* and suggest alternatives. Reading and writing fanfictions, then, encourages the *Harry Potter* reader to address the source text critically, and respond to it in great detail. Fanfiction is an alternative form of literary criticism that can alter and correct a particular text (McBride), in which fans are actively constructing meaning.

Traditional academic literary criticism, which is the academically expert study, evaluation, description and interpretation of literary works, shares many qualities with fanfiction. This underpins fanfiction as an alternative form of literary criticism. These qualities include, but are not limited to, expertise on a source text and a detailed analytical approach to this text. Through narrative, fanfiction authors reinterpret the source text with new critical insight. The results of the critical engagement for literary criticism is scholarly work in the author's field, but for fans critical engagement may result in fanfiction; a combination of both criticism and fiction. Fanfiction undoubtedly encourages readers of the *Harry Potter* series to address their source text critically, however, fanfiction cannot be regarded as literary criticism in itself.

Traditional academic literary criticism offers a vastly different reading experience than reading criticism in fiction form. Academic literary criticism is explicit, clearly structured and

properly referenced. Fanfiction is not explicit about its critical purpose, if that is a purpose in the first place. Concerns are voiced implicitly, in narrative form. Since fanfiction has no gatekeepers and there are no specific textual standards, quality of the pieces varies widely: not all fanfictions are produced with the same care and attention to detail as E.M. Snape's and Emma Lipardi's. Fanfiction, however, has become a more easily accessible form of criticism, since it is published online and accessible for free, unlike traditional criticism. The same gatekeepers that keep up the standard for academic literary criticism limits its access: untrained people, like fans, have little to no access to scholarly journals or they are unable to understand the specialised language. As Sheenagh Pugh book title suggest, fanfiction has become "the democratic genre".

Fanfiction, then, is not literary criticism like traditional literary criticism, but it can nonetheless shed new light, propose new and alternative insights into specifically popular texts, and as such, it has the potential for much more use within the academic literary field.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

The size and scope expected of a Bachelor's thesis limited the amount of fanfictions that were explored in detail. Only two fanfictions were explored, both novel-length and from the same fandom. The textual analyses are not exhaustive. The results presented in this paper result in an informed conclusion that fanfiction can indeed be seen as an alternative form of literary criticism, but further research is necessary to explore this in alternate fandoms, alternate genres and/or alternate media; for example, continuation fanfictions, especially in the *Harry Potter* fandom, stick very close to canon and the question is if these fanfiction challenge dominant ideologies like Severitus fanfictions.

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